

**IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL**

**WAI 2700**

**WAI 475**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

The Mana Wahine Kaupapa Inquiry  
(Wai 2700)

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

A claim by Wanda Brljevich on behalf of herself and for the benefit of her whānau and on behalf of her iwi Ngāti Huarere ki Whangapoua

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**BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF WANDA BRLJEVICH  
DATED 12 FEBRUARY 2026**

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**RECEIVED**

Waitangi Tribunal

**13 Feb 26**

Ministry of Justice  
WELLINGTON

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**MAY IT PLEASE THE TRIBUNAL**

***“Ko te take i motini atu ai ahau, ki te Tumuaiki Honore, me nga mema honore, ka mahia he ture e tenei whare kia whakamana nga wahine ki te pooti mema mo ratou ki te Paremata Māori”.***

*“The reason I move this motion before the principle member and all honourable members is so that a law may emerge from this parliament allowing women to vote and women to be accepted as members of the parliament”.*

Meri Mangakāhia

**Ko Te Arawa te waka**

**Ko Te Moengahau o Tamatekapua te maunga**

**Ko Te Tai Tamawahine te moana**

**Ko Te Pungapunga te awa**

**Ko Ngāti Huarere te iwi**

**Ko Ngāti Pare te hapu**

**Ko No Whangapoua ahau**

**Ko Wanda Brljevich toku ingoa**

**The Claimant**

1. Kia ora, my name is Wanda Brljevich, and I am a descendant of Ngāti Huarere ki Whangapoua (“NHkW”).
2. I serve as the Chair of the Ngāti Huarere ki Whangapoua Trust (“the Trust”).
3. My great-grandmother, Meri Mangakāhia, was a prominent wāhine toa and suffragist who addressed the Kotahitanga Parliament, paving the way for women in Aotearoa to vote and stand for political office.
4. My grand-aunty, Mabel Mangakāhia, was among the first Māori to become a District and Karitane nurse in New Zealand.

## Wai 475

5. Wai 475 lodged its Waitangi Treaty claim, in March 2000, to seek redress for the loss of our ancestral lands. As the claim was specific to the lands of our Great Grandfather, Hamiora Mangakahia, whom was a prominent Māori chief and the first Premier of Te Kotahitanga, the movement for an independent Māori parliament. It was lodged under the name “Te Whānau o Hamiora Mangakahia” to differentiate the claimant group from the wider Ngāti Huarere iwi, to which many in the Hauraki region may whakapapa too.<sup>1</sup>
6. The Waitangi Tribunal hearing for WAI 475 was held over four days in March of 2000 and the Tribunal determined the claim to be “well founded”.<sup>2</sup>
7. In 2009 the Crown initiated a regional “collective” Treaty settlement process in Hauraki, grouping claimants to negotiate collectively. This affected NHkW significantly.<sup>3</sup>
8. From 2010 onwards, NHkW and other legitimate Hauraki claimants formally request membership in the Hauraki Collective. The Collective repeatedly refuses membership. The Collective suggests NHkW could participate only by assimilating under one of the twelve recognised iwi.
9. The Crown, which retains final authority over Collective membership, advises excluded groups to continue engaging with the Collective.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ngāti Huarere ki Whangapoua Trust, *Complaint to the Human Rights Commission: Discrimination against Te Whānau o Hamiora Mangakahia (Ngāti Huarere ki Whangapoua) by the New Zealand Government, the Hauraki Collective and Others* (16 November 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Waitangi Tribunal *The Hauraki Report* (Wai 686, 2006) vol 3 at PTVII.2.11.

10. However, the reality is that, to this day NHkW remains excluded from the Hauraki Collective settlement framework despite the Tribunal's earlier finding that Wai 475 is well founded.
11. Wai 475 was brought for inclusion into the Wai 2700 inquiry concerning Mana wāhine.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Trust**

12. The Trust is an organisation that was duly established and mandated in 1998 by NHkW to act on the iwi's behalf in respect of all aspects pertaining to the tribe. This includes the settlement of its historical Treaty grievances with the New Zealand Government. NHkW is comprised of the descendants of Hamiora Mangakahia who is of Ngati Huarere descent. Therefore, NHkW and Te Whānau o Hamiora Mangakahia are the same group of people.<sup>6</sup>
13. The Trust lodged a formal complaint against the New Zealand Government and the Hauraki Collective, as it believes their conduct in the Waitangi Treaty Settlement process is discriminatory and unjust and will result in "irreversible prejudice" to the Whānau NHkW. A copy of the complaint is attached as **Appendix A**. This complaint was filed against the New Zealand Government and the Collective.

### **Mana wāhine**

14. Before the signing of Te Tiriti, NHkW wāhine held positions of high status and influence in every part of our cultural, political, and spiritual lives. We

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<sup>5</sup> Wai 475, #1.1(g)

<sup>6</sup> CIV-2017-404-000482 Ngati Huarere ki Whangapoua.

were recognised as leaders, knowledge holders, and protectors of whakapapa, and mātauranga Māori.

15. Through roles such as tohunga, kaikaranga, and whakahaere, wāhine Māori helped to guide and strengthen our whānau, hapū, and iwi.
16. Meri Mangakāhia was one of our significant Tipuna Rangatira that bestowed what it means to be mana wāhine. she was a inspirational woman's suffrage campaigner.
17. Meri Mangakāhia lived here in Whangapoua. Meri defended the rights of Māori women and indirectly supported the wider women's suffrage movement. She did not allow the beliefs of the day, concerning what women could or could not achieve, to stand in her way.

### **Erosion of role and mana of Wāhine Māori through colonisation**

18. After the signing of Te Tiriti, the status of wāhine Māori began to be undermined. The Crown brought in patriarchal systems of government, education, and law that pushed Western ideas and excluded wāhine Māori from decision-making. Our roles and voices began to be devalued in our own communities, directly affecting us, our whānau, hapū, and iwi.
19. My mother Raukawa Lillian Adams and her mother Tangiora Edith Whangapoua Browne (daughter of Hamiora and Meri Mangakāhia) were speakers, as was Nanny Meri and my great great grandmother Riria.
20. They were the speakers at hui for their wider whanau in the area. In particular, when the Kauri timber traders would come in, Riria was our main Kai-korero as well as an activist.
21. Over generations the Crown have brought ideologies which have undermined whanau and hapu structures. I believe there has been influence

- from the Crown and a Pakeha mindset that has emboldened tāne Māori to put wāhine Māori at a lesser standing than themselves. This is not tikanga.
22. Wāhine Māori have suffered the loss of rangatiratanga, traditional leadership roles, and cultural recognition, leading to intergenerational harm to ourselves, our whānau, our hapū, and our iwi.
23. I have experienced humiliation as tāne Māori have often silenced me in hui stating that it is not tikanga for wāhine to speak, however I believe this is only learnt behaviour from the European culture.
24. At a hui on a marae where I was the spokesperson for NHkW, I was not given opportunity to speak but instead all the tāne were asked and another iwi leader included the NHkW kōrero that should have been afforded to me to deliver.
25. As the Chair and environmental lead for NHkW, I attended an induction for Chorus contractors in an area where our rohe overlaps with other iwi.
26. The tāne of the other iwi spoke to the contractors, but when I was about to speak one of the tāne spoke over me, saying it is not Te Arawa tikanga for wāhine to speak. This was not just embarrassing but also infuriating, as it meant that NHkW were left without a voice in that space, once again.
27. In fairness, I will add that in most government sectors, I am treated more respectfully than in Māori engagements. But that does not mean the Crown have not had a hand to play in the treatment we are receiving from Māori.

### **Crown Laws and Policies**

28. The Crown have created laws and policies without wāhine Māori involvement and consequently our voice is removed and undervalued, and a new culture emerges where wāhine Māori are not treated fairly or equally.

29. One example, is the 2025 amendments to New Zealand's pay equity law are considered "bad" by unions and advocates because they make it significantly harder for women in female-dominated industries to claim fair pay.
30. The Crown has failed to ensure wāhine Māori have a voice in matters that concern them, like decisions being made over our rohe. The Crown has failed to protect our tikanga as wāhine Māori and our traditional whānau and hapu structures.
31. The ongoing impacts of colonisation continue to affect wāhine Māori deeply. The introduction of sickness and disease, alcohol and drugs to Aotearoa, impacted our people.
32. In the 1874 census there were only 13 NHkW recorded and yet they still documented us an iwi. This shows the impact linked to colonisation and how hapu suffered. As of 2026, we now have over 600 members.
33. And yet today, we are among the most disadvantaged and under-resourced groups in Aotearoa, especially when compared with Pākehā women.

#### **Wāhine Māori excluded from leadership roles & kōrero**

34. I have experienced how wāhine Māori have been pushed out of leadership roles and excluded from kōrero, where we are often ignored, or spoken over during hui, mihi, karakia, and discussions about whakapapa.
35. This behaviour not only undermines our mana, but also shuts us out of decisions that directly affect our whānau, hapū, and iwi. I have attended hui where I am the only wāhine in the room. That to me indicates that in some iwi the wāhine voice has been diminished.

36. The Crown has failed to protect the leadership roles and status of wāhine Māori, both in the past and today, through its laws, policies, and inaction.<sup>7</sup>
37. Because of this, wāhine Māori have suffered long-term harm that has affected our wellbeing, identity, and ability to pass on knowledge and leadership to future generations.
38. The Crown has undermined our mana and disrupted the traditional roles that are central to Māori society. Through the imposed patriarchal systems, this has erased wāhine-led knowledge systems, stripped us of status, and excluded us from decision-making.
39. These actions are a breach of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, causing lasting harm by silencing the voices and leadership of wāhine Māori and failing to uphold our rights and mana.
40. The Crown has failed to recognise the distinct nature of wāhine Māori and the extent of the harm and prejudice experienced by wāhine Māori through colonisation and ongoing breaches of Te Tiriti.
41. Wāhine, who were often at the forefront of protecting and advocating for whakapapa, whenua, and tikanga have had their voices silenced.

### **The Hauraki collective**

42. In 2009 the Hauraki Māori Trust Board (“HMTB”) and the Marutūāhu Working Group (“MWG”) both claimed a mandate to represent Hauraki iwi in Treaty settlement negotiations.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For example, #G14 at [101] and [115] where it is stated that the systematic operation of English Law and sexism meant that Wāhine Rangatira were downgraded to a status below their male equals and treated like chattels;

<sup>8</sup> Ngāti Huarere Complaint, above n 1, at 5

43. On the 28th October 2009 the Crown invited each Hauraki iwi represented by both the HMTB and the MWG to enter a formal process to elect negotiators to represent each of their iwi in the Hauraki Treaty settlements. This process firstly involved interim mandates and then full mandates were completed in June of 2011.<sup>9</sup>
44. The Hauraki Collective was formed to group these negotiators into one entity. The Collective membership is identical to that of the HMTB, which was established by the Crown to facilitate a comprehensive Treaty settlement for all Hauraki claimants.<sup>10</sup>
45. It has twelve members who are often referred to as “The twelve iwi of Hauraki”. It is important to note that this label is misleading, as there are more than 12 iwi in Hauraki and the HMTB do not incorporate or represent all Hauraki iwi; and the Hauraki Collective does not incorporate or represent all Hauraki Treaty claimants.<sup>11</sup>
46. The Crown will only negotiate with, fund and recognise Hauraki iwi who are members of the Collective. Although the Collective does not represent all Treaty claimants in the Hauraki region, there has been no open invitation, selection or qualification process for other claimants to gain membership of the Collective. It is essentially a “closed shop.”<sup>12</sup> This is illustrated in a letter from Te Puni Kōkiri (“TPK”) as seen in **Appendix B**.
47. This has resulted in the “cultural genocide” of those Hauraki tribes which have been excluded from the Hauraki Collective.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ngāti Huarere Complaint, above n 1, at 5

<sup>10</sup> Ngāti Huarere Complaint, above n 1, at 5

<sup>11</sup> Ngāti Huarere Complaint, above n 1, at 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ngāti Huarere Complaint, above n 1, at 6.

<sup>13</sup>

## Ngāti Huarere and the Hauraki Settlement

48. The experiences of wāhine Māori must be understood within the broader context of Crown processes. These have marginalised entire iwi, including NHkW.
49. Crown actions both historic and ongoing have excluded our people from critical decisions affecting our whenua, identity, and tino rangatiratanga.
50. I have seen how NHkW have been excluded by the Crown in the Hauraki Settlement during the negotiations period between the Crown and Hauraki iwi.
51. Under the leadership of Lucien Mangakāhia, NHkW were engaging with iwi and the Crown, however following his death it became more apparent that neither the Crown nor iwi were willing to progress further with the voice of NHkW being continually sidelined. This has resulted in the Wai 475 claim being distributed amongst six other Hauraki iwi.
52. The Crown maintains we can whakapapa to those iwi so can register with them to gain any redress. However, whakapapa (genealogy) is very clear, that we are a distinct people from those of the Collective.
53. I have tried to register with the Ngāti Hei Settlement Trust, but their Trust deed states specific tupuna that we do not whakapapa too, so we cannot gain access to any redress.
54. I believe that the Crown has neglected their duty to provide for wāhine Māori, not only in being excluded from the Settlement negotiation process, but also in that wāhine are unable to have access to any redress that would help our whānau, hapu and iwi. No other iwi or entity has been mandated by our people to settle our claim.

55. Because we are not recognised by the Crown as an iwi, our people are excluded from many funding sources, scholarships, grants, meetings, and access to knowledge.
56. Through the Hauraki Settlement, our whenua within our own rohe is being given to other iwi. There have even been attempts to rename our Maunga as part of the settlement process.
57. There is a flow-on effect from the Crown disadvantaging NHkW by labelling us as a non-Crown recognised iwi. While this is not a formal label, because we are not a Crown-recognised iwi we regularly encounter issues with certain government departments, which treat us as ineligible due to that lack of recognition.
58. As a result, on several occasions, most notably during the COVID-19 period, when we applied for funding, we were told that we had to apply through one of the iwi within the Hauraki Collective / Hauraki Māori Trust Board.
59. We were further advised by those entities that, in order to access any funding through them, we would first need to register with one of their iwi.
60. This same situation arose following Cyclone Gabrielle, which caused widespread devastation across the Coromandel Peninsula. This is a deeply humiliating situation, as it completely undermines our mana and that of my tupuna, Meri Mangakāhia, by expecting or requiring us to alter or deny our whakapapa to our whenua.
61. The Crown's Large Natural Groupings Policy has also contributed to the exclusion of NHkW in many areas, including local, regional, and central government representation.

62. We are often not invited to meetings, because NHkW is not recognised as a co-governing iwi. So not only is our voice as wāhine Māori not being heard, our voice as an iwi is being diminished.
63. We believe the Crown has allowed the Hauraki Collective, through the Hauraki Treaty Settlement process, to take advantage of tangata whenua groups by allowing the twelve iwi of the Collective to divide up legitimately separate tangata whenua interests amongst themselves.
64. The notion that tangata whenua groups, such as the Whānau NHkW could simply affiliate and take out eventually, after a settlement, what would be such groups' legitimate interests, is illusory.

### **The Collective membership**

65. The Collective membership is clearly discriminatory and inconsistent. For example: one Collective member, Ngati Porou, is a landowner on the Coromandel peninsula only because they were gifted the land in the 1850's as a stopover on their journey up the East Coast to trade in Auckland. They have a seat at the negotiation table while the Whānau NHkW with a larger claim and who is one of the original iwi of Hauraki do not.
66. Another example is; Ngati Hei, another Collective member, is the teina (junior) line to Ngati Huarere ki Whangapoua and settled on the Coromandel at the same time as Ngati Huarere; they have a seat at the negotiation table while the Whānau NHkW do not.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ngāti Huarere Complaint, above n 1.

67. The Trust is not suggesting these iwi should not have a seat at the negotiating table. We are simply raising these matters as examples of the inconsistencies that result from a discriminatory process.<sup>15</sup>

### **Impact of the minimisation of the Wāhine Māori voice on identity and traditional cultural practices**

68. I have seen how wāhine Māori voices are missing from spaces where knowledge is shared, leaving some whakapapa narratives incomplete and wāhine no longer acknowledged or celebrated as they once were.

69. Over time, the cultural knowledge, practices, and roles held by wāhine Māori have been devalued or lost, leading to an erosion of tikanga and mātauranga, and diminishing our ability to pass these traditions and understandings on to future generations.

70. The Crown has failed to protect the taonga of wāhine Māori, including mātauranga Māori and traditional institutions such as Te Whare Pora.

### **Te Whare Pora**

71. I understand Te Whare Pora to be a sacred wānanga for wāhine, where learning took place under karakia and strict spiritual conditions. Within this space, tauira were guided through deep spiritual and practical training that strengthened their memory, focus, and mental clarity.

72. Those who were initiated as weavers gained not only mastery of fine weaving but also a spiritual understanding grounded in whakapapa, karakia, and waiata.

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<sup>15</sup> Ngāti Huarere Complaint, above n 1.

73. As a weaver, I embrace my relationship with the environment, just as our tūpuna did, and from that relationship comes a system of knowledge our wāhine Māori methodologies, sciences, tikanga, and mātauranga.
74. Mum's whanau had a large papakainga in Whangapoua where they learnt to live off the land, to harvest flax and cultivated large gardens.
75. This way of learning was dedicated solely to wāhine, nurturing our intellectual growth and creating many pathways to specialised knowledge and kaitiakitanga.
76. There were various areas where they harvested the good flax and had specific areas where pumpkins flourished. Kumara were planted elsewhere. This land is now crown land and we can no longer exercise our traditional customary practices.

### **Te Reo Māori**

77. Generationally, my tūpuna wāhine were eloquent speakers. They moved with ease between Māori and Pākehā worlds, carrying knowledge and authority into hui. They were whenua owners; they spoke on behalf of their iwi, hapū and whānau, and they were the decision makers of their time.
78. But the breaking of that reo line within my whānau did not happen in isolation. A decision was made three generations ago by my great-grandfather that his mokopuna should not speak Māori because the Pākehā way was the future. This was a decision shaped by the pressures and impacts of Crown policies that actively undermined te reo Māori.
79. The climate created by the Crown's schooling system, where English was enforced, and te reo was discouraged or punished, left our people believing that the only path to survival was to step away from our own language.

80. I recall a korero from my Mum that her and her siblings would be strapped or hit over the knuckles with a wooden ruler for speaking te reo Maori.
81. Therefore, my siblings and I were not encouraged to learn te reo Maori. The stigma and memories left a lasting impression on Mum which she didn't want imposed on her children.
82. Crown pressures have fallen on our people. The kawa and tikanga carried in the NHkW reo, our dialect that once lived strongly among us, has now been lost. In Hauraki today, the reo that is taught carries heavy influence from Marutūāhu, and the distinct voice of NHkW has been diminished because the Crown did not protect our reo, our tikanga, or our ability to pass them down intact to the generations that followed.

### **Matauranga**

83. The skills and tikanga practiced by our tūpuna are rarely seen today. Practices such as not gathering kaimoana when a wāhine has her mate; avoiding metal tools when digging for pipi or tuatua; returning the first fish caught; and many others, along with the mātauranga that explained why these tikanga were upheld, have faded.
84. This loss did not occur by accident. It sits within generations of Crown actions that disrupted our relationship with our whenua, moana, and tikanga, leaving little room for the transmission of these teachings.
85. Our ancestors understood intimately what to gather, where to find it, its purpose, its preparation, and the cautions that came with it. They read the change in weather patterns, the ngahere, the moana, and the awa with expertise that had been shaped over centuries.

86. As it is with every rohe, we had our own maramataka and the matauranga that goes with it. This is now having to be reconstructed as that information has passed with our tupuna.
87. We have started on this kaupapa but the funding was cut so the resources required are no longer available which makes this mahi more difficult.
88. Crown restrictions on access to whenua and waterways, environmental degradation caused by Crown decisions, and the displacement of our people through urbanisation have all weakened the opportunities for this knowledge to be practised and passed on.
89. Crown-imposed schooling, land loss, and the prioritisation of western norms and systems of knowledge has meant that mātauranga Māori, which was once used daily, was pushed to the margins and treated as less important.
90. While some iwi have maintained these skills and bodies of knowledge, for NHkW much of this mātauranga has been lost. This loss is part of the wider Crown impact on our reo, our whenua, and our practices. There has been an erosion of identity that occurred not through choice, but through the sustained pressures of colonisation and the Crown's failure to protect the tikanga, practices, and mātauranga that once defined us.

### **Concluding remarks**

91. Statistics show that many Māori families are in a worse position than their counterparts. Some of this may be linked to a mindset that encourages Māori to see themselves as victims, however a large part of this comes down to the Crown's failure to protect the tino rangatiratanga of Māori; the Crown's failure to provide adequate support for Māori whanau; and the

Crown's failure to ensure equity between Māori and non-Māori, and between wāhine Māori and tāne Māori.

92. I believe Māori are being used as political pawns to create division, by encouraging ongoing blame toward Pākehā for current circumstances. While there is historical truth behind these grievances, I feel the Crown continues to fuel this division, maintaining a level of disharmony that allows it to manage and control both groups.

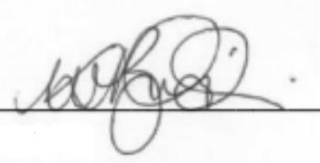
### **Recommendations**

93. In order to continue to make improvements and to recognise the mana motuhake and tino rangatiratanga of Māori wāhine, I seek the following recommendations and remedies:

- a) Acknowledge the losses outlined in my evidence.
- b) Conduct an independent review of NHkW's exclusion from the Hauraki Collective process.
- c) Allow direct negotiations with NHkW if joining the Collective would require giving up its identity or rangatiratanga.
- d) Ensure NHkW is not required to join another iwi in a way that undermines its whakapapa, identity, or claimant status.
- e) Support hapū, iwi, and wāhine Māori to exercise their tino rangatiratanga.
  - i. Recognise and strengthen wāhine Māori leadership.
  - ii. Respect and support traditional leadership roles, including tohunga, kuia, and other mana wāhine.
  - iii. Protect wāhine Māori-led cultural practices, te reo revitalisation, and mātauranga Māori.

f) Consider any other recommendations the Tribunal sees fit.

**DATED** at Auckland this 12th day of February 2026



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wanda Brljevic', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

**Wanda Brljevic**

TO: The Registrar, Waitangi Tribunal; Crown Law Office; and those on the notification list for the Wai 2700 Mana Wahine Kaupapa Inquiry