BEFORE THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

WAI 3575
WAI 1212
WAI 1194

IN THE MATTER OF the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

AND

IN THE MATTER OF Te Tinihanga o Ngā Mātāpono o te Tiriti – the Treaty Principles Reform Urgent Inquiry **(WAI 3565)**

AND

IN THE MATTER OF he kerēme nā **Colleen Skerrett-White**, **Timitepo Hohepa** me **Te Ariki Derek Morehu** mō **Ngāti Te Rangiunuora** me **Ngāti Pikiao (WAI 1212** and **WAI 1194)**.

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF COLLEEN SKERRETT-WHITE
I tēnei rā, te 18 o Mei 2026

RECEIVED
Waitangi Tribunal
18 May 26
Ministry of Justice
WELLINGTON

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KIA WHAKĀE MAI TE RŌPŪ WHAKAMANA I TE TIRITI O WAITANGI:

1. Ko **Colleen Skerrett-White** tōku ingoa. I am a named claimant in the Wai 1194 and Wai 1212 claims, which I have brought before this Tribunal on behalf of my whānau, hapū, iwi, whānau whānui, and whāngai.

2. In bringing this claim, I represent Ngāti Te Rangiunuora and other hapū of Ngāti Pikiao.

3. I am a descendant of Te Arawa, Takitimu, Mataatua me Tainui Waka. I am 74 years old. I currently have 5 children, 23 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. I reside in Rotomā on the ancestral land of my tūpuna at Taumanu. I have a BA in Māori Development, and I have spent the past 42 years working with my iwi and hapū on projects involving land protection and development.

4. I was a claimant acting for and on behalf of the descendants of the tūpuna Te Rangiunuora I & II under the mantle of Ngāti Te Rangiunuora in the Wai 1194 claim before the Waitangi Tribunal which formed part of the Central North Island Inquiry, and also on behalf of Ngāti Te Rangiunuora in our Wai 1310 claim regarding the Te Arawa mandate and the Ngā Uri o Te Tokotoru o Manawakotokoto Lands & Resources claim (Wai 1212).

5. I was also a foundation member of Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Pikiao and the author of our first Ngāti Pikiao Iwi Management Plan in 1993, and several other Hapū Development Plans i.e. Ngāti Rongomai, Ngāi Tamarangi, Ngāti Whakaue ki Maketu and Te Arawa Fisheries.

6. I am a trustee of Paengaroa South 5 (Chairperson), Ruahine Kuharua Incorporation, Te Punawhakareia Marae, Te Kotahitanga o Tūwharetoa (alternate Delegate) and Te WAI 21(a) Settlement Trust Kawerau. I am also an active member of Ngāti Pikiao Environmental Society (NPES).

7. I was and still am the writer/researcher of our Iwi/Hapū Development Plan and the current Waitangi Tribunal claims. I therefore carry a mandate to speak for my fellow kuia and koroua and other hapū members of Ngāti Te Rangiunuora,

Ngā Uri o Te Tokotoru o Manawakotokoto, Ngāti Te Takinga, Ngāti Hinekura, Ngāti Makino, and Ngāti Hinerangi.

8. I have also been actively involved in contemporary litigation concerning Māori rights and Crown obligations. I participated in the urgent Waitangi Tribunal proceedings relating to the proposed repeal and amendment of section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989,[1] which concerned the Crown's obligations to Māori children, whānau, hapū, and iwi within the care and protection system. That involvement ultimately extended into proceedings before the general courts concerning the Crown's attempts to resist the summoning of the Minister for Oranga Tamariki to give evidence before the Tribunal.[2] I was also involved in proceedings concerning the proposed abolition of Māori wards, which sought to challenge legislative changes that would undermine Māori representation and participation in local government decision-making.[3] Through both matters, I have observed firsthand the ongoing tension between Crown policy decisions and the constitutional rights and interests guaranteed to Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Rohe of Ngāti Pikiao

9. The rohe of our iwi includes the lakes Rotoiti, Rotoehu, Rotomā and Ōkataina. It extends northwards to Maketū and Matatā on the coast, eastwards to near Kawerau, and southwards to the northern shores of Lake Tarawera.

10. In my lifetime, I have never considered myself to be a Kiwi per se, I am Maori. I grew up just after WWII on Air Force bases when everyone looked forward to Peace and plenty. I was also always able to travel "home" to be with my tūpuna – some of whom were born in the late 1800's, couldn't speak English but doted on all of us with much love, kai and laughter. My own grandmother, Raiha Serjeant, hand feed the last tohunga tapu of our hapū while he taught her of the living wonders of our world, the whakapapa, tikanga, kaitiakitanga, manaakitangata for our people, lands and resources. She went on to be one of the first Māori Welfare officers in the country, serving the whole rohe of Tainui

[1] Waitangi Tribunal *The Oranga Tamariki (Section 7AA) Urgent Inquiry* (WAI 3350).
[2] *Skerrett-White & Ors v Minister for Children & Ors* NZCA 160 [13 May 2024].
[3] Waitangi Tribunal *The Māori Wards and Constituencies Urgent Inquiry Report* (WAI 3365).

as a duty of a mokopuna of Potatau Te Wherowhero and a niece of Te Puea Herangi. I spent many school holidays traveling around the countryside with her while she feed, clothed, housed and sought education for her people. A great friend and ally of Whina Cooper, Rumatiki Wright, Ruihi Sage and many more strong proud Māori women. Her much loved cadets, John Rangihau, Moana Raureti, Wharehuia Milroy, Timoti Karetu – men she was very proud of, despite the fact that they were tasked to encourage the Urban Drift of Māori as the departments goals premised on recommendations of a process of social reforms of assimilation into Pākehā norms for Māori based on the 1961 Hunn Report.[4]

11. We have always endeavoured to uphold our responsibilities to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, to protect ourselves and our taonga tuku iho we have marched, protested, litigated, re-educated ignorant complacent people and survived.

12. Despite all the work and gains we have made to stand in our own nationhood, our Tino Rangatiratanga and Mana Motuhake, the changes and proposed changes, no less than 19 pieces of legislative review, I consider to be the absolute epitome of the arrogant, greedy, lethal colonial rulebook of our Pākehā forefathers. I have watched our lakes, our lands, and our children be stripped from us across my lifetime. The Treaty clauses review represents the same process by another name, and this cannot be the legacy we leave our mokopuna.

Dated: **18 May 2026**

COLLEEN SKERRETT-WHITE

[4] J.K. Hunn. Report on Department of Māori Affairs: with statistical supplement, 24 August 1960. Wellington: Government Printer, 1961.