OFFICIAL

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 AMIRIA TE AO MARAMA RATU-LE BAS

Dated this 23rd day of September 2013

RECEIVED
Waitangi Tribunal
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WELLINGTON

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MAY IT PLEASE THE TRIBUNAL

1. My name is Amiria Te Ao Marama Ratu-Le Bas. I was born at Te Awamutu in 1990. I am 23 years old.

2. My Mum's name is Te Kore Ratu and she is Ngāti Hikairo. My Dad's name is Stephen Le Bas. He is Ngāti Maniapoto from Te Kopua Marae.

3. I have two older brothers who are much older than me. Their names are Santana and Lyall. I am the potiki of my whanau.

4. I have lived all of my life at Kawhia. I went to kohanga and primary school here. There is no college at Kawhia so I had to board at Otorohanga College but I always came home and I continue to live here at Kawhia on the ancestral lands of my iwi today.

5. My evidence covers two things that really impact upon us of Ngati Hikairo. The first is the lack of land, jobs and opportunities for our people here at Kawhia. This is because the Crown took all the lands for itself and has left us with little or no lands. The second thing I will talk about it is the huge struggle of Ngati Hikairo to keep our language alive. This fight is ongoing and I blame the Crown for not supporting us to retain our reo rangatira.

No land and no opportunities for Ngati Hikairo

6. I live with my Mum and whanau on our whanau trust farm. My Mum farms this farm with the help of my brother. Our house is just by Mokaikainga at Aotea. My Mum, Te Kore Ratu, will speak in her evidence about how my grandparents had to work so hard and buy back land for our whanau in our own rohe. This is because the Crown took most of the land of our tupuna so if Ngati Hikairo people want to stay here on their tupuna whenua they are forced to buy it back from Pakeha or the Crown. That doesn't seem right to me.

7. I grew up mostly with my Mum and my Nanny and Koro. My Dad did

stay here for some of the time but he had to go away a lot for work and so did my Mum at times too. That's because when I was growing up there was no work here at Kawhia. It is still the case today that there is very little work here at Kawhia.

8. After I finished school I went to Wintech in Te Kuiti for a while and did a foundation studies course. This was because my English was not very good and because Māori has always been my first language. I talk about this more further on in my evidence.

9. I came home from Te Kuiti after a few months. The government had a scheme at that time called Community Max Scheme. Through this scheme Kawhia School was given some money and four of us were employed at the School to help as kai awhina. Three of us were in the classroom and one was doing sports. There were other schemes like this operating in our area. Eight people of my age worked under the scheme for Otorohanga District Council. Some people worked at Maketu Marae doing environmental work like planting and then there were the four of us at Kawhia School. The scheme only went for about a year but then the Government ended the scheme and almost everybody lost their jobs. I don't know why the government ended the scheme.

10. When it ended the school asked me to keep working there. They had to find the money themselves to keep me there. But for all the others who were working through the scheme there was no money so they all had to move to town to find work.

11. As you can see a real problem for Kawhia is that there are not many young people because there is no money and no jobs and no opportunities for us. I am still here because the school employs me and it's my home. I am really lucky that I have been able to find work and stay on my turangawaewae.

12. Lots of my friends and whanaunga that did the schemes all went to school and college together. They all want to come home but they can't because there's no work here for them. Most of them have to go to Hamilton and a few of them have gone to Australia.

13. My partner and I are expecting our first baby in November. Because there is no work at Kawhia, my partner lives at Te Kauwhata working on a dairy farm. Ideally he would be here too with me as we prepare for pepi but there are three dairy farms on Kawhia Road and the Pakeha own them all. There are no jobs for Ngāti Hikairo on those farms.

14. That is a very big issue for us, lack of employment for our people. With no land, no farms and no employment how do we bring Ngāti Hikairo people back to Kawhia? I think the Crown has a responsibility to help Ngati Hikairo with that because if it wasn't for the Crown our people wouldn't be in this position of struggling to survive in our own rohe and having to move away for work.

Te Reo Maori

15. I want to speak now about te reo Maori. I am lucky that I was brought up speaking te reo by my Nanny and Koro. This happened because my Mum and Dad had to go away from Kawhia for work. When they would be away I would live with my Nanny and Koro.

16. My Koro's name was Mick Ratu and my Nanny's name was Maggie Ratu. Nanny's maiden name was Tuwhangai.

17. Nanny and Koro spoke Māori at home. They only spoke Māori to me. In fact when my Mum enrolled me at Kawhia Primary School I didn't understand any English.

18. I went to Kohanga reo at Maketu. Then I went to Kawhia Primary School. When I was 11 my school, Kawhia Primary School, started a Māori Immersion class. I was in this class and learned Māori right the way through my schooling but I learnt most of my reo from my Nanny and Koro.

19. I went to school with lots of my cousins of Ngāti Hikairo. My aunty Roimata Pikia, who is also giving evidence for us, was our teacher. There is no high school at Kawhia, Hauturu, Kinohaku or Piripiri so all the kids of this area have to travel away from the area for high school. As I have said I went to Otorohanga High School and boarded.

20. I did alright at school but it wasn't immersion in te reo like living with my nanny and koro or like I experienced at my kohanga and in primary school years. At college we just had Māori language as a subject that we could take and we could also take Māori performing arts and kapahaka. I stayed at school until year 13. At that school if you were willing to learn then you would succeed but if you were mangere then you were just plain mangere and wouldn't learn much.

21. Right through my schooling I struggled with reading and writing and everything in English right up until I finished. At Kawhia Primary I did struggle with English. We had a Māori teacher aid to help but it was hard going. Reading and writing and English were really hard for me. I believe this affected my learning at College. I didn't struggle with te reo just the Pakeha things.

22. I was the only mokopuna that lived with my Nanny and Koro. They have both died now. I think I was very lucky to be able to be brought up with my grandparents and learn te reo from them. When I lived with them they were in their 70s. Some of my close friends at Kawhia also grew up with their grandparents so we would see each other at the same hui and tangi and all the events that our grandparents took us to and we had that thing in common - that we were taken around by our grandparents and looked after.

The Future

23. I will stay here in Kawhia when my baby is born. I will keep working at Kawhia Primary school for as long as the kura can find the putea to pay me but there will come a time when I will probably have to move to town to get a job like my partner and all my cousins.

24. I know that I am very lucky that I was able to learn te reo from my grandparents but I know that most others of Ngāti Hikairo especially the middle generations have not had this privilege.

25. My hopes and aspirations for Ngāti Hikairo are that there are jobs and opportunities for us to come home to so that my cousins and relations can be a part of their iwi. There is no kohanga reo now and it would be really good to have our own kohanga and have something so that

our own tamariki can grow up here on their own marae.

AMIRIA TE AO MARAMA RATU-LE BAS