

IN THE MATTER OF The Treaty of
Waitangi Act 1975

AND

IN THE MATTER OF Claims by
HUHURERE
TUKUKINO and
OTHERS known
as the HAURAKI
CLAIMS

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF TE UIRA RAKENA
ON BEHALF OF THE CLAIMANTS**

My name is Te Uira Rakena, everyone calls me Vera Rakena or Aunty Vera. My iwi is Ngati Hako. My marae is Tirohia. I was born in Tirohia on January 25th 1925 and I was married in 1945. We have two daughters and two grand-daughters. They both have jobs, one has been working for 16 years the other for 20 years. They were lucky to have jobs when they left school.

I remember when I was young that we were poor, but we did have food. Up until I was twelve we only had earth floors in our house and one large sleeping room for us all. I remember the excitement when we moved to a house in Paeroa with wooden floors, water coming out of a tap and a cooking stove instead of an open fire.

3. When I was very young we all had a number of chores to do for the whanau. We also helped milk the cows for my grandmother, she had a small herd and she knew them all individually, like humans. She would call them all individually by name for us to milk. I remember that our cousins used to tell us ghost stories, so we used to get frightened when we got up in the mornings to milk the cows.
4. Most of the work revolved around the garden. All of the whanau in our community had large gardens, and we were all taught as kids to go and help our aunts and grandmothers to do the work. All the kids joined in and the gardens produced riwai, corn, kumara, kamokamo, pumpkin, puha, melons and a large variety of other vegetables, as many as you could name. As kids we often did the weeding. For us, digging was done by hand as we had no plough.
5. The produce was shared around and shared amongst our community, and much of it was stored in rua. The rua were pits which we filled with piles of food covered with ferns and then on top of that covered with soil. When you needed food from the rua you could dig a small hole with your hand and put your arm through and feel around for some kumara or riwai, but you hoped you didn't find a rat because if you did "God bless you".
6. Our mother like our aunts and grandmother also loved flower gardens and shrubs. As mother always said "he kai mo te puku, he putiputi mo nga karu". When the red gladioli flowers came out, we knew that it was time for Christmas jelly. Mum would bring out bottled fruit. I remember the smell of burned sugar for boiled duff. My dad and uncles would make a big fire for the Christmas hangi and our granny used to invite swaggers she saw walking along the road in for Christmas.
7. So while we were very poor we were able to live off our gardens and the fruit trees, and there were many other foods we also gathered from the lands, rivers

and seas around us. We also went to the bush to gather kiekie for our mother to make ketes and whariki.

8. While at the time I can't remember having complaints, when I look back I do believe that there were some health problems going through our families. There were sixteen children in our whanau but five of them passed away through illness. My Dad himself died of tuberculosis in 1939. I was very lucky and was quite healthy really. I only had hepatitis for two weeks after eating watercress from below the Kawerau Paper Mill. We all kept everything very, very clean though and I think that helped for some of the diseases like typhoid.
9. I remember going to school at Tirohia, the teachers didn't like us to speak Te Reo. I believe this was just because they didn't understand. Everyone called me Vera even though my name is actually Uira. I didn't really mind that they couldn't pronounce my name because they added a 'V' I always thought that was "victory for me".
10. My name like many Maori names, was after an event or special incident. I was told that I was named after a flash of lightening which hit a wharf beside the boat of my father or the boat itself when he was in England during the First World War. I was born around that time.
11. At Paeroa I went to school until about standard three or four and left at about the age of fourteen.
12. I think I was lucky to be brought up with Te Reo. My parents spoke Maori most of the time. Many of the kids today have become scattered away in far lands and cities, and while they always come back for tangi and other special occasions, it is difficult for them to learn Te Reo or keep fluent. It seems these things get behind when people have to face the pakeha world.

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13. When I left school, jobs were very, very hard to get. In some ways it was always who you knew that would get you the job. When my father died, my aunt came from Waikato and took me to Auckland. I got a job at the rope and twine factory. I was only 14 at the time and I needed to be 16 to work at the factory. A relation of mine was a supervisor at the factory and she told me to change my age. That is how I got the job. I worked there for 8 months, but came home for a wedding and my mother didn't want me to go back to Auckland. So, I got a job pounding butter in the dairy factory. We all had many odd jobs and moved around to get work a lot. I was lucky, particularly when many Maori did not have jobs.
14. I stayed home during the War, because I was born with one deaf ear. I worked making camouflage nets through the Women's Auxiliary Forces. The Maori Tribal Committee of this area sent me to Auckland where I packed meat during the 'flush of the season'. However I returned after I had an accident at work.
15. From all this background this is why parents of our generation have pushed our kids to get an education. We just don't want them to face the same problems we faced.
16. Now when I look around there are a few young people with degrees and that learning, but I see that there are no jobs for them to come back to though.

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