

2012 Festival of Pacific Arts – Artist Profile

Emma Kesha

I stayed alive with my art form of weaving by sharing and teaching others in the community to keep their art alive.

Misa Emma Kesha QSM

Originally from Samoa, Emma Kesha says that weaving is an art, talent and gift that she has been given. Her aim as an artist is to promote and preserve the art of weaving by sharing her knowledge, particularly with the younger generation of her culture, helping to preserve the art of weaving which might otherwise be lost in modern society.

Emma has been weaving since the age of nine, when this skill was an integral part of everyday life in her village. She has since taught weaving to a wide range of people from different cultures, and has exhibited her work throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, New Caledonia and Australia.



Figure 1. Aotearoa Weavers: Emaraina Small, Misa Emma Kesha and Karl.
Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.

Her time working with local iwi has contributed to many intercultural collaborations of Pacific Island and Māori weaving arts. Over the years, she has facilitated workshops and exchange visits with various groups, such as Te Moana Ā Kiwa Multicultural Weavers, events which have been held throughout New Zealand and in the Pacific Islands and Australia, including a trip for Māori and Pacific weavers from New Zealand to Western Samoa which



Figure 2. Basket woven by Emma Kesha.

was hosted by her family, in Samoa. Whilst there, they were able to experience village life and partake in sharing skills and weaving techniques with local people.

Emma's expertise has been recognised with a Creative New Zealand/Macmillan Brown Pacific Artists in Residence award at Canterbury University, during which time she completed pieces for an installation of her weaving works entitled *Siva Siva Maia: Come Dance with Me*. In 2010 she won the supreme award at the 2010 Creative New Zealand Arts Pasifika Awards, and in 2011 Emma Kesha was awarded the Queen's Service Medal from the New Zealand Government for services to the Pacific Island community in Aotearoa.

She is recently returned from the 2012 Pacific Festival of Arts held this year in Honiara, Solomon Islands, where she was invited to be a member of the Creative New Zealand delegation from Aotearoa.

Emma Kesha is a mother of six children and wife of Indian immigrant Hira Kesha. She is currently an active member of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. Inc., of which she was a founding member. The organisation aims to empower Pacific and New Zealand women through workshops, conferences and community activities. Emma is a Matai and travels annually to her homeland of Western Samoa where she supports her family, church and community. In 1998 she received the chieftain title 'Misa' in recognition of the ways in which Emma has served her family and community in Samoa. (This was the first time a woman had been made a chief in her family.) Misa has strong ties with the Seventh Day Adventist Church and is involved with many aspects of the church including women's ministries and health and youth initiatives.