OFFICIAL

IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

Wai 2700
Wai 2931

IN THE MATTER OF	the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975
AND	
IN THE MATTER OF	the Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry
BY	Teina Boasa-Dean on behalf of her whānau, hapū, iwi, whanau whanui and whāngai

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BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF TEINA BOASA-DEAN

13 February 2026

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Waitangi Tribunal
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WELLINGTON

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I, **Teina Boasa-Dean,** Mana Rauhī Taiao, of Ruatoki, state:

1. He uri ahau nō Ngāi Tūhoe, nō te rohe o Te Urewera.

2. I provide this Brief of Evidence ("BoE") in support of my Wai 2931 Claim.

3. My evidence speaks to Issue 1 of this Inquiry's Statement of Issues[1] which states as follows:

> What are the Crown's duties and obligations under te Tiriti/the Treaty concerning the exercise of rangatiratanga and Tikanga by wāhine Māori in relation to their status, roles, responsibilities, practices, values, and beliefs?

4. My evidence is about how Crown laws, colonial systems, and Crown policy settings have undermined rangatiratanga/mana motuhake, and eroded wāhine Māori status, authority, and decision-making, including over tamariki, whānau, lands, and other taonga.

5. I discuss how rangatiratanga has been undermined over the last 180 years with the British Crown's imposition of their foreign laws over us. Crown legislation and policies have systematically eroded wahine Māori rangatiratanga, subsequently, eroding the rights and inheritance of our tamariki, whanau, whenua, reo, identity, and all other taonga associated with these matters.

6. I will explain how my whakapapa and whenua relationships locate my mana and responsibilities, and how those responsibilities relate to rangatiratanga/ mana motuhake and mana wāhine.

7. I will also provide my understanding of rangatiratanga and mana motuhake as a wāhine Māori, grounded in whakapapa, lived reality, and kaupapa Māori leadership, especially where Crown mechanisms have attempted to constrain, limit, and deliberately erase Māori rangatiratanga from Aotearoa.

[1] Wai 2700, #1.4.004.

A: LEADERSHIP

8. I have held leadership, governance, and advocacy roles that relate directly to Māori authority and kaupapa Māori futures. These include:

- **a.** board member and chair of research and development unit of Te Mātāwai, established under the Māori Language Act 2016 to guide the revitalisation of te reo Māori;
- **b.** Māori immersion educator for the last 20 years with significant involvement in the kōhanga reo movement;
- **c.** executive Manager of the Tuhoe Settlement Institute [2002-2010]. My main role was the collection of Māori oral histories to support 29 Tuhoe claims and Waitangi Tribunal hearings;
- **d.** writer/editor of the 7 oral research reports which informed the Tuhoe Deed of Settlement;
- **e.** appointment to a Ministerial Advisory Committee in 2022 to develop a framework for a Te Ao Māori response to climate change;
- **f.** member of the Waste Advisory Board, providing independent advice to the Minister for the Environment on matters relating to the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 and waste minimization; and
- **g.** principal advisor to the Māori Marine Science Association based in Tauranga Moana.

9. Through these roles, I have seen how Crown systems often position Māori authority as something to be "consulted" on, rather than recognised as an inherent and enduring form of authority.

B: RANGATIRANGA AND MANA MOTUHAKE

10. The social, cultural and political dispossession of wahine Māori rangatiratanga began with the arrival of Pakeha to Aotearoa. Mana motuhake characterises the right to live "as free men and women upon the lands of Aotearoa." This is an ancestral inheritance consisting of a range of obligations and duties. These obligations are inter-generational and are held by wahine Māori.

11. Rangatiratanga pre-existed colonial systems and the imposition of colonial government models to Aotearoa. It is connected to iwi and hapu identity, freedoms, and liberties and which also necessitated a level of distinction and separateness from the colonial systems that were designed to breach, subjugate and erode our rights as wahine Māori to define and determine our own futures and destinies.

12. Both rangatiratanga and mana motuhake are the sacred, inherent authority of whānau, hapū, and iwi to govern themselves in accordance with their own tikanga, reo, and mātauranga. Mana is not something given by the Crown. Mana is something a person is born with through whakapapa, whenua, and atua.

13. Therefore, Mana motuhake affirms Māori as tangata whenua with enduring rights, obligations, and authority. We are not a population to be "managed". Any legitimate framework which values and protects mana wahine must be grounded in recognition of rangatiratanga/mana Motuhake.Māori governance structures must stand alongside, and not be subordinate to, those of the Crown.

14. Mana motuhake is inextricably linked to my understanding and innate responsibilities to nature. In fact, a significant part of my mana emanates from the mauri of all natural entities of Ranginui and Papatuanuku. What this means is that the natural environment is a living, breathing organism, which I refer to as my tuakana or matamua (eldest sibling).

15. My rangatiratanga/manu motuhake rights provide the context for me to utilise my intellectual, emotional and spiritual wairua to exercise Tikanga and kawa following the laws of my tipuna. What gives me this inherent right to exercise this authority is the following whakapapa:

- **a.** Te Hereherenganui: feminine energy, the most important in the universe, a primordial energy. It is where the uwha originates. It is the female essence;
- **b.** Te Orokahanga;
- **c.** Te Whakaaronui;
- **d.** Te Matauranga;
- **e.** Te Wananga;

f. Te Pu me te Kore;

g. Te Korekore;

h. Te Po;

i. Te Ao;

j. Rangi and Papa;

k. Te Aitanga a Tiki (humanity).

16. This whakapapa demonstrates that in order for the cosmos and universe to come into being, there had to be a pre-existing feminine essence. From within, this essence was granted directly into the womb of Hineahuone, the first female human made from earth and soil. When she was created, the nito kokiri was granted to her. This nito kokiri was implanted into her body and located in the female ovum.

17. As a wahine Māori this nito kokiri gives me the ability to form the beginnings of a chromosomal framework for human beings. In other words, I was granted from the spiritual world the right to carry the encoded esoteric taonga of the beginning of life. So, the nito kokiri carried the chromosomal framework for the beginning of life. This is exclusively carried by wahine and contained within the nito kokiri from a biomedical point of view. This special life-giving cell is referred to as mitochondria. Thus Māori have their own words and whakapapa for this special disposition.

18. As a wahine Māori, I understand from this perspective that I carry a special and foundational ability to form and create life. It has been granted directly to me. It is from the same elements that created the universe, housed and situated in my whare tangata. I also understand that almost no other living species, both human and non-human, can create life. If it is not female, it does not carry the nito kokiri.

19. Furthermore, I have long understood as wāhine Māori, that my mana is principal. I am the creator of life. I am the nurturer of life. I give shape, form, rhythm and pulse to life. I am also the caretaker or kaitiaki of those who pass over to the spirit world.

C: CROWN ACTIONS

20. From the early twentieth century onward, Crown actions and colonial legal structures systematically undermined the authority, autonomy, and decision-making powers

of wāhine Māori. These actions displaced Tikanga-based systems in which wāhine exercised rangatiratanga over land, knowledge, reproduction, whānau wellbeing, and resource management, and replaced them with foreign legal and political regimes imposed without the free, prior, and informed consent of Māori women or their tamariki.

Tohunga Suppression Act 1908

21. The Tohunga Suppression Act 1908 represents a foundational Crown intervention that directly targeted Māori systems of leadership and knowledge transmission. Wāhine tohunga, particularly healers, midwives, spiritual leaders, and repositories of mātauranga Māori, were delegitimised and criminalised under the guise of public health and "civilisation." This Act disrupted the inter-generational transfer of knowledge held by wāhine, including birthing practices, rongoā, spiritual protection, and child-rearing. By suppressing tohunga, the Crown dismantled Māori women's authority within their own communities and replaced Tikanga-based leadership with state-sanctioned, male-dominated, Western expertise.

State Control of Birthing and Reproductive Autonomy

22. Colonial health and birthing regimes further eroded wāhine Māori autonomy by removing childbirth from whānau and hapū control and placing it under Crown and medical authority. Traditional Māori birthing practices, where wāhine were supported by other wāhine, exercised authority over their bodies, and maintained spiritual and cultural connections to whenua, were replaced by hospital-based systems that excluded Tikanga and marginalised Māori midwives. These changes were imposed without informed consent and resulted in wāhine Māori losing decision-making power over reproduction, childbirth, and early child-rearing. This constituted not only a health intervention, but a profound political act that severed wāhine from their roles as life-givers, knowledge holders, and leaders within whānau and hapū.

23. I have lived experience as a Maori birthing practitioner, helping expecting mama navigate the imposition of foreign concepts- concepts which violently oppose what is traditional birthing and natural. These concepts were imposed without informed

consent and resulted in wāhine Māori losing decision-making power over reproduction, childbirth, and early child-rearing. This constituted not only a health intervention, but a profound political act that severed wāhine from their roles as life-givers, knowledge holders, and leaders within whānau and hapū.

Conservation Regimes and the Dispossession of Mana over Kai and Moana

24. Crown conservation legislation, including the Conservation Act 1987 and its predecessors, including related fisheries and wildlife regimes, further constrained wāhine Māori leadership by restricting customary relationships with land, sea, and resources. These laws reframed Māori as "users" of Crown-owned resources, rather than rangatira with inherited responsibilities of kaitiakitanga. Wāhine Māori, who traditionally held key roles in food gathering, preparation, distribution, and ceremonial use, were stripped of their authority to harvest kai from their own whenua and moana, including taonga species such as whales. This not only undermined economic and cultural wellbeing, but eroded wāhine Māori capacity to exercise leadership in sustaining whānau and transmitting ecological knowledge to tamariki.

25. For several decades, I have worked as a Kaimahi Maara advocating for maintaining the integrity of kai and the right to nurture food that is poison and toxic free. I have fought for the use of the Maramataka Māori in the growing of food. The Maramataka has a congruent alignment, is more natural, and an environmentally and spiritually connected form of teaching and learning. For decades, I have fought for organic farms and systems, including against the extraction of our rocks and resources from our awa and lands.

Political Marginalisation and the Exclusion of Wāhine Voices

26. Across these regimes, the Crown imposed patriarchal governance structures that privileged male leadership models and excluded wāhine Māori from decision-making processes. Colonial law failed to recognise Māori women as political actors in their own right, instead subsuming them under Western notions of citizenship, property ownership, and governance. Decisions affecting wāhine and tamariki were made by the state without Māori women's participation, consent, or recognition of Tikanga, resulting in long-term social, cultural, and economic harm.

Cumulative Impact on Wāhine Māori and Tamariki

27. Taken together, these Crown actions represent a sustained pattern of control over Māori women's bodies, knowledge, labour, and authority. By dismantling Tikanga-based systems and imposing foreign legal regimes, the Crown directly interfered with wāhine Māori ability to lead, to make decisions for their whānau and hapū, and to protect the wellbeing of their tamariki. The effects are inter-generational, contributing to the marginalisation of wāhine Māori in leadership, governance, and resource management roles today.

28. As historians, educators and scholars, our intellectual authority was eroded systematically to stop us from teaching our children that knowledge. In my view, Crown actions and colonial structures have directly affected wāhine Māori ability to lead and make decisions, including through the imposition of foreign legal and political regimes over Māori women and their tamariki without informed consent.

D: CROWN PREJUDICE

29. Crown laws, colonial systems, and Crown policy settings have undermined rangatiratanga/ mana motuhake, and eroded wāhine Māori status, authority, and decision-making by:

- **a.** failing to recognise and actively protect Māori women's authority over taonga;
- **b.** failing to recognise and give effect to Māori women's status, mana, and tino rangatiratanga over their taonga (including tamariki, peoples, lands and taonga);
- **c.** failing to actively protect Māori women, their tamariki, and their lands;
- **d.** imposing a regime of "care" for children resulting in severe trauma to tamariki Māori and their whānau, and over-representation of tamariki Māori forcibly removed and held by the state.

Political and Social Structures

30. The Crown continues to cause prejudice to wāhine by destroying the political and social structures that housed and protected the standing and status of wāhine Māori

as critical leaders, thinkers, strategists, and decision-makers of their whānau and hapū. This includes the subjugation of wāhine Māori under a foreign regime harmful to their status and relegating them to a status lower than all other groups in society.

31. The Crown's imposition of foreign structures over wāhine Māori and their tamariki, without informed consent, has shaped social norms and institutional settings that still affect wāhine Māori status and authority today.

32. This wider context is relevant because contemporary issues cannot be viewed in a vacuum. The historical context is vitally important.

Mandate Process

33. Mechanisms such as mandated consultation processes and funding arrangements have sought to contain, limit, or manage rangatiratanga/ mana motuhake. These mechanisms are inconsistent with the nature of rangatiratanga/ mana motuhake. It cannot be subject to consultation or conditional approval. It is not negotiable as it is a lived, inherited, continuous authority and responsibility.

34. Mana motuhake needs to be recognised as a constitutional and legal right and obligation, not treated as a policy preference subject to political discretion.

Exclusion Of Wāhine Māori

35. The exclusion of wāhine Māori from key decision-making spaces include:

- **a.** wāhine Māori participating in Treaty settlement processes and decisions about whenua, culture, and resources;
- **b.** wāhine Māori participating in and developing policies affecting Māori communities;
- **c.** wāhine Māori within professional spaces through Crown policy settings that restrict their voices and views.

36. Prejudice occurs where:

- **a.** Māori authority is treated as "advice only";
- **b.** Tikanga-based solutions are constrained by Crown criteria; and
- **c.** wāhine Māori perspectives are sidelined or re-framed by institutional norms.

37. In my experience, the Crown's policy and institutional settings continue to create barriers to wāhine Māori leadership and influence, including through contracting, compliance, funding, and "consultation" models that do not reflect rangatiratanga/ mana motuhake. The prejudice suffered is significant, irreversible, and ongoing.

E: RECOMMENDATIONS SOUGHT

38. I support the Tribunal making findings that:

- **a.** since time immemorial, Māori women have collectively exercised mana and tino rangatiratanga in accordance with Tikanga over their tamariki, peoples, lands and taonga;
- **b.** the Crown has failed to recognise and give effect to, and failed to actively protect, Māori women's mana and tino rangatiratanga over their taonga; and
- **c.** Crown mechanisms (including consultation and funding arrangements) have wrongly constrained rangatiratanga/mana motuhake, which must be recognised as constitutional and legal in nature, not discretionary.

39. I recommend solutions at a "bigger picture" level, including:

- **a.** governance frameworks that recognise rangatiratanga/mana motuhake as non-subordinate authority alongside the Crown;
- **b.** decision-making structures and resourcing that embed wāhine Māori authority over matters affecting wāhine and tamariki (rather than treating it as optional consultation); and
- **c.** accountability mechanisms that prevent Crown agencies from imposing regimes over wāhine Māori and tamariki without informed consent and constraining wāhine Māori authority and decision-making over their taonga.

40. The patterns described above, the failure to recognise and protect wāhine authority, the displacement of Tikanga structures, and the "management" of rangatiratanga/ mana motuhake through consultation and funding, are matters the Tribunal should recognise and address through findings and recommendations.

Dated: 13 February 2026

Teina Boasa-Dean