

IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL**WAI 2700
WAI 2673****UNDER**

The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

AND**IN THE MATTER OF**The Mana Wahine Inquiry (Wai
2700)**AND****IN THE MATTER OF**

a claim by Sheena Ross (Wai 2673)

**SPEAKING NOTES OF SHEENA ROSS
DATED 30 MARCH 2021**

**Te Mata Law Limited
Barristers and Solicitors**

PO Box 44331

Point Chevalier

AUCKLAND 1246

Tel: 0508-TEMATA (0508-836282)

Counsel Acting: David Stone | Azania Watene

David@tematalaw.co.nz | Azania@tematalaw.co.nz

**RECEIVED**

Waitangi Tribunal

30 Mar 2021Ministry of Justice
WELLINGTON

MAY IT PLEASE THE TRIBUNAL

Ko Sheena Ross Toku ingoa

Ko Maraeroa Marae Tupuna

Ko Hokianga Te Moana

Ko Te Ramaroa Te Maunga

Ko Ngati KoroKoro te Hapu

- 1) My name is Sheena Ross, I descend from my great great grandfather Rangatira Moetara, a signatory of Te Tiriti. The oral korero that I give today is how I have experienced trials and tribulations as a wahine of Ngati KoroKoro.
- 2) My korero today comes from stories that were shared by my elders and how that carried through in to how I was raised. Though I know this week is not yet time for my own specific evidence, some of my evidence relates to my own experiences.

What was the tapu and mana of wahine maori and how was it given effect to, protected and restored?

- 3) I was raised that our body is ours, and no one has the right to touch what belongs to me. To my mind our body is a temple, it is tapu, it is sacred.
- 4) Unfortunately, at the age of 8 I was put in a situation of having to stay with my grandmother as my mother was working. I thought at the time it was good to spend this time with my grandmother, she had her son living with her, my uncle who was of the age span of 50.
- 5) When we went to bed, this was when my Uncle would come to our room. It is so ugly to explain. As time went on, I was not none the wiser that this Uncle had done the same to my first cousins.
- 6) When it came to the school holidays my mother would say that we were to go to our grandmothers. I was adamant that I did not want to go. How was I to explain to my mother what had transpired, would she believe me? Or would she believe her brother who would imply that I am making things up.

- 7) Protection had failed me. I had to have help, but I was still worried that no one would believe me. As a result, I carried this with me till the age of 28. It all came to the open was when my husband passed away. He was 38 years old and I was 28 years old left with two children to bring who were 8 and 4 years of age. Due to all this stress I ended up in ward 10a at Auckland Hospital as I had tried to commit suicide. I had overdosed and when I came to I found myself in this room. It had bars on the window, a steel bed with bars across it and a mattress on top, that was all.
- 8) I thought to myself, where am I? Then the door opened a person took me to a room, and this man was sitting there. I was asked to take a seat, I did not open up to the person. He said that he was a psychiatrist then explained why I was in the hospital. He said my neighbour came over and found me laying in the lounge with sleeping pills and bottles of wine so he phoned 111.
- 9) The psychiatrist said to me he would work with me to try and help me. I was given depression pills. My mother found out from my neighbour that I was sent to the hospital and he told her I tried to overdose. Through out the therapy I started to get stronger.
- 10) Through the therapy they tried to say something happened to me at a young age. I denied it and said nothing happened. As the sessions carried on, again it was pressed on me that something had happened to me at a young age, then the penny dropped. I just broke down and cried, it all came flooding back to me of what my uncle had done.
- 11) I was told by the therapist the reason for wanting to commit suicide was that my husband was my security, he kept me safe, and now that he has passed away there was no safety net. As I continued my therapy it made me stronger, and someone finally believed me. In my mind and to date I have become stronger, I have learnt to make sure not to let anyone undermine my Mana. I am glad that someone was there to help to heal me, and made me stronger.
- 12) The essence of my mana wahine claim is based on this experience.

What was the tikanga in relation to the whanau, including tradition around birthing, menstruation, and other aspects of Wahine.

- 13) I was raised that when you have your menstruation that you were never to gather food from the garden or moana. We were taught to be discreet with sanitary pads, as this was not good for my brothers to see. I was not aware until I was an adult that when we gave birth that we should return the after birth to our whenua of our Hapu that the tupuna left behind. I was told the purpose of this was that our children will return home, know that there whakapapa is in the whenua.
- 14) Also my mother always said to either have a bath or even in the hot summer days to just lay in the water, as this will give you an easy birth. She taught us to lay on the floor and elevate my feet on a couch, to help stop varicose veins. We were also taught as part of tikanga never to sit on table as it was tapu and this was related to a woman who was on her period.
- 15) My gran Aunty Marama Russell the granddaughter of Rangatira Moetara, she was a tohunga for Ngati KoroKoro Hapu. She was called upon to work alongside Doctor Smith who cared for the pakeha of Rawene Hospital. Nanny Marama took care of the maori patients, helping woman with pregnancy, and other ailments, along with taking tapu off hapu members.
- 16) Nanny Marama resided in Koutu, she had 14 children. People would go to her when they struggled with their sicknesses. She would even tell the Wahine what they were having. I was told by my aunty Hine Naera that she was having trouble with her pregnancy and she was taken to my Nanny. My Nanny said that she needed to go to the moana, so off they went. My gran aunt would chant a karakia, and call to the tupuna, as a result my aunty was fine.
- 17) The stories have always been passed down. I went to the Waipoua Forest to see Grace Birch who is living in the Waipoua. I felt the wairua there was good, such a warm feeling. Grace told me it was natural as my nanny Marama's whenua was here. She then went on to say that my Nanny Marama had helped her through birth as she had difficulty with carrying. She told me that my Nanny had great powers as a tohunga and she was going to help me. She said that I needed to go to the moana with her, she then did a karakia and chant, then I also came right with my baby.

- 18) I was told by my Uncle Toni Te Rore that our Nanny Marama was challenged by another Tohunga, a male from Waikato. The Tohunga from Waikato argued his powers were stronger than my Nanny Marama. So to prove whose power was stronger they went to the creek and the male tohunga called to his tupuna to make the creek rise. Then my Nanny looked and thought alright that is good, then she called to our tupuna's and the water in the creek went over the top. The male tohunga admitted defeat. This was also told to my uncle Toni, from Nanny Marama.
- 19) Our Nanny Marama also used different rongoa to heal people in many ways, and this also helped with the breast of women after feeding the baby to stop the milk flow. Kumarahou was the medicine for the kume on the chest, Runa was to clean the blood and give energy.

How were tamariki Māori cared for within the whānau and hapū structure, and in particular, how were decisions around whāngai made?

- 20) How were we cared for in the whanau, we were bought up to do chores, we were taught how to cook, well I was. Our father would take us to the beach, but it was a long way to walk for our kaimoana, unlike today, they drive to get the kaimoana. Our father would get only enough kaimoana to feed us, and of course the elders. He would take pipi, mussels, karehu, to the elders. We were never allowed to go fishing with him at the age of menstruation. We were taught never to eat kaimoana by the sea as this will scare them away.
- 21) Decisions of whangai. I suspect this is different for different areas. In our experience my mother's relations did not want their mokopuna and as a result my mother said could she have her, so my mother bought our sister home and asked our father if we could keep the baby. My father said we will give the family two weeks to make their minds up as to whether they still wanted her. They grandparents still said no to raising their mokopuna.
- 22) This was told to me by my mother when I was 24 years of age. I knew my sister was not of us but I never questioned my parents, and to my mind she was, and still is my sister today. My father gave her the same rights as us to any lands that he held. My mum and dad adopted my sister when the grandparents turned her away. I have to

admit I felt really sorry for my little sister's real mother. How could grandparents turn away a mokopuna, and how could they take the right from the paternal mother.

What was the role and status of wahine Maori in the care and wellbeing of tamariki and whanau?

23) The role of the mother was to nurture our children from the day they were born, breast feeding, bathing and changing them. We had to teach them to walk and learn to talk. We had to make sure they were on the right path, not the wrong path, in keeping them out of trouble, and explaining the consequences if they got into trouble, which could lead to them being taken away from us.

24) [REDACTED]. I was a trustee on the school board. It was on a Monday that my daughter was told by a 17 year old girl to play up and cause an argument with me. My daughter was 13 years of age. Anyway, I said to my daughter I was not in the mood to listen to her as I needed to go to a trustees meeting. I said to her when I get home we will talk and that you do not go anywhere.

25) [REDACTED]

26) I then told her that she needed to clean her own back yard up before going around poking her nose into my business. Why I said that was I knew the lady very well and her own moko were out of control. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. The reply was No.

27) [REDACTED]. Due to my complaint to the Minister, it had rattled a few feathers and people were moved to different areas.

28) [REDACTED]
then if she wanted to return then she could. I decided to take a friend of mine that was a Maori warden and we waited at the bridge. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. I had a recorder on me to prove the evidence against this organization.

29) The next day I then phoned the organization and asked that we meet at my house and they agreed. I made sure to get some of my Hapu whanau in to witness what was going to be take place. I then pulled the recorder out and played it to the two people that came from the organization. I said listen to this recording. I said to them due to your negligence you made me go and pick my daughter up at 2am.

30) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

31) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

32) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

33) This is not how whanau would have managed a situation like this in my experience and knowledge.

DATED at Auckland this 30th day of March 2021

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S Ross', written over a horizontal line.

Sheena Ross nee Moctara

TO: The Registrar, Waitangi Tribunal; Crown Law Office; and those on the notification list for the Wai 2700.