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IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

WAI 2700
WAI 2872

IN THE MATTER OF	**The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975**
AND	
IN THE MATTER OF	the Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry
AND	
IN THE MATTER OF	a claim by **Dr Leonie Pihama, Angeline Greensill, Mereana Pitman, Hilda Halkyard-Harawira** and **Te Ringahuia Hata** (Wai 2872)

SUMMARY OF THE OPENING SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF WAI 2782

Dated this 10th day of March 2026

RECEIVED
Waitangi Tribunal
10 Mar 26
Ministry of Justice
WELLINGTON

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MAY IT PLEASE THE TRIBUNAL

1. These opening submissions are filed on behalf of four witnesses supporting the Wai 2872 claim. The claim affirms the mana and tino rangatiratanga of wāhine Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni. The claim asserts that wāhine Māori, historically recognised as rangatira and kaitiaki of whakapapa, whenua, and tikanga, have experienced systematic marginalisation through Crown policies and institutions since 1840. Colonial legal systems, including land tenure changes, governance structures, and assimilationist policies, diminished their authority and excluded them from political decision-making, land ownership, and leadership roles. These patterns continue today through structural barriers within Crown governance, appointment processes, and international policy engagement.

2. The Tribunal will hear evidence from four witnesses whose perspectives collectively address the Crown's duties under Te Tiriti in relation to wāhine Māori participation in governance and decision-making. Together, the evidence establishes that the Crown's exclusive control over international treaty-making, governance appointments, and policy development has systematically displaced wāhine Māori from roles their tūpuna historically held, including diplomatic and leadership positions. Appointment systems privilege Western governance credentials and informal networks while undervaluing tikanga-based expertise. Crown reliance on a limited group of Māori interlocutors further marginalises mana wāhine perspectives.

3. The resulting prejudice includes the loss of tino rangatiratanga over taonga such as food, seed, and soil systems; reduced diversity and effectiveness in governance of Māori assets; diminished economic opportunities; and the ongoing undermining of tikanga and Māori social structures.

4. Evidence also shows that wāhine Māori-led organisations, including those working in food sovereignty and indigenous environmental governance, are developing alternative constitutional and economic frameworks outside Crown structures. However, Crown policies, including free trade agreements and domestic legislation affecting biotechnology and agriculture, risk constraining these initiatives.

5. The submissions seek systemic reform to give effect to Te Tiriti obligations. Key reforms sought include:

   a. Governance reform: ensuring genuine wāhine Māori representation in Crown decision-making bodies and reforming appointment processes to recognise tikanga-based leadership.

   b. Trade and foreign policy reform: recognising wāhine Māori as constitutional actors and treaty-makers under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni, and establishing tikanga-based engagement in international negotiations.

   c. Protection of Māori food systems: safeguarding seed, soil, and food sovereignty, including Hua Parakore systems, from adverse impacts of trade agreements and legislation.

   d. Accountability measures: improving data collection, monitoring, and mandate obligations relating to wāhine Māori participation.

   e. Leadership development: supporting pathways for wāhine Māori in governance, trade, and foreign affairs.

6. The evidence demonstrates that the marginalisation of wāhine Māori is structural and ongoing, and the Tribunal is asked to recommend reforms that recognise wāhine Māori as constitutional actors and treaty partners, rather than merely participants in Crown processes.

DATED at Rotorua this 10th day of March 2026

Annette Sykes	Kalei Delamere-Ririnui	Rangipurei Manley

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