

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

WILLIAM THOMAS ‘BILL’ GRAY

DATED 14 AUGUST 2015

Te Mata a Maui Law

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MAY IT PLEASE THE TRIBUNAL

- [1] When Dad died we didn't say nice things to him at his tangi. He deserved a 21 gun salute but all he got from us was a 21 bum salute. Looking back and knowing what I know now, I know he didn't deserve that. But we didn't know that at the time. We felt that way because he hit Mum and we saw the violence first hand. We all sat under the shadow of silence for years and for years the violence stayed behind closed doors. But it happened. Some of my whanaunga won't talk about their experiences and what their Dad's did and that is their choice. But we don't make it better by keeping it behind those doors.
- [2] He was always drinking and the money that was meant to feed us was spent at the pub. Bread and tea for breakfast. Bread and tea for lunch. Bread and tea for dinner. Sometimes pork fat, bread and tea. We thought Dad was an alcoholic but I realise now that he wasn't. It was his rongoa and he didn't have anything else.
- [3] Dad became distant after the war. Dad came home and tried his best to deal with his traumas. He didn't know how to deal with things or how to get help. With all this going on we the kids were mentally affected by it all too. We had no direction and we had no one to turn to and we tried our best to cope.
- [4] Little did we realise that what he was doing was the result of what he had gone through. I can say that because I'm a soldier too and now I have a greater understanding of his experiences. It doesn't make it right, but I understand it now.
- [5] Dad would push us away as kids and I just wish I had the opportunity to get to know him better. The war took that away from my family and I.

- [6] Our men, I remember when crop dusting planes would fly overhead they would drop to the ground for cover thinking they were enemy planes.
- [7] I am angry about the rehab blocks and what happened to land from Tolaga that was taken by the Crown for the rehabilitation of soldiers. The land that was taken was given to Pakeha. How come? Wharekaka. Tauwharepara. Mangatuna. The Crown set that land aside, all Tolaga land, Maori land and none of the Maori soldiers from Tolaga got a single acre. How come?
- [8] Life is in the seed but the power is in the soil. I'm part of the soil. Our men were the seed. Those seeds became destroyed by a war that didn't belong to us.
- [9] When C Company Memorial House was opened and I saw those boys dressed in those uniforms I realised there and then that just like these boys, my father and the rest who went, they too were just boys. How do you expect boys to be able to go to war and come back and cope as if nothing had happened? The truth is you can't.
- [10] Our family has a long history of serving in the New Zealand army. My grandfather was George Haere and he was a pioneer. He went to war thinking that he would fight but instead he was used as a labourer. For him it was degrading and it had an impact on him and on our family in terms of mana. George had two sons in World War II and one of them went on to Korea. Our whole family have served in the army so we know what we're talking about.
- [11] Those who were killed in action are recognised but what about those who came home to die, where is their recognition? That is how we feel about it: that many of them just came home to die. What we mean is they came home and got nothing. No land. No recognition. No help. No services. Nothing. Just sent home to die.

It's a horrible thing to say but that's how we feel how our men were treated. Sent home to die.

[12] This year we honoured all those from Hauiti who served from World War I onwards by putting all their names up on the memorial gates. All the men from Whangara to Tologa – they're all on there. We hope that the ideals that they fought for were not in vain: lest we forget.

[13] The kehua of violence has plagued many Maori households and we recognised that there is a connection to the war. So this year for ANZAC we made a point of putting the kehua of violence to rest. It was not easy, but trying to fix the problem meant that we had to acknowledge it so we put it out there. No more keeping it in the closet. It was our biggest ANZAC parade ever and in terms of the number of people who came out to support the kaupapa we stopped counting after we got passed 2000. You couldn't move in the town. The roads were blocked with people.

[14] I'm sorry that my Dad didn't get the 21 gun salute that he deserved. What he needed was to be re-educated and taught how to cope. Him and us.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM THOMAS 'BILL' GRAY, PADRE QSM, JP.