IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

Wai 3325
Wai 3282

IN THE MATTER OF the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

AND

IN THE MATTER OF the Climate Change Priority Inquiry

BY a claim by Te Ohu Wi Kingi on behalf of his whānau, hapū, iwi, whānau, whānui and whāngai

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BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF TE OHU WI KINGI

Dated 28 APRIL 2025

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RECEIVED
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29 Apr 25
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WELLINGTON

I, **Te Ohu Mokai Wi-Kingi**, Retired, of Rotorua, state that:

1. My name is Te Ohu Mokai Wi-kingi.

2. I currently reside in Rotorua.

3. I am of Te Arawa descent, my main iwi being Tuhourangi and Ngati Tarawhai. My main mārae is Hinemihi at Ngapuna in Rotorua.

4. I am currently retired.

5. I am Chairman of three small Māori freehold land Trusts (between 14 and 50 hectares) located on and around Lake Tarawera. On these Trusts, the common owners number around 500.

6. I am also the Deputy Chairman of Haumingi 1A2 Incorporation, a larger land block of 102 hectares located on the shores of Lake Rotoiti. In 2023, the Incorporation purchased a 4.6 hectare orchard that was sold over 60 years ago. The orchard was purchased because the whenua aligns with our Māori values- as kaitiaki to provide food for our owners; and also to fulfill our aspiration to grow more natives. The spectre of climate change has forced us to think about food security and food sovereignty and the ability to sustain our communities.

7. For more than 20 years, I have been leading the paepae at Hinemihi mārae. As a kaumatua, I provide cultural tikanga, te reo and whakapapa mātauranga to the iwi. My evidence today will speak to our Te Ao Māori approach to our whenua in the face of the climate change challenges we face today.

A: THE CLAIM

8. I have brought this claim to the Waitangi Tribunal as a Trustee and Kaitiaki of whenua Māori. I believe the Crown has failed to consider Te Ao Māori in its climate change policies and the ETS, specifically:

- **a.** Māori view land intergenerationally, decisions on the use of whenua are made with multigenerational considerations;
- **b.** Māori are Kaitiaki - guardians, of the land and the people. This shapes and influences our approach and aspirations; and
- **c.** Māori have actively incorporated native forests (carbon mitigating) practices for many years and wish to continue this practice into the future.

B: WHENUA MĀORI

9. Approximately 1.4 million hectares of land in Aotearoa is Māori freehold land with an average Māori land block being 53 ha and having 114 owners. Blocks with a management structure under Te Ture Whenua Act have an average size of 112.84ha and average 207 beneficial owners (Māori Land Update June 2024).

10. I am a Trustee on whenua Māori that is relatively typical. The land size is that of a small farm- ie under 50 hectares. It is generally class 4-8 land. This means its land use capability is poor- suitable for growing gorse or forestry unless further inputs are added. And it comes with large numbers of owners. These conditions pose significant challenges for Māori Trustees, the key one being the difficulty of raising finance on land that cannot be sold or is multiply owned. Thus, while many of our Māori owners may have land available for housing or food production, the challenges to utilise these lands are extremely difficult.

C: TE AO MĀORI APPROACH

Ranginui, Papatūānuku

Tāne Mahuta, Tangaroa, Hine Kirikiri, Rūaumoko, Rongo-mā-Tāne, Tūmatauenga

Te whai ao, Te Aomārama

Tuia ki te rangi

Tuia ki te whenua

Tuia ki te moana

Tuia te here tangata

E rongo te pō, e rongo te ao

11. This kōrero expresses the relationship between people and the natural world in Te AT Māori. Beginning with the primordial parents, Ranginui and Papatūānuku, and their offspring, it reflects the interconnectedness of the earth, sea, sky, and all living things. Reminding us that we are bound by whakapapa (genealogy) to the environment, sharing a mauri (lifeforce), and that we have a responsibility to restore and look after the mauri of both parents – Ranginui and Papatūānuku – the domains of the true kaitiaki (custodians) and all life within them.

12. Understanding this concept provides an insight into a Māori perspective of climate change and adaptation as we seek taurite (balance) for our actions and practices in relation to the environment. Just as our ancestors sought balance in nature, Trusts must align their practices with Māori values to build resilience and to adapt in the face of climate change.

13. I grew up with our old people learning about our tikanga, traditions and values. These set up a framework for how to live well with the taiao and to aspire to do different things. Tāonga tuku iho, pūrakau, waiata, karakia or our mātauranga have a huge role to play. If we can interpret them well, or if we re-learn how to interpret our mātauranga and those pūrakau to apply to a modern context. There are kura huna, kura whākina, tāonga and just bounds of wisdom imbued into different, stories, different applications and different interactions between atua that make simple what's happening in the taiao today.

14. In the 1950s whanau grew their own vegetables, including crops of kamokamo, potatoes and watermelon. These māra kai were worked collectively by whanau for personal consumption and in some cases sale. Tuna and trout was described as 'big and plentiful' in the lakes. Reports of multiple fruit orchards included narratives of an abundance of fruit. mārae were surrounded by fruit trees. The surrounding bush area was a place where there was an abundance of venison and wild pigs that contributed to their own food sources. Traditional healing and the collection of rongoa (medicinal plants) in the surrounding bush area, was discussed common place, The air was clean in comparison to accounts of heavy pollen days today. Water shortage was never an issue for mārae. The weather was consistent in the sense that planting and harvesting was predictable to defined seasons.

15. We have may stories or pūrākau which help explain what is happening in the environment. Quite often our elders will speak on behalf of the whenua, maunga or awa and personify what might be happening. They will recall and recite whakapapa. It is through that mātauranga we become connected and informed. Everything in Te Ao Māori is about balance or restoring balance.

16. One of the ways we could ensure the safety of our mātauranga is to keep in mind that our mātauranga is dynamic, It is meant to evolve with time. The mātauranga that our tupuna had in Hawaiki, when they arrived here, had to innovate because some plants didn't survive when they tried to grow them here. The atua behave differently. Take for example, the kōrero of Ngatoroirangi- having to call on his sisters to send fire to revive him to keep him warm. For the Central North Island iwi this pūrākau establishes the whakapapa and the interconnectedness between geothermal fields and iwi.

17. And so, growing our mātauranga, using the context of taonga tuku iho, is important to us. We can be guided. We ask ourselves what is our environment telling us now. In Te Ao Māori , the spiritual comes first, our whakapapa comes next and then we look at the physical manifestation. This is why Māori almost always have a karakia- to get the tikanga right.

18. Like all things in Te Ao Māori, our food has whakapapa. All animals, minerals, fungi and plants – both wild and cultivated – have a specific connection to each other, to the tides, stars and moon, and to atua, Māori deities.

19. For hundreds of years, long before the terms “food chain” or “eco-system” entered the English language, Māori observed their natural world closely in order to trace those connections and create a system of hunting, gathering, gardening and preserving that would ensure the sustainability of resources. With changes in the climate affecting food production globally, and the cost of living growing exponentially, mātauranga Māori still holds many lessons in climate resilience and easing food insecurity.

20. Te Puia orchard is a māra kai initiative at Tikitere, located just outside of Rotorua. As mentioned earlier, our Māori incorporation purchased the whenua two years ago for the purpose of growing kai for our owners as well as native seedlings. Our owners had just experienced food shortages following Covid-19 lockdowns, so we were looking for whenua that could sustain our communities.

21. Our orchard is looking at becoming organic. Hua Parakore is an organic growing system developed by researcher Dr. Jessica Hutchings and Te Waka Kaiora, a food sovereignty collective that supports māra kai initiatives, agriculture and horticulture that is free from pesticides, fertilisers and GMO. It is the first indigenous system for certifying organic kai using indigenous values and Māori principles.

22. Hutchings writes in her book, Te Mahi Māra Hua Parakore: "In Aotearoa it is our right as Indigenous peoples to eat from the lands and waterways of our tūpuna (ancestors). This right is ours to claim and we restore our relationship to the natural environment by producing our own food. Enhancing soil, plant and species biodiversity through food production is vital for the survival of our natural food systems.

23. Re-seeding root vegetables, like taewa and kū māra, for the following year's crop is a practise my tipuna were very familiar with. Our ancestors might have had some hungry days but they knew that no matter what, you save some for next year's crop and replenish.

24. For Te Ao Māori , kai is like whanau. There are "babies", "teenagers" and "kaumātua". Some are easy-going and eager to grow, others are stubborn and don't like to be looked at. The "kaumātua plants" – hearty natives such as rimu and tōtara – need sleep, warmth and protection.

25. Our goal reflects that of Te Puea Herangi's original vision- to utilise whenua Māori in a way that sustains and supports the people. The underlying mātauranga is to share food with the community. Our goal is to teach people that it's not about cost – this is for you and your wellbeing and wairua.

26. At the end of the day, community and kaupapa are our "why". Whether it's the māra kai movement, hunting introduced species or choosing where to dine out – connection, sustainability and sovereignty underpin the growing consciousness of local kai systems. And above all, responsibility. This is what it means to be kaitiaki.

27. Our aversion to pine plantations is that these forests are a monculture and do not support biodiversity, Our native forests on the other hand encourage a range of flora and fauna. There's a big, untapped resource that's going to be positive for the environment. The ngahere is full. Deer, wild pigs, watercress- these are kai you will find in native forests. Things may have changed because our climate and bio-diversity have changed, but we can adapt and be part of the solution.

28. Our aim is to eco-source native seedlings from the local environment to develop, grow and supply native trees, including for neighbouring whenua Māori . These natives will form a barrier of protection around the whenua as well as increase biodiversity.

D: REMEDIES

29. Small rural communities like ours, require funding and support to ensure our own planning and development. We need to be linked to a broader climate change network where ideas can be socialised, where data and information is discussed, where support can be garnered.

30. We need to source funding to support:

a. the development and implementation of a climate change action plan access to the necessary data and information that support climate planning for our community;

b. the strengthening of the socio-cultural and socio-environmental fabric of the community to stay technologically up-to-date and technologically upskilling required;

c. establish links into key climate forums that facilitate knowledge and capacity building partnership approaches into the climate space to include other iwi, indigenous people, public and private sector solutions that mitigate problems;

d. solutions to mitigate problems with access in extreme weather events caused through infrastructure failure;

e. development of whānau homes on local land for those who are displaced and those wanting to return home; and

f. specific on-the-ground support to implement community-based projects, such as:

  i. implementation of programmes that support food forests: māra kai and orchard restoration;

  ii. recording of matāuranga-ā-hapū knowledge development of riparian planting in alignment with traditional knowledge, development of mārae-based products such as mārae emergency kits, development of a sustainable mārae, with alternative energy sources and water security;

  iii. development of rongoa sustainability programme including knowledge transmission monitoring of waterways to ascertain flow levels and health;

  iv. soil health restoration; and

v. solutions for pollen contamination of the air impacting health and wellbeing capacity and capability development of younger demographic in climate change strategies and future pathways for the whanāu solutions for leeching and run-off from farms assistance to capitalise on climate options that brings opportunity leading to employment and sustainable land utilisation mārae based disaster preparedness kits including satellite phone for emergencies diversification of land– upskilling and assistance.

Dated 28 April 2025

Te Ohu Wi Kingi