

IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL
OF NEW ZEALAND

IN THE MATTER OF: The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

A N D

IN THE MATTER OF: The Wairarapa Ki Tararua Inquiry **Wai 863**

A N D

IN THE MATTER OF: The claims by **JAMES RIMENE** and **PIRINIHA TE TAU** for and on behalf of the Rangitāne iwi of Wairarapa and their constituent hapū – **Wai 175**

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MIKE GRACE

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Pukaha - Te Ngahere Tupuna

1. The land is a mother who never dies
Ko Papatuanuku te whaea;ora tonu ai
Proverb:anon

Introduction

2. My name is **MIKE GRACE**. I live at Kaituna, Masterton. I first came to the Wairarapa as a boy in the 1970's working as a shepherd in the Tiraumea district and later for the NZ Forest Service. Throughout the 1990s I covered Wairarapa as a Wellington based field worker for various Government Departments including; Internal Affairs, Community Housing and the Department of Labour. Prior to moving to Masterton as Community Relations Manager for Department of Conservation I was employed as a Senior Policy Advisor for Te Puni Kokiri. I am currently employed by the Department of Labour managing the Community Employment Group Project throughout Wairarapa.
3. My contact with Rangitāne o Wairarapa started in the early 1990's. During this period I was engaged in facilitating, reporting and monitoring a small number of grants and contracts with Rangitāne o Wairarapa on behalf of Government. My contact with Rangitāne during the late 1990's was increasingly sporadic as I moved through different roles for various Government Departments. I first became aware of the relationship between Rangitāne and Pukaha at a meeting with Kath Rimene in 1999 to discuss priorities for Rangitāne capacity building. She was very clear that despite wishing to make progress on development of fishing, forestry and potential mineral and oil deposits Rangitāne's immediate interest was at Pukaha. She told me that this was due to their belief that engagement at Pukaha would afford their people cultural and spiritual sustenance and also held the potential for economic development.

4. During this period I was present at a meeting where funding was sought from Department of Labour for a Coordination Position to support Rangitāne men working at Pukaha. Whilst employed at DOC as Community Relations Manager in 2001 I worked closely with Rangitāne on various initiatives involving Pukaha. Following my resignation from DOC I continued to work closely with Rangitāne o Wairarapa as I undertook kaumatua interviews on contract to DOC. I accepted the offer of a work station at Rangitāne o Wairarapa and in return provided support including development of draft applications for funding supporting development of cultural ecological tourism capacity and capability. I also supported development of Rangitāne o Wairarapa presentations supporting their partnership with the National Wildlife Centre Trust (NWCT) and DOC and represented Rangitāne o Wairarapa on the NWCT for several months.
5. During that time I had numerous discussions with Jim Rimene about the Rangitāne relationship with Pukaha. Some of that information I took down in personal notes and also in OHP form. Much of that information was also used by me to develop the funding applications on behalf of Rangitāne o Wairarapa I have previously discussed. Much of what I have learnt came from Jim Rimene and other Rangitāne representatives on the basis of me seeking information from them.
6. While I am currently a member of the NWCT in my own right the following statement does not purport to represent the views of the Trust but are drawn from my own engagement with Rangitāne o Wairarapa; discussions, facilitated sessions, speech notes and presentations drafted during the period 2001 to the present. I have also utilised some written material drafted by the partnership for promotional purposes.

The Rangitāne Relationship with Pukaha

7. Rangitāne's longstanding relationship with Pukaha is evidenced by the name Te Taperenui o Whatonga later known as the 70 Mile Bush of which Pukaha is the largest and southernmost remnant. Whatonga is the grandfather of

Rangitāne whose descendants came to value Pukaha as a ngahere; a source of spiritual and material sustenance.

8. I understand that the name Pukaha refers to an area that includes the 942 hectare block administered and commonly known as Mt Bruce. I understand that the name Pukaha refers to the strength of the wind at that place, a fact which can be attested to by even the most intermittent visitor. As Kaumatua Jim Rimene has said of his time working the bush there, *“Pukaha”...what a bugger of a place to blow!*

9. I recall Jim Rimene saying:

“There were some hard knocks at Pukaha, our people, the Chiefs from Te Oreore and Wairarapa had land interests there. People from Manawatu began to sell land around Pukaha”.

10. In the 1870’s the Crown purchased the greater part of the Seventy Mile Bush. The bush was subsequently surveyed, sold and cleared. Pukaha’s 942 hectares were retained as Forest Reserve, later becoming part of the Tararua State Forest Park. The land at Pukaha was vested in DOC and recently redesignated as a scenic reserve, affording the ecological values greater protection. Pukaha is otherwise bounded by Māori land across the North Eastern boundaries, and by farms in private ownership to the East and South.

11. The destruction of the Seventy Mile Bush left Pukaha a charred and battered 942 hectare remnant on the border between the Wairarapa and Tararua districts. It was infested with pests; particularly goats and possums and the birds suffered from unrestrained predation by rats, cats and mustelids.

12. The richness and diversity of Te Taperenui a Whatonga was acknowledged by all who knew it. Nineteenth century Pakeha were astounded by the size of the trees, the beauty of the ferns and the deafening chorus of the birds. Despite burning, milling and grazing well into the 20th century, Huia, Kokako and

Hihi clung onto survival in this area long after they had become extinct in most other regions of Aotearoa.

Mt Bruce

13. In the 1940's Pukaha or Mt Bruce as it had come to be called, became the home of a breeding programme established by the Wildlife Service to save the critically endangered Takahe. Although ownership of Pukaha was then vested in the NZ Forest Service, The Wildlife Service was responsible for the birds within 55 hectares separately gazetted as a Native Bird Reserve. In the ensuing years Mt Bruce became internationally recognised as a leader in the breeding of rare bird species. This work was carried out in aviaries that covered the 55 hectares of road frontage adjoining State Highway Two. The remainder of the forest continued to deteriorate through uncontrolled grazing and the impact of pests.
14. The National Wildlife Centre was established in 1962 and visitor centre assets began to be developed to enable visitors to learn about unique endangered species. This was the beginning of Mt Bruce's international reputation as a tourist destination attracting visitor numbers in excess of 50,000 per annum. The National Wildlife Centre Trust Board was formally established in 1984 as a means of raising finance that would otherwise not have been available to Government Departments. Since 1987 the Department of Conservation has shared the administration of the National Wildlife Centre with the National Wildlife Centre Trust Board. Department of Conservation staff manage the breeding facility and the visitor centre and work with the Trust to maintain and develop the buildings.

Rangitāne at Pukaha

15. The story of the Rangitāne relationship with Pukaha throughout the last 70 years is best told as the story of a boy who listened, who grew into a man who in turn became the kaumatua who shares that experience and knowledge in the form of a powerful vision for Pukaha. Jim Rimene was raised at Te Oreore

and grew up listening to kaumatua talk about nga manu ki te ngahere – the birds of the forest and Pukaha the place to the North, over the Ruamahunga. As a boy he knew that the kaumatua were speaking of something that they held in high esteem, something of profound significance that related to the wellbeing of the people. I recall Jim Rimene saying to me that as a young man he was instructed by the old people that the Ngahere was his “dictionary”, the Ngahere was his pataka and his whakapapa.

16. It was only later as a young man working the bush at Pukaha for timber, particularly maire (used as cross bars for telegraph poles) that Jim began to understand what his kaumatua were referring too. He speaks of this time:

“We cut the bush, totara, kahikatea – massive trees. It was jobs for the people in the 50s and 60s. We lived off the bush at Pukaha....The older guys knew which tree, which karakia. How to live safely with the bush.

As I got older I began to appreciate what the kaumatua were saying; about the spiritual side of the ngahere, its importance to Māori.”

17. Through his experience as a bushman Jim came to understand the significance that the different birds and plants had for the old people. He learnt about the different tikanga associated with harvesting species for kai and rongoa. He began to take an interest in the whakapapa of Te Wao Nui a Tane; the genealogy of the trees and birds. He has said:

“Everything has a whakapapa...the insects the birds, the plants, even the rocks! They all come down from the same tree. If you want to find out about these things then you must know the whakapapa”.

Formal Relationship at Pukaha

18. Notwithstanding the ongoing importance of Pukaha to Rangitāne, there was no formal relationship with the Wildlife Service or the New Zealand Forest Service. In the mid to late 1980’s, Rangitāne talked of the importance of

Pukaha as a source of cultural and spiritual nourishment and the need to be engaged with those organisations involved in the management of Pukaha. This led to dialogue with those organisations.

19. In the late 1990's Rangitāne joined the National Wildlife Centre Trust. Jim Rimene had identified that he wanted his people to engage in a closer relationship with Pukaha and that Pukaha could be the place where they could:
 - Achieve their vision to engage in natural heritage activity on their whenua tipuna;
 - Regain and retain cultural knowledge; and
 - Build an economic opportunity for the future and provide jobs and income for their people.

20. Joining the National Wildlife Centre Trust brought the challenge of partnerships with community and Government. Issues that Rangitāne sought to address at this time were;
 - Finding out about NWCT and DOC;
 - Ensuring that their partners accepted Rangitāne for who they were;
 - Establishing what they wanted from this partnership; and
 - What the extent of any partnership should be.

21. During the late 1990's Rangitāne brought a cultural leadership dimension to the Trust. Jim Rimene provided support to the movement of species too and from Pukaha and officiated at a number of ceremonies where birds were welcomed and released or gifted to other areas of Aotearoa.

Hands on at Pukaha - The Restoration Project and Rangitāne

22. In May 2001, DOC, Rangitāne o Wairarapa and NWCT joined forces to restore the 942 hectare forest at Pukaha and return species that had become locally extinct. It was a very significant step as Mt Bruce had become synonymous with an aviary based rare species recovery facility. The new direction looked for the first time at the whole of Pukaha, the ngahere beyond the cages and sought to address one of the most fundamental and intractable conservation problems confronting Aotearoa; how to restore a damaged forest to a viable ecosystem.
23. The project was also cutting edge conservation as it sought to return species and protect them through community supported pest/predator control without the expensive fencing and ongoing maintenance costs of other initiatives. Essentially the Pukaha Restoration is achieving its goals through a comprehensive network of partnerships. The advent of the Pukaha Restoration Project also began the process of bringing the name Pukaha back into common usage.

He mahi nui

24. The initial task of the Pukaha Restoration Project was to reduce pest numbers to very low levels and hold them there. In order to achieve this a grid of more than 100 kilometres of pest control tracks was cut across Pukaha by Rangitāne men over a period of two years. This was tough work in rugged terrain and often appalling weather conditions and it is to the everlasting credit of this group of men that this enormous and fundamental conservation task was completed. Rangitāne o Wairarapa established a Coordination position to seek and support local men to undertake the work of cutting the tracks and ridding Pukaha of pests. As well as employment the workers gained skills and qualifications associated with pest control and recognition for their contribution to the project. It needs to be said that many of these men came to Pukaha from lives of frustration, low income and all that stuff we know so well. Many were “well known identities” around Wairarapa and were drawn

to Pukaha voluntarily, all did what they could, many staying for months or for a year or more. As they struggled with the task of scratching tracks across the flanks of Pukaha they were laying the foundation for the return of kiwi, kokako and kaka.

25. The success of Rangitāne's investment in the Pukaha Restoration Projection is nationally and perhaps internationally significant. For the first time in Aotearoa, locally extinct species have been returned to their home range. Thanks to the track and pest control work Pukaha now has the best kaka population in the North Island, kiwi back for the first time in 150 years and kokako (extinct since 1940) breeding in their first season.
26. In the past year however Rangitāne has ceased to be involved in the project. This is in part due to a 75% reduction in the number of unemployed in Wairarapa that has reduced the pool of available workers but also relates to Rangitāne o Wairarapa capacity to engage of which I will refer to again.
27. During the initiation of the Pukaha Restoration Project, Rangitāne o Wairarapa continued to play a leadership role at Pukaha, supporting the release of birds and leading the highly successful opening of the new Huia Room in the Visitor Centre. In 2002 Rangitāne won an Innovation in Conservation Award at the Conservation Board Awards. The award was for Rangitāne's outstanding contribution to the fundraising CD, "Pukaha – Songs of the Forest" for which they performed traditional and contemporary original waiata as well as visual design concepts.
28. Two years on, the Restoration Project is proving successful beyond all expectation with kiwi, kokako and kākā all re-established and breeding. These are some of the first examples of birds being successfully returned to areas where they have become extinct. Pukaha has now what is regarded as the most viable and dynamic kākā population in the North Island. Kākā from Pukaha are seen as far afield as Whanganui and Eastbourne.

29. Sustaining pest control is an ongoing struggle for Doc and the NWCT. Pest management short fall is currently \$100,000 pa. To address this in a sustainable fashion the NWCT is implementing a regional fundraising programme to establish an endowment fund to protect Pukaha in perpetuity.

MOU

30. In a Memorandum of Understanding signed with DOC and NWCT to underpin the Pukaha Restoration Project, Rangitāne identified that:

“Rangitāne o Wairarapa has a mission to reacquaint Rangitāne people with the history and ecology of Pukaha/Mount Bruce, and to develop their people through employment, training and development of new qualifications in indigenous ecological tourism.”

31. This MOU has been hailed by other regions as an ideal model of Iwi – Crown - Community partnership and is the foundation of all promotion seeking support for the Restoration Project. While the MOU accurately represents Rangitāne’s aspirations there are as yet no structural mechanisms or agreements that might actively support these developments or protect Rangitāne o Wairarapa investment. All proposed activities on DOC estate are required to apply to DOC for a concession and neither Rangitāne o Wairarapa nor NWCT has any special status in this regard.
32. Further, I believe that there is an inherent tension in the mix of outcomes sought by the three parties in the MOU. The Pukaha Restoration has an overriding ecological goal and yet Rangitāne o Wairarapa are clearly seeking to benefit their people directly, in a cultural, spiritual and material sense through engagement in the Restoration Project. This is a transparent declaration that transcends a single environmental outcome and identifies the Māori world view that the wellbeing of the people - te ira tangata and the wellbeing of the environment, te ao turoa are inextricable and interdependent. While the three parties agree very well on the central ecological purpose of the MOU, Rangitāne o Wairarapa’s intention to derive economic benefit for their

people from Pukaha has yet to be acknowledged, addressed or developed in any structural way. This is not due to any articulated negativity from the partnership but more to do with the overriding financial and ecological imperative of the environmental goal. While the MOU declares that the parties agree to support each other's objectives pertaining to Pukaha, as long as Rangitāne o Wairarapa struggle to represent their interests at Pukaha they cannot progress.

33. The development of a sustainable cultural tourism business at Pukaha is realistic, achievable and has the potential to benefit Rangitāne o Wairarapa and the wider community substantially. Rangitāne trained guides conversant with te reo, Rangitāne history and tikanga as well as precepts of Māori ecology would provide an interpreted experience for visitors. Rangitāne can already identify kaiarahi who have the skills and qualifications to undertake this work. Rangitāne has also developed intellectual property to underpin cultural ecological tourism development in the form of publications identifying traditional ecological practices and relationships of Rangitāne. While many of the key elements for economic development are available, the fundamental task of building a business has only just begun. Towards this end Rangitāne o Wairarapa have received development funding (TPK Kaitataki a Rohe 2002) and are currently exploring cultural tourism development at Pukaha.

Pukaha as Provider - Tourism Development

34. Jim Rimene's vision recognised that Pukaha, the provider of spiritual and physical sustenance for Rangitāne in the past, can once again become a place that engages the spirit and provides income and employment through cultural and environmental tourism. This vision is consistent with national tourism development data that identify Māori tourism as the single greatest point of differentiation for NZ tourism and Māori product as one of the biggest attractions for tourists. Coupled with projected tourism growth of 1,000,000 visitors over the next six years, strong international interest in eco-tourism and significant support for new Māori tourism initiatives, Pukaha does appear to

be a viable development option. The Wairarapa and Tararua district is projected to receive a 7.5 percent increase in tourism numbers during the next six year period. Pukaha has the advantage of being situated alongside State Highway 2 and in close proximity to a major city. Thus it is in a prime position to take advantage of the tourism market.

35. With respect to cultural and ecological tourism Rangitāne are interested in the development of a cultural dimension to ecological tourism that is prescribed and defined by who they are as an iwi. This means that whatever service is developed will reflect the particular values and way of being that make them Rangitāne and define their relationships with others.
36. In particular they want to ensure that any such development:
 - (a) Upholds the mana and mauri of the people and reflects well on the relationships they have with others;
 - (b) Enhance and add value to the ecological experience currently available at Pukaha;
 - (c) Be based on information that has both cultural and scientific integrity;
 - (d) Be supported by professional, industry based standards, training and resources; and
 - (e) They acknowledge our close whanaunga from Tamaki nui a rua and encourage their participation.
37. The project they have developed, named Pukaha, has the following aims;
 - To build a sustainable business that will generate training, employment and income for Wairarapa Māori;

- To build the capacity of Rangitāne people as business and project managers and tourism professionals;
 - To promote understanding and knowledge of Wairarapa ecology and the relationship between Māori and Te Wao nui a Tane to the people of Rangitāne o Wairarapa/Tararua, Wairarapa whanui and all New Zealanders;
 - To build strong relationships between Rangitāne and the tourism industry;
 - To build the capacity of Rangitāne as an ecological tourism provider; and
 - Transfer of Te Reo and Tikanga Māori between Kaumatua and younger generations to ensure ongoing retention of this knowledge as foundation for all project work.
38. Rangitāne o Wairarapa have been successful in receiving Kaitataki a Rohe funding from Te Puni Kokiri to develop a business plan for cultural-ecological tourism development at Pukaha.

Pukaha – Representation is the key to the future

39. Rangitāne engagement at Pukaha is profound, generous and creative. Rangitāne o Wairarapa share their spirituality, manaakitanga, cultural and artistic knowledge with a warmth that has without doubt had a positive impact on how Pukaha is perceived in the community. Rangitāne o Wairarapa’s stunning contribution to the CD “Pukaha Songs From the Forest” is just one example of the wonderful creativity generated through their interaction with Pukaha.

40. It is significant that kokako and kiwi transferred to Pukaha from other tribal areas are presented as gifts to Rangitāne. Kokako from Pureora were named for Ngati Rere Ahu tipuna and placed in the care of Rangitāne. This profound cultural act is an example of the mana that Rangitāne engagement brings to Pukaha.
41. To balance these enormously positive aspects of the relationship it is necessary to state that Rangitāne engagement can also be defined as being entirely responsive. Rangitāne o Wairarapa inputs are invariably in response to specific requests from DOC for assistance or engagement. Typically this occurs when Rangitāne are called upon to host visitors and receive and release birds. When asked, Rangitāne get there, however it is a drain on their capacity and the “cultural attendances” they make don’t provide any income or sustainability for Rangitāne.
42. Attendance by Rangitāne o Wairarapa at the NWCT bi monthly meetings is intermittent at best and Rangitāne o Wairarapa do not engage with the partnership on a regular basis. The reactive/responsive nature of Rangitāne role in engagement at Pukaha is a significant limitation on their ability to negotiate development of their vision for Pukaha. DOC control all resources relating to Pukaha/Mt Bruce and Visitor Centre Operation save for fundraising activity and some maintenance coordination activity undertaken by the NWCT. I am conscious that Rangitāne have a number of large projects currently on their plate, in particular the necessity to gear up for and present evidence before the Waitangi Tribunal and their current fish negotiations. Rangitāne have a number of other contracts run as service providers in Masterton. They also have other relationships with territorial and regional authorities. This is a huge drain on a relatively small organisation with limited funding.
43. The partnership at Pukaha has unfortunately stalled. DOC and NWCT unwillingness to allow Rangitāne to use Pukaha as a base for cultural and ecological tourism and an unwillingness to translate the MOU into concrete structures combined with representation, capacity and capability issues on the

part of Rangitāne, are seriously limiting the development of their interests at Pukaha.

Conclusion

44. The following key factors concerning Rangitāne engagement at Pukaha are relevant:
- (a) Rangitāne whakapapa to Pukaha
 - (b) He ngahere nui – Pukaha is a place of significance to Rangitāne
 - (c) The Pukaha vision – Rangitāne o Wairarapa have a comprehensive vision for Pukaha articulated by the life experience, whakaaro and moemoea of Jim Rimene.
 - (d) Pukaha is a valuable economic asset with premium location. Cultural ecological product development aligns with inbound tourism visitor interests and increasing demand for authentic, contemporary Māori product.
 - (e) Rangitāne o Wairarapa is a member of a significant partnership with NWCT and DOC.
 - (f) Rangitāne o Wairarapa have made a fundamental and generous contribution to the development at Pukaha, particularly the Pukaha Restoration Project.
 - (g) The partnership at Pukaha has stalled.
45. Pukaha has been identified as significant to the future of Rangitāne. This is evidenced by the immense goodwill and positive public profile that has been associated with Rangitāne engagement which is a wonderful outcome in its own right. I believe however that Rangitāne has barely touched the potential

associated with re-engagement with their tupuna ngahere. Rangitāne o Wairarapa have worked hard to be at the table where decisions are made concerning the future of Pukaha yet are unlikely to progress their vision without reviewing their engagement. There is much to be done if Pukaha is once more to be of economic benefit to Rangitāne o Wairarapa. The task of negotiating this opportunity with the Crown and providing a cultural ecological tourism service at Pukaha is absolutely achievable and is consistent with Iwi – Crown asset and commercial management partnerships in other areas.

46. I understand that Rangitāne o Wairarapa operate on a limited budget, they have a limited capacity and have a number of major projects on their plate. However in order to achieve the powerful and imminently achievable vision of Jim Rimene on their part Rangitāne o Wairarapa need to recommit and reinvest in Pukaha. Rangitāne o Wairarapa need to develop a cultural and economic vision for the people at Pukaha that will take commitment to ongoing partnership negotiation with the Crown at regional and national levels.
47. For their part the Crown need to commit as well. MOUs by themselves are well intention however the Crown can do more. They could assist by developing capacity for example, the training and employment of ecological tourism co-ordinators and guides, the employment of Rangitāne persons in the Pukaha project and open and proper dialogue to enable Rangitāne to use Pukaha as the base for an ecological tourism project.