

IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL WAI 2500
WAI 1344

IN THE MATTER OF The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

AND

IN THE MATTER OF The Military Veterans Kaupapa
Inquiry

AND

IN THE MATTER OF A claim by Turi Stone, Tamati
Pohatu, Most Reverend Archbishop
Brown Turei and Nolan Raihania.

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF
DESMA KEMP RATIMA
DATED 14 AUGUST 2015

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MAY IT PLEASE THE TRIBUNAL

“What happens within the realm of Tumatauenga, belongs to Tumatauenga and must return to Tumatauenga”.

- [1] Desma Kemp Ratima W760538, retired from New Zealand Army after 27 years’ service in the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1 in the Corp of Royal New Zealand logistics, also known as “Duke of Yorks Own”.
- [2] I am Maori and descend from Ngati Kahungunu, Rongowhakaata and Ngai Tamanuhiri.
- [3] This brief of evidence outlines how I as Maori endeavoured to maintain my heritage while serving in the Army with distinction. At first being a soldier was sufficient, however as my service in the Army continued a desire to be recognised as Maori including the values of our warrior culture became more important. These were sentiments expressed to me by other soldiers including those of the 28th Maori Battalion. This korero is how the army’s failure to recognise and cater for Maori culture, beliefs and customs impacted on Maori soldiers.

Tapu and Whakanoa

- [4] Encounters on the battlefield are preceded with karakia and meditation. This is widely known among Maori as the tikanga of Tumatauenga. During battle the warrior is within the realm of Tumatauenga and when one returns from war there is a need to cleanse from the effects of Tumatauenga and from the state of tapu. Again a tikanga exists that includes karakia and washing with water. At the time I joined the Army no such protocols existed nor was there any consideration for such tikanga.

- [5] Members of the Maori Battalion expressed to me their burden and sadness of having to carry the world of Tumatauenga back to their homes and families. They said to me, 'what happens under Tumatauenga belongs to Tumatauenga and needs to return to Tumatauenga'. They all knew it had to happen but there was nowhere to make that happen. This became the genesis for the Army to build a marae: to have a place where they could come to take deliver and off load to Tumatauenga that which belonged to Tumatauenga. That's the tikanga.
- [6] When I enlisted Waiouru had established a Marae. It was called Rongamaraeroa o Nga Hau E Wha. It had the support of Mana Whenua Ngati Rangi and Tuwharetoa. It was a collection of old army barracks that were to be demolished but instead the army gave the buildings to the marae committee at the time. It was a series of buildings connected to become one building. The dining area was separated from the Whare Tipuna by a decorated curtain and the foundations were concrete piles dug into uneven, waterlogged terrain which were sinking and caused the floor to be uneven and spongy. Initially the idea was to complete the existing Marae, build a separate Whare Tipuna, compact the foundations and have a Marae that could be used in its traditional role. It was not a New Zealand *Army* marae but a marae for Maori. At first it was about Maori soldiers and their families having a Marae to meet their cultural needs. This quickly changed.
- [7] The marae at the time was run by a dedicated committee of Maori civilians and soldiers who volunteered their time and the marae was mostly used for accommodation and church services.

The Beginning and Instrumental People

- [8] I was posted to Waiouru from Trentham by a strange set of circumstances which when reflected upon later could only be described as spiritual. Following my arrival in Waiouru, I was given charge of the Marae and made Chairman of the Marae committee by the retiring Chairman Joseph Pohatu. This began an intense period of learning, challenges (spiritual and real), relationship building (negotiations) between myself and

my small team with the NZ Army, Maori soldiers, Maori Battalion, Mana Maori and non-Maori. We started in 1994, the Marae was blessed and the Whare Tipuna named and blessed in October 1996.

[9] After my arrival in Waiouru and having received the keys to the Marae buildings I went to the Marae for a visit. I opened the front door and was greeted by spider cobwebs across the entrance and as I pulled the door upon squeaky hinges, a very cold breath emitted from the whare. I quickly closed the door, locked it and went for a walk around the building and as I stepped across an open drain into an open carpark adjacent to the location of the Marae I saw a vision of a Wharenuī facing the mountains, glistening and shining and immediately I began to feel emotionally strong, happier and had an immense desire inside me to build the Marae I had seen in the vision. But it meant that we had to move the Marae. It was the first of many spiritual events that I would experience throughout the journey of establishing a new marae for our soldiers.

[10] Immediately I began to identify people in the Army that might be excited by the challenge to build a Marae for our people. My first thoughts were to speak with Captain Wiremu Gray (Bill) QSM, Padre. He was to be my Spiritual/kaumatua advisor. Peter Tamepo Waiouru Camp RSM had carpentry skills, Colonel Roger Mortlock would be the Army and senior officer, Henare Matahe builder and Philip Pompey the part time carver. I had no skills, tikanga, reo or whanau support and I turned to these rangatira for help. I wanted to speak like my Koro Tom Dennis (mum's Dad – Rongowhakaata) so I had to learn all these things at a fast pace and they were the ones who taught and guided me.

Greater Recognition Overseas

[11] 1RNZIR Singapore had a kapahaka team composed of Maori soldiers and their families. They were known as the Haka Bludge and everyone wanted to join because they would get flown to places to support NZ VIP's visiting the region. It became the ropu tautoko

for Asia. The Battalion had a stage representing a whare with carvings and a koruru. VIP visitors got the full welcome overseas, but not in New Zealand. You're closer to your culture when you're further away from it: we did more 'Maori stuff' when we were away from New Zealand than when we were actually in New Zealand.

- [12] Tony Birkes, Chief of Defence Force, remarked to me once that seeing soldiers doing the haka was like turning on the light switch. Prior to the haka Maori soldiers could be seen laughing and being quite casual, then at the shout of 'kia mau!' these same soldiers would be transformed into a disciplined unified whole, committed to the act of haka and *te ihi me te wehi* would explode. He commented that he wanted to package this effect and that commanders would want this effect from all their soldiers. I called this "the light switch" effect. But he only observed a very small part of our culture and there was much more he was going to see.

Initial Struggles

- [13] There were several battles that we had to fight and win simply to get the marae project off the ground. There was the battle within the army itself. We had to win the hearts of the General, the Brigadiers and senior officers and then we had to fight with Maori soldiers, many of whom didn't want it. The officers were afraid that it would open a can of worms that they couldn't control.
- [14] The Army was committed to one Army family, which meant it didn't recognise soldiers as Maori, Pakeha, male or female. Once dressed in your 'green skin' you were seen as soldier and soldier (w) or soldier lumpy. There was no way to identify you as Maori and there was a huge struggle to remove the 'green skin'. No one had a culture, identity or sexuality.
- [15] We went out almost every weekend from 1994 through until 1996 to obtain support and commitment for what we were doing and we were comforted knowing that what we

were doing had the support of Maori throughout the country, including veterans. We also sought extra funding to assist the marae committee in completing the task. Initially we had the Marae committee had fundraised almost \$14,000.00 by that stage but we were going to need much more to build and complete the New Zealand Army Marae.

[16] Other than time off and the use of a vehicle we were self-funded. We relied on whanau, koha, and friends to provide a bed and food. Each time we returned to Waiouru we were always excited by our achievements and the encouragement we were receiving from A company in the North through to D company in the South.

[17] We met Parekura Horomia while he was working in Wellington before he became a Member of Parliament. We also met with Koro Wetere MP and Wira Gardiner when he was at Te Puni Kokiri to ask them for their help, which they all agreed to do. We spoke with Hepi Te Heuheu asking for his support for building the new Marae and he agreed and provided the use of those attending a hammer hand course, led by Tula Wall. They stayed in Waiouru while building the Whare complex.

[18] Wira Gardiner gave us a Te Puni Kokiri check for \$10,000 and we were over the moon. We returned to Waiouru happy campers only to be called to the Colonels office for an 'interview without coffee' and directed to return the cheque. We got a telling off and we're told that we should never have met with any of the Maori politicians. So we had to look at other options.

More Fighting

[19] Another experience worthy of sharing concerned the carvings of the marae and tikanga involving women. The kaitiaki of the carvings declared that he would not give the carvings over to the house if women were to be involved or if they walked in front of the whare while it was being moved. He declared that he would burn them rather than give them over to the Marae committee. This of course was unacceptable so I arranged

for the carvings to be taken out of his possession and stored until required to adorn the whare. But the damage had already been done. The threat had been made. The next day a scorpion tank overturned and the commander was killed and two other people were seriously burned (they are still fighting for compensation). All three of these people were all part of this man's mau rakau team.

- [20] The night before we were scheduled to move the whare there was a fire inside it. On one part of the whare I had my tool belt hanging up and on the other side was this person's tool belt. The part of the whare that had his tool belt was burnt, but the side where my tool belt was hanging was completely untouched. The fire brigade came and found that there was no accelerant: no power was connected and the cause of the fire was unknown. As I left the whare he came in and I said to him, "Your mess, you clean it up" and he did. I saw the fire as a spiritual intervention which provided a reminder that this project had a spirituality about it that would become more difficult to explain and understand as the project progressed. It also had a cleansing and cauterising effect.
- [21] My mother was concerned for me when all this was going on and asked if I was ok? I told her that Wiremu was an Anglican priest and he was looking after me. I knew the kaupapa was good and that I'd be ok.

Moving the house - 1994

- [22] The next day I knew that it was going to be an awesome day because so many soldiers had turned up to help with the move. We had calculated that we needed 270 soldiers but on the preparation day only 100 men turned up. On this day we were to separate the whare from the other buildings and prepare the building for the move in the morning. On the day of the move with the full contingent of soldiers required and positioned the Commander said, 'Prepare to lift – lift!' and just like that it went up. The soldiers

literally picked up the whare and moved it on their shoulders. Archbishop Whakahuihui Vercoe led the karakia. My mother was doing the karanga. The move was spiritual.

[23] When the marae was positioned we were challenged and we were told that we were boys playing with fire and that our house was facing the wrong direction. Ngati Rangi said that it should have been facing east. In reply to that I said that I had taken a compass and driven around Lake Taupo to obtain a compass reading of the marae of Tuwharetoa. I discovered that many of their marae actually faced their sacred maunga. The whare in the vision faced the maunga too. Secondly I said we were soldiers and that as soldiers we work to camouflage and to hide our face from the sun. Thirdly I said we did not want to turn our backs on the sacred maunga Ruapehu and Ngaruhoe. Lastly I said that the backs of our soldiers needed the warmth of the sun. Nothing further was said and it was left alone.

Completion

[24] After the whare was moved and all the renovations were complete it still wasn't finished as there was still a vital component missing. We went to the desert and found a rock, had a karakia and craned this rock onto a truck and took it back to camp. The purpose of the rock was to become the rock where soldiers off loaded their hakihiaki from war and the rock was to receive and keep those hakihiaki. This was all part of the whakanoa process. It was now complete and it was 1996.

Naming the Whare

[25] When it comes to naming a whare you normally ask the people. If there is more than 1 name the question gets asked again until a clear decision is made. Ta Hepi gave the name. When the question was asked what the name of the whare was he replied and

then the question was asked again to which all the soldiers repeated the name of the whare.

[26] Te Whare Tu Taua o Tumatauenga was the name of the meeting house. The wharekai name Te Rau Aroha – the Leaf of Love, came from the truck that looked after the soldiers in Egypt which was the kai van. That's the Maori Battalion connection again.

[27] Ngati Rangi did the blessing and the Maori Queen opened it. Just by chance the Maori Queen happened to put her hand on the only spot of the whare that still had wet paint and she got paint on her hand.

Ngati Tumatauenga

[28] The name Ngati Tumatauenga was a name that only Maori used in reference to the army and the name only stuck after the marae was opened. After that the army itself started using the name.

[29] The navy wanted a marae too and fronted up with a million dollars but it had a different kaupapa. The marae there is on Tainui and Ngati Whatua land and reflects their tikanga. At Waiouru the kawa is Ngati Tumatauenga. The kawa is paeke because at the time there were not many Te Reo speakers in the Army and paeke only requires one person to uphold the mana of the Paepae.

The Return of the Soldiers

[30] Following the opening of the Marae the first ceremony was held in October 1996 and the Maori Battalion were the first to come back, then the Vietnam companies and then the rest. They all came back to off load their haki on to this rock and this was the only ceremony available to them within the army. I know that some had a whakanoa process on their own marae, but something had to be missing for them to undergo

another whakanoa process on the army grounds. I think for many this was the right place to whakanoa because I think the army is special: it is the only specific ope taua so the off load needs to go back there. That's the difference. And this was the kaupapa for this whare: to whakanoa.

[31] When the Maori Battalion came back we would buy them whiskey. If we kept buying they kept talking and they would talk late into the night and we loved listening to them.

Further Change: Uniform

[32] The marae was only the beginning of change in the army. The uniform at the time was based on the British army and we said it needed a Maori context. The Queen's Ensign had 3 lions on top of crossed swords. We said one should be a taiaha and it was changed. The Sam Browne symbol leadership worn by Officers and Senior Warrant Officers had its origins from the British. A beautiful sash was designed and approved to be worn by Officers. It featured a Maori design on gold and red and was now worn by the Officers as ceremonial dress.

A Place for All

[33] When the marae was completed the ordinary Pakeha soldier thanked me saying, 'now I have a marae'.

[34] The Singapore army came over and 3 of their men died in exercises and they didn't know where to put them. They went to the marae which by then was viewed as a place for warriors, all warriors regardless of race, gender or nationality. The whare unified them and still does. When the head of the Singapore army came to Waiouru he was blown away. He rubbed all the carvings. When he left he made sure that every time Singapore soldiers come to Waiouru they pay their respects to the whare and they reconnect to the warrior code.

The protocols

[35] The marae meant that new protocols were brought into the army which I think the army has forgotten about. For example we brought in the Mauri stone and karakia. We went to the Whangaehu river at night and retrieved rocks which we had blessed and we put these rocks into kete. When the army was going to Bosnia the soldiers came to the whare along with their wives and we had karakia. It was very emotional and we poured all that wairua and aroha into those rocks and they became mauri stones filled with those elements and wairua.

[36] Those rocks were put into kete to be taken with them and put in a prominent place where they could be seen at Bosnia. Those rocks were meant to be brought back from Bosnia and put next to the hakihaki rock at Waiouru. But this hasn't been done and I don't know why. Each ropu that goes away, they were to get their mauri stones and when they come back they were meant to put their stones next to the hakihaki rock. There should be a wall of these stones by now but there isn't.

The Aftermath

[37] One week after the opening Bill and I were posted to Mount Wellington, Auckland for our 'own safety'. There was fear that Maori would take over, just like when the Maori Battalion came back. It ruined our careers. It was a nowhere job and damaging for us both. But we wouldn't have changed a thing.

[38] You need to have peace, but you don't just arrive at peace, you have to work at it and the whare has helped many people to obtain that peace. We have done all we can do to protect the army and the soldiers but now the army has to use the tikanga that we've given it. Our tikanga, kawa, values and belief systems all help us to arrive at that peace

because it is part of who we are as Maori. Having a place to return that which belongs to Tumatauenga to Tumatauenga has helped many soldiers arrive at peace.

Desma Kemp Ratima (Warrant Officer Class One RNZLR retired)