

Speaking Notes of Donna Kerridge – Wai 3300 wānanga tuaono – 3 December 2025 at Te Tii marae, Waitangi.

Mihi

Tēnā koutou katoa e huihui mai nei i raro i te maru o Te Tiriti o Waitangi. He mihi mahana ki a koutou mō tō koutou kaha ki te wānanga i ngā kaupapa nui o te wā.

Before we begin we would like to acknowledge

- Kingi Taurua
- Merehora Taurua
- Lani Apiata

Thank you for the opportunity to co-present today on behalf of Nga Toki Whakaruruanga and our Wai 3342 claim.

Ko wai au:

He uri ō Waikato iwi, ō ngā hapū o Ngāti Mahuta, Ngāti Tahinga hoki. Nō Kāwhia me Te Puaha o Waikato ahau, ko Donna Kerridge tōku ingoa.

I would like to acknowledge Annette Sykes & Co for their support and outstanding efforts supporting us in this claim.

My role here today, is as one of the WAI 3342 claimants and as one of the Kaihautū for Ngā Toki Whakarururanga (NTW). I will take my speaking notes as read by the panel. However, to reiterate:

1. Who is Ngā Toki Whakarururanga?

a. Establishment

NTW was established through a binding agreement between the Crown and the WAI 2522 claimants. In that agreement, both parties recognised NTW as an independent, Māori-led Treaty partner in trade negotiations.

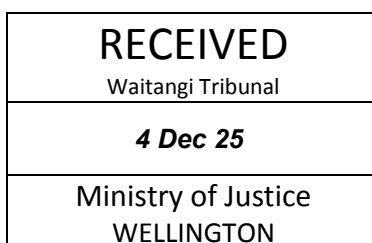
b. Purpose

Our role is to uphold the Māori rangatiratanga and the mana of taonga Māori, lands, resources, and cultural heritage in all areas of international trade and economic policy.

c. Approach

We strive to work alongside the Crown as an equal partner—advancing trade opportunities for Aotearoa New Zealand while strengthening and protecting Māori intergenerational rights and responsibilities within trade agreements.

2. Historical Context



Māori have always been successful traders and entrepreneurs. And we are in it for the long game caring for the mana and mauri of both whanau and whenua. Maori economics are clear, one is not sustainable without the other.

Historically we have proven ourselves to be some of the best strategists the world has seen, not only warfare but also in trade.

Māori have actively resisted Crown control over trade, across generations—whether in agriculture, rongoā, kai sovereignty, the care and protection of taonga species, or international commerce. We have consistently affirmed that tino rangatiratanga includes economic sovereignty.

Examples of Māori resistance to Crown control in trade go back to:

i. To the 1850s

When the Crown imposed customs barriers and sought to divert Māori trade through colonial channels, Māori resisted by establishing independent trade networks, building their own flour mills, purchasing ships, and refusing to recognise colonial customs authorities—an unequivocal assertion of economic independence.

ii. 1870s – Parihaka

Te Whiti and Tohu led peaceful resistance not only to land confiscation but also to Crown encroachment on Māori economic life. Parihaka sustained its own food production, trade, and distribution systems, directly challenging colonial authority.

iii. 1990s – WAI 262

The WAI 262 claim resisted Crown control over Māori trade relating to taonga species, genetic resources, and mātauranga Māori. Claimants argued that the Crown could not determine who commercialises taonga derived from whakapapa.

iv. 2015 – WAI 2522

WAI 2522 claim challenged the Crown's practice of entering trade agreements and establishing intellectual property and regulatory systems without Māori authority or participation—directly affecting Māori rights over taonga species, mātauranga Māori, and our own economic futures. The claim made clear that the Crown cannot negotiate away Māori rights in trade or IP without Māori consent.

v. Recent legislation

More recent legislative attempts—including the Plant Variety Rights Amendment Act, the Therapeutic Products Act, the Gene Technologies Bill, the Treaty Principles Bill, and the Regulatory Standards Act—were strongly challenged by Māori for the risk they posed by constraining Māori control and protection over the economic use of whenua, taonga species including rongoā Māori and mātauranga Māori.

Together, these frameworks attempted to:

- centralise Crown or corporate authority over land use, plant genetics, seeds, therapeutic systems, and gene technologies,
- they would weaken the standing of Te Tiriti in economic decision-making, and
- shift regulatory power away from Māori tino rangatiratanga toward state-controlled systems.

These attempts undermine Māori autonomy in determining how taonga, knowledge, and Indigenous innovators participate in domestic and global trade.

3. What's the Problem?

Māori must exercise kaitiakitanga by retaining authority over the resources, knowledge, and systems that underpin Māori economic life—for the benefit of the whole country.

a. **NZ Government has limited negotiating power internationally.**

It negotiates for crumbs; Māori receive even less. Māori intergenerational responsibilities and our rights to protect taonga and mātauranga Māori become even more vulnerable.

b. **Our trade agreements are effectively unenforceable for a small nation.**

They create a false perception of equality with our trading partners. New Zealand lack the scale to sustain trade agreements long term, based on price or should I say tariff management.

c. Trade agreements **create opportunity for large privately own monopolies to bankrupt small Governments** for non-compliance—then assume Government assets and even rights that properly belong to the citizens of small nations, including Māori.

d. **Trade succeeds where there is trust, respect, and reliability.**

This is why Māori have historically excelled in trade, and why Māori are continually showcased in modern international trade events and discussions, albeit with limited influence and decision making authority.

e. The two **most valuable global commodities are natural resources and knowledge associated with their use, care and protection.** The Government's only legitimate mechanism for protecting these for future generations is its obligation to Te Tiriti. Weak Treaty clauses result in indefensible trade agreements. Our country is not for sale.

Rangiaowhia – A Historical Warning

Before I hand over to Jane, I want to remind us of Rangiaowhia, near Te Awamutu.

1. Pre 1864 Rangiaowhia was one of the most prosperous Māori farming and trading centres in Aotearoa.

- Extensive wheat fields, orchards, market gardens and water-powered flour mills
- The community was exporting to Auckland, Sydney, Melbourne and owned their own ships and transport networks
- Māori agricultural output often exceeded that of settlers

2. In February 1864 the Colonial Government:

- Shot or burned the people of Rangiaowhia, mostly women and children,
- Destroyed crops, homes and the livelihoods of the whole community and,
- The Government went on to confiscate, 1.2 million acres of Waikato whenua.

3. Destroying Rangiaowhia achieved several Crown objectives:

1. Collapsed the Māori agricultural economy in the Waikato and removed the Māori trade advantage.
2. Shifted economic dominance to settlers, who then became principal suppliers to colonial markets.
3. Marked a turning point from Māori-led agricultural trade to settler-controlled farming on confiscated land.

The Rangiaowhia massacre remains one of the most devastating blows to Māori economic independence. It has taken Māori almost 200 years to recover. But recover we have!

And once again some people are feeling threatened and re-positioning to repeat history albeit using different mechanisms to achieve the same outcome we saw at Rangiaowhia.

The Lesson for Today

But a word of warning – controlling the Māori economy and failing to acknowledge the intergenerational rights and responsibilities of Māori agreed to by our collective ancestors in He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti would be akin to cutting off our nose to spite our face.

If we fail to leverage our Treaty of Waitangi obligations and secure robust protections for this in trade agreements, Rangiaowhia will repeat itself. Like Rangiaowhia, the citizens of Aotearoa are a peaceful people, thriving as a virtually undefended economic hub, vulnerable to not muskets, but weak economic trade protections agreed to in international treaties where;

- Larger economies with their commercial monopolies pressure us into surrendering advantage: through IP control over taonga species, genetic modification, land-use rights, or ownership of horticultural and agricultural assets and the associated knowledge economy.
- Challenges about authority and rights under such trade agreements may be met not with invasion but with punitive trade provisions. See the recent debacle between Mexico and the US around the rights (or lack thereof) of the Mexican Government to refuse the importation of GE corn into its own country earlier this year.
- Ultimately, small nations like us risk Government assets (if there are any left) being transferred to privately owned mega-corporations for “non-compliance,” eroding our economic base and our capacity to care for our people and the whenua that sustains us all.

In a nutshell:

- Weakening Indigenous protection clauses weakens the Crown’s position in trade agreements.
- It makes it easier for commercial powerhouses to seize national collective assets.
- And it undermines our collective ability to self-determine our future.

Weakened trade agreements will collapse the NZ economy, shift ownership of our trade capabilities to our trading partners, and will mark a turning point in NZ economic history where it will be our trading partners that control our futures, built once again, on confiscated land.

In my view

Aotearoa must protect natural resources (taonga Māori) and the knowledge economy (including mātauranga Māori) by strengthening Treaty-compliant frameworks within all trade agreements.

Māori are rising again as a joint economic force alongside the Crown. The recent announcement of the \$100m Kotahitanga Fund is clear evidence of this growing collective strength and the international interest in the Māori economy.

Strong, non-negotiable Treaty protections give New Zealand an opportunity to lead globally honouring both its;

- obligations under He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti, ensuring Māori rights to self-govern in trade, influence legislation, and institutionalise equity and co-governance

Speaking Notes of Donna Kerridge – Wai 3300 wānanga tuaono – 3 December 2025 at Te Tii marae, Waitangi.

- while also protecting itself and its resources.

As Kahurangi Pania Tyson-Nathan, expressed at our Nga Toki Whakarururanga meeting with the Indian Trade delegation earlier this year, trade for Māori is “not about commercialising our culture but culturalising commerce.”

Te Tiriti protection is not just for the ‘Māori’s’, it is the most effective tool our Government has available to it, against economic cannibalisation by larger global trading monopolies.

No reira tena koutou katoa.