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Wai 814 # DS
(Chai 856 # CS)

TE ROOPU WHAKAMANA I TE TIRITI O WAITANGI
IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

WAI 856

IN THE MATTER OF

The Treaty of Waitangi Act
1975 (as amended)

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

a claim by **PUKA MOEAU** for
and on behalf of **NGA URI O
TE KOOTI RIKIRANGI**

**BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF PUKA MOEAU
ON BEHALF OF NGA URI O TE KOOTI RIKIRANGI: WAI 856**

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Whakapapa

1. **MY** name is Puka Moeau. I'm a descendant to Te Kooti Rikirangi through my mother, the lineage is as follows: Te Kooti to his son Weteni. Weteni down to his daughter Putiputi. Putiputi down to her eldest daughter Tihei. Tihei down to my mother Elizabeth, and Elizabeth down to myself.

Private and public impacts

2. **MOST** other witnesses have separated the impact of being a descendant of Te Kooti's into positive effects and negative effects but for me it occurs or has occurred in a private context and a public context, mostly of the negative type.
3. **THE** private impact of being a descendant was something that I shared with myself, like most of the whanau, because we were brought up with the hush-hush policy. We were told that we were the descendants of Te Kooti Rikirangi but not encouraged to acknowledge it or share it publicly. So that was a bit different - a different way to celebrate being a descendant of a certain tūpuna. The public context is probably where the more negative experiences occurred, and like others I've had my own incidences.

Primary School Experience

4. **THE** first major experience for me occurred at school in about 1977. Being at a Gisborne school we inevitably studied Gisborne history and part of that was the Matawhero “massacre”, as they say the massacre that my tūpuna committed. But it was a very one-sided story and naturally because it was one sided, very Pākehā sided, that’s all the teacher communicated to the classroom. I had been brought up being told by family *“Oh your tūpuna got accused of being something he wasn’t, arrested without trial and then returned to get revenge after his land had been stolen and people were killed from being associated with him”*. That was a bit of a clash with school where it was taught that, Te Kooti was, *“A murderer, a massacrer and a guerrilla”*. It was as simple as that. And it was made out as though he attacked innocent people, which actually wasn’t the case.

5. I was eight at the time and of course put my hand up and said, *“That’s not, what I know”*. Then I was asked, *“Well how do you know?”* I didn’t say how I knew, but in the end they sort of figured it out because our family all went through that school. So, for me, that was the day that I got my first real taste of the public perception towards him. And from there on I learnt more and more about this public perception and that it wasn’t a good one. Naturally being a descendant of his the treatment towards us wasn’t very nice in most cases.

Reflecting on the education system

6. **THE** major result from my experiences was that I lost trust in teachers, now that I look back on the situation, that was a lot for a child to handle. Mainly because if you were at school in the 70s, you had God, your parents and then your teacher. That was the pecking order of trust. Teachers had a lot of influence and standing in the community, but, I took one step back and thought, *“My teacher’s a liar”*. How could I not when I went home and was told, *“No, that’s the wrong story, it’s a bit unbalanced”*. And sadly enough

that coloured my attitude towards education from there on in. That mistrust in the education system stayed with me right through to my tertiary education. My view has been that it's been a tool and a weapon used against my people, so I was going to infiltrate it and learn about it so that it never happened again. Not necessarily a good approach to go in on, but I suppose the important thing was that I set down a path and was determined to get there.

Denied of our Tūpuna

7. **WE** have been denied of our tūpuna. Not just personally but all our whanau, hapū and cousins have lost a role model. A good role model. I also think that Māoridom has lost a positive role model, and further to that I think Pākehā have lost out as well. If you look at what he was: steeped in his tikanga, his reo and he was a very good businessman, which is one of the reasons why he was arrested without trial. One can quickly recognise these as desirable, almost crucial skills for Maori people today. He was considered a threat to the local business sector in Gisborne at the time. They were still on the land grab. And so he was set up and accused of being a Hauhau. That was the excuse to get him on a boat and arrested without trial. His business interest and everything that he had set up disappeared. And at that particular stage we've learnt that one of the Pākehā businessmen that were behind it absorbed a lot of business interest at the time that Te Kooti was arrested. So we've lost that too. In a material way and a capital way, but more importantly we've lost a good example.

8. **IT** begs the question of what would be the ideal Māori citizen now? I'd say, one that's steeped in tikanga and reo and one who's a good businessperson. And why would I say that? People who are good businessmen and women are considered productive contributing members of society. On the other hand Māori consume a lot of the negative statistics. So for me, that's one of the biggest things that has been denied to Māoridom, not just for our whanau but for all Māoridom. Had our ability to be good business people, as we were in the past, been allowed to evolve in its natural cycle, we perhaps wouldn't be at the bottom of the heap like we are now. This would also benefit Pākehā,

because we wouldn't be the ball and chain weighing down the progress and development of New Zealand.

9. **BY** way of comparison George Court, the great great grandfather of Stephen Tindall (heir to the great business empire, The Warehouse) was an Auckland business merchant in the 1800s. This must have shaped Tindall's life and contributed to his success today, and in turn New Zealand's economic wealth. Not only did we lose a similar figure as a whanau, because of our collective nature, so did Maoridom. One can only imagine the sorts of business alliances that would have arisen if this had been allowed to evolve naturally.
10. This matter is very close to my heart, this opportunity is being denied to us, other Māori and the rest of New Zealand. That is a great loss for New Zealand.

The hush-hush policy

11. **ONE** thing that we were brought up with and go through a lot now is the hush-hush policy. We learnt about Te Kooti but it was very secretive. We learnt that the old fulla was kicked out of home and told never to come back, and so he actually settled, and occupied and travelled pretty much most of the North Island. He had a lot of time in Tuhoe, and he also had a lot of time with Ngati Maniapoto. He finally moved over to Te Whānau-a-Apanui area, courting into Ngāti Awa and Tauranga Moana. So he was quite nationally global, back then. His influence stretched to Hauraki and down into Kahungunu and Whanganui. In this way, he was one of the first Maori to have almost national influence, through his teachings, his Haahi and his waiata.
12. **TE** Kooti was also the founder of the Ringatū church. And we used to get bundled into the car and snuck off to those hui. We'd just sit at these hui, not really knowing what was going on. I don't know if it was policy, but, the karakia and teachings weren't shared with us. So, our involvement in the Ringatū hui was secretive, undercover, and I think that it was a protection

mechanism, and I'm grateful for that I guess. Other Māori were concerned about our interests.

13. **NOWADAYS** what we've got is a lot of experts on our old fulla, and sadly, none of these experts are us. A result perhaps of the hush-hush policy. We're in an environment where a lot of other people from other tribes know more about our tūpuna than we do. And if anything that's one thing that not only my generation, but all of us who are involved in this claim have vowed to stop. It's such a disempowering process. It's lead to situations when people belittle us for not knowing, come down on us, "*Oh your tūpuna was this, that, and the other and you should know all of this*". Well, you know, our apologies, but - we don't.
14. **TO** stop the policy affecting our future generations, we've made a public stand to stop it here with my generation. This is one of the reasons we've put this claim through. We're going to educate our kids, and they're going to celebrate his name. It's as simple as that. And we want to encourage other Māori to celebrate his name too.

Vision for the future

15. **THIS** is my own personal vision, and I'm still talking with the committee and our whānau, so we can shape it together. My vision aligns to what the old fulla set out to do way back then. He got arrested without trial - he came back. When he came back to Aotearoa, he said don't pursue me or be warned. And he was pursued so it turned to war. It turned Māori against Māori, Pākehā against Māori, hapū against hapū, iwi against iwi. A lot of killing resulting, not just by him, and the Crown never managed to kill him like they wanted to. He watched a lot of his followers: men; women and kids get shot. And so, he moved on. He moved on from that and founded the Ringatū religion, and it became a stand for forgiving and peace.
16. **I'M** just discovering all of Te Kooti's teachings now. And I'd like to carry them on. We've already decided we're going to celebrate his name within our

whānau. We're going to inform and teach our children. They're going to know everything about him. We also want to encourage other Māori to celebrate his name, celebrate the example he set and try to re-create it. But we also want to open up our arms to Pākehā, and say look, he is a pioneer of this country, it's our shared history, so come and celebrate his name too. Part and parcel of that process happening though is to talk the hard talk, and talk the historical facts, put it all into perspective and bring it back into balance. Once we've done that, I myself, I'm ready to forgive and move on. Because Pākehā nowadays didn't commit that, it happened back then by the Crown and we're dealing with that. So, that's basically my vision. And hopefully its something that will align closely with what our whānau wants, from our discussions so far I think it will.

17. **WE** need to rectify the history books, and then the final step would be to educate the country. There needs to be an objective and accurate portrayal of his history. The ultimate goal is towards the attainment of more harmony and peace and an opportunity to celebrate our tupuna. It's worth it.

Puka Moeau