

**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.

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**BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF WIRANGI WIREMU 'BILL'**  
**WHAITIRI**

**DATED 23 AUGUST 2015**

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## **MAY IT PLEASE THE TRIBUNAL**

[1] My name is Wirangi Wiremu Bill Whaitiri. I'm Rongo Whakaata and I'm from Manutuke. I was brought up by my grandmother, Mere Kingi who had a moko kauae.

[2] I had 3 Uncles who were my mother's brothers who were all Maori Battalion. Josh Pohatu, the eldest, he was brought up by Turi Carrol. Haripa Pohatu who was also known as Haripa Ferris. He was also K Force. And Dan Pohatu, he was the youngest. He was also known as Raniera. My whanaunga, Dave Pohatu spoke about his brother, Dooley. Dooley was my brother as well. We had the same father but different mothers. Dan was killed on the same day as Dooley and at the same place: Faenza. Dan is buried at Forli and I don't know why buried separate from each other.

### **Life at Manutuke**

[3] We were poor but we had our kumara maara and we used the river extensively. Manutuke and Muriwai were very close back then and we were always sharing kai with each other. We had our river and Muriwai had the sea. We would exchange tuna for crayfish and Muriwai was the only place you could get karengo.

[4] I've always had a close connection to Muriwai. My Nanny Ehau helped bring me up at Bartlett's place. Dave's father, Matene use to take me down to Young Nick's Head and teach me whaikorero, pepeha and whakatauki. His wife, Wharengaio would yell out, 'stop that mahi, you'll go porangi'. Matene was an expert orator.

[5] Today I think Manutuke and Muriwai have grown apart and I think it's because we don't have many old people left at either Manutuke or Muriwai to tell them about these things. I hope this korero reminds them of it and helps bring them back together again.

[6] The men leaving had an enormous impact on Manutuke. Just like Muriwai the women and the children had to do the work because we had no men. This included women speaking on the marae too. That's the impact that the war had on our tikanga and our way of life.

[7] I remember the tangi we had for those who died overseas. The whole community came together at these tangi. I clearly remember thinking that these men had paid the supreme sacrifice and part of me felt a need to play my part as well. You could say that part of it felt like an obligation to pay back those whanaunga of mine who served in the Maori Battalion.

[8] I remember talking with the Maori Battalion when they came back. They didn't say much about the war and often just kept to themselves. When I came back from Korea I understood why.

### **Enlisting for Korea**

[9] I was a native speaker of Te Reo and I was sent to Te Aute college to learn to speak English to help me get a job. During my last year at school the Korean conflict started and I remember thinking even then that I would go to Korea.

- [10] My first job was working at the freezing works but Darcy Ria who was Maori Battalion said it was a waste of my education so I got a job at Maori Affairs in Gisborne working with him. From there I moved to the Department of Research in Hamilton and it was there that I got the urge to enlist, so I did. I didn't tell anyone that I had enlisted and when I came home I was actually on final leave. When my Nanny found out that I had enlisted she cried. She tried her best to get me to change my mind. I told her not to worry and that I was going on a holiday. My mother didn't know either. The first time my mother found out was when she got a letter from me from Korea!
- [11] When I was training I got into a fight with Pakeha from Korea home on furlough. I was reported to the Major who said to me, 'Whaitiri, if you want to fight you can get on that plane tomorrow'. The next day I was off to Korea. The plane was the last of the Qantas flying boats, the Sunderlands. We flew to Australia, then to Japan and then to Korea.
- [12] The Padre was Sam Rangiehu, he was Maori Battalion. We were part of his kapa haka group and we entertained the Americans and the film stars.
- [13] The first job I got as soon as I got off the plane was a pallbearer. The flag was draped over these caskets and I had to carry them. The flag for me is a symbol. It reminds me of the soldiers. I fought for the flag.
- [14] I played for the New Zealand Army British Commonwealth Rugby team 3 times in Japan.
- [15] I was in Korea for 3 years and 71 days. I was happy to get back.

## **Post Korea**

[16] When I came back my first job was shearing for Dawson Jones. Then I became a freezing worker at Kaiti, Linton, Palmerston North and Whakatu until it closed down in 1986. At the time there was an advert calling for native speakers to become teachers so I went to Palmerston North and started at Karamu High School in 1987 and I've been there ever since. Today I'm a kaumatua for the school. I also work with those who may have whakamomori issues.

[17] I know there have been veterans who were handicapped who took their own lives. Some take time to settle down after the army and some won't change their ways. I don't think civilians fully appreciate what soldiers go through, only soldiers know. That's why I came to learn why the Maori Battalion kept to themselves after the war. I didn't talk much about the war when I got back and I didn't talk to my kids or mokos about Korea. The mokos don't bother to ask me about Korea, I think that's because they only see Papa the Teacher, not Papa the Soldier. But every year I take my mokos to the top of Lone Pine Hill in Taradale on ANZAC day, every year, we never miss. Then we have breakfast and go to the Maori celebrations.

[18] Civilians don't understand the nature of the conflict. But nor do soldiers when they enlist. The Army, they prepare you to fight, but they don't prepare you psychologically for fighting. Nor do they prepare you for when you finish fighting. The army needs to fix this, if they haven't already.

[19] When I came back I had a heck of a time getting access to all the things that I was entitled to medically. I had to go and see so many different people and it would have been so much easier if there was just one place that you had to go to but that wasn't the case when I got out. I even saw Craig Foss, the Minister for Veterans Affairs

about it. Today I think I'm getting everything I'm entitled to, but that's mainly because of my wife as she makes sure I get everything I'm due. I haven't met a single soldier who doesn't have some type of injury from war and for some reason, many Maori just didn't know that they were entitled to things and we often went without for a long time.

[20] Today I have titanium knees, titanium hip, need a hearing aid and am losing my eyesight. This is all from Korea.

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Bill Whaitiri

Manutuke