

I TE RŌPU WHAKAMANA  
I TE TIRITI O WAITANGI

WAI 2700  
WAI 1464/1546

KEI RARO I TE MANA o te ture o te Tiriti o Waitangi 1975

I TE TAKE O te pakirehua, Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry  
(Wai 2700)

Ā

I TE TAKE O he kerēme nā Te Riwhi Whao Reti rātou ko Hau  
Hereora, ko Romana Tarau, ko Karen Herbert,  
ko Edward Cook, ko Pearl Reti mō Te Kapotai  
(Wai 1464/1546)

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HE KŌRERO TAUNAKI A RENEE KATE LANI WIKAIRE

I tēnei rā i te 12 o Pēpuere 2026

	RECEIVED Waitangi Tribunal	
	<b>12 Feb 26</b>	
	Ministry of Justice WELLINGTON	



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## **TĒNĀ, E TE RŌPŪ WHAKAMANA I TE TIRITI O WAITANGI:**

### **Introduction**

1. My name is Renee Wikaire and I whakapapa to Te Kapotai.
2. I am currently completing a Doctorate in Philosophy (“PhD”) exploring expressions of mana wāhine with our wāhine of Te Kapotai.
3. The journey of my PhD has been a really powerful experience because it has exposed me to the kōrero and mātauranga that exists in the wāhine of Te Kapotai, and because it is supervised by my Aunty Lily George, Professor Helen Barnes, and Associate Professor Angela Barnes who are all Te Kapotai wāhine. So, not only am I learning about the mana of our Te Kapotai wāhine, but I am doing so in a space that completely understands and cares about the nuances of our people.
4. My evidence shares the background to my PhD journey and why I chose to centre it on the mana of Te Kapotai wāhine; the themes of mamae that Te Kapotai wāhine have experienced since 1840; and how we can heal through decolonisation and continuity.

### **Developing my PhD topic**

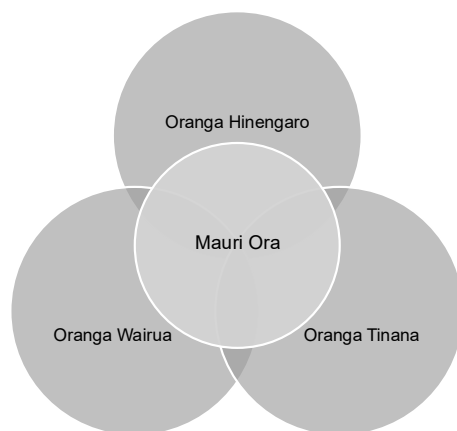
5. My PhD journey began after I attended the Tuia 250 celebration at Waikare. At the hui, I discussed with Aunty Lily the possibility of developing my PhD and focusing it on the hauora of Te Kapotai wāhine. That kōrero was really what started it. Following this, Aunty Lily organised a meeting with Waikare Women’s Committee and they expressed an interest in a kaupapa exploring mana wāhine with the women of our hapū.
6. I had always been interested in hauora, and my own experiences with health, mental health and cultural identity motivated me to study in that direction.
7. My first experience with mental health was in our home, growing up with a father who had Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (“PTSD”). He

was a Vietnam War veteran. He left Moerewa for the Army when he was 15 years old and when he returned, everything was different. We eventually all had to learn what living with PTSD looked like.

8. As an adult, I then had my own experiences with mental health because of the *mamae* I experienced from living with the harsh reality of PTSD.
9. As part of my own healing, I realised that a lot of *mamae* that I was carrying came from the disruptions of colonisation. I thought it might help me to learn and understand where I come from and who I am as a *wahine* of Te Kapotai. So, when Aunty Lily agreed to help me in my PhD journey, I jumped at the opportunity.
10. It was at the height of Covid-19 when I started working on my PhD. We decided to start with some online *hui* to learn about the *hauora* experiences of Te Kapotai *wāhine*
11. Once the lockdowns ended, we facilitated an in-person *wānanga* to provide *wāhine* with an opportunity to come together to share space and perspectives on their mental, emotional and physical *hauora*. We were lucky to run that *wānanga* through Ngā Waka *Hauora*, which was a *kaupapa* focused on the *hauora* of our *whānau* and *hapū* at Waikare. That *kaupapa* is run by the Waikare Community Development and Research Trust.
12. It became clear from our *wānanga* that to really understand what *hauora* means for our *wāhine*, we needed to first gather the *kōrero* around what it means to be a *wahine* of Te Kapotai. We needed to understand how Te Kapotai *wāhine* have expressed themselves and asserted their *mana* and *rangatiratanga* throughout our history, and how that might differ from today.
13. With the support of my supervisors and the Waikare Marae Trust, we were successful in securing a Health Research Council Māori PhD scholarship. With the interest in the *kaupapa* from the community, we also decided to apply for funding to run some community workshops for our *wāhine* and ended up running seven *wānanga*, each with

between 15 to 50 wāhine in attendance. Five were held at Waikare, one in Kirikiriroa and one in Tāmaki Makaurau.

14. Around that time, Aunty Lily had also been approached by three different Te Kapotai women who were struggling with issues of domestic violence and childhood trauma, so the wānanga around understanding and empowering ourselves as Te Kapotai wāhine felt really fitting.
15. Our wānanga usually started with whakawhanaungatanga and waiata, then we would move into kōrero around our experiences of past and present Te Kapotai wāhine. We ventured into some really amazing kōrero, covering themes such as culture, whenua, birthing, ikura, whakapapa, death and tikanga.
16. I realised through that kōrero that our Te Kapotai wāhine have incredible knowledge and purākau to share, and my PhD could be the pathway to bridge that gap. It is a way to explore what mana wāhine means to our hapū, because reasserting the mana of our wāhine is the pursuit of mauri ora. It is healing intergenerational mamae with intergenerational wisdom.
17. Mauri ora is hauora in alignment. It is the intersection between the oranga hinengaro, oranga tinana and oranga wairua. That is what connects the collective.



18. My hope is that my PhD will make people think about mana as inherited and enacted within their lives, and help them to become consciously aware of the practices and mātauranga they want to pass onto the future generations.
19. I see my PhD as a way of contributing to Te Kapotai. We spent many years living away from Waikare, but this journey has brought me back. I have started to really contribute to our marae and formed meaningful relationships with the people of our hapū.
20. That sense of understanding and belonging now lives in me, and I am able to take the tikanga and mātauranga that I am learning back to my whānau, planting those ideals and values within my own whare. That is the power of whanaungatanga and whakapapa continuity.

#### **Themes of mana wāhine and mamae**

21. I developed my thesis chapters based on the multiple hui we held for our Te Kapotai wāhine. They focus on:
  - (a) the history of Te Kapotai. This looks at who we are and where we are from, based on our purākau and historical narratives;
  - (b) mana atua ki whanaungatanga (relational enactments to the female deities/ancestors). Through the purākau of our Te Kapotai wāhine, I explore whakapapa-based relationships between our wāhine and atua as the source of mana atua;
  - (c) mana whānau ki whanaungatanga (relational enactments through the family). In this chapter, I examine mana as a form of collective authority exercised through joint obligations, intergenerational continuity and the relational labour of our wāhine. In this context, mana is enacted through culturally embedded collective practices of care that resist colonial patriarchal ideologies; and
  - (d) mana whenua ki whanaungatanga (relational enactments with land/placenta/earth mother). This chapter extends on understandings of mana whenua, beyond continuous

occupation and proprietary, to encompass the ways that our Te Kapotai wāhine exercise mana whenua through everyday practices. This is not to dismiss legal, territorial or political discourse, but rather to re-centre the lived relational practices that bind wāhine Māori to the whenua as tupuna, nurturer, teacher, mother and atua.

22. Despite the diverse experiences we heard during our wānanga, the stories that were shared echoed similar sentiments around history, whakapapa, trauma and healing, and the same themes of colonisation, decolonisation, continuity, and disruption to both land and people.
23. The ties that connect Te Kapotai wāhine to themselves have been disrupted. You can trace it back to the sacking of Waikare Pā in 1845 and the subsequent impact on and disruption to our way of life, our whanaungatanga, our financial base, and mātauranga. The positions of mana and rangatiratanga that our wāhine had previously held were systematically dismantled as colonial and patriarchal forces took hold.
24. We have heard Te Kapotai wāhine share their experiences of patriarchy where their wisdom has been belittled and their mana denigrated, and where they are still forced to carry the invisible mental load that keeps our homes functioning. They are simultaneously the māmā, worker and emotional regulator. Often they manage it all by themselves and the individualised society we live in means there is little help. So, there is an exorbitant amount of stress and then burn out — all without recognition.
25. And on top of that, our wāhine are dealing with the intersectional and systemic hardships that come with just being Māori.
26. That is where the concept of feminism falls short. Feminism sits in a completely separate and contrary worldview to te ao Māori notions of mana wāhine, mana tāne and mana tangata. It has no place with us as a concept because it does not account for the intersectional experiences of wāhine Māori, nor the ways in which power, authority

and autonomy are expressed and practiced by women in Māori society.

27. Another common theme in our wānanga was violence and safety in the home; how in forgetting about the mana of wāhine, our society has created environments for toxic masculinity to manifest. The colonial belief systems where women are seen and treated as property have become naturalised. These belief systems did not develop by mistake. They were taught and reinforced through colonial land ownership laws, marital laws and customs, voting rights, and the education system that taught our kōtiro from a young age that they were not to dream too big.
28. Warped views around masculinity (being the aggressor, fighter, warrior) and femininity (being skittish and sexual) have influenced our communities and institutions. Even within our own rūnanga, men are usually the ones picked for positions of power and influence. They call themselves 'corporate warriors', forgetting their role as nurturers. But in redefining their roles, they also redefine ours. It means that when we aim for those roles and leadership positions, we are not given the chance or taken seriously.

### **Healing through continuity**

29. I consider my PhD a very special, although complex journey.
30. What naively started out as a task to understand hauora for Te Kapotai wāhine has turned into a space for the intergenerational healing of our wāhine. The wānanga have been so important in that because they have created a safe space to explore all the highs and lows that come with being a wahine of Te Kapotai. Building on the previous work of our hapū members, these wānanga continued the wave of addressing the internal, collective mamae and whakamā that existed within us.
31. The wāhine who attended the wānanga agreed that an important part of addressing the intergenerational mamae is returning to Te Kapotai tangata, whenua, whakapapa, mātauranga and tikanga.

32. Some wāhine attending our wānanga were returning to Te Kapotai for the first time in generations, and they shared the peace that brought them. We knew we needed to encourage our whānau to return, which is why we decided to hold wānanga in Kirikiriroa, Tāmaki and then the final wānanga at Waikare Marae.
33. At the Waikare wānanga, we deliberately took time to nurture and support those who had returned for the first time, trying to ease the mamae that many of them were carrying. They shared how colonial disruptions had created a diminished sense of mana for them, to the extent that they were too whakamā to return.
34. That was also my experience. My PhD opened the door of return for me — back to Waikare, back to Te Kapotai and back to consciously understanding my mana as a wahine Māori.
35. The wānanga we held were complex but ultimately successful because we connected to wāhine on multiple levels. There was kōrero, tikanga, mirimiri, and rongoā, so we were connecting ā-tinana, ā-wairua, ā-hinengaro, and were releasing mental and physical trauma all at once. We even had sessions where we used taonga pūoro and learned how the vibrations activate different things in us, connecting us to our inner guidance and mauri.
36. It was such a release of mamae, and that came by recognising that the feelings of hurt and shame that many of us carried were a result of macro-level colonial design. And we have the power to heal ourselves.

### **The way forward**

37. We have had generations of mamae, but we have now also had generations of healing for our Te Kapotai wāhine.
38. If we continue to only tell stories of pain and hurt, it will spiral and continue to be that way. But if we sit with our wāhine and change the narrative to one of decolonisation and return, there is so much hope for future generations.

39. To my knowledge, prior to the wānanga we held, there has never been wānanga in Te Kapotai around the concept of mana wāhine.
40. We need to continue to share this kind of mātauranga with our whānau. We need spaces where we can teach our kōtiro about hapūtanga, birthing and kaikaranga duties; these bastions of mana wāhine that they can then integrate and imbed into their everyday life.
41. That is a way of transforming a PhD (which sits in an intellectual space) into a practice and expression of mana wāhine.
42. Hapū mātauranga needs to be shared in order for collective healing to take place. We need to restore what has been lost through colonisation, and that can only be done by sharing the mātauranga that makes us, us. That means reconnecting to ourselves not just as wāhine Māori, but as wāhine of Te Kapotai.
43. That is how we stop the intergenerational trauma so that our kōtiro can grow strongly in their own mana. If we can empower our kōtiro to understand their potential and who they are, that is a clear expression of mana and rangatiratanga.
44. Empowerment could come from creating spaces to consciously realise the different forms of mana that we possess as wāhine. Through the wānanga discussions, our wāhine became aware of the ways that they had intuitively exercised mana wāhine throughout their lives. Whether it was our tūpuna calling out to them through manu kaitiaki, or the ethics of care embedded in their professional practices, they are bound through whakapapa to their mana wāhinetanga.
45. However, reclaiming who we are as Te Kapotai wāhine in the current political climate is difficult. The Government shows time and time again that it does not respect us. It does not care for te Tiriti o Waitangi or our mātauranga. And we are spending so much energy defending ourselves. What resources are we supposed to use to uplift ourselves?

46. If you take te reo Māori for example, many of the language centres that teach the reo only really cater to the younger, more urban crowds. We have kuia and kaumātua who were beaten for speaking the reo, people who have been brutalised and colonised. We need to be mindful of that and provide equal access to learning for those generations. How do they reclaim their reo or their karanga otherwise?
47. The loss of reo is a huge source of mamae and whakamā for our wāhine. There is whakamā around not having the time, space or finances to invest into learning the reo. And even where people are learning, there is whakamā around not learning the dialect of home because we know that is the reo that opens up the world of Te Kapotai.
48. Hapū specific resourcing could expand the reo support we are able to provide to Te Kapotai wāhine. If we were resourced to hold immersion wānanga at Waikare with Te Kapotai speakers and teachers, it would add even more meaning to learning experiences and enhance the sense of confidence and mana of our wāhine when speaking the reo. We could minimise the feelings of shame and inadequacy that so many feel.
49. The same can be said in regards to hauora. We have been working on hapū hauora since 2018, discovering and reclaiming the ways of doing things that work for our people and their mental, emotional and physical health. We have built some really good momentum, but there are still so many challenges that we face, particularly around resourcing and access.
50. Aunty Lily and I spoke about developing a hauora strategy for Te Kapotai, which morphed into a focus on the wāhine in our hapū for my PhD. Research is an important component to understanding ourselves, and it should be encouraged and supported in a mana enhancing way.

### **Concluding remarks**

51. Reclaiming our mana as wāhine of Te Kapotai is not only about creating access for our whānau, but also about understanding our

history, embracing the experiences of our whānau, and providing space for those experiences as part of any hapū wānanga that we develop.

52. The wāhine I spoke to decided to engage because they felt safe. There was a respect for their mana and rangatiratanga which ultimately empowered them to speak freely and meaningfully. That is how our wāhine need to be engaged with; a far cry from how they have been treated historically.
53. The more that we are able to move out of the survival state and into a space of simply being as wāhine Māori, the more we can actually thrive in our mana and rangatiratanga. That is how our wāhine will grow, individually and collectively.

**I TĒNEI RĀ**, te rā 12 o Pēpuere 2026



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**Renee Kate Lani Wikaire**