

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 LAURA HIKU ON
BEHALF OF THE CLAIMANTS**

1. My name is Laura Hiku and my marae is Tirohia. I belong to Ngati Hako but also to many of the iwi and hapu of Hauraki. I have three natural children and four fostered.
2. I was born the second daughter of Te Mamaru and Tiro Taupaki. I am a great grandchild of Paora Tuinga of Ngati Hako.
3. When I think of my life growing up in Tirohia everything centres around our community. I also remember that we were poor, but we did

always have food which we gathered from the lands around us. So things were very humble.

4. Our houses were especially humble. I remember, when I was about 10, I was extremely excited when we moved into a home with a wooden floor. We'd moved away for a while to follow my father's work but before then our house always had mud floors. We used to clean them by throwing water on them and then sweeping them with manuka brooms.
5. I think my parents did a very very good job bringing us up, they made good use of nearly everything we had. Mum always found uses for sacking and other materials from supplies. Sacking was good for bedding and clothing. She even used the champion flour bags and used caustic soda to get the dye out. But there were lots of things we didn't have. For example, I remember when I got my first pair of shoes. It was when I went to college at Te Aroha and I was 12 years old. I was very ashamed about that. Of the five of us, my 2 brothers, myself and my youngest sister all had a good education. My eldest sister left school in standard 6 so did not get a secondary education.
6. While we were very poor, in a way that didn't matter because there was always food around us. All of the whanau collected and gathered food from the bush, rivers and seas. All the whanau had extensive gardens as well.
7. Perhaps most important was that we shared everything amongst ourselves. Even our clothes. It was first up best dressed in our whanau. I think my mum, like a few others, was good at bartering and swapping kai with other people outside the community.
8. A lot of our food was gathered from the bush. All us kids and my mum used to gather nikau. We ate the core, and we used the leaves to

make kete. That weaving was quite fun. Some things we collected for the materials and some for food and others for health things. For example, we gathered kiekie and hauhere and in June we got tawhara when it was ripe, that was one of our chores. About 6 months later when the tiore was ripe (that is the pineapple plant) we'd collect heaps of that too. Mum use to get harore from the bush, but I thought it was really horrible stuff. We also gathered the roots of the King Fern which looked much like horses hoofs. Also the fern fronds known to us as piko piko.

9. There were also a lot of birds in the bush around Tirohia. I remember when I was young the old people were still eating kereru and tui and I've got to say that tui was the best eating bird. Oh, and then there were those turkeys from the Pakeha farm. I think my cousins were some of culprits that got them. I think the Pakeha farmer must have known.
10. While we got our water from the river and bathed in it, it was also a source of our food. We got lots of kaeo black pipis which were these huge shellfish that used to be in the river. You had to add heaps of salt and pepper because they were really tasteless. I wasn't really too keen on them, but I loved the heaps of eels we caught and the brown trout and whitebait. We would dry the whitebait on corrugated iron and we used heaps and heaps of salt and pepper to keep the flies away.
11. I really enjoyed our holidays at Whiritoa. We gathered lots of pipi and mussels then and dried them on flax cords to bring back home.
12. I remember some of the other things we grew or gathered from our land. We used to cook paua till there was no liquid left then it could be added to other foods much later on. There was always a little bit of beef, huahua, mutton birds and sometimes lamb. We always gathered

heaps of watercress and sometimes also harore which was a fungus like mushroom growing on the side of a tree.

13. When I was a kid the bulk of our food came from the gardens though. My mum was a marvelous gardener. She had heaps of crops, the potatoes and kumara were the most common. Again everything was shared amongst the different whanau in our area. Above all we lived as a community and our focus was our marae.
14. Even though we didn't have much money we had no complaints because kai was plentiful in Tirohia then.
15. The marae had always been a real meeting place for our community. A lot of sports and other events were organised from there. In particular I remember as a young one going to the dances which were organised by the kaumatua, all the kids were there. We danced to the piano and piano accordion and then afterwards we'd have a supper of tea and a biscuit. All that for two and six pence for the marae. Back then we didn't dance in the dark with dim lights, the kaumatua always turned the lights up very bright to make sure that they could keep an eye on us. We were always very good.
16. I remember at the marae in the 1940s we often had a tunu tunu which was a barbecue on a large sheet of iron. It was a great way of grilling all our food.
17. Whenever we had hui or tangi at the marae we all pitched in with the work and some of us had particular jobs. I always had to organise the central heating system. We'd burn a large fire of manuka and at the same time we filled a large metal wash tub with dirt. Then we gathered the embers from the fire and laid them on top. This always kept the wharenuī very warm and you could stir the embers a bit further to heat it up even more.

18. Back in the old days our health wasn't so good though. A lot of the kids had hakihaki (which were sores that weeped), raupa (which was when skin dried out and cracked), and kutu (head lice). I myself was quite lucky with all these things. My dad was the chemist of the whanau, every Saturday morning he always made a flax drink which was to purify our blood and help digestion. Even though the stuff tasted really bad it was okay because afterwards we were always given a barley sugar and that was my only chance of ever getting a lollie. Some plants my dad boiled up for us to drink to keep our kidneys clear, and one we used to bathe in so that I never had hakihaki. We used kerosene for kutu. A bald head was sure guarantee that a kid had had kutu.
19. I remember too, whenever we came back from the marae my aunty would clean our feet with a scrubbing brush made from a corn cob if they were too dirty. Man alive we didn't dare let our feet get dirty.
20. In my time, getting a job seemed to be about who you knew and what contacts you had. If you got a job you know you were lucky to get it. You would go for any job you could get. My whanau ended up moving about a lot to get jobs, and moving from job to job and contract to contract. We've been pushing the next generations to get a better education and try and break the cycle.
21. While te reo was spoken at the home a lot, when we went to school we weren't allowed to speak at all. The teachers used to get very annoyed if we spoke it I think they thought we were saying bad things about them and they couldn't understand it. Many of us and our kids can't speak te reo today, I think it was because in our time if you knew Pakeha things then you could get on with life. Te reo seemed to be getting lost in the Pakeha world.

22. While our kids do come home a lot for tangi, many are now scattered around the world having gone overseas and into other cities to look for jobs.
23. One of my kids is trying to learn te reo now, late in life. I've got him reading Te Paipera Tapu or the Maori Bible because it has one page in english and one in te reo. I think this is good, we all grew up steeped in religion whether it was Ratana, Anglican, Methodist or some other denomination.
24. The speaking of te reo amongst the latest generations is much better though. All of our people here have put a lot of time into kohanga reo and kura kaupapa, but we do have to keep hold of our own Hauraki dialect I think some of the local schools are accepting te reo much more now and many are teaching courses in it too.
25. Although we were poor, our lives were simple and safe, and I have many fond memories of those times. Now our problems are so much more complicated and our people are not equipped to cope with them without help.
26. To close, I would like to pay my parents my most humble thanks and aroha for having raised us all to grow to become a Hauraki kuia.

Kia ora koutou katoa.