

IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

**IN THE MATTER OF
WAITANGI ACT 1975**

THE TREATY OF

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

THE WAI 811 CLAIMS

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

THE MARUTUAHU CLAIMS

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF BILLY PETERS

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Billy Peters and I am 77 years young, being born in Thames in 1925, and spending most of my youth there. I am retired and currently reside in Chartwell, Hamilton.
2. I am the chairman of the management committee ("the committee") of Te Patukirikiri Iwi Incorporated being a member through bloodline descent of Patukirikiri. I am also a member through bloodline descent of the Marutuahu, consisting of Ngati Maru, Ngati Paoa, Ngati Whanaunga and Ngati Tamatera.
3. I spent 9 years primary education at the Thames South School then started my secondary learning period at the Thames High School in 1939. I sat the public service entrance examination in 1940 or 1941. I dropped out of High School in 1943 without any educational qualifications whatever and this bothered me not one little bit! However I later wished I had taken advantage of the scholastic opportunities then offered.
4. For a while I worked as a milk-delivery person at a dairy owned by the parents of one of my school friends and enjoyed the freedom of an existence, which did not include school work. It was wartime and I enjoyed the atmosphere created by the fact that I could get into the glamorous life of those days without the inhibiting influence of anything I did not like! A young man's thoughts in those days!
5. At the end of 1943 a friend and I went to Auckland ostensibly to join the Merchant Navy, but being young and impressionable we proceeded to have fun in the big city. It was not long before we both went our own ways. I think he joined the Army and I enlisted in the RNZAF. I served at various Air Force stations throughout the country in 1945 and at the end of the war I was posted to RNZAF Remuera.
6. I became part of an inspection unit, which travelled around the ex-Air force bases in the Pacific. We travelled on the old steamship "Matai" and our job was to identify and label all items left in buildings and

hangars such as aircraft engines, rifles, small arms, ammunition and other aircraft components such as airscrews etc, for later collection and return to New Zealand. I duly served at the flying boat base at Lathuala Bay, Fiji. I was released from the RNZAF in 1955.

7. I then joined the Department of Lands and Survey shortly after my release and served 30 years with that state department. I have been retired for 17 years.
8. My eldest son Stewart Konui Peters joins me in the preparation and presentation of this submission. He is the Treasurer of our Iwi Incorporation and resides in Flagstaff, Hamilton.

Te Patukirikiri Iwi Incorporated

9. The committee holds regular meetings in the old Hospital Buildings at Coromandel ("the hospital"). These meetings take place every six to eight weeks or so, to discuss Iwi responsibilities and plan future policy.
10. As part of this claim, Wai 811, our relevant whakapapa shows us as descendants of the Patukirikiri chief Pita Taurua, My Great-Grandfather, who died in 1872. His son Wiremu Pita Taurua, assumed the mantle of his father, once he came of age.
11. One of their Pa was called Arapawa located at Koputauaki, a few kilometres north of Coromandel, while another was Koputauaki itself however, sadly no trace of these Pa remain although a meticulous search of the high country in the locality will find some evidence of their existence.
12. Patukirikiri is one of the acknowledged tangata whenua of the Coromandel Township, which mantle is sometimes exclusive to certain areas and sometimes shared with our cousins of the Marutuahu in other areas of the environs, or both. In this connection the Iwi has the use of the Hospital and out buildings for any relevant purpose it may choose.
13. A few years after the hospital closed down in 1994 by the then Government, Patukirikiri entered into a lease arrangement with Health

Waikato, who have since been succeeded by Knight-Frank for the Minister in Charge of Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations, Office of Treaty Settlements (OTS).

Patukirikiri Generosity

14. Pita Taurua and his son displayed dignity and generosity in gifting land in the Coromandel Township area for health and religious purposes. Their contribution included land gifted to the Anglican and Methodist Churches. It is easy to be aware that their action at that particular time was very much appreciated by all, but there is no doubt that their extreme benevolence has been almost completely forgotten in this day and age.
15. We understand that the gift of land to the Churches was subject to a condition that any members of Patukirikiri would be interred free of charge once the Church was built and the Cemetery was established. As most of the Iwi members had to leave the Coromandel area in search of work in other places once our lands and resources were gone, the only ones who were able to take advantage of this condition were the generations of Pita Taurua and his son Wiremu, whom are both buried in the Anglican Church Graveyard.
16. I was present at the interment of Wiremu Taurua, who died in 1936, and lies buried in the same fenced enclosure with a suitable and prominent remembrance stone, as his father. It is said there are also others of our Iwi buried in the graveyard of the Anglican Church.
17. In the case of the Hospital property it has been proved that the land was gifted by Pita free of charge, but there does appear to be evidence available that strongly suggests some manipulation on the part of the Crown has taken place. The Deed of Transfer from Pita to the Crown has been made to look as though the land was sold. This is very definitely not the case.
18. My nephew William Kapanga Peters presented precise evidence refuting this under the umbrella of the Wai 100 claim.

Grievance

19. Our Iwi has grievances related to the lands of our ancestors being taken by the Crown, and the hardship for us as a result of those resources being stripped from our control.
20. When I was younger, there was a custom at that time in the communities to look down on Maori families and the Peters family was no exception. Although our neighbours caused no bother to us generally speaking, there were instances of what I now realise to be differential racial bias. These came to light mainly during my school times, from school pupils, but rarely from adults.
21. I can recall when the primary school headmaster after inspecting a job he had set me, castigated me for not doing it right and ended with the words *"don't come at your Maori tricks here!"* However most of the racist jibes came from school pupils, both male and female. I have to say though, that there were more good friends to my family and me, than the ones described otherwise.
22. We had no land remaining in the township of Coromandel thus we lived at Thames among our Ngati Maru whanau. We would visit our whanau at Papa Aroha and also visit our relatives of Ngati Tamatera there and also at Paeroa.
23. I remember my mother taking me to visit old Makoare Te Ahuroa at Papa Aroha, and visit some of our relatives, who were fluent in all forms of Maoritanga, however my brother and I were not taught these things by our mother for fear of her sons being punished. We weren't even allowed to speak our own language, or to be Maori.
24. Our elders would speak of our land loss and discuss matters associated to this. I was young and didn't pay too much attention and preferred to explore the area. Recently I returned to this place, however it is gone now, and so has our land.

25. I also remember "Old Mac" as Makoare was known by, when he came to Thames periodically in the 1930's to attend the Maori Land Court which was on the corner of Pollen and Grey streets. The court was next to Kennedy's house (the local police constable) and opposite The Warwick Arms' and 'Shortland Hotels'. He stayed with us on these occasions at our home in Heale Street in Parawai and I recall him as a happy old gentleman with a smile for everybody.
26. Sadly I never got to speak to him much as he mainly conversed with my grandparents in Maori and I never knew what they were saying. Anyway my thoughts at the time were that I wasn't interested in speaking Maori, as I was a child living in a European environment.
27. It was very difficult in those days and times were hard. These hard times for our people are the result of our land and resource loss, of our treatment in a society that did not appreciate or want us as a people included in that society, for if they had, we would not have suffered as greatly as we have.
28. People may well ask why I did not take an interest in my Maoritanga much earlier. Well, all I can say is that I had no desire to be involved in something that I was taught to be repressive and out of date. I was of the opinion that my only interest in life was providing for my family the Pakeha way. I have done this, but in the early 1970's I became aware of my Iwi interest and decided this should be investigated, studied and followed up.
29. I say to the Crown to give us all a fair go and return our lands and resources to us so that we can grow as a community. Pay for the past deeds of your predecessors and your ancestors.

MAKE THINGS RIGHT!

Kia ora koutou.