

BEFORE THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

WAI 2700

WAI 2933

IN THE MATTER OF

the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

the Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

A claim by **Hinerangi Cooper-Puru** on behalf of the whanau, hapū and iwi of Te Taitokerau (**Wai 2933**).

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF HINERANGI COOPER-PURU

Dated this 28th day of January 2021

Annette Sykes & Co
Barristers & Solicitors
8 – Unit 1 Marguerita Street
Rotorua, 3010
Phone: 07-460-0433
Fax: 07-460-0434

Counsel Acting: Annette Sykes / Camille Houia / Tumanako Silveira

Email: asykes@annettesykes.com / camille@annettesykes.com / tumanako@annettesykes.com

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Waitangi Tribunal

28 Jan 2021

Ministry of Justice
WELLINGTON

INTRODUCTION

Toi Wahine – The Worlds of Māori Women

Ko Papatuanuku

Ko Papatuanuku.

Te whenua, te whenua.

Te Wahine tino hirahira,

Te Wahine Atua,

Te ihi, te mana, te wehi,

Ko Papatuanuku te tino whaea

o te Taiao.

Whakamana I te wahine

o te Ao Marama.

Te Ao kikokiko,

He wahine – he wahine,

Kia toa, kia toa,

Te whare tangata

Hei whakamana I te Taiao,

Hiaue-hiaue-hiaue.

He aha te taonga nui o te Ao?

He tangata – he tangata – te tangata, he wahine

Tihei Mauri ora – Tihei mauri maha.

Au! Au! Aue ha! Hi!

1. My name is Hinerangi Cooper-Puru. I am of Ngapuhi and Te Rarawa descent. My hapū are Te Wai Ariki, Ngāti Manawa and Ngāti Kaitutae. I currently live in Panguru in the Hokianga. I am 84 years old.

MANA WĀHINE

2. I was born in Panguru and attended the Convent School there. I was raised by my mother, the late Dame Whina Cooper and was often called to assist in whatever activities she was involved in. I can remember her words, “Kia oho, kia mataara, be awake, be alert”. My mother was a great believer in of the abilities of Māori women and would encourage

women to develop their full potential and beyond. She could not be pigeonholed into any typical female stereotype and provided an excellent example of 'Mana Wāhine' herself.

3. She would say that a woman is the Prime Minister of her household. She is the Minister of Health, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Children – women fulfil these roles on a daily basis at home and often don't think anything of it.

Take care of our children.

Take care of what they hear.

Take care of what they see.

Take care of what they feel.

For how the children grown will the shape of Aotearoa.

We must all be diligent gardeners.

4. This is the role of women, we are the keepers, the nurturers of man. Just like our atua whaea – Papatūānuku who provides us with shelter, sustenance and protection. It is women who are the gateway or the portal that has the ability to bring forth life into the physical realm from the spiritual dimension. Her body was made for this and prepared over the years for the demands of impending motherhood and beyond. After a tumultuous nine months of pregnancy, a women's job does not end there – in fact, it is only the beginning. A mother's job only ends when she takes her last breath. Until then she will endeavour to care for her descendants and those around her to the best of her abilities – all the while thinking of her future descendants to come.

5. I was fortunate enough to have been raised by such a strong role model as my mother. She was a great believer in education and development. Like myself, she was born and raised in Panguru. My grandfather the late Heremia Te Wake was approached by Sir Turi Carroll, who while he had no issue of his own – could see potential in a young Whina. He offered to pay her tutorage costs to attend Hato Hohepa College in

Hawkes Bay where she attended for five years. She would later send her two older Cooper children to college (Joseph attended Hato Petera in Auckland, and I would be sent to attend at Hato Hohepa in Hawkes Bay as a second-generation student).

6. Continuing in her role of developing Māori women, my mother became the first president of the Māori Woman's Welfare League (MWWL) when it was launched in 1951. Based in Auckland at the time, the MWWL would be proactive in the care and manaaki of Māori women, mothers and children. The kaupapa of the league was never to detract or takahi the mana of our men, no – it is to empower women so that they can contribute to the wellbeing of the whānau in a healthy manner. Just as a mother's job doesn't end at the birth of her child – it is only the beginning.
7. The MWWL identified early on that Māori families who had left their homes in the districts were struggling with the challenges of city life. They endeavoured to provide ongoing care and support to these families – and I would suggest that maybe if these ongoing wrap around services were made more readily available to whānau from birth, that maybe, just maybe we would not need these agencies such as Oranga Tamariki and the like – which have become ambulances at the bottom of the cliff.
8. After leaving Hato Hohepa in Napier, I finished my education in Auckland. This ensured that I would be able to assist my mother with whatever project she would entrust me to attend to. From the Māori Community Centre in downtown Auckland to Te Unga Waka in Epsom as well as attending numerous MWWL hui (and others) – we were everywhere.

NGĀ ATUA WHAEA

9. 'Me aro koe ki te hā o Hineahuone. Pay the heed to the dignity of Māori women'. This whakatauki was later chosen to commemorate Women's

Suffrage Year – celebrating the fact that New Zealand was the first country in the world to give women the right to vote. While Meri Te Tai Mangakahia was a huge driving force behind the fight (for woman to vote), it would be Kate Sheppard who is recognised publicly.

10. Hineahuone was formed in clay of Papatūānuku and brought to life when Tāne blew into her being, she sneezed and was awoken. She became the first woman and it was during her creation, she conceived a child; Hine-titama. Tāne would later take Hine-titama for his wife and together they would parent many daughters. After some time passing, Hine-titama would question Tāne – who is my father? To which he replied, ‘Put your questions to the posts of the house’. It is soon revealed that Tāne, her husband was also her father. With great shame and anger, Hine-titama chose to leave the world of light. And as she fled, she told Tane not to follow her – that she would go ahead to the dark world and prepare a place for their children in the afterlife. She would change her name to Hine Nui te Po, (Great woman of the Night / Goddess of Death).
11. These are only but a few examples of ngā atua whaea, there are many more. However, it is obvious that women are the creators and nurturers of life itself. Even western stories proclaim ‘Mother Nature’ is indeed a woman. What lessons can we learn from these stories? They are often stories of resilience, perseverance and endurance. The act of childbirth itself marks only the first step of motherhood. The lifelong journey has only just begun.
12. When a woman is pregnant, she is hapū (which second meaning is a collection of closely related families/whānau). When baby is born, the placenta or whenua/afterbirth is taken home to be buried upon their home territories, essentially staking your claim to your turangawaewae – giving you mana/strength to your whenua/land and the ability to talk for said lands. The links between woman and land are numerous.

13. Over the years, many of our traditional stories have been reconstructed, some more than others. It is through the retelling of these stories that we continue to gain lessons and further insight into our culture and the understanding of Māori at that time. These stories help to provide a blueprint for how we as Māori women are viewed today. In regards to the role of wāhine Māori pre- and post-colonisation, our traditional narratives acknowledge tales of bravery and leadership that complement their menfolk. It is these stories that inspire our wāhine to be capable to handle whatever life brings.

THE RELATIONALITY AND BALANCE OF WĀHINE AND TĀNE

14. In life, we have many opposing forces. Life/death, black/white, dark/light, male/female. These elements are not considered to be opposites but rather complementary of each other – one could not exist without the other. Mana Tangata – both sexes have their roles to fulfil. The presence of women brings noa to a situation (whakanoa, to remove tapu, or make normal). However, during menstruation women are considered very tapu, due to the tapu associated with blood. There are certain areas women are not allowed to enter during this time to avoid ‘breaking tapu’ or make these areas noa. For example, women were not permitted in the maara kai (garden), shoreline (to gather kaimoana) and other food storage areas – so not to spoil these areas. Men are considered to be tapu, and their mana needs to be maintained so not to be rendered as neutral.
15. Our traditions can be very male dominated, where hui become events where the majority of speakers or participants are men. In most tribes, women are not permitted to speak because of the battles fought previously, but its 2021 now, and it has been many years since there has been any battles. Women fulfil many roles in life – we are more than just a karanga and poi bearers for entertainment and it is time to pay heed to the dignity of women. We pay respects to the dignity of our men – but it has not been balanced. Today we have a Prime Minister

and a Governor General who are woman leaders, but when are we going to have a Māori woman in those places? Tēnei whenua - he whenua Māori.

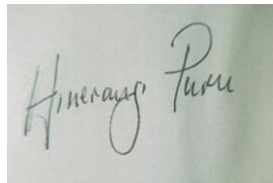
16. I recall my mother and one hui she attended. She sat and waited all day and half the night for the floor to be open for woman to speak. And in the early of hours of the morning she had spotted a carving of a wāhine tupuna. She used this carving as an opening to kōrero, which was largely supported by many in the whare.
17. It was at another hui where my mother had become so frustrated by the numerous male speakers (and the lack of female speakers) where she stood to speak, lifted her skirt and said to the speakers dominating the hui – ‘Putā mai koe i toku teke’. She had had enough! Women of that era were unafraid to show their ‘Mana Wāhine’, they were bold, challenging just like our tupuna before them. An example of this is Te kōrero o Muriwai – me whakatane ahau i ahau. Later, in order to observe tikanga and save many hours waiting, my mother would take my husband to ‘whakapurungia’ or open the floor to allow for a woman to speak.
18. It is time to whakamana/uplift our young Māori women. Traditionally, when you grew up it was at home and surrounded by kaumātua who were there to teach and guide you. Today however this is not so, and it is even more worrying that in future our young Māori women (and men) will have even less kaumātua on hand to assist in the passing of traditional knowledge. There is one marae in Auckland – Te Awataha Marae in Takapuna where they have many carvings of wāhine tupuna and allow women to stand and speak. They pay heed to the dignity, the hā of Māori women. We need others to embrace these concepts and whakamana/uplift our women. Nga mihi nunui ki a kōrua – Arnold and Rangi Wilson.

19. I wish to finish my kōrero with a lament composed by my mother.

‘Haere rā ngā manu kōrero
Whakatopu ki tua o te arai
Ka mimiti te whenua e
Pakipaki kau ana ngā tai o te uru e

Farewell oh birds who talked wisely
Soar to the far side of the veil
While the seas continue to weep on the shore’

DATED this 28th day of January 2021

A photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Hinerangi Puru". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Hinerangi Cooper-Puru