

IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

Wai 2700

Wai 1940

IN THE MATTER OF the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

AND

IN THE MATTER OF the Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry

BY a claim by Jane Mihingarangi Ruka
Te Korako, on behalf of the
Grandmother Council of the Waitaha
Nation, including the three hapu of
Ngāti Kurawaka, Ngāti Rakaiwaka
and Ngāti Pakauwaka

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF NGARONOA KIMURA

15 August 2022

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I, **Ngaronoa Kimura**, Lactation Consultant, of Tamaki Makaurau, state that:

Introduction

1. I present this Brief of Evidence (“BoE”) in support of the claim by the Waitaha Grandmother Council.
2. I am from the Hokianga and belong to the Hapū of Te Mahurehure and Ngati Pakau. My tupuna are Mohi Tawhai (a Treaty of Waitangi Signatory), Ani Waitapu (daughter of Mohi Tawhai Tohunga, and mother of Kereama Tete Mocaraka), Kereama Mocaraka -Pine Ruka, Karorina Hiri (wife of Korakora), Mere Marotini (wife of Wiremu Ruka Te Korakora), Pine Ruka (daughter of Mere Marotini Ruka), and Pine Ruka-Kereama Tete Mocaraka.
3. I live in Tamaki Makaurau. I have three tamariki, nine grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.
4. I have worked in the South Auckland community for many years. I am a qualified International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiner (“IBLCE”) Lactation Consultant specialising in breast feeding. I have worked in the Counties Manukau District Health Board (“CMDHB”) area from East Auckland to South Auckland for 20 years supporting mothers and their babies to breastfeed. In particular, I work with Māori and Pacific mothers to breastfeed, as that is where the need is. Māori and Pacifica have the lowest breastfeeding rates in Aotearoa. I support mother and baby from birth to six months, then support them to introduce solids, while continuing to breastfeed for up to two years, or more as recommended by the World Health Organisation. My work history, and years of experience indicates that I have substantial experience when it comes to breast feeding and birth.

Traditional Narratives

5. Since colonisation many things have changed for Māori, including our culture, our reo, our health, and our history. The confiscation of our whenua has impacted our way of life today in many, many ways. Colonisation has changed the way we do things. The introduction of the Tohunga Suppression Act 1907

impacted greatly on Māori health. Western medicine was then introduced. Colonialism brought their foreign beliefs and ways into Aotearoa. Even though we tried to carry on our pre-1840 traditions, these changes have severely impacted our culture and traditions.

Atua Whāea

6. In the Creation Story, Ranginui and Papatūānuku were in a tight loving embrace where they had many children. The children needed more space to grow, so Tane pushed their parents apart. Ranginui became the Sky Father and Papatūānuku became the Earth Mother, the first Atua whaea. She was the nurturer of all her children who all became ira atua. Māori have a lot of respect for Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother who is our nurturer. We were formed from her and when we die we return to her, embracing us in her loving care. She sustains us with all our cultural needs. Papatūānuku is our Atua Whaea from where our whakapapa starts from.

Te Whare Tangata

7. Te Whare Tangata is the house of humanity, which is really precious to Māori. The conception of future generations is nurtured in the Whare Tangata until birth. Wāhine Māori are well respected for the mana they carry and for nurturing future generations. Our whakapapa starts from there, which means that once a baby is conceived, that baby is going to be the one that will carry our generations forward. This concept aligns with Papatūānuku, who is Atua Whaea, the nurturer of all generations.
8. To Māori when a child is conceived, that child is instantly a living being. We didn't believe in abortion, or anything like that, as that child is already classified as human when it is first conceived. The concept of abortion takes away the Tapu of our women.

Birth

9. Before hospitals were built, and as it was in Māori traditions pre-1840, Māori women used to give birth at home surrounded by their whanau and hapū. Māori

had a special place at home when giving birth called “kōhanga”, where mothers were looked after by their kuia, kaumatua, and whoever was available from their whanau. When the mother gave birth, she and her baby, were separated from the rest of the whanau, to give her time to get to know her baby, supported by kuia and whanau. Birthing mothers were Tapu during this stage, where they were left on their own to connect with their new-born, and to breast feed them.

10. This tradition was passed on through the generations and continued on until around the mid-20th century. For Māori, birthing traditions may change a little when passed down, however the process would always be the same. It will always be Tapu.
11. When the child is born, the Whenua (Placenta) is given back to Papatūānuku. If the child ventures out into the world, the Child will be connected to that Whenua. In our beliefs, we come from Papatūānuku, and when we die, we go back to Papatūānuku.
12. Papatūānuku for Māori is where we came from, and to understand birth you have to have a good understanding of what happened right through from the beginning of time, the history of Papatūānuku and Rangi, right to when the child is born.
13. When Tane searched for the female element, he was not able to find her, hence he gathered Papatūānuku in his hands, and he breathed life into her. By breathing Mauri into the female element, the duality of ira atua and ira tāngata in human beings was created. Papatūānuku was conceived, in the womb of Te Pō.¹ Wāhine Māori carry their tamariki under their hearts for the duration of their time in Te Pō. The body of Papatūānuku and the body of wāhine Māori are woven together in the spaces of Te Kore, Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama.² Wāhine Māori have been blessed with the same ability as Papatūānuku, which is to nourish and give life through their bodies to Māori.

¹ Naomi Simmonds “Mana Wahine Geographies: Spiritual, Spatial and Embodied Understandings of Papatūānuku” (Masters of Social Sciences, University of Waikato, 2009) at paragraph [85].

² Ibid, at paragraph [87].

14. When the placenta is returned back to Papatūānuku, it is usually a place where that child comes from. The placenta connects that child back to their place. It ties them back to their lands and roots. This affects how we identify ourselves, where Māori will say “I am from so and so, and that is where my placenta is, that is where my whenua is buried and cared for by Papatūānuku”.
15. For Māori, the gestation period is known as being hapū, which is the same term used to describe a collective of whānau who descend from a common ancestor. Ensuring the survival of the hapū for Māori emphasised the importance of carrying and bearing children. Therefore, protecting wāhine Māori was central to the survival of hapū.
16. Once the child emerges from the womb, a karanga is sent out welcoming the child from Te Pō, the world of darkness, into Te Ao Marama, the world of light.
17. The babies were usually named after their tupuna, or after a happening. The child will emulate the gifts of that tohunga they are named after.
18. These cultural practices were very Tapu to Māori, and Māori respected every part of that process. Karakia was an integral part of the birthing process. For Maori, birthing and caring for the baby was done at home. Everything was done at home. It was considered Tapu.
19. Pre-1840 women did not have problems getting pregnant, or giving birth, because Māori had clean living. They grew their own vegetable and fruit gardens, and they lived off the land and the sea. We lived off nature, lived with nature, and eventually went back to nature, hence Māori women were very healthy.

Birthing Mothers and Menstruating Women

20. Women were considered Tapu during the birthing stage and during menstruation. They were separated out to separate accommodation from the Marae, and they did not work the gardens. Nor did they undertake other chores. Women were seen as sacred and Tapu during these times.

21. A woman is respected more and treated with kindness in her birthing time, particularly when the baby is coming, where the baby is welcomed by the village, the iwi, and the hapū. The baby belonged to everyone and was nurtured by everybody, and nursed by multiple wāhine.

Breast Feeding

22. For Māori, when a baby is born, the baby would belong to everyone, hence the baby is nurtured by whoever is there at the time. Nurturing was not the sole domain of the birth mother.
23. Women naturally breast fed their babies and were not ashamed of their bodies. Māori believed that breast milk was the best, and the most nutritious for their babies. It contained all the ingredients required to build a strong healthy generation of Māori. Furthermore, Māori did not feel the need to hide their breasts, as breastfeeding was a normal practice.
24. Māori women used to connect with each other through breast feeding. Breast feeding was common in Marae. It was a normal practice. All the community helped. If the baby needed to be breast fed and the mother could not do this, somebody from the whanau or village would breast feed them.
25. The only food that the baby had was breast milk. Our women used to be proud to breast feed their babies, and they fed them a lot longer than what they are used to now. A child would start running around and would still be able to come back to get milk from whichever breast that was available in the family or the village. They did not need to drink only from their mother.
26. Wāhine Māori are the primary nurturers of their tamariki, starting from when tamariki are in the womb, and then through breast feeding. Wāhine have an essential role in passing our culture and mātauranga knowledge onto the next generation. It flows through feeding, singing (through lullabies), storytelling, and giving unconditional love. The stories that the wāhine Māori told their

tamariki were crucial in keeping kōrero tuku iho alive. This was one of the fundamental things that happened while wāhine Māori breastfed their tamariki.

27. Wāhine who have become initiators, carriers and storytellers, were the ones who embedded their young with who they were, where they were, and what tasks lay ahead for them. The stories they told cemented their culture, their land, and their duties to their whanau, iwi and hapū.
28. These wāhine stories told during the infancy stage helped to imbue tamariki with their sense of self identity.
29. Māori have always worked better as a community and most of our activities were considered group affairs. This included birthing and breast feeding. Our women were always surrounded and supported by their whanau and iwi, and they were treated as Tapu through certain periods, such as pregnancy, birthing and menstruation.

Dated: 15 August 2022

NGARONOA KIMURA