

**IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL
KEI MUA I TE ROOPU WHAKAMANA I TE TIRITI O WAITANGI**

**WAI 745/1308
WAI 2700**

IN THE MATTER the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

AND

IN THE MATTER OF The Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry

AND

IN THE MATTER OF A claim by **Luana Pirihi** and **Paki Pirihi** (deceased) on behalf of Patuharakeke (Wai 745) and a claim filed by **Ngawaka Pirihi**, **Paraire Pirihi** (deceased), **Harry Midwood**, **Patricia Heperi**, **Crete Milner** and **Terence Pirihi** on behalf of the owners of Pukekauri 1B1, 1B2, 1B3, 1B4 and 1B5, and Takahiwai 4C, 4D1, 4E, 7A, 7B2 and 7C (Wai 1308)

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF LISA MINHINNICK

Dated this 10th day of April 2026

RECEIVED

Waitangi Tribunal

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WELLINGTON

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TĒNĀ E TE TARAIPUNARA

Introduction

1. My name is Lisa Minhinnick. I am of Patuharakeke, Ngāti Hine and Ngāpuhi decent.
2. I hold a Bachelor of Teaching, a Diploma in Te Reo Māori, and credentials in business and adult education.
3. I am an Executive Director at Te Kopu / Mahi Pai, a Māori educational platform. I am also the creator of Te Aka Kūmara, a tamariki-centred kaupapa designed to support future Māori wellbeing through financial literacy, identity strengthening, and intergenerational empowerment. I have widely delivered Kaupapa Māori professional development to iwi, schools, kura, kōhanga reo, and early childhood education centres.
4. In addition, I have presented at the World Indigenous Education Forum and received the Prime Minister's Award for Service to Whānau and Tamariki during COVID-19. Finally, I am a mother of six and was a caregiver to 13 more tamariki.
5. My evidence is filed in support of the Wai 745/Wai 1308 claim in the Mana Wāhine Inquiry (Wai 2700). My evidence details my experience as a wahine Māori in our contemporary society, in particular my experience in leadership as a businesswoman and as a mother.

The Value of Wāhine and its Misinterpretation in Western Society

6. The importance of wāhine is well understood in te Ao Māori. Wāhine are the first to call manuhiri onto the marae and pōhiri them. Wāhine carry out two integral jobs before people even enter the wharenuī. Without wāhine, this would not be possible.
7. We do this as we are noa. This is a foundational concept of te Ao Māori – the balancing of tapu and noa.
8. As wāhine, we are the mechanism which enables people to enter a state of noa, allowing them to leave a state of tapu. We do this through karakia, waiata, preparing and eating kai. When tāne go to the spiritual realm of whaikorero and mihi, such as the realm of Tūmatauenga at the entrance

of the wharenuī, they enter a state of tapu. As wāhine, we ensure that our people are able to safely come back to noa.

9. Society's recognition of the essential value of wāhine has been lost with the introduction of western Pākehā ideologies with colonisation. Our value has been misinterpreted, resulting in our treatment to have changed. We are now treated as Pākehā women always have been.
10. We have come a long way, but the roots of colonial systems are in the mistreatment of women. Whenua was passed down to the eldest son. Women carried their father's name, and then their husband's name. The lack of autonomy in these processes, which are just two examples of the devaluing of women, shows how women were merely chattels in colonial ideologies.
11. Our education system taught our grandmothers to sew and to cook. Their role was relegated to that of sustaining men and their children.
12. Women were perceived as being less important or significant than men. This is the foundation for our society today. I believe that these attitudes contribute to wāhine struggles in attaining leadership positions in the first place, and the barriers they face in carrying out these roles in the face of misogynistic attitudes, even in Māori communities.
13. My experience has been that my roles as a businesswoman and as a mother have often been in conflict. I believe both of these roles require immense rangatiratanga, however our society does not allow wāhine to exercise these different manifestations of rangatiratanga as smoothly as we should.

Rangatiratanga: Haputanga & Motherhood

14. Motherhood comes with it a need to exercise rangatiratanga. Over your children, over the decisions you make for your children, and when others engage with your children. They are a taonga, and part of our rights as Māori is to make decisions about our taonga as we wish – this is rangatiratanga.
15. However, when I was raising my tamariki, I felt like this part of Māoritanga, raising my children with mana and to be kaha in te Ao Māori, did not align

with the expectations that society had of me as a mother. I felt as if I was reduced to keeping my children quiet and obedient.

16. I felt conflicted in these emotions. Becoming a māmā, being hapū, and then birthing my tamariki, has inherent mana. It has been a privilege to bring my children into the world through te whare tangata, and raising our next generations is tapu in itself. However, in society I felt like being a mother was not valued. I felt minimised.
17. I now know that the box society placed on me as a young mother did not foster my confidence. This box was constricting, and I can see with hindsight that societal attitudes did not want me to exercise rangatiratanga in respect of my tamariki. Whilst it was difficult at the time, I'm glad that I did.
18. Regardless of a woman's whakapapa (Māori or otherwise), being a mother requires endurance. It entails caring for others whilst continuing to show up for the other roles you have. To run the household, to cook and provide for your whānau, to go to mahi and make money to support your whānau. I don't think many men experience this kind of day-in and day-out endurance, or the burden that us mothers carry and which is conditioned into us.
19. Today, it is often the case that the contemporary mother is the breadwinner. This means that the responsibility on women is even higher.
20. I have seen that the consequences of these responsibilities on women when we don't speak about the weight that we are carrying. Particularly for wāhine who are not confident in their ability to exercise their rangatiratanga. It often arises in mental health issues - I have seen this in my wider community and for some in my own whānau.
21. It is these wāhine that need the most support to care for themselves and their tamariki. I believe a cause of the diminishment of mothers and their importance in our society is due to these deep-rooted ideals about the value of women.

Rangatiratanga: Business Attitudes & Private Sector Treatment of Wāhine

22. My experience as a businesswoman is connected to my experience as a mother as I always held these two roles at the same time and I believe that my success as a businesswoman was impacted due to being a māmā. At times, this impact was for the better, but in some spaces, it limited me.
23. When I became a mother, I felt like I lost my professional momentum. I noticed that the working spaces I previously occupied were no longer accommodating for me as a working mother. My responsibilities as a mother, part of which included nursing my pepi, were seen as overtaking my ability to contribute to my work. I felt like I was less important by the way I was treated in my workplaces and by the rest of society.
24. I felt like my capacity to participate in society as a working professional was not considered equal to my role as a mother. My ability to participate in political spaces or decision-making was limited.
25. Once my tamariki had grown older I was able to give more attention to my professional role. It was no coincidence that once I was less focused on parenting young children, I was given more credibility and considered more valuable. I believe this is because being a mother is entirely undervalued in our society. But this is not to say that I was valued in my entirety – I was still a woman. This has barriers no matter who you are.
26. I believe that being a woman and being Māori means I am faced with additional barriers to other groups in society. These barriers require myself and other wāhine to work double as hard to get just as far as others. My ability to lead in professional spaces has been inhibited by society's preconceived ideas of the value that a woman and a Māori can bring to the table.
27. I am now a director on various Boards, including the Waipu Cove Reserve Board and the Northland Rugby League Board. I notice that in environments like these, which are largely occupied by Pākehā men, that ensuring my voice, which is representative of the voice of wāhine, is heard can be difficult.
28. A challenge I had in formulating this evidence was articulating specific events or major incidents which can demonstrate why I have felt as if I

was undervalued or minimised as a working mother, and then later as just a businesswoman. I believe that this is because these things occur through passive measures. Subtle arrogance or condescension, a demeaning tone of voice, or simply not being provided with the same recognition or opportunities as others. Through these small measures, I am reminded that the place of a wāhine in our society is lesser. The aim behind these actions is to undermine me and make me feel lesser.

29. I do not believe that these measures are done due to explicit hate, racism or sexism. As I outlined at the start of my evidence, our society has been founded on oppressive ideologies. I believe that those that show these attitudes do so because of unconscious biases they hold towards women and Māori. It is my unfortunate experience to exist the intersection of both of these groups.
30. Now that I know who I am, and I am confident in exercising my rangatiratanga, I know not to be rocked by this type of behaviour. This is not the experience for all wāhine however.

Kaha in being Māori and being a woman: Mana Wāhine

31. More recently I have felt more confident in myself as a wāhine Māori and exercising my rangatiratanga, being proud in my Māoritanga, and standing up for myself. I am proud to be Māori and view this as a strength.
32. Returning to my whenua in Ruakaka has been an essential part of my journey. I feel strong knowing I live and stand on my whenua, where my own tupuna lived and stood. I feel proud to know that my tamariki can come back to their whenua at my whare and feel this sense of belonging as well. This confidence in myself makes me feel better equipped to exercise my rangatiratanga in all facets of my life.
33. I have outlined above that I have struggled in exercising my rangatiratanga in working spaces, particular as a director in Pākehā dominated boards. However, these roles have also been part of my reclamation of my kaha and mana as a wāhine.

34. With my return, I took up the position on the Waipu Cove Reserve Board which has enabled me to exercise my belonging, identity and presence in a ture Pākehā environment.
35. I have been surrounded by mana wāhine, particularly in my own mother and my mother-in-law. These are wāhine who are shamelessly themselves, and I have been privileged to learn from them. I have learnt to stand in my own shoes, strong in knowing I have mana as a wāhine.
36. This strength has also come from knowledge. I have developed my knowledge in te ture Pākehā and te Ao Māori, and have the confidence to enter these spaces which deal with issues overlapping both.

Our Next Generations

37. My background is in education. This is where I have focused my attention in my professional life, so have conducted thorough assessments of the western education model. In particular, I have looked at how our education system helps or disadvantages Māori.
38. Our current system categorises children based on age and stage; there are boundaries around what you can learn and when. I do not believe that this method of learning and educating is helpful for our tamariki, and in particular, for ngā kōtiro when they already have societal barriers ahead of them.
39. To ensure the success of our tamariki, I envisage an education model which is strength based. This is the model that we used customarily, and we know that this was successful for our tupuna. Tamariki would be taught to hone the particular skills which they excel at and become experts in these fields.
40. I believe that we can plan an education model which teaches our young girls to be strong wāhine when they are older. The tools to walk onto marae and hold their own through te reo, waiata, and knowledge of te Ao Māori, as well as walk into a boardroom and be confident to use her voice, especially in Pākehā settings. We need to weaponise our girls with their reo.

41. We need to ensure that our mokopuna are not boxed in to the expectations that society had of us wāhine when we grew up. They should not have to apologise for being Māori and for being a wahine. If we give our girls the tools to have confidence and kaha in being wāhine Māori, we can be certain that men are unable to minimise or undervalue them as they move into the world. Our strength comes from within, from what our tupuna gave us.
42. What I would love to see is our wāhine be respected for bearing children, but being able to maintain themselves as a professional without sacrifice. We need to ensure that we can exercise our rangatiratanga in both roles. It is from this that we will maintain our wairua and show our mokopuna that they can do the same.

DATED at Whangārei this 10th day of April 2026



LISA MINHINNICK