

IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

**Wai 2180, Wai 1705, Wai 647, Wai 588,
Wai 385, Wai 581, Wai 1888**

IN THE MATTER OF

the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 and the
Taihape: Rangitikei ki Rangipo Inquiry
(Wai 2180)

IN THE MATTER OF

a claim by Isaac Hunter, Utiku Potaka,
Maria Taiuru, Hari Benevides, Moira
Raukawa-Haskell, Te Rangiangoa
Hawira, Kelly Thompson, Barbara Ball and
Richard Steedman on behalf of themselves,
the Iwi organisations who have authorised
them to make this claim and the Mōkai
Pātea Waitangi Claims Trust (**Wai 1705**)

AND

a claim by Maria Taiuru and others for and
on behalf of Wai 647 Claimants (**Wai 647**)

AND

a claim by Isaac Hunter and Maria Taiuru
and others for and on behalf of the Wai 588
Claimants (**Wai 588**)

AND

a claim by Neville Franze Te Ngahoa
Lomax and others for and behalf of the
Potaka Whanau Trust and Nga Hapu o
Ngati Hauti (**Wai 385**)

AND

a claim by Neville Franze Te Ngahoa
Lomax and others for and behalf of Te
Runanga o Ngati Hauti (**Wai 581**)

AND

a claim by Iria Te Rangi Halbert and others
for and behalf of the Wai 1888 Claimants
(**Wai 1888**)

**Statement of Evidence of Barbara Thomason
12 February 2018**

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Statement of Evidence of Barbara Thomason

Ko wai au

Ko Takitimu te waka

Ko Rata te Marae

Ko Ngati Hauti te iwi

Ko Ngāti Tamatareka me Ngāti Ruanga ngā Hapu

Ko Aorangi te maunga tapu

Ko au te uri o Utiku Potaka raua ko RoraTe Oiroa Geoff

Ko Barbara Thomason tōku ingoa

E noho ana ahau i raro i te wharuruhau o ngā pae maunga a Ruahine

Ki te taha o tōku awa a Rangitikei

Kei runga i te whenua o ōku tīpuna i Otara

1. For Māori, land is a source of identity.
2. Maori see themselves as not only of the land but as the land. The land links to their parents, grandparents and tīpuna and the future generations. The land is shared between the dead, the living and the unborn.
3. We can never overstate the detrimental effects that colonisation has caused our iwi Māori. From the arrival of the first settlers, our history has clearly demonstrated that they were concerned with the acquisition of land and control of natural and physical resources. The focus of my evidence here is the ongoing effect this has had on our cultural identity, values and tikanga and kawa.
4. The social impact of land alienation, and the loss of our economic land base, has had far reaching effects on our people of Ngāti Hauti. Institutional racism and the stripping away of our traditional values and social structures that connected us to the land. This resulted in whanau dysfunction, poverty, domestic violence, child abuse, alcoholism, gambling, loss of our Reo, loss of mana.

5. It is difficult for me to even bring these past events back into this kōrero, because it brings a flood of pain, anxiety and confusion. But it is necessary, because we often comment on the “here and now” without seeing the root of this evil. It is through the insidious processes of colonisation that have turned whānau against whānau, mother against daughter, son against father.
6. A number of Ngāti Hauiti men, including my father, served in the Second World War. My dad was from the East coast and met my mother Ria Charmaine Potaka in Taihape. It is my whakaaro that these men had a genuine conviction to fight for their land, King and country with the hope that things would improve in Aotearoa. Sadly this was not to be. On their return, ballots were made available for Pākeha war veterans but not for Maori soldiers. The tragedy of this kōrero is that our Māori men, fathers and uncles returned to join the labour workforce, but were not provided the same privileges as many Pākeha.
7. According to my aunty Margaret Pirini-Purdue the land at Otamakapua was destined to be for ballot lands. But she said that our grandfather used both his son-in-laws’ names George Baker and Wiwi Pirini as a way of keeping the land, and avoiding it being included in the ballot.
8. In would talk with various whanau members, my dad and other uncles, who were traumatised and were constantly haunted by the memories of war. I was told that one thing the Pākeha government provided was free access to alcohol in 1948 for Māori. For my dad and many others, this was an escape for a while from those things that tormented their minds. I will always remember when our dad would have a few, we would sit and listen to his stories. He also tried to find solace in God and joined the Jehovah’s Witness faith. My dad was a wonderful father however, I believe that life could have easier and greatly improved if he, and the other uncles had been given the support that they were deserving of.

9. The introduction of alcohol had a profound impact on many of the whānau. It caused an increase in domestic violence, sexual abuse, and the degradation of women. As a child I witnessed many incidences of domestic violence within our whānau and the abuse of alcohol made us, as children vulnerable to abuse. It is only now as adults we are able to talk of such things.
10. In 1956 our family returned to our ancestral land at Otara which is also known as Otamakapua. Many of the families had moved back after the end of the ninety-nine year leases to a Pakeha named McGregor.
11. Through my parents, aunties and uncles stories were told of the lease holders at that time, who were angered and upset that they were having to leave “THEIR” land. The man that lived in my auntie’s house referred to us as “BLACK BASTARDS” and she said that he refused to leave the house.
12. One farmer actually burnt a house down on whānau land. He had stated that he would burn it down before letting those Maoris have it. Before he left, he was made to build another house to replace it. I am not sure who made him do this.
13. The Arapeta and Meikura whanau had already settled on the whenua prior to our return. They lived at Orangipango. Meikura was the whāngai daughter of Utiku and Rora. Some lived Ohingaiti, mainly those of the Pape Epiha whanau. The Tumihau whanau is my mum’s whānau, and they were resettled on Otara Road and the lands were in one block.
14. I believe that having whanau who were already living on their whenua made the transition to our ancestral land in Otara easier for our family. We were a tight knit whānau. Many of the whānau were either dairy or did mixed farming. As a young child I felt a strong sense of whanaungatanga which was bound by whakapapa. We were supported in the good times in the bad times and the sad times.

Education

15. Six out of our nine brothers and sisters attended Otamakapua School. We walked approximately 10 km a day, to school and back. That is, until we were blessed with some horses (hand-me-down horses).
16. Although we got on with the Pākeha kids, underlying racism was evident during my time there. The favorite game was bullrush and it was always Maori versus the Pākeha, with both groups being aware of their differences. Kids develop their awareness of that from the attitudes they hear and learn at the home. Both my uncle and my father applied to be members of the school board on a number of occasions, however this never happened in the years we attended school. This is concerning given that fifty percent of our school was made up of our family and our first cousins.
17. The members of our family left Otamakapua feeling no sense of achievement. This was also the case for my cousins. I sincerely do believe that the racist and bigoted attitudes at the time clouded our teachers' thinking. I think he saw us as labourers, shed hands and potato pickers, without having higher aspirations for our achievement, and no understanding of our proud history.
18. Accordingly this has affected us through to this day. Many locals know little of our Ngāti Hauiti history or our connection to the awa. They only speak of their colonial ancestors and the land they own. That was land that belonged to Ngati Hauiti.
19. Our tipuna, Utiku Potaka believed that education was the way for our whanau and was instrumental in supporting the establishment of Turakina Maori Girls College.
20. My aunties and my mother attended Turakina along with their cousin Te Ao hou (Daisy) Potaka and many more relatives from up the Whanganui river.

21. During the initial period at Turakina, the thinking as I understand it was to “civilise” these young ladies to become good Christian farmers’ housewives (quoted from ex-principal of Turakina). These views had a significant impact on our Maori women and their traditional values. Our whānau preferred to use their Pākeha names and English was the language of choice and believe me they could hob-knob it with the best of them.
22. That changed over time. I worked at Turakina for three years and it filled me with a sense of pride to see the names of my kuias on the dux board, to see that although the college was under the mantle of the church, the college promoted and taught young Māori women tikanga, Maori values, te reo and the belief they could achieve whatever they set their hearts upon.
23. But that is an exception and not the norm. As a teacher, I work in a mainstream institution. My whakaaro is to encourage my own mokopuna, nieces, nephews to learn the reo within our rohe. However it is extremely difficult to work within the parameters of a system that has not placed value on our language or our culture, and where the decision making control is still held elsewhere. Institutional racism is alive and well, and continues to impact on the next generation.

Land Alienation and loss of connection

24. My message to our whānau of Ngati Hauti, is kua e wareware, never forget that from the beginning of time we were predestined to be people of Aho Ariki, Kawai Rangatira.
25. But I feel the effects of disconnection from our whenua on a daily basis. I feel the fact that we do not have decision-making authority. At our river, we needed to request permission to go down there because metal was being extracted from the river banks. I found this to be an insult to my wairua, and felt alienated from our turangawaewae. As my koro Pita Richardson stated you must walk

upon the land and toil it with your hands so that you remain connected.

26. The laws which resulted in alienation of our land turned whanau and hāpu against each other. We now see dispossessed whanau, whanau dysfunction, alcoholism, increased youth suicide, domestic violence and high levels of addiction.
27. This has also had a major impact on mana wahine and our wellbeing as women. This has been a significant passion and interest of mine and I trace the issues back to the impacts of colonisation. I have previously given evidence about this to this Waitangi Tribunal at Rata Marae.
28. In just one example, I was contemplating the way in which we learned about our connection to our whenua at Otamakapua block 2. I te tau 1956, ka hunuku tōku whanau ki Otarā he whenua tuku no tōku kuia a Rora Te Oiroa Goffe. However, for many years living on the whenua at Otarā, I was under the belief that our *take tipuna* to our whenua came by way of our tipuna, Utiku Potaka.
29. When I realized that this land was left to my tipuna kuia, Rora Te Oiroa, and through her matua Hohaia, I questioned as to why we had always attributed this to Utiku. Today I have grown to understand that European and thinking had a major influence on how women were perceived, contrary to Maori tikanga philosophies of mana whenua, mana tangata, mana wahine. Our tipuna kuia had her own mana through her own whakapapa.

Barbara Thomason

12 February 2018