

News Release

For Release: 2 July 2018

Tauranga local shines for Matariki

"Matariki is a time for celebration. A time to re-evaluate how you're going and reflect and see how far you've come and also a time to look forward and to celebrate," said Tauranga local Lesleigh Ricardi as she describes what Matariki means to her and her family.

"It's important to celebrate Māori festivals like Matariki because it shows that we are proud of our culture and who we are. For me as a Māori it's also an opportunity to teach others about our culture."

For Ricardi, celebrating her culture is important. Growing up in Tauranga she moved to Australia in 2002 but returned to New Zealand seven years ago to give her children a direct line to their iwi and active involvement in their marae.

"I am Māori but I'm also a working mother and a team leader in a corporate environment. It's important for me to set an example for other Māori women in the community and be proud of who I am and where I come from," Ricardi said.

Culture at work

Ricardi has worked at ANZ for the last 15 years and is currently branch manager at Tauranga Crossing in Tauriko.

Reflecting on the past 12 months, she was proud to see ANZ introduce a te reo Māori language option on all ANZ ATMs in August: "It shows the bank supports the revitalisation of Maori language in a meaningful way. Particularly, it creates opportunities for Māori speakers to fold te reo into their everyday lives. It's awesome."

A key member of ANZ's Māori and Pasifika Staff Group, Ricardi is actively involved in brainstorming ways to increase Māori cultural awareness within the bank.

"I love that ANZ considers ideas, they don't just go 'no, not going to do that, don't have the time, don't have the resources.' ANZ cares about its customers and it cares about its staff, particularly those who are Māori."

To celebrate Matariki Ricardi is helping organise Māori New Year dinners for ANZ staff in Wellington and Auckland. Closer to home she hosts cultural food days in her Tauranga branch where staff members of all ethnicities can contribute food from their culture.

"I think we're still on a journey but I'm proud to work in an environment where my culture isn't just accepted, it's embraced."

ANZ General Manager Talent and Culture Felicity Evans agrees. Over the decades she has worked at ANZ she's seen positive cultural change across the bank. For her, the deliberate integration of te reo Māori in all communications coming from the leadership team, led by ANZ NZ Chief Executive David Hisco, is a win.

"It's wonderful to see the interest in te reo Māori from the leaders within the bank. When they naturally weave it into their communication it supports its continuation both at work and at home. I hope to see the inclusion of te reo Māori continue to rise," Evans said.

About Matariki

Matariki, popularly known as Maori New Year, is a time to pause and recognise New Zealand's indigenous culture and traditions and celebrate new beginnings.

Traditionally, Maori would observe the sky making notes on star movements and their relationship to the planets, the moon and the sun.

One of the star groups identified is Matariki, the Māori name given to Pleiades, an internationally recognised star cluster that can be seen all over the world. There are around 500 stars in the Matariki cluster, but only six or seven are visible without a telescope.

Different tribes celebrate Matariki at different times. For 2018, June 7 is listed as the day Matariki sets, and it can be seen as it rises just before sunrise from July 6 – 9.

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