

IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

WAI 898

Wai 762

Under

The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

In the Matter of

Te Rohe Potae Inquiry (Wai 898)

And

In the Matter of

A claim by Harry Kereopa and Evelyn Kereopa on behalf of Te Ihingarangi, a hapu of Maniapoto

AMENDED BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF HUIA WHETO

Date: 22 August 2014

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Waitangi Tribunal

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MAY IT PLEASE THE TRIBUNAL

1. I am Huia Wheto. My hapu is Te Ihi Ngarangi. I was born and raised in Waimiha. I lived there for most of my life. I provide this brief of evidence in support of the Wai 762 claim.

Education Claim

2. My schooling started at Piriaka School, just out of Taumarunui at five years old in 1951. I was there for about a year before I went to Waimiha Primary School. The majority of my primary schooling was at Waimiha. Later on, I went to Piu Piu convent school for about 6 months. Then I transferred to Benneydale High School. I did not complete high school because I had to look after the old people. Their mokopuna wouldn't do it and they needed someone to care for them.

Matauranga Maori

3. For many of the things we needed to know, we learnt by observation. This was the older generation's way of handing knowledge down to the next generation. For example, my Nanny Nahe taught us children how to make piupiu. She would often give these as gifts for people who were leaving Waimiha. We would sit there and she would start showing us. We had to watch and learn and if we didn't pick it up she would wonder why. We were coaxed along as opposed to being pushed into it.
4. When we made piupiu, one of my jobs was to go and get the flax. I was shown which flax to pick and when. My grandmother had a special flax that grew in a certain place.
5. I used to go with Nanny Nahe to get the mud for the dye from the river. We called it "the paru". My nanny had her own paru and it was black. Other whanau had theirs. I would go with some of my other nannies to get their paru and I came to know that they were not all the same. It would only appear for certain people. Nanny Rahera's

was sandy in colour and when you brushed the top away, it went black.

6. My nanny used to take the bark from a special tree and feed it to their paru. I was taught how to do this. I used to get my cousin to bring me this bark from the mill where he worked so that we always had plenty of it.
7. My nanny used to say karakia over her paru but I was not taught this. Now when I go to get the paru, I don't say a karakia but I say to myself that my nanny has said all the karakia for me and so I will be all right.
8. My grandfather, Charlie Rehu, was the healer of all healers. I learnt a lot about rongoa from him but from others too. On one occasion, a dear relation of ours arrived in Waimiha from Auckland covered in sores. She had swollen up to three times her usual size and was really in a bad way. She had her two young ones with her and we had to look after them but that was ok. We treated her in the traditional way using the doc plant roots. We would pound them, boil them and then my cousin would drink it. She would bathe in the rongoa we made and we would rub it on her as well. All the while I was learning how to take care of the sick. After a few days, she came right and went back to Auckland. To this day, she has flawless skin but I wonder about what would have happened to her if my grandfather had not known what to do.
9. The main thing we were taught by the old people was how to work. We had to work in the gardens and we loved it. It was part of our life growing up. We learnt how to prepare the ground and when to prepare it. We knew what to plant and when. If something went wrong, we were taught what to do. We took great pride in our gardens, especially when the fruits of our labour were harvested.
10. Growing up, we learnt how to live off the land. We learnt hunting skills and how to gather kai. We were taught all of these things by our elders, not by the school. We were told where to get the

freshwater mussels. Sometimes we were told to go to a certain place for them and we would go to a different place. We would come back with the mussels and the old people knew we had gone to the wrong area. So back we would go but this was all right because we could go for another swim.

11. We were taught how to do interesting things like keep a pet trout. We would go back to the same part of the river to feed them and up they would come. We kept animals such as kunekune, ducks and pigs. All of this was teaching us how to survive.
12. We were also taught how to conduct ourselves on the marae. Sometimes the teaching of kawa could be quite strict. I remember Te Kohinga with his tokotoko. There was a rule that there were no children on the marae atea. We would be on there and suddenly he would appear, waving his tokotoko at us and really growling us. We used to run but we got the message.

Poor Quality Teachers

13. One of my teachers was Mr Pattie. He was also the headmaster. When doing school work, he was there to help. He never pushed you aside. The community supported him and he stayed for longer than 4 years. He was the only teacher I know that did that. He did not teach us anything to do with Maori but if there was something on at the marae, he would come down. That was very rare for a teacher.
14. However most of the teachers were not helpful at all. They only focused on the children that they liked. Unfortunately I was not one of them and most of the Maori kids were the same.
15. If a Maori child got into trouble, they got into trouble big time. The teachers made sure everyone knew about it. Those teachers were there for the Pakeha.
16. **The teacher for the senior class** was one of them. I was in his class for about 2 or 3 years. He used to strap. It didn't matter what you

did, that strap would come out. I got strapped. In the end, some of us children took the strap and we chopped it up with the guillotine. But after that we got the cane.

17. He used to growl at us and often we did not know why. The Pakeha kids would sit at their desks laughing at us. All through his teaching he would do that. You could do any little thing, like getting to school late, or forgetting a pencil, or sometimes we would get picked on for no reason at all. When this happened **he** would pull you out in front of all the children to show them how not to behave and you would get punished. I had to look after the old people before I left for school in the mornings, so by the time I got to school I would have forgotten this and forgotten that. But I never got a chance to tell **him** about looking after the old people. He would have the last say, always.
18. He had a strong voice and he would yell at us. Everyone would turn and listen because they wanted to know why you were getting a growling. We didn't want to go to school because of that teacher. There were a lot of pupils like me that didn't want to go to school. We didn't learn anything when he was the teacher. I think he was prejudiced towards Maori and if you heard what I heard and if you saw what I saw, you would think that too.
19. **He was the one** who made me change my name. They called a roll every morning. When they called out Elizabeth there were two of us and both of us stood up. To avoid the confusion in the future, he said we had to change our names. He told me my name would be Betty and Elizabeth's name got changed to Lizzie. I did not say anything to him at the time because I did not know what to say.
20. I thought, 'what the hell am I going to school for if they are going to change my name?' This put me off school and I did not want to go anymore. Even to this day, there is confusion over my name. Some people call me Huia, others call me Elizabeth and still others call me Betty.
21. When my nephews went to school, I remember them complaining about Mr Powell. They said that he did not like Maoris and they

were clearly anxious about this. They said that he would always find something to blame on them.

22. There were many forms of abuse. Every day at assembly, those that had kutus, those that were paru, and anyone who had long finger nails, were made to stand in front of everyone. It was mostly Maori kids and especially our relations. They would be put on the top steps and ostracised. The Pakeha kids would smirk and smile at us. I dreaded those mornings. They made me anxious about going to school.
23. As a child I never thought about it because it was the norm. But looking back now, I realise that to Maori kids at that age, the impact on them would have been huge.
24. Another form of abuse was knowing who the “haves” were and who the “have nots” were. It was plain and clear to me.
25. I noticed that our teachers came and went. You would just be getting used to them and off they would go. Although the headmasters were there for 4 years, many of the teachers just came for a year or two.

No Maori in Class

26. We did not do Maori art and we never looked at Maori history. I could speak English and Maori but we were not allowed to speak Maori at school so no one did. It was English the whole way through. I never got the strap but I was made to write out lines that said, “I will not speak Maori at school.” Three quarters of the community were Maori and therefore three quarters of the school were Maori but it didn’t make a difference. However no one really complained. We were young and I think we just accepted what was going on.
27. We sang some Maori songs at school but this was when we were having concerts at the end of the year. There was no kapa haka.

28. I did not learn much about New Zealand history. I did learn about Captain Cook but that was in geography class at high school. We would learn more about France and Spain than anything.
29. Growing up in the Maori community we had a different way of learning things. When I went into formal schooling, the Pakeha did everything differently. Every day the teachers singled Maori kids out to be disciplined and humiliated. It was always Maori kids being punished and Pakeha kids laughing. In an environment like this, learning was impossible.
30. At high school my favourite subject was accounting but I had to give that up as well because I found maths hard. I think if I had completed my schooling that's what I would like to have been. I never tried to do adult education. I heard about it but by then it was too late.

No Parent Interaction

31. The Pakeha parents were always interacting with the school but the Maori parents would usually only come along when there was trouble. There wasn't that community relationship. I think this had a bad effect on my education because we were not learning. We were falling through the cracks and nothing was being done.
32. I would have told my Nanny Nahe about my problems at school but I had seen her before go down to the school and it wasn't very nice. One time though, I couldn't stop her. When I got older I used to clean the school. I saw Nanny Nahe come storming through the gates looking for this kid that hit her great-grandson. I had to follow her because I knew what she was going to do. Soon she is in the school yard growling at some teacher and all in the reo. The teacher doesn't know what she is saying but I am sure he is getting the message. She then started to swing her stick around and that's when I got worried. She took her rakau and whacked this Pakeha kid. The principal was red in the face. "No, Mrs Rehu. No. No". But it was too late. Bang.

33. The Maori parents were only there when there was trouble. I remember one time when Aroha got told to stand on a desk by the teacher. She refused because she was too big and really self-conscious about it. It really got out of hand and the teacher got aggressive. Aroha had a cricket bat and he told her to give it to him. She said that she would hit him with the bat. The next thing the teacher called Aroha's father and he came down. He was one of our kaumatuas and he ended up whacking Aroha with the cricket bat. It was sad and I think the teacher was in the wrong. He could have dealt with the situation without getting her to stand on the desk.

Conclusion

34. I would have liked to continue my schooling but, at the time, the old people were more important to me. They needed to be looked after. It was a choice between them and education so education went on hold. But then again, I was getting an education from the old people in the Maori way. After the old people came children, after the children came more children and old people. It just wasn't to be. I encouraged the children I looked after to get a better education. I told them, 'don't be like me'.

HUIA WHETO