

Manfeild Park, the preferred venue for Ngāti Raukawa's Northern Waitangi Tribunal Hearings



Sixteen Ngāti Raukawa claimants representing 12 hapū claims and others filed a submission to the Waitangi Tribunal on 1 July 2019 around Tribunal arrangements to hear the Iwi's Te Tiriti o Waitangi claims in February 2020.

The final date for submissions on this matter are due in September but this article reflects the current thinking of the group.

The submission flags the prospect of scheduling the hearings from 17-28 February 2020. It is suggested that the groups with interests north of the southern loop of the Manawatū River should be heard first with the South to follow. This reflects the fact that the main Crown breaches to Te Tiriti occurred first in the North. The land losses to the North were a consequence of Native Land Court partition purchasing; the behaviour continued in the South (for example, the Kemp and Hunia interventions which followed similar lines).

It is anticipated that the North will open with an explanation of Ngāti Raukawa unity in diversity by reference to whakapapa and the processes by which the North and South were occupied. This will be followed by an overview of the claims common to many of the hapū. This would be followed by the technical witnesses for the balance of the two weeks. The claimants would be heard in clusters around Te Awahou, Hīmatanga, Parewahawaha, Manomano, Te Reureu, Kauwhata and Shannon.

The shaping of the Southern hearings has yet to be finalised but some initial thinking suggests that for the first week in the South, the Tribunal should hear the technical evidence as it relates to the South. There would need to be a larger time allocated for the Horowhenua block than currently provided. Following the technical evidence, the claims of the Horowhenua Muhunua blocks should be heard to address the competing Muaūpoko claims.

Over the next fortnight Ngāti Huia and Kereru hapū of the southern Manawatū River, the central hapū of Kupu and Manakau, the Ōtaki hapū could be heard with evidence on rangatiratanga drawing together the threads of all claims and presentations. Although this programme is subject to revision

before being finalised in September, what is important is that each hapū has the fullest possible opportunity to present their claims to the panel.

A number of Ngāti Raukawa claimants have indicated that the time currently allocated for the hearings by the Tribunal will be insufficient to provide for giving all of their evidence. The submission asked the Tribunal to consult with all claimants on this issue before finalising the schedule.

In preparation, the Wai-113 Forum have discussed the hearings being opened on northern Marae but that evidence be presented at the Manfield Stadium in Feilding. Forum co-convenor Dennis Emery says that “Manfeild sits on the original 1035-acre Kawakawa Block that was held by Ngāti Kauwhata. The Iwi leased the block to early settlers James Whisker and his brother-in-law John Hughey with approximately 500 acres going to each. They used this land to secure funds from the Bank of New Zealand in the 1890s to develop their plans but went broke. The land was then taken by the bank and the Iwi lost their legal interest in the site. Emery testified to a Select Committee that “Ngāti Raukawa still own 17 acres of land within the block but that the Trust have built over it”. This is the basis of one of the Ngāti Kauwhata Treaty claims.

The site eventually found its way on to the asset registers of the Manawatu District Council, the Feilding IA&P and the Manawatū Car Club before being deed to the Manfeild Park Trust. The Trust has developed the site to include residential homes and properties, stock yards, a petrol station and racecourse, the grand prix racing track and a huge equestrian stadium.

Part of the rationale for the desire to use Manfeild is that it means the tangata whenua can be fully focused on their presentations and supporting their whanaunga rather than hosting hundreds of people at the marae for weeks on end. Manfeild is a large facility that can be partitioned to suit the hearings and has all the equipment needed inhouse, their onsite caterers will work with our people to satisfy our people’s needs and there is lots of onsite, free carparking.

End

12 July 2019