

IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

WAI 3060
WAI 2143

IN THE MATTER of the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975
AND

IN THE MATTER of the Justice Kaupapa Inquiry (Wai 3060)
AND

IN THE MATTER of a claim by Karen Pointon and Steven Wilson on
behalf of Ngāti Turi (Māori Deaf) (Wai 2143)

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE MILTON REEDY

Dated: 5 June 2025

RECEIVED

Waitangi Tribunal

6 Jun 25

Ministry of Justice
WELLINGTON

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Introduction

Ko Hikurangi te maunga

Ko Waiapu te awa

Ko Te Aitanga a Mate te hapū

Ko Mangahanea te marae i te taha o tōku pāpā

Ko Hiruharama te marae i te taha o tōku māmā

Ko Horouta te waka

Ko Ngāti Porou te iwi

Ko Milton Reedy ahau

1. My name is Milton Reedy. I was born in Lower Hutt on 23 September 1960 and then grew up in Gisborne.
2. My mother is Kuini Moehau-Reedy, and my father is Percy Reedy. I have one brother and two sisters. I am the second child.
3. My mother had German measles when she was pregnant with me, and I was born Deaf. I have other Deaf aunties and uncles. My wife is Deaf, and we have an adopted Mexican daughter who is hearing.
4. I am a Youth Worker at Ko Taku Reo Deaf Education Centre.
5. I have previously given evidence to the Waitangi Tribunal in its health inquiry. My full story is set out in more detail in this document.¹

Early life

6. My parents became worried when I was unresponsive to my name, so when I was around three years old, they took me in for a checkup. The doctor suspected that I might be Deaf.
7. I started at kindergarten in Gisborne, but I could not communicate. I went to kindergarten for 2 years, and then an Educational Consultant said that the best place for me was a Deaf school.

¹ Wai 2575, H005.

8. I communicated with my whānau orally by turning my voice on. We also used gestures and pointing, but I was still learning language at that time. My sisters knew some home signs.

Kelston Deaf School 1966 – 1973

9. At age four, in 1965, I went to Kelston Deaf School ('Kelston').
10. I have given a statement to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into State Care Abuse, about my experience at Kelston. A copy of my statement is **attached and marked MR-1**.
11. My parents were very upset. It was a big move for my parents and a huge decision about what was best for me. My mum wanted to hold on to me and she couldn't let go, she was heartbroken. Its taumaha, it sits very heavy, for our whole whānau when we had very limited options.
12. I attended Kelston from 1965 to 1973. When I was 6 years old, I went to day school in the Deaf Unit at Waterview Primary School, and then the Deaf Unit at Kelston Intermediate School.
13. I would say that there were more Māori than Pākehā at Kelston when I was there.
14. Both my parents are native te reo Māori speakers. But I had to lip read and speak English. Te Reo Māori was banned.
15. We were also banned from signing at Kelston. The teachers and staff only communicated orally with us students. When they saw us signing, they would hit us on our hands, and we were told to turn our voice on and talk. A favourite phrase used by staff to describe Deaf students was "Deaf and dumb."
16. I started wearing a hearing aid when I was three or four years old. They were quite old fashioned and included a pack I had to carry around. It had shoulder straps, and the transistor would sit on the front of my chest. The hearing aid was heavy and uncomfortable. Some hearing students at the hearing school sometimes teased me and called me a robot and Dr Who which is not very nice and hurt.

17. When I moved back to Gisborne for high school, I went to a hearing school, and I wasn't connected to the Deaf community. I attended Gisborne Boys High School from ages 13 to 16.
18. There were no interpreters at this time. If I had had access interpreters, I think school would have been a lot different for me, I would have learnt so much quicker. It was very difficult to rely on the teacher lip reading as well as listening to the teacher, there were so many communication barriers, even with my hearing aid on. Sometimes the teachers would mumble their lips when speaking, which made it hard to read their lips or hear some of what they were saying with my hearings aids on.

Later Life

19. I left school at 16 with no burning interests, so I went to work at a Wattie's food factory. I refused to sit the school certificate examination because I knew I had missed a lot and so it was not worth it. I worked there for about 3 years. There were about 3 other Deaf people also working at the factory.
20. When I was about 18, I moved to Auckland, where I worked in the post office. I moved to Australia when I was 22 for work and a new life, settling in Sydney, where I stayed for 10 years. I worked in a post office there as well.
21. From there, I travelled around the world with sport. I have travelled to 44 countries. Through travelling I have learnt lots of different sign languages, and cultures which comes with the food too!
22. While I was travelling to the Deaf Olympics with the Australian team, I met my wife at the Bulgaria Deaf Olympic Games in 1993. I moved to Ireland in 1994, and we married in 1996. We stayed in Ireland for 26 years.
23. In Ireland, I got access to interpreters for the first time when I went to university. I studied building management at Dublin Institute of Technology for four years (2002 – 2006).
24. After this I got a job in building management. I moved back to Aotearoa in 2017 when my father passed away. I am happy to be back here, as whānau is important and it has been good for my heart.

25. There is racism and discrimination still here in Aotearoa. It is better, but it is still there. Often Māori Deaf people become angry and aggressive out of frustration and end up in trouble with the law.
26. I started working at Ko Taku Reo, first as a teacher aid, and now as night youth worker with the residential students. The residential students are all Māori. I have been in this role for 9 years. I work from 10pm to 8.30am, supervising kids. It is important that our rangatahi have Tāngata Turi role models.

Arrest

27. When I was around 15 or 16 years old, in 1976, I was living in Gisborne and attending Gisborne Boys High School. One night I went out with a few hearing friends to a party. Around 3am I got a ride home with three of my friends.
28. I was sitting in the back of the car and fell asleep. The car ran out of petrol. The driver and his friend tried to siphon petrol from a car at a nearby house. I was not part of this and waited in the car.
29. The owner of the car woke up and rang the police. He himself was an off-duty police officer. By the time the police arrived, my two friends had run away. My friend and I were still waiting in the car, and we were arrested.
30. During the arrest, my hearing aids fell out and I could not hear what the Pākehā policeman was saying. I was asked questions, but I could not hear anything. Eventually, he handcuffed me behind my back.
31. I asked the policeman to grab my hearing aid from the ground, so I could communicate and explain what happened. The policeman got really angry and punched my stomach multiple times instead for no reason. It was very unfair that this off-duty Pākehā police officer punched my stomach while I was handcuffed – I couldn't defend or protect myself. It was so painful.
32. They thought I was playing dumb. The detective arrived and we were taken to the station. I was questioned, this time with my hearing aids back in my ears. I explained the incident had nothing to do with us. He insisted we tell

the names of the guys who took off. We did, it was an impossible situation. The detective said that if I didn't reveal my two hearing friends' names and/or where they lived, they would lock me up until I did. It wasn't fair. I thought it was best to reveal their names so that they would take me home, rather than embarrassing my parents. I went home at 5:30am in the morning.

33. The officer who punched me was Pākehā. I felt that he targeted me because I was Māori. I was so shocked that a police officer could hurt me like that. It never occurred to me that I could make a complaint and take it further
34. There was no interpreter present during the interaction with police. I am not sure if they realised that I was Deaf. But they should have picked it up from seeing my hearing aids.
35. About four years ago, I was at a Royal Commission hui and asked the government officials present there if there was anything I could do in relation to this assault by an off-duty police officer in Gisborne back in 1976. A Detective contacted me and asked me a lot of questions. It wasn't until last year in November 2024, that Police officers and a detective came to visit me at my home. I have followed up with NZ Police several times since then to try and understand if anything can be done or if any progress has been made, but I have not heard back from them. It has been a slow and frustrating process, and I would really like to just be kept updated about if anything can be done.
36. It is also difficult for Tāngata Turi who are imprisoned. While they can access interpreters during Court proceedings, they do not have access to interpreters consistently while imprisoned. This lack of communication and connection makes Tāngata Turi isolated and can have a big impact on their mental health.
37. In the early 1980s, I was visiting a Māori Deaf friend in Tokoroa and learnt that he had been locked up in Waikeria Prison. I managed to visit him there once, for about two hours. I remember how happy and relieved he was to see me. He was finding it really difficult to engage with hearing people, as

he was the only Deaf person and so he was really isolated. Māori Deaf need this kind of support on the inside, to avoid the mental health risks that come with this kind of extreme isolation.

38. In Australia I also went as part of a group of four Deaf to visit a Deaf prisoner. They were so happy to be able to have a conversation with us, and it lifted their wairua.

Outcomes

39. I would like to see funding for Tāngata Turi to become counsellors. There is a huge need for Deaf counsellors, as a lot of our community have held onto their trauma for a very long time. Many of us struggle with our mental health and because of this end up in trouble with the police. To have a Māori Deaf counsellor and support workers would be like a balloon popping, we would become more able to manage our futures. It is important that Māori Deaf counsellors and support workers are also connected to Māori Deaf in prison. Māori Deaf provide huge comfort and connection to one another, this reduces things like mental health issues and attempted suicides.

40. I would also like to see more Tāngata Turi in Deaf relay interpreting, support work roles and in Deaf education. This would also help Tāngata Turi manage our futures and keep out of trouble. There is that instant cultural connection between Tāngata Turi that is important to address the needs of the Tāngata Turi community.

Milton Reedy