

IN BRIEF

Debbie McCauley is an award-winning author and indie publisher. Her work has won the Best Non-Fiction category in the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults, been chosen as a White Raven by the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany, and selected by the New Zealand Blind Foundation to be produced in braille, large print and e-text. She believes in telling children stories from Aotearoa that will enrich their lives through a sense of place and belonging.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

McCauley, Debbie (1972-) is a fifth-generation Pākehā New Zealander whose earliest ancestor arrived in Aotearoa in 1841. Other ancestors were pioneers of the Katikati and Cambridge settlements. As a child, Debbie lived 'in the middle of a maize field' in Whakatāne, before moving to Tauranga where she attended high school at Tauranga Girls' College. There she won first prize for journalism at the end of her 7th form year before experiencing life living in a housetruck and volunteering for Women's Refuge and Trade Aid. Her various paid jobs include picking mushrooms, stocktaking logs at Tasman Forestry, caring for a 24-year-old man with motor neurone disease before he passed away, working in a crystal shop and researching and cataloguing moa bones and other artefacts for a private museum.

Debbie was a recipient of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Year Scholarship, and since 2003 has worked as a librarian at Tauranga City Library with an interest in local history and children's literature. She has a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in Humanities and Library & Information Studies. Debbie's passion is writing narrative non-fiction with text in both English and Te Reo Māori. She has been a member of Bookrapt (the Bay of Plenty Children's Literature Association) since 2007 and writes extensively for the Tauranga City Libraries heritage website.

Debbie's writing has been published in *Library Life* (A Passion for Publishing Children's Books, 2018 / Revisiting Tauranga Moana's Matariki Festival, 2015), the *Historical Review: Bay of Plenty Journal of History* (Te Awanui: the waka, 2017), *New Zealand Genealogist* (Bay of Plenty sources: Katikati, 2016), *New Zealand Memories* (Emigrating on the SS Captain Hobson in 1953, 2016), *Creativebeat* (Commemoration an Opportunity for the Creative, 2014), *Tauranga Memories Kete* (Identity and the Battle of Gate Pa Pukehinahina, 2011) and the *New Zealand Library & Information Management Journal* (Tauranga City Libraries: Meeting the needs of local Iwi? Biculturalism and Māori cultural intellectual property, 2008). Her poetry has been published in *Bravado*, the *Bay of Plenty Times* and *Enamel* magazine and used in advertising for National Poetry Day.

In 2012 Debbie arranged a family reunion and published her first book under the imprint Mauao Publishing; *The McCauley Family of Katikati, New Zealand, 1876-2012*. Written in just three months, it brings together over 20 years of her genealogical research. In 2015 she was the winner of the inaugural Creative Tauranga Writers' Award.

Debbie's first story for children was bilingual narrative non-fiction picture book *Taratoa and the Code of Conduct: A Story from the Battle of Gate Pā* (Mauao Publishing, 2014), which was a finalist in the 2015 LIANZA Children's and Young Adult's Book Awards. As part of the organising committee for the 2014 Battle of Gate Pa sesquicentennial, Debbie was inspired to tell the story of the battle in a way accessible to children. Illustrated by her 15-year-old daughter, Sophie McCauley, and translated into Te Reo Māori by Tamati Waaka, it also proved to be a big hit with adults. Pete Dashwood wrote, '*Debbie's book is a beautifully produced piece of New Zealand history... This little book conveys the feeling of the time in simple language and with simple illustrations. It is ideal if you want to know what happened, and it is fair to both sides. A children's book? Maybe. I am one adult who found it delightful and informative*' (6 April 2014).

Mōtītī Blue and the Oil Spill: A Story from the Rena Disaster (Mauao Publishing, 2014) was Debbie's second children's book. Translated into Te Reo Māori by Tamati Waaka, it won the Best Non-Fiction category in the 2015 New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults and was chosen as a 2015 White Raven by the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany. The Blind Foundation selected it to be produced in braille, large print and e-text. John McIntyre (1951-2017) of The Children's Bookshop wrote, '*Really nice book, good work*' (2014), and Bob Docherty wrote, '*This is a powerful, accurate and superbly illustrated picture book sized work of a major marine disaster. An excellent resource for a study of the Rena disaster and a beginning study for senior students wanting to dig further*' (bobsbooksnz, 15 December 2014). The LIANZA Children and Young Adult Book Awards judges wrote, '*This attractive bilingual story provides eye-opening detail on a major New Zealand environmental disaster, making it an excellent resource*' (15 June 2015).

The following three years were spent researching *The Treaty of Waitangi in Tauranga: Te Tiriti o Waitangi ki Tauranga Moana* (Mauao Publishing, 2018) which was illustrated by Whare Joseph Thompson, translated into Te Reo Māori by Tamati Waaka, and released on Waitangi Day 2018. During the process, Debbie was contacted by Treaty researcher and writer Claudia Orange, with the result that she shared her research for the 'He Tohu' exhibition at the National Library of New Zealand. Matariki Williams of *The Sapling* wrote, 'Like the other two books, McCauley's is richly illustrated with a mixture of photographs, maps and taonga related to the people written about. At the back of the book, the signatories at Tauranga are listed and identified by the tohu they left on the parchment. Each signatory has had a biography written about them and I can't help but think what a huge taonga this is for their descendants. The Treaty of Waitangi in Tauranga has included educational resources for teachers to use with their students to further extrapolate the kōrero therein' (27 February 2018).

Ko Mauao te Maunga: Legend of Mauao (Mauao Publishing, 2018) was illustrated by Debbie Tipuna, translated into Te Reo Māori by Tamati Waaka, and released during Tauranga's Matariki festival. Debbie wrote the book with the approval and support of kaumatua. It retells the traditional Legend of Mauao. Simie Simpson wrote, 'If you get a copy of this book, you'll need to hold onto it tightly. The beautiful illustration and production will have people trying to wrestle it off you in a heartbeat. This, in fact, happened to me—I took it out in public and I won't be making the same mistake twice. People are drawn to it; it has a book lovers sensibility: a matt cover, lovely thick paper and the illustrations are stunning... Like the tardis, this book is much more than it seems. It is more than a picture book—at the back is a glossary, facts about Mauao, a detailed timeline, place names, karakia, whakatauki, maps and activities. This book is the perfect classroom resource—it is informative and well thought out. However, to label it as such does undercook it slightly—this retelling is captivating and evocative' (*Magpies Magazine*, September 2018, Vol. 33, No. 4).

While on the Suffrage 125 Tauranga organising committee, Debbie was inspired to research and write the story of her suffragist ancestor and the result was *Eliza and the White Camellia: A Story of Suffrage in New Zealand* (Mauao Publishing, 2018), illustrated by Helen Casey and translated into Te Reo Māori by Tamati Waaka. Eliza Wallis (nee Hart) was a first-wave feminist who actively sought the Vote for Women. The book was released on 28 November 2018, 125 years after New Zealand women went to the polls for the first time. Chris Wright wrote, 'This story of Eliza is an introduction for young readers into the whole topic of suffrage, women's suffrage in particular... This book is itself a celebration, showing younger generations some of the struggles people, especially women, went through to win this right... Author Debbie McCauley is to be commended for her extensive research into the life and times of Eliza. With its extensive Glossary and Index, this is a reference text while also being the interesting story of a New Zealand woman activist, one of many reaching forward to the present day' (Bookrapt via Goodreads).

Debbie is currently working on her next book for children and enjoys being part of the entire creative process from conception, research, writing and editing, to organising the translation of her work and overseeing illustration, book design, printing, marketing and distribution.

Websites

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