

WAI 113A CLAIM: NEPIA TARATOA c1793-1863

A statement by the Reverend Dr Rangi Nicholson of Ngāti Raukawa.

He korōria ki te Atua i runga rawa,
He maunga-ā-rongo ki runga i te mata o te whenua,
He whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata katoa.

E aku rangatira, tēnā koutou katoa.

E te hunga mate, e ngā mātua, tūpuna kua ngaro atu i te tirohanga kanohi, moe mai i roto i te Ariki.

Āpiti hono tātai hono, te hunga wairua ki te hunga wairua, āpiti hono tātai hono, te hunga ora ki te hunga ora e mihi nei, e tangi nei.

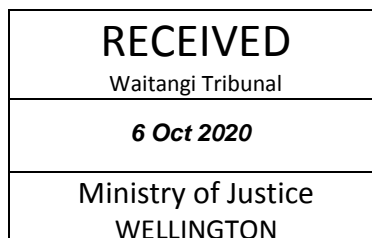
Tēnā anō koutou katoa.

1. This brief statement is made in support of the claim under WAI113A. For the information of the Tribunal, my full name is Wayne Rangi Nicholson. Most people know me as Rangi Nicholson. I am a member of the Ngāti Takihiku and Ngāti Ngārongo hapū of Ngāti Raukawa. I am a whāngai of Ngāti Huia and Ngāti Pareraukawa. He kāwai morimori. Through a marriage of almost thirty years to my late wife, Ellen Hirini, and through my children, Alex and Arohanui, as well as my grandchildren, I have a very close association with Ngāti Huia ki Matau. I also identify with Ngāti Toarangatira, Ngāi Tahu, Rangitāne, Ngāti Kuia and Ngāti Kahungunu. Finally, I am a nephew to the original WAI 113 claimants: Mr Whatakaraka Davis, Mr Te Maharanui Ranfurly Jacob and Mr Ngārongo Iwikātea Nicholson, each of whom encouraged me on my study and church journeys.

2. Ehara mā te kūmara e kōrero mō tōna ake reka. I do not find it easy to talk about myself.

However, I do recognise the need to locate myself in ways which are helpful for the Tribunal and future generations. I am an educator and sociolinguist who has spent over forty-five years

working in the area of Māori language revitalisation. I have taught at four universities and worked



with many iwi, church and government organisations. I am also a contextual theologian and a clergy person in the Māori Anglican Church – Te Hāhi Mihingare. My qualifications include a doctorate in contextual theology, a master's degree in language revitalisation and two bachelor's degrees in Māori language, linguistics and theology.

3. My past positions have included Acting Dean of Tikanga Māori at St John's Theological College based in Auckland, the international Anglican theological education and ministry formation institution, and Te Kei, Chief Executive, Te Whare Wānanga o Te Pihopatanga o Aotearoa, an Anglican Māori bachelor's and master's degree granting institution. I was also Te Manutaki, Principal, Te Wānanga Mihingare ki Te Manawa o Te Wheke, a ministry training school based in Rotorua.

4. I spent twelve years as a student, lecturer and Acting Tikanga Māori Dean at St John's Theological College. I am an ordained minister in the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. I was first ordained in Rangiātea Church, Ōtaki in 1994. I am currently a Minita-ā-Iwi, a priest, based at Rangiātea Church, in a district stretching from the Manawatū River to Paekākāriki in the south. I also work part-time as a post-graduate supervisor and examiner at Laidlaw Theological College, Auckland, and a part-time tutor at Te Wānanga o Raukawa, Ōtaki.

5. I am a member of the St John's Theological College Board of Governors, the John Kinder Theological Library Board, Te Waka Huia (Diocesan Council for Te Pihopatanga ki Te Ūpoko o Te Ika), Aotearoa ki Te Ūpoko o Te Ika Trust Board and the Ōtaki and Porirua Trusts Board.

6. As the Tribunal is aware, I attended the first week's hearing of the Claim at Hato Paora

College, Feilding. I was present not as a representative of a hapū of Ngāti Raukawa but as a Minita-ā-Iwi for Rangiātea Church. I was, and I am still, mindful of criticisms of the missionaries by some Ngāti Raukawa, namely, that “missionaries utterly failed to ‘protect’ iwi from settler greed or Crown duplicity.” (Te Hono ki Raukawa, 2019, Vol 1 p.399). My intention at the first hearing was to have a watching brief to see whether these criticisms were valid or not.

7. I believe that it is important for me as an ordained minister in the Anglican Church to maintain a neutral position. I do not wish to be seen to be siding with any particular group within Ngāti Raukawa. As a clergy person, I need to be able to minister to the whomsoever, whatever their political position might be. However, having said this, I am aware that the Reverend Octavius Hadfield, who was a friend of Nepia Taratoa, tried to be helpful to Ngāti Raukawa. My position is the same. More will be said about this matter further on.

8. I was approached by Ms Rachael Selby, a member of Te Hono ki Raukawa, to make a brief presentation before the Waitangi Tribunal about her great great great grandfather, Nepia Taratoa, who was a prominent rangatira of Ngāti Raukawa in the nineteenth century. I am very honoured to have this privilege to make this presentation. Initially, however, for the reasons outlined above and for tikanga Māori reasons, I encouraged Rachael to seek descendants of Taratoa who might be willing to undertake this task. In brief, no other person from the whānau was available. In terms of tikanga, I appreciate that it is not always easy to talk about your own tupuna, especially one who is highly respected, without looking as if you are bolstering up your own mana. It is also not easy to talk about the ancestor of a whānau that I have been strongly associated with for the last fifty years. Again, if I sound too complimentary, I will look as if I am complimenting myself by association. I will say more about why I accepted this invitation at the conclusion of this statement.

9. Although I have post-graduate qualifications, I have assumed, however, that part of the

reason why I have been invited to deliver this statement, is that in 1973 I did some research on Nepia Taratoa's life. I completed a brief dissertation on Nepia Taratoa, a research exercise presented for the completion of the requirements for the MAOR302 paper for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the Department of Anthropology at Victoria University of Wellington. This dissertation was submitted for examination in October 1973. I was 21 years old when I submitted this fledgling research effort.

10. Ehara taku toa I te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini. In the course of my research, I spoke with Mr Jock McEwen, then Secretary of the Department of Māori Affairs, who was considered to be knowledgeable in aspects of history regarding the southern North Island. I also conferred with Mr Ormond Wilson, the son of Sir James Wilson who wrote the book *Early Rangitikei* (1914). In addition, I also spoke with two historians at Massey University: Dr John Owens and Mr Graeme Butterworth. Another contact was Mr Ian Matheson, then Archivist for the Palmerston North City Council, who was able to share aspects of Rangitikei history. I am grateful to Ian and his wife, Lila, for their kind hospitality. None of these informants, however, was able to add substantially to the aspects of Taratoa's life which I was particularly interested in, namely, the last ten years of his life. I will outline these aspects later. Finally, I did spend time at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington viewing the available microfilmed records. My thanks to all these historians for their assistance.

11. A major highlight of my research process, however, was listening to my kuia, Aunty Atareti Jacob, also known more widely as Aunty Lucy. (As an aside, in the 1970s, it was then acceptable to call kuia and koroua, aunty and uncle, as a term of respect). Aunty Lucy, Ngāti Huia and Ngāti Pareraukawa, was a great granddaughter of Nepia Taratoa. She was, of course, a granddaughter of Erenora Taratoa, Nepia's daughter. Aunty Lucy was the youngest of fourteen children of Winiata

Pataka and Te Hapai (nee Nicholson). I am incredibly grateful for Aunty's support and the stories she shared. I should acknowledge that one of the Claimants, Mr Te Maharanui Ranfurly Jacob, known also more widely as Uncle Ran, is the son of Aunty Lucy. My grandmother's brother, Mr Sonny Sciascia was married to Aunty Lucy's daughter, Aroha.

12. My main advisor and mentor for this research exercise was my uncle, Uncle Iwikātea Nicholson, one of the Claimants for Claim WAI113. Uncle Iwikātea, or more informally, Uncle Iwi, Ngāti Huia and Ngāti Pareraukawa, is a first cousin to my father, Percival Te Āwhina Nicholson, known more widely as Nick Nicholson. They were both brought up as brothers by their grandparents, Howard Taparoto Nicholson (Ngāti Huia, Ngāti Pareraukawa and Ngāti Raukawa) and Akenahi Tamarana Tomlins (Ngāti Toarangatira, Ngai Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu) at the family homestead, "Porokaiaia," Poroutawhao, Levin. From the time I arrived from Christchurch in February 1971 to attend Victoria University, Uncle Iwikātea advised and mentored me as well as supported my studies. I should point out, however, that any errors in te reo Māori in the dissertation are entirely my own. At the time of writing this essay, I had been studying Māori language for two and a half years. I sincerely wish to acknowledge and to thank all those who helped me in this fledgling research effort. My apologies if I have omitted to mention any person by name who contributed to the dissertation.

13. I now turn to draw directly upon my own research as set out in my brief essay unless stated otherwise (Nicholson, 1973). It is estimated that Nepia Taratoa was born about 1793 in Maungatautari (Scholefield, 1940, 367). According to the whakapapa given to me by Uncle Iwikātea in 1973, Taratoa's parents were his father, Te Teke, and his mother, Te Au. His grandparents were Parewahawaha and Rangipumamao. Taratoa's other ancestors included Raukawa, Ngātokowaru and Huia. Taratoa married Pareautohe. His four children included Nepia II and

Erenora, the composer of the well-known pātere, *Poia atu taku poi*. Taratoa was undoubtedly one of the rangatira of Ngāti Parewahawaha. In 1827 Ngāti Parewahawaha migrated to Manawatū on the heke known as te kariri tahi. After discussions between Te Rauparaha and Te Whatanui, Rangitikei came under the mana of Taratoa. Taratoa lived on the southern side of the Rangitikei River at Maramahoea. Periodically, he also lived near the Manawatū River at Te Awahou, known today as Foxton.

14. Other commentators will present aspects of Taratoa's life to the Tribunal. I wish, however, to focus on his last ten years (1853-1863). Nepia Taratoa was by then a senior chief of Ngāti Raukawa, a kaumātua who was widely respected in the region of Rangitikei Manawatū and the Kāpiti Coast as well as other parts of Aotearoa New Zealand. In 1853 Taratoa agreed to be baptised by an Anglican missionary, the Reverend Richard Taylor. Given that there are no records of the Ngāti Toarangatira chiefs Te Rauparaha or Te Rangihaeata being baptised, this was a significant event. Taratoa was given the Christian name, Nepia, Māori for Napier. He was most probably named after the first Lord Napier who was known for his acts of bravery. Given his good character, including his integrity, his commitment to the gospel message of love and peace was undoubtedly sincere. As a result of Te Rauparaha's son, Tamihana, and his nephew, Matene Te Whiwhi travelling to Paihia, Bay of Islands, to seek a missionary, the Reverend Octavius Hadfield, the Anglican missionary, agreed to move to the Wellington region where he worked tirelessly to sow peace among warring iwi. It was Te Rauparaha who planted the seed of building Rangiātea Church, Ōtaki, where the first service was held in 1849. Taratoa would have been aware of Te Rauparaha's support for both the Church and Hadfield.

15. There are records of two letters which Taratoa wrote to Hadfield in 1860. In the first letter it is worth noting that Taratoa addresses Hadfield in this way: "E Hoa, e te Harawira tena koe" which

can be translated as “My friend, Hadfield, greetings.” Clearly there was a close friendly relationship between Taratoa and Hadfield. There was also considerable trust between them as evidenced by the second letter where there is mention of a letter that has arrived from Waikato informing Taratoa of Waikato’s intention to join in the Taranaki Wars. There is also criticism of the Governor’s role in this war. Hadfield tried to support Māori regarding land matters. He was a voice for Ngāti Raukawa to the Governor and Government Ministers in Wellington, as a result, he was vilified in the press. Eventually, Hadfield became the second Bishop of Wellington and then Archbishop of New Zealand.

16. In 1861 a Pākehā merchant, J.M.Cook, wrote to government authorities that “Nepia Taratoa the most influential man of the Ngāti Raukawa’s, has not openly declared himself Kingite; but there is no doubt that he has secretly done so to his own people, and it is my opinion, that immediately a blow were struck, he would come forward in his true colours.” (Cook, A.J.H.R., 1862, E-7: 28-29.).

17. Other commentators will, no doubt, explain why Taratoa felt constrained to openly declare his allegiance to the Kingitanga. It could be argued that the final lines in the pātere, *Poia atu taku poi*, were a relatively discreet way of conveying Taratoa’s support for the Kingitanga which openly opposed land sales, an issue close to Taratoa’s heart:

Ko Kingi Potatau ko Te Paea

Ko Matutaera e taoro nei

I te nuku o te whenua

Hei mana mō Niu Tireni

E poi e.

This version of the final lines of *Poia atu taku poi* was given to me by Aunty Lucy.

18. Sir William Fox was Premier of Aotearoa New Zealand on four separate occasions. He

also held the office of Minister of Native Affairs. He was an MP for Rangitikei and Whanganui. In 1862 Fox, as Premier, wrote that he believed Nepia Taratoa “who adheres to the King” was “sincerely desirous of peace...” He described Taratoa as “a fine old man, and I think that he has more influence on the coast between Wanganui and Wellington than any other native of that district.”

19. In the course of undertaking my research, Nepia Taratoa’s portrait was pointed out to me as I was standing in the old meeting house of Ngātokowaru at Ngātokowaru Marae, Hōkio Beach, Levin. On closer inspection I discovered that the pencil sketch with water colours had been drawn and painted by Sir William Fox. I understand that when Taratoa died in 1863, the whānau informed Fox who arrived at the tangihanga with his art equipment. Taratoa, although dead, was sitting up straight as was the custom in those times. Fox got out his equipment and sketched and painted Taratoa who was sitting.

20. Again, on closer inspection I discovered that it looked as if part of the portrait near the head was flaking away, possibly as a result of moisture building up over a number of years. I brought these matters to the attention of Uncle Iwikātea and Aunty Lucy. In the meantime, I had discussions with staff at the Alexander Turnbull Library, which is now housed at the National Library of New Zealand in Wellington. A member of staff, Mr Anthony Murray-Oliver, was especially interested in this historic portrait by Sir William Fox. Eventually the whānau decided to allow the painting to be restored. Aunty Lucy, Uncle Iwikātea and another Uncle and Aunty brought the painting to the Library where it was restored. The original has remained in the Library under climatically controlled archival conditions. A copy was given to the whānau and placed back in the old Ngātokowaru meeting house. It remains today in Ngātokowaru meeting house which was opened in 1978.

21. Given that I had written my research paper on Nepia Taratoa, given that Aunty Lucy, a great granddaughter of Nepia Taratoa had assisted me, given that her mokopuna, Ms Rachael Selby, asked me to write this statement, given that no other descendant of Nepia Taratoa was available to undertake this task, given that one of the Claimants, my uncle, Iwikātea, had supported me in my studies and given that Archbishop Octavius Hadfield tried to be helpful to Ngāti Raukawa in land matters, I agreed to Rachael Selby's request to write this brief statement. Once again, it has been an honour and a privilege to be asked to do so.

Kia ora anō tātou katoa.

Reference

Nicholson, Rangi (1973). *He kōrero mō Nepia Taratoa o Ngāti Raukawa*. Unpublished BA essay, Victoria University of Wellington.