IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

WAI 898
WAI 1112
WAI 1113

IN THE MATTER of The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 (as amended)

AND Claims in the King Country Inquiry consolidated under Wai 898

AND the Wai 1112 claim by **MANIHERA FORBES** and **MERE GILMORE** on behalf of themselves and Ngāti Hikairo

AND the Wai 1113 claim by **MANIHERA FORBES** and **MERE GILMORE** on behalf of themselves and Ngāti Hikairo

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BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF TE KORE RATU

Dated this 23rd day of September 2013

RECEIVED
Waitangi Tribunal
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Ministry of Justice
WELLINGTON

WACKROW WILLIAMS & DAVIES LIMITED
LEVEL 14, 48 EMILY PLACE
P O BOX 461
DX CP 20503
AUCKLAND
PHONE: (09) 379 5026 FAX: (09) 377 6553
SOLICITOR: Dominic Wilson / Bernadette Arapere
EMAIL: dominic@wwandd.co.nz

Introduction

1. I am Te Kore Ratu and I give this evidence to support my hapū Te Whānau Pani and my iwi, Ngāti Hikairo. I will tell the Waitangi Tribunal of the loss of much of our customary knowledge and practices and the impact that such loss has on our people. I believe that the Crown has caused much of our loss. I also believe that the Crown has consistently failed to recognise our iwi and our way of life and to seek to protect our ways. Much of my evidence is about colonisation and assimilation and what the Crown did to our Ngāti Hikairo whānau.

2. I am pleased to give this evidence on my marae. I am with my people and supported by my ancestors.

Our people do not have enough whenua

3. Today I live with my whānau on Aotea Road near Mokaikainga marae. I reside on the northern lands of my tupuna Mourea, which is part of Kawhia block. This raises the first issue I want to bring before the Tribunal. The people of our iwi do not have enough land. In our case we do have shareholdings in various Kāwhia and other blocks in our rohe, but none are large and there are many shareholders in each block. This meant that when my immediate whānau decided to return to our turangawaewae we were forced to buy our own block. This is why we are located where we are on the edge of our tupuna whenua. Our land is "general land", bought with the life savings of my parents. We are pleased to be back on our turangawaewae and where we strong connections to both Mokaikainga marae and Waipapa marae. My mother's grandparents had lived at Mokaikainga pā in the late 1800s, so it was their papakainga too.

4. I do not believe our whānau are alone with this problem. Some of the larger blocks of land have many owners (sometimes from a variety of iwi) and are managed as one. For example, there is the Kāwhia- Tainui Incorporation with forestry on it. I think also of the leased lands in the townships that drip in rental money to some of us, but where we can't live anymore.

5. We survive on our block living off the land. But we have a hell of a struggle with keeping up with the rates and penalties when we get behind. This forces members of our whānau to travel far and wide for work to make ends meet. Sometimes we feel that the rates penalise us for living on our whenua.

Te Taha Wairua

6. The key point I want the Tribunal to hear is this: I believe that the Crown has actively worked to colonise and assimilate our people so that today only a few lucky ones hold the iwi knowledge. The knowledge I am talking about is sometimes classified as religion, but it is really our "spirituality". Our whānau has been lucky to have been raised in the Māori way, but so few of our Ngāti Hikairo whānau live this way and know our spirituality.

7. My mind turns to my grandfather, Tame Te Nuinga Tuwhangai and my mother's grandmother Te Hua Manuka. They lived in a century when the Crown was doing its best to stamp out our spirituality and teachings. In this time, though the 1800s and into the early 1900s, our ways were still openly practiced on our marae and in our wharenui. I am aware that the Crown passed the Tohunga Suppression Act in the early 1900s. This law was well known in our whānau from early times and I think this caused many of our people to stop practising our spirituality and to stop teaching it to the next generations. I don't know if it was ever actually applied to any of my tupuna, but I do know that many feared that being a tohunga would cause them trouble in the

Pākehā world. Each new generation following the 1900s had fewer and fewer tohunga.

8. We had lived by the teachings of our tohunga and their spiritual leadership was vital to our very being. Our people were well known for their tohunga. Our people still revere Te Tapihana as a great tohunga. We recall his role in establishing the Kīngitanga as a leader and poropiti (prophet). We were also followers of Te Pao Miere and Te Tariao teachings. Our Ngati Hikairo people had a very close relationship with Ngati Rereahu and Te Ihingarangi people who also followed these teachings. Sadly, later generations did not turn to our Ngāti Hikairo teachings but followed other non-Māori leaders and spiritual paths.

9. There were very few whānau, like ours, who continued to try to practice our spiritual ways. We tried to continue the school of learning passed down from our tohunga such as Te Tapihana. We tried to keep practising the karakia of his time. Our whānau, like those few others who kept to the old ways, tended to do so behind the closed doors of their homes. I think to some degree we became private about our spirituality as it cut across mainstream teachings – such as those of Christianity and medicine.

Migration away – in search of work

10. The generation of my koro and kui felt forced to leave Kāwhia in search of work. My koro, Tame Tuwhangai, worked on the North Island Railway Trunk Line from the 1890s at Rereahu and later at Pureora forest as a bushman. My grandmother left Kāwhia and met him at Rereahu in the bush. This generation lived with the old reo.

11. My dad, born about 1923, lived with te Reo spoken around the home but experienced the complete opposite at school. He told

me of his generation losing te Reo. I faced the same at school. I think the Crown has a lot to answer for.

12. My parents spent much of their early years in Te Kuiti. My dad was a farm hand and fencer doing what contracts he could get. Our whānau lived during the 1950s at Tanehopuwai in a dirt-floor whare. I went to school in Te Kuiti and experienced the same "two worlds". While we spoke Māori around the home, but this was non-existent in the school and scorned. Despite the hard work of my parents we were very poor, so our whānau joined the "urban migration" and headed to Pōneke for work. We were stationed there for around 30 years. My father worked on the railway there and my mum was a factory hand for several years then finally a postal worker. While my parents were forced into the city to get work, we regularly came back home to try to keep our fires warm here.

13. Again, I faced two lives. One at home where we spoke te Reo and the other at school where we spoke English and te Reo was forbidden. At home we practiced our Māori spirituality and we upheld our custom in our daily lives, but at school I faced "Religious Instruction". This was compulsory and was taken by local ministers. The line between the government and the church was very blurred and school was very Christian. I really believe that the Crown made it hard to be Māori. I think the Crown wanted Māori to become Pākehā and to assimilate fully.

14. It was during our time in Pōneke that we first started to see doctors. My parents, like their grandparents, were skilled and trained in rongoa Māori, but there was always pressure from the surrounding Pākehā world to go to doctors.

15. I believe that very few whānau survived all of these changes with their tikanga and kawa intact. So much of our spiritual knowledge

and health practice has been lost and what remains is held by a few.

16. Our whānau finally came back home to Kāwhia in about 1985 when my parents retired. Today I live on our lands near Mokaikainga with my son and daughter. I have one son in Australia, again working in the bush like his ancestors, but I expect he will return home one day. The pull of our whenua is too strong.

17. We continue to live and practice our Māori spirituality, but today there are new challenges. We find it hard to access some rongoa. With many forests cut down and wetlands drained many sources are gone. Sometimes with the source gone we stop using the special karakia that was linked to that rongoa. I fear some karakia will be lost. For example, when I was young there was plenty of Raurekau. This was a common rongoa. It had special healing properties. We also used it as a food cover in hangi or for wrapping tuna that we smoked. Today the closest Raurekau to our kāinga is about 15 kilometres away towards Aotea moana.

Summary

18. In many ways my kōrero applies to nearly all of our Ngāti Hikairo whānau. We all have suffered from the loss of tikanga and reo. We all have kōrero of whānau having to leave Kāwhia in search of work – many never returning or not being able to return. Most of our iwi do not have enough land or shares to come to live in Kāwhia.

19. Our whānau was one of a lucky few who continued to practice our spirituality at home, but most of our people today know nothing of the teachings of the tohunga. I am most grateful for the strength of my tupuna to continue our ways against the Crown's pressures,

but we tended to work behind our closed doors and out of the view of the Pākehā.

20. I believe that the Crown has failed our people. The Crown has worked very hard to stop our language and customs being passed down. I think the Crown deliberately tried to run our tohunga to the ground. Ngāti Hikairo used to be well known for our spiritual knowledge.

21. I hope that the future is better for Ngāti Hikairo and that our iwi can re-group and share the knowledge that remains. I hope that in the future the Crown recognises our people and works to support us and our growth.

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TE KORE RATU