

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY  
DISABILITY, DEAF AND MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTION HEARING**

**Under** The Inquiries Act 2013

**In the matter of** The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions

**Royal Commission:** Judge Coral Shaw (Chair)  
Paul Gibson  
Julia Steenson

**Counsel:** Mr Simon Mount QC, Ms Kerryn Beaton QC, Ms Ruth Thomas, Ms Lucy Leadbetter, Mr Michael Thomas and Ms Kathy Basire for the Royal Commission  
Mr Gregor Allan, Ms Sandra Moore and Mr Vaughan Dodd for the Crown

**Venue:** Level 2  
Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry  
414 Khyber Pass Road  
AUCKLAND

**Date:** 18 July 2022

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**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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**Hearing opens with waiata Te Aroha and karakia by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei**

**[10.06 am]**

**COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Nau mai, piki mai, haere mai ki te kaupapa Ūhia te Māramatanga.

Welcome, everybody, to week 2. Just a reminder about mask wearing, the government has put in some new guidelines and because we care about you and your families and your loved ones, we encourage you to wear them within the hearing space, and if you're exempt from mask wearing just let one of the staff members know quietly. Kia ora, thank you.

Ms Basire.

**MS BASIRE:** The next witness is Whiti Ronaki. Matua Whiti is going to start proceedings today with his karakia. And we can all stand with him.

A. Tuatahi, ka mihi au ki tēnei whare ki to tātou rangatira e whakapuaki i to tātou hui. Nō reira, e te Atua tēnei hau e inoi atu ki a koe kia ūhia tō mana akitanga ki runga, ki tēnā, ki tēnā o tātou i roto i tēnei whare, otirā i roto i tēnei motu, mō tēnei kaupapa whakahirahira. Nō reira, tēnei au e mihi atu ki a koutou ngā Kaikōmihana.

I roto i te aroha o tō tātou Matua nui i te rangi, kia rongo pai i ngā kōrero mai i ngā Tāngata Turi, o rātou hītori, o rātou wheako. Ahakoa ngā taumahatanga me ngā pēhitanga e pā ana ki a mātou, otirā ki a tātou. Kia wātea tēnei wāhi, hei wāhi whakahaumarū i a tātou. Nō reira i roto i tō ingoa tapu, āmine.

Nō reira, kei ahau taku pepeha? E noho koutou. Ko Rangiuri [Rangiuru] taku maunga, ko Kaituna taku awa, ko Te Arawa taku waka, ko Tapuika taku iwi, ko Moko-tangata-kotahi taku marae. Āhua roa tērā ingoa, nō reira ko tērā te marae or taku mama. Ko Whiti Ronaki ahau.

Tēnei au e mihi atu ki a tātou katoa otirā ki a koutou anō ngā Kaikōmihana, tēnā koutou. Otirā ki a koutou katoa kua tae mai ki te whakarongo ki ngā kōrero i tēnei rā, tēnā koutou. Āe, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou koutou. Ka waiata tātou i te waiata Te Aroha anō. (Waiata Te Aroha).

**QUESTIONING BY MS BASIRE:** Tēnā koe Matua Whiti. You've just told us your name is Whiti Ronaki and you're 68 years old.

A. Yes.

**Q.** And Commissioner Shaw has just pointed out I skipped a step.

Commissioner Gibson, we need to start with the affirmation.

**COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** My apologies.

**WHITI RONAKI (Affirmed)**

**QUESTIONING BY MS BASIRE CONTINUED:** Matua Whiti, you were born hearing but you

- 1 lost your hearing about the age of three to meningitis, is that right?
- 2 A. Yes, yeah.
- 3 Q. What were the names of the parents who brought you up?
- 4 A. The last name is Reha, yes.
- 5 Q. And I understand you knew them as [GRO-B]?
- 6 A. Yes, that's correct.
- 7 Q. But it was only at about the age of 20 that you found out that in fact they were adoptive
- 8 parents?
- 9 A. Yeah, I never knew that, I never knew at all, they never told me, no -one taught me that at
- 10 all, I didn't know who my real parents were, didn't know. They didn't tell me anything.
- 11 I thought my real parents -- they were my real parents, but when I found out, I was really
- 12 shocked. It was a massive impact on me. I was like, what? What does this mean,
- 13 "adopted"? What does adopted mean? I never understood that sign, you know, I was fully
- 14 Deaf so I didn't understand what that meant, the word "adopting".
- 15 Q. Just some technical issues, matua, we just have to move that screen so people can see your
- 16 signing better. And all this is getting typed up, so we have to go a little bit slower if we
- 17 can.
- 18 A. Okay, no problem, I understand. Sorry about that.
- 19 Q. That's okay. So as you said, this had a massive impact on you, because one of the issues
- 20 for being Deaf is translating concepts such as "adoptive" or "stepparent" or different sorts
- 21 of parenting?
- 22 A. Yeah, I didn't understand at all what that meant, "adopted"? What does that mean? Yeah,
- 23 I didn't understand at all.
- 24 Q. And [GRO-B] was your [GRO-B/C] that you later found out?
- 25 A. Yes. Yes.
- 26 Q. And your birth family is Ronaki, which is the name you go by today?
- 27 A. Yes, that's correct.
- 28 Q. When you lost your hearing, [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] didn't understand that you had lost
- 29 your hearing, did they?
- 30 A. Yes, yeah, that's true.
- 31 Q. And they thought you were being cheeky for not answering them back?
- 32 A. Yes, yeah, that's true.
- 33 Q. And it took a while until the doctor explained to them that you'd lost your hearing?
- 34 A. Yes, that's right, that's right.

- 1 **Q.** The doctor said to your parents, "He's Deaf but not dumb"?
- 2 **A.** Yes.
- 3 **Q.** Because you were a very bright child, very creative?
- 4 **A.** Yes.
- 5 **Q.** But you had to learn everything with your eyes because your family couldn't communicate  
6 with you?
- 7 **A.** I was lucky. Why? Because I had special eyes, I can see everything, you know, I saw the  
8 abuse coming, so I could read -- you know, I'm Deaf yes, but, you know, all the abuse that  
9 was coming towards me, I was really lucky, I had really good eyes, I could see what was  
10 going on, I could get away from the abuse, I could run away and get away from all of that.  
11 So yeah, my eyes are very valuable to me.
- 12 **Q.** Tell us about the abuse, who was abusing you when you were a little boy?
- 13 **A.** I only know the faces, names I don't know, but faces I know. I didn't really know people's  
14 names, what their names were, but the faces I knew, I knew them by their face, I knew  
15 straight away, "Ooh, that one, yes, stay away from that one", and I'd run away from them.  
16 So yeah.
- 17 Some other people were nice, I knew who they were, they would beckon me to  
18 come towards them but other people I was a bit suspicious, you know, how could  
19 I communicate with people, you know, if they told me to come to them, I was like, "Ooh,  
20 I'm not too sure", very suspicious of people, but I felt lost inside my family, it was really  
21 hard, it was a hard time.
- 22 **Q.** Your father [GRO-B], did he abuse you?
- 23 **A.** Oh, yes, I hate him, I really hate him. He was cruel all the time to me. And I tried to, you  
24 know, stay away from him and I don't want to be close with him at all. He'd always get the  
25 broomstick and beat me with a broomstick and that's why I always try and stay away from  
26 him.
- 27 **Q.** Tell me more about the things that he used to do to you?
- 28 **A.** Oh, I was in the kitchen, I was hungry, always hungry, wanted to eat something. But my  
29 father was in the kitchen as well, at the same time, and I can't go in there when he's in there.  
30 I had to wait for him to leave or go to sleep, then I can go into the kitchen, and find some  
31 food. But mostly it would be bread and butter, that's all really, that's what I would take  
32 most of the time. And I'd always be on the look-out looking to see if someone was coming,  
33 I was always watching, and then once he came I'd always disappear and run away, I'd  
34 straight away run away, keep myself safe all the time, to protect myself against my father.

1           But I don't know why they never used to give me food all the time. You know the  
2 beef fat on the meat? That beef fat, they'd cut it up and it used to make me sick, they'd feed  
3 me that and it used to make me sick. They'd say, "No, eat it now, eat it now." And I'm  
4 like, "Oh, I don't like it", you know, that's the fatty food. And it used to make me sick all  
5 the time. They'd say, "No, you've got to eat it."

6           My father only had one leg, he was an amputee, and I used to sign this -- mother,  
7 because she had one eye and my father had one leg, so my father lost one of his legs, so  
8 I used to sign -- his sign name was "one leg off" and "one eye off" for mother and father.  
9 But yeah, I used to always -- I never liked staying with them. But mum, she was good  
10 sometimes, like they loved alcohol all the time, they'd always leave me on the street or at  
11 home all day, just sitting there on the street, on the curb sitting there by myself, cars would  
12 go past, it was cold.

13           It was hard for me, really hard. I'll never forget that.

14 **Q.** I understand that to start with you lived on a farm and then you moved into town?

15 **A.** Yes.

16 **Q.** When you were on the farm, where would you go to try and escape from your father Bill?

17 **A.** My grandfather, I used to visit his house, he was alone, he's a very old grandfather. He was  
18 amazing, he was beautiful, he used to help me, he knew I was Deaf and he would try to  
19 explain things to me, you know, he used to teach me about the cows, and how to milk the  
20 cows, I'd watch him with my eyes, I'd learn with my eyes, and I'd learn that way. So he  
21 would teach me. And I was really happy with my grandfather because he would teach me  
22 stuff. All my other whānau, they didn't teach me anything. I can't stand it with my other  
23 whānau.

24 **Q.** When you moved to town, to Te Puke, that's when mum and dad would leave you on the  
25 street outside the pub?

26 **A.** Yes, yes.

27 **Q.** How did that make you feel?

28 **A.** Oh horrible, it was cold, you know, people would look at me, walking by on the streets,  
29 they'd look at me, I was always afraid of them, sitting on the curb on the side of the street,  
30 cars would park in front of me and people would walk around, I would make sur e I was  
31 watching them, yeah, it was horrible. Yeah, I had a hard life, I know I did, it was wrong.  
32 Why did my parents just treat me like that? It was wrong.

1           You know, they'd stay at the pub, get drunk and then come home and then be  
2 abusive and, but yeah, I'd always escape the house all the time to get away from it, yeah,  
3 because they were always drinking.

4 **Q.** Did anyone try and help you during that time when you were sitting outside the pub?

5 **A.** So, yeah, outside, I was there all day when I was really, really young, three, four, five years  
6 old, at that time staying outside on the street by myself. That's all, yeah, just stayed there.

7 **Q.** When you were on the farm, you had a dog, didn't you?

8 **A.** Yes, yes, yeah. That dog really helped me all the time, he'd be always with me. The dog  
9 can hear, so I would watch the dog and if the dog looked around I would look as well and  
10 see what was going on, so the dog helped me, helped me to stay away from the abuse. So  
11 I'd look at the dog and would run away. But really the dog supported me so much.

12 **Q.** When you moved into town, did the dog come into town with you?

13 **A.** Yes, always with my dog, always.

14 **Q.** When you were six years old, you went to Kelston School for the Deaf, didn't you?

15 **A.** Yes.

16 **Q.** And you later learned that it was your birth father who went to see [GRO-B] and told him  
17 about the school?

18 **A.** Yes.

19 **Q.** When you went to Kelston, you were there as a boarder, which meant that you were there  
20 all the time?

21 **A.** Yes.

22 **Q.** Did [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] explain to you what was happening, why you were going to  
23 Kelston?

24 **A.** Never, no, never, nothing, no explanation at all. Nothing. I didn't know anything that was  
25 going on, they never explained anything to me.

26 **Q.** How did they communicate with you at that age?

27 **A.** Nothing really, no communication with me at all. Oh, sometimes I'd try and lip read them,  
28 they would yell at me and I'd try and lip read what they were saying, but it never worked,  
29 yeah.

30           I never understood lip reading. I prefer sign, but yeah, at that time there was no sign  
31 language at all. You know, I used to get so frustrated inside, you know, sign would help  
32 me a lot, you know, help me to learn, but no, there was none of that, it was -- there was just  
33 none of that at all, from a very young age.

34 **Q.** Had you developed your own signs before you went to Kelston?

1 A. No. So in Kelston School we got together as a group of Deaf kids, we'd get together and  
2 we made up our own sign, but yeah, there was no home signs at all, yeah. But yeah, I was  
3 just by myself at home, walking around, no-one was talking to me, you know, there's other  
4 children there that were playing but I wasn't allowed to play with them and I was, like,  
5 "Why? Why can't I play with them?" But their parents are like "No, no, no, go away, go  
6 away." So I'd just be by myself while the kids were playing as a group. I never knew why,  
7 yep, I never knew why.

8 Q. I want to take you to that first day or the first few days you went into Kelston School, what  
9 were your first impressions of this new place?

10 A. Oh, there were so many Deaf children around, the first time -- I'd never seen this many  
11 Deaf children around before, from about five, yeah, I started Kelston at five, roughly, so  
12 had a group of five -year -olds and six -year -olds, seven -year olds, and then they got  
13 bigger and bigger and bigger. But yeah, it was really scary. Because they'd just look at me,  
14 the Deaf kids would look at me with their faces and I'm like, "Ooh, okay. Am I wrong?  
15 What am I doing wrong?" I'd just read their facial expressions. But yeah, I never  
16 understood what they were signing, I was really slow- to try and pick it up, you know, I'd  
17 be like, "What's that? What does that mean?" But yeah, we were in our group of five -year  
18 old-s, and we just followed our age group from there.

19 Q. You said that it was scary. Can you tell us about that first dinner that you had at Kelston?

20 A. Yeah. The first time the staff told us, when we were five years old, to line up, we had to be  
21 in our lines from smallest to tallest and I was in the last because I was five, I was one of the  
22 smallest. And then we'd go and sit at the table, at big long rows of tables, all sitting next to  
23 each other, and all us group of five -year olds would be sitting together. And then I  
24 can't -remember - I think we were ready for a -feed - anyway, everyone had these knives  
25 and forks and I was like, "What is that?" I used my hands to eat, you know, that's my habit,  
26 that's my family habit from home, we eat with our hands. So - I started picking up my food  
27 and started eating and then I got a knife on the back of my hand, whacked on the back of  
28 my hand, "No, no, you can't do that, you have to use your knife and fork." And I was like,  
29 "Huh? What is this? I don't know how to do that."

30 You know, they never taught the children how to do that, they would cry, all the  
31 Māori kids would cry, and they'd get whacked on the back of the hands, and I was like,  
32 "Why?" You know, they should have taught us like, "No, look, this is a fork, this is a knife,  
33 but they never taught us at all." They just growled us. It was really sore, really sore on the  
34 back of our hands. And I just knew every time I came, I was like, "Oh, I better pick up this



1 knife and fork and use that, I don't want to get hurt", you know, trying to manoeuvre these  
 2 knives and forks around, but I've never used them before, most of the time I was always  
 3 using my hands, you know, with corn or meat or whatever, eat with my hands, you know,  
 4 follow the family how they did it, eat with my hands.

5 But yeah, it was really hard for me, with a knife and fork, you know, having to eat  
 6 like that. Yeah. But, really, they used to whack us on the back of hands. No explanation.  
 7 They never gave us an explanation at all. So yeah, yeah it's true.

8 All the children used to cry because they used to get whacked on the back of their  
 9 hands and I used to be "oh", trying to hold that pain, rubbing it better. But it was sore, oh,  
 10 man that pain, but the staff there, yeah, that's how they raised us.

11 **Q.** And you said it was more the Māori kids who were getting hit about their table manners  
 12 than the Pākehā kids?

13 **A.** Yes, yeah.

14 **Q.** There was a routine at Kelston, wasn't there, every morning you had to get up, have  
 15 breakfast, go to school, come home, have your dinner, bath or shower, and then bed?

16 **A.** In the morning we'd go for breakfast and after breakfast we'd go to the bathroom to brush  
 17 our teeth. We had to brush our teeth, we'd line up again, and the staff had, you know, put  
 18 the toothpaste on the toothbrush but for me they got the soap, they grabbed the soap bar and  
 19 said, "Come here, put your toothbrush on this." And I was like, "Huh?" So yeah, we had to  
 20 rub our -- it tasted so disgusting with the soap on the toothbrush, but all the Māori kids had  
 21 soap on their toothbrushes, we used to say, "It tastes disgusting" and all the other kids were  
 22 like, "Yeah, it's gross. Why?" But all the Pākehā kids got toothpaste but the Māori kids got  
 23 soap. And I was just little at that time. It was terrible.

24 I don't brush my teeth, I still don't brush my teeth, it's -- yeah, I still got that locked  
 25 memory in my brain about that soap on the toothbrush.

26 **Q.** Do you know why it was that the Māori kids had to use soap but the Pākehā kids had  
 27 toothpaste?

28 **A.** Don't know. I don't know. I really don't know. I saw the other kids crying but yeah, I don't  
 29 know.

30 Am I signing okay? I just want to check. Am I too fast? You know, sorry if I'm  
 31 too fast, I'm really frustrated, I've got a lot of stuff to get out, I just want to try and keep  
 32 calm at the same time. So sorry about that if I'm signing too fast, sorry.

33 **Q.** I think everybody understands, Matua Whiti, that there's a lot that you want to tell us.

1                   So that was a form of racism, you were treated differently because you were Māori.

2                   Was there other racism that you experienced at Kelston?

3    A.            I can't remember, there's so many, but yeah, racism, like which one, a Deaf person or -- like  
4                   Māori Deaf support me a lot. They helped me a lot, so much. (Interpreter  
5                   correcting) -- only a few of them supported me.

6    **Q.**           Because most of the staff at Kelston were Pākehā, is that right?

7    A.            Yes. Yeah, no Māori staff.

8    **Q.**            There was some Māori staff who worked at the hostel, a particular woman who was a  
9                   cook?

10   A.            In the kitchen, in the kitchen.

11   **Q.**            Yes.

12   A.            Yes, she worked there. She was lovely. She knew, she saw what happened, she saw we  
13                   were starving, we were hungry, and she'd say, "Shh, come here", and we'd go in a little  
14                   group to the kitchen and make sure no-one saw, and she was so lovely, oh. But, you know,  
15                   the first time I saw her, she supported us, she gave us ice cream, a heap of ice cream,  
16                   heaping bowl of ice cream, and then said, "Go around the back to your bedrooms, go the  
17                   back way." She was so lovely. And then one day she wasn't there, she was just gone. And  
18                   we all talked about her and how lovely she was. She was amazing.

19   **Q.**            The hostel had different staff to the school, didn't they?

20   A.            Oh yeah, they were hopeless, hopeless. You'd see them, the teachers, oh, you know, lazy,  
21                   not supporting us, everything was the same on the board, the same thing over and over  
22                   again, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, same thing, day after day. Then  
23                   they'd just sit down, write in their books. They knew we were all Deaf, we'd get sick of  
24                   doing the same thing all the time, we wanted something different, maths or English or  
25                   whatever, but no, it was the same thing, copy it down, copy it down. I was sick of it. It  
26                   made me not clever.

27   **Q.**            Because at that time at Kelston, you were banned from using sign language, is that right?

28   A.            Yes, yes, that's true.

29   **Q.**            What would happen if you or the other children tried to sign to each other?

30   A.            They'd get a ruler and slap us on the hand, or the leather, thick leather, big long thick  
31                   leather like this, and then they'd hit you three times on each hand, you had to have your  
32                   hands out. That was really sore. Ooh. And the staff were big man, tall, and he'd go wh ack,  
33                   you knew it was coming, and you'd stand there and wait for it, really painful,  
34                   meaning -- you hadn't been naughty but they were picking on you, they picked me on with

1 that strap. It was like, "Why me? Why am I getting strapped?" I wouldn't even know what  
2 it was for sometimes, they were just picking on me because they thought I was cheeky.  
3 "Oh, he's been naughty, good, give him a strap." I was so sore. You couldn't write  
4 afterwards, your hand would swell up.

5 **Q.** So sometimes you were given the strap for signing, but sometimes you were given the strap  
6 for no reason at all?

7 **A.** That's right.

8 **Q.** How did the teachers expect you to learn how to communicate if they didn't let you sign?

9 **A.** Yeah, that's it, I don't know. I mean, they didn't teach us sign, so... there were a few other  
10 teachers who were pretty good, I liked -- there was one old lady and she'd gesture and that  
11 was great because then you could learn. But, you know, the other teachers, they didn't take  
12 any notice of you. "Oh, they're too Deaf." They just had an easy job there. You know, but  
13 how were we supposed to improve? Yeah.

14 **Q.** The teachers, did they expect you to learn to lip read?

15 **A.** Yes, but it was impossible, it was impossible. I'll show you. You think about like a  
16 feather, and you can hear, when you hear you'll say "S" and you can hear "S", but we  
17 couldn't hear that because we were too Deaf to hear it. So they'd put the feather closer and  
18 closer to your mouth and if you didn't say the sound properly they'd get the ruler and hit  
19 you on the mouth. "No, 'Sss'." And so we'd be crying because they'd hit us on the mouth  
20 and give you a shock when they hit you on the mouth, hurt your lips, flick it, and it would  
21 go whack on your lips. You know, why would they do that?

22 So I wasn't good, I had -- I had no experience with speech and it just didn't work,  
23 I prefer signing, you know, on the hands. It's so easy when you sign. Much easier than lip  
24 reading.

25 **Q.** So they wanted you to learn how to talk and then how to watch other people talking?

26 **A.** That's right, yes.

27 **Q.** And they also wanted --

28 **A.** They wanted me to watch, "You watch me, watch my lips, watch me." Didn't work.

29 **Q.** They also wanted you to learn to read and write English?

30 **A.** Yes. Yeah true, everything entirely in English, right throughout school, no Te reo Māori at  
31 all, kapa haka, never. They said, "Who am I?" And it wasn't - it was all English, and very  
32 easy basic English, so you'd just copy it down by wrote and the next day copy more down.  
33 So- you were trying to learn it yourself, like learning language yourself, but that didn't  
34 work, you just didn't understand what was happening. It was terrible.

- 1 **Q.** You were frustrated because they just gave you the same words over and over again, didn't  
2 they?
- 3 **A.** Yes, yeah, we were all frustrated, we were all the same.
- 4 **Q.** So in fact, during the day, you couldn't wait to get out of the classroom and into the  
5 playground?
- 6 **A.** Yes, that's right.
- 7 **Q.** Because what was good about being in the playground?
- 8 **A.** Because there was no teachers there, nobody was around so we'd mix together and it was  
9 great, "Hey, hey, did you get smacked?" "Yeah, I got hit. You did too? Oh really?"  
10 I started to realise that I was the same, it wasn't just me, everyone was getting it. And, "Oh,  
11 it hurts, eh?" "Yeah, yeah." It was good to hear that, you know, because then you'd  
12 understand, they'd sign about getting hit so then you could understand they were saying  
13 about getting hit. But if they didn't sign or didn't talk then I wouldn't understand.
- 14 **Q.** When you went back home, mum and dad also wanted you to learn to talk, didn't they?
- 15 **A.** Yes.
- 16 **Q.** So they didn't support you with any signing at all?
- 17 **A.** No, nothing at all. They didn't even teach me to speak, nothing. I was very, very isolated  
18 there.
- 19 **Q.** Because when you went home for the holidays, the physical abuse that you were telling us  
20 about continued, didn't it?
- 21 **A.** Yes, I was back and forth and it was always the same, yeah, back and forth school to home,  
22 school to home, and it was always the same. And I'd arrive at Te Puke to my home, get off  
23 the train, they dropped me off from the train, "Bye, everybody," wait and wait and wait,  
24 mum and dad were meant to pick me up, but they didn't come and I'd be there until dark.  
25 And one Māori woman knew who I was, she was like, "Hey you," and I took off, not  
26 knowing who she was. But leaving me there at the train station until the night and all the  
27 other Deaf kids would go home one by one, I'd say good bye until I was the last one left  
28 there waiting and waiting and mum wouldn't come. And that was it. And then eventually  
29 Police came and got me, they knew who I was and that I was Deaf, and took me to my  
30 grandmother's house and dropped me off there.
- 31 **Q.** So you weren't safe at home, were you?
- 32 **A.** No, I was sick of it, really sick of it at home. They were always, if I came then I was scared  
33 straight away, I'd be like, "Oh, no, no, I don't want to come." "Come in, come in." But in  
34 my mind it was just so awful, dad was always like there was something to hit me with, so

- 1 I'd be running away, running away, you know, I would try to have a good time with my  
2 family, but it just couldn't happen, I was so frightened all the time of going home.
- 3 **Q.** It was also frightening being at Kelston, wasn't it?
- 4 **A.** Yeah, sometimes. When you're with the Deaf group that was great because you could mix  
5 with those other kids, but the older Deaf kids, the bigger ones, they were no good. So yeah.  
6 Sometimes okay, sometimes bad, it was worse at home.
- 7 **Q.** You talk about the older Deaf kids. Was there bullying by the older kids at Kelston?
- 8 **A.** Yes, of course, yes, all the time, a lot. Much bigger and we were afraid of them, there was  
9 nothing we could do, what could we do? We wouldn't know what to do, we'd get lollies  
10 and they'd take them off us, "Good kid, off you go," and take our lollies. And it happened  
11 to other little Deaf kids too, they were scared, but how could we stop them? We'd say, "Oh,  
12 they've taken our lollies off us, they took our lollies," and the staff would say, "No. No,  
13 they didn't," and wouldn't believe us, the staff didn't believe me, and the other children as  
14 well, they were the same.
- 15 **Q.** The big boys would take your lunch sometimes, wouldn't they?
- 16 **A.** Yes, yes.
- 17 **Q.** And the teachers knew, but they didn't care?
- 18 **A.** Yeah, really, that's right. I'd say, "I haven't got any lunch." "Oh well, it's gone." It's  
19 terrible. They should, you know, hold on to the lunches and be responsible, "Hey, that's not  
20 your name." And, "Hello you, this is your lunch." You know, but they just put them out  
21 and you'd see people grabbing lunches and that was it. And you knew, "Oh look, that big  
22 boy's got my lunch." "Yeah he's got mine too." It was obvious. It wasn't right. We'd go so  
23 hungry, that's the main thing I remember, just being hungry all the time.
- 24 **Q.** Sometimes the girls who were at day school, who came from their own homes would try  
25 and give you kids lunch, wouldn't they?
- 26 **A.** Yeah, lovely, lovely. They knew, "You poor things," and they'd try and give us food.  
27 Yeah, they were really good, really good. It was lovely.
- 28 **Q.** But the teachers, if they caught them doing it would stop them, wouldn't they?
- 29 **A.** That's right, "Don't give it." Not allowed to give us their lunch.
- 30 **Q.** You've talked about being hit with this leather strap. Did sometimes you get hit with the  
31 leather strap on your behind as well as your hand?
- 32 **A.** Yes, it was worse on the hand. On your bum it wasn't much, so, you know, we knew to put  
33 a book down your pants and they'd whack you and the staff would know, they'd see the  
34 book and they'd take it out. But with your bum it's sort of like a shock, like bang, but it's

1 easy and it just hurts and then you can't sit down, you know, to eat your dinner, you have to  
 2 stand up, stand up because it's sore and walk around and couldn't sit down, couldn't sleep,  
 3 you'd have to sleep on your side on your left or your right side because your bum was all  
 4 red. Yeah, really sore.

5 **Q.** I want to talk about when you were really little at Kelston and you were at the hostel and  
 6 the boys were getting bathed together.

7 **A.** Yes.

8 **Q.** You've told us that they would bathe about four boys together in the bath?

9 **A.** That's right, like four or five boys in the bath together, and, you know, they were all  
 10 playing, touching each other, touch my penis, pull on it, you know, "Ooh," but we didn't  
 11 know what was going on and the others would laugh and -- so it was, like, you know,  
 12 grabbing you and playing with your bum and some of the Pākehā kids were in with that too,  
 13 because they were big and they'd tease you and grab hold of you and I'll never forget it, that  
 14 was really awful. We'd all get upset and cry. And then the next time when you go back to  
 15 the bath you'd go, "I don't want to go with that staff member, I don't want that one, I want  
 16 another staff member, the good ones."

17 So there were two to a room, and if there were two in a room that would be good,  
 18 but these four or five, that was terrible, but the staff made the decisions.

19 **Q.** So there were two male staff in particular that were bad, weren't there?

20 **A.** Yeah, they didn't care, you'd see their faces, "Come on, in you get," and just throw them all  
 21 in the bath. Not "Come on, it's bath time now, and here's the soap." "Come on, come on."  
 22 Just hand the soap to you, you had to learn how to wash yourself, but we were all the same,  
 23 the boys didn't know how to bath, they should have had only two to a bath, it would have  
 24 been safer, you know, if you had somebody there with you, but four, oh no, you know,  
 25 everything was going on in the bath, pulling on each other's penis and real bullying.

26 **Q.** So the children would bully each other, but these two male staff members, they were doing  
 27 wrong things in the bath to you, weren't they?

28 **A.** Yeah, they didn't care, they watched it all. I remember seeing their eyes. Oh yeah. They  
 29 didn't care, they took no notice, they wouldn't help, and then when it was time to get out,  
 30 "All right, out you get." And you'd see everybody quickly get out and run to their  
 31 bedrooms, because they wanted to keep away from the staff.

32 **Q.** When the male staff members washed your body, would they sometimes put their hands up  
 33 your bottom?

- 1 A. That's right, yeah. Same as the other kids too. They'd say, "Those staff members put their  
2 hand right up there." "Yeah, me too," they'd tell me. Yeah, that's right. Yeah, I was really  
3 upset, I didn't want them to touch me, I wanted to go home and, yeah. But, you know, you  
4 saw them doing that.
- 5 Q. Did you feel that you could tell any of the other staff what was going on in the bath?
- 6 A. Ooh -- not really, I wasn't -- I'd keep my mouth shut. Other Deaf kids would tell you what  
7 was happening for them but nobody talked to the staff. You couldn't tell the staff. You'd  
8 keep your mouth shut.
- 9 Q. You've told us that some of the staff at the hostel treated the Māori children differently. Do  
10 you want to tell us anything else you remember about that?
- 11 A. Yeah, so for the Pākehā staff, there was lots of staff but not very many -- no Māori staff, no  
12 Māori staff at all. So the staff were entirely Pākehā. And I'd look and if you'd have seen a  
13 Māori staff member you would have thought, "Yes," and go and hug them. But no, you  
14 just had to keep yourself to yourself.
- 15 Q. When you were at school, did you understand your own identity as being Māori?
- 16 A. No, no idea at all. Deaf kids would say, "Ehf, off." "Why?" "Your colour, nah, nah, we  
17 don't want you. White, we want white." I didn't understand that, what they were saying.  
18 And they'd say, "You know who you are?" And I'd go, "Who am I, who am I, where am  
19 I from?" They thought I was an Islander, Tongan, Niuean, Cook Islander, I didn't know.  
20 Didn't know where my colour came from, my family hadn't told me. I found out really late.
- 21 Q. Because your parents couldn't communicate with you, you're saying that you didn't even  
22 understand what the difference between Māori and Pākehā or Tongan or Samoan, etc, was?
- 23 A. Yeah, they never asked me or taught me anything. They never taught me anything, I didn't  
24 even know who I was, like, "Who am I?" I didn't know. If someone said, "You're Māori."  
25 I went, "Oh, really? How? How come? Why am I Māori? What is that?" And I'd learn  
26 and have them explain it to me, but I never had that, I had no idea.
- 27 Q. You've told us when we were speaking earlier that you knew that there was a beautiful  
28 house on the farm where you lived, but it was many, many years later that you came to  
29 understand that that was a marae?
- 30 A. Yes, yes, you're right, yes, that time I think I was 18 and we went to a marae and I was like,  
31 "Oh, wait, that's the same as the one that I have growing up." You know, different colours,  
32 different paintings. I was like "Oh." So I asked, "What is this?" They said, "That's a  
33 marae." I'm like, "What? A marae? I don't know what that is. What's a marae?" So they  
34 said, "Come with me." And, you know, when a person passes away, there's a body there.

1 "Oh, this person in here has passed away?" They said, "Yes, this is a marae." So they  
2 taught me all about the marae, but before that I had no idea, no -one had ever taught me that  
3 concept before.

4 I've got a strong Deaf identity, no-one took me to a marae or a tangi, I'd never been  
5 to one before, you know, I was just always left at home, but yeah, the first time I went to a  
6 marae I was like, "Wow, it's similar to the one that's at home," but I didn't realise that was a  
7 marae at home. So yeah, I suddenly realised, I was shocked, I was never explained what it  
8 was before, when I was young, yeah.

9 **Q.** You've told us that at school, because you were boarding and you didn't go home at night to  
10 supportive parents, your schooling fell way behind the day pupils, is that right?

11 **A.** Yeah, yes, I was always behind, always behind, yeah, always, always behind. I was always  
12 late, you know, other ones would be catching up, you know, same age as me, but why am  
13 I behind? I was like, "They're cleverer than me, why am I so behind?" You know, how did  
14 I -- I needed to catch up but no-one was teaching me.

15 **Q.** Because the day pupils, if they had supportive parents, when they went home at night, mum  
16 and dad would help them with their homework?

17 **A.** Yes, yeah, my parents at home helping me, no, no way. They had lovely parents who could  
18 teach them, their son or their daughter, or whatever, they could teach them, but yeah, I had  
19 nothing like that, nothing like that at all. It was different for me, yeah, and I realise that  
20 yeah, I had a hard time.

21 And, you know, I want to be a good father and teach my children and be a good  
22 parent, you know, being at home and teaching my children, but yeah, when I was younger I  
23 was behind, I missed out on a lot.

24 **Q.** And the staff at the hostel, they didn't play the role of a parent by helping you with  
25 homework, did they?

26 **A.** No, no. Not at all.

27 **Q.** So when you were at Kelston, you got the impression that you were not intelligent because  
28 you were behind the other kids?

29 **A.** Well, I'm not really thinking about, you know, being behind, I kind of, like, didn't really  
30 know I was behind, but that's called, you know, at the bottom of the class, if you've heard  
31 that saying, you know, being dumb, this is the sign here, "bottom of the class". And we all  
32 go to one side of the room and the clever ones will go to another side of the room and do  
33 their work. But yeah, they got homework and they got communication but we didn't really,



1           we were on one side of the room at the bottom, you know, bottom of the class group, and I  
2           was in that group.

3   **Q.**    So by the time you left Kelston when you were 15 years old, do you think you had learned  
4           much education?

5   **A.**    Yeah, not much education at all, not much at all.

6   **Q.**    Matua Whiti, I was thinking that we've got to 11 o'clock and it might be a good time for a  
7           break, would that be all right with you?

8   **A.**    Yes, please.

9   **Q.**    Commissioner Paul?

10 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you, Whiti, thank you Ms Basire, we'll resume in  
11           15 minutes.

12   **Adjournment from 11.00 am to 11.20 am**

13 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Ms Basire.

14 **MS BASIRE:** Thank you, Commissioner Paul.

15                   Matua Whiti, I now want to talk to you about finding out about your biological  
16           family. When you were about 18 some people came to visit at your nana's house and they  
17           looked a bit like you, but you didn't know who they were. And then your real father came  
18           to visit.

19 **A.**    Yes.

20 **Q.**    And you remembered him from when you were a little kid?

21 **A.**    I knew the face, that was all.

22 **Q.**    You just knew that there is this man that you had a memory of, and he invited you to come  
23           to his family Christmas?

24 **A.**    Yes. I said, "No." I didn't want to go to Christmas with that family because I didn't know  
25           who they were. I didn't know who they were.

26 **Q.**    And then somehow it was explained to you that in fact the family that you'd been growing  
27           up with wasn't your family at all?

28 **A.**    Yeah, it was hard. I didn't know my real mother and father, I didn't know that they were  
29           my real family, it wasn't until I was 18 someone said, "You're adopted," and I was like,  
30           "What's that?" This word "adopted", it was an English word "adopted". They said, "Do  
31           you understand me?" And I was like, "No, I don't understand that. What does that mean?"  
32           And they said, "They're not your real mother and father." And I said, "Eh? Why?" They  
33           said, "Your cousin was given you as a baby," but they didn't give me the whole story, so it

1 was quite complicated and I was confused. So I wasn't really clear about what was actually  
2 going on.

3 Just recently, at 30/40 years old I've got the full story and had it all explained to me.  
4 You know, so the brain works, but at the time as a young man it didn't work, I had no  
5 background on it, so it wasn't until later that I got the true story and I'd had to try and lip  
6 read it and really not gotten what was going on. So it wasn't until I was 30 or 40 years old  
7 that, you know, I really understood the entire picture of the whānau and asked some  
8 questions and said, "How come I was adopted?" And they said, "Your mother didn't want a  
9 baby." "Really?"

10 So I asked if I was given away and they didn't -- I asked my stepmother if I was  
11 given away and she said, "Yeah, they didn't want you." And I said, "How come?" I asked,  
12 "How come?" She didn't want to talk about it. It wasn't fair for me, I wanted to know, I  
13 wanted to hear, I was interested in what had happened to me. I wanted to ask mum.  
14 I know she was frightened of me by then because I'd get angry, and she saw that I was  
15 angry, saying, "Why?"

16 I couldn't blame her by then, she'd gotten old and I did respect her, and understood  
17 but, you know, it was in my heart to ask and I knew she'd been naughty but, you know,  
18 I said, "You know, you looked after me, you were drinking a lot." She said, "Yeah, I  
19 know." But it was good, we did talk, and I said, "You were a naughty mum, eh?" I wasn't  
20 grumpy about it or angry asking her, because she was old by that stage and she'd realised.

21 It was good to be able to talk about that with her. She was happy, I know she cried  
22 over the suffering that I experienced because, you know, she said to me, you suffered really  
23 hard and I worried so much about you and that you couldn't communicate, and you  
24 wouldn't hear your father and he'd hit you a lot, to see her explain that it was, you know,  
25 quite gratifying. I didn't say anything more.

26 **Q.** So she eventually acknowledged what had happened when you were growing up?

27 **A.** Yeah, that's right.

28 **Q.** And you eventually learned that you had lots of siblings, brothers and sisters?

29 **A.** Yes, I didn't realise.

30 **Q.** Yes.

31 **A.** I thought I was the only child, because I was with mum and dad, no other siblings there,  
32 and then -- it wasn't until then that I realised because I'd been adopted away from my other  
33 brothers and sisters. So I wasn't allowed to be close to them, I wasn't allowed to go with  
34 them, they were told to keep away from me because I was adopted. It just doesn't seem

1 right, that -- you could say, "Hello." You could see me and say, "Hello," you know, say  
 2 you're my brother, and I could say, "How come" and ask questions. There are twins in the  
 3 family.

4 (Interpreter correcting) -- I have a sibling in the whānau who can sign and we were  
 5 able to communicate and we remember each other. That sibling was older than me. And  
 6 they remember me when I was small and they said, "Oh, you know, what are you doing  
 7 here?" And I said, "My father's passed away." They said, "Your real father?" I said, "No,  
 8 it's my real father." I was really shocked. But that was really good, I was really happy to  
 9 see that sibling and be able to say "hi". But we didn't really talk again, they lived in  
 10 Auckland and I lived in Te Puke, so we were quite a long way apart, and I was still isolated.

11 **Q.** If I take you back to when you were a young man of about 20 when you're starting to learn  
 12 all this new information about your identity, you would describe yourself as quite an angry  
 13 young man at that time?

14 **A.** Yes, yeah definitely. Frustrated.

15 **Q.** Because the abuse from your-- from [GRO-B] your adoptive dad was so bad that you  
 16 would often sleep in the chook house?

17 **A.** Yeah, the chicken house, the dog house, and underneath the actual house itself, our home.  
 18 Never in my bed, never ever in my bed because I knew that I'd get hit, you know, go to bed  
 19 and I had to wake up and keep an eye, one eye open, you know, sleep with one eye open  
 20 because my dad would be coming, so regularly slept under the house with the dog and with  
 21 the chickens and sometimes way down by the river, sleep in the trees down there by the  
 22 river. But never ever in the home. Not at all.

23 Once I left for school, that was the first time I slept in a bed.

24 **Q.** You've told us in your statement that in your early 20s, or around 20 you became involved  
 25 in gangs. Can you tell us about how that happened?

26 **A.** Yeah, I was young and I was big, I had become a big man with long hair and, you know,  
 27 looked really tough and so they showed me motorbikes and I had a look over these  
 28 motorbikes and I thought, "Oh, I'd like to join these guys," but I couldn't really  
 29 communicate with them, I didn't understand anything they were saying, they said, "Do you  
 30 want to ride a motorbike?" "I don't know, I don't know." So they said they'd teach me how  
 31 to ride a motorbike. I didn't realise that became a gang, what the name was, "gang", and  
 32 I just thought, "Oh, that's lovely, a nice group riding motorbikes, Harley Davidson Club,  
 33 you know, visiting pubs and drinking together, and nobody sort of said it is a gang, and it  
 34 wasn't until I later found out it was a gang. And they said, "It looks like you've joined

1 another gang, you're fighting." I was like, "Oh, I'm fighting, I'm not allowed to do that, I'm  
2 Deaf." "Come on, come with me."

3 So I followed them and that was the president of the gang and I went him, and he  
4 said, "You come with me." And he tricked me into fighting and I was stupid, I thought it  
5 was fun, you know, I was a big guy and I could do this. And then later on I realised that I  
6 was hurting people and I was, like, "Hey, why are we doing this to them?" And they said,  
7 "Oh, they're no good," and the name of their gang, and then I thought, "I need to stop this,  
8 this is wrong, you know, I'm not managing myself" and I could see what was really going  
9 on with my eyes, these people are bleeding, you know, there's knives involved. I hadn't  
10 used a knife, I only used my hands.

11 And then afterwards they were like, "Come on, again." I said, "Nah, nah, I think  
12 I'm done", because I was thinking about the importance of children in the future and being  
13 the kind of person I wanted to be for my children, I didn't want to pass on my name and the  
14 history from my stepfather on to my own children of that violence.

15 So I wanted to be good and teach my children and my children are hearing but they  
16 know how to sign from me and I think that that's, you know, a real taonga for me to be able  
17 to communicate with my children, they're fantastic, and they can sign and that's wonderful  
18 that they do that with me.

19 So I taught them that, and then I realised -- well, at the time when I was in the gangs  
20 I realised I don't want this for my future and I've been arrested a lot of times by the Police  
21 and I didn't understand why I was being arrested, and it wasn't until then that I started to  
22 realise what was going on and I said to the president, "I'm sorry, I have to finish. It's pretty  
23 hard for me, it's really difficult being Deaf, it's really risky, I can't hear if someone's got a  
24 gun, I'd just be taken out without any idea, I'd never know. You know, if someone's  
25 running up behind me they could stab me, I wouldn't hear them coming, or a car, you never  
26 know." So the president said, "All right, okay, yeah, I understand if you want to leave."  
27 And I said, "Yes, I do, definitely," and I want to be safe, I wanted to keep safe, you know,  
28 I wanted to have children.

29 That was important for me, children are beautiful.

30 **Q.** Why do you think it is that you were attracted to this group of men, the gang?

31 **A.** Well, I mean, they had these awesome motorbikes, you know, they looked cool and what  
32 they were wearing and I thought, "I want to look like that. Why not? Who cares if I'm  
33 Deaf? I can join them." And they were all hearing, I was the only Deaf who had joined,  
34 and they were like, "Ooh." They were scared of me because I was a good fighter and so

1 I had become the bully, from being young and getting stronger and stronger and then they  
 2 were like, "Oh, nah, nah, nah." And I didn't realise until I took a good look at myself, you  
 3 know, that this was a mistake for me.

4 And I visited people and apologised, and said, "I'm really sorry, nobody taught me,  
 5 nobody, my parents didn't teach me." And their response was, you know, and I said, "I hit  
 6 you for nothing, I didn't realise what I was doing" and explained to them. And they said,  
 7 "It's okay." They said, "It's okay." And they even asked me in for dinner, we had a nice  
 8 talk, and looking at them I realised, "Hey, this is a family and they're peaceful, I was the  
 9 rough one." So I wanted to become like them. So I did. I became sensible, was able to  
 10 communicate better, Pākehā, Māori, Pacific Islander, whoever you are, you could talk to  
 11 me, we talk about where you're from and, you know, make those connections.

12 But back then, at the time things were really hard. I just feel so bad for these Deaf  
 13 children who have these problems and even now, you know, I visited a month ago in  
 14 Matamata, and they were nervous and frightened, they said, "Can you please come and visit  
 15 at Matamata school." They had a girl there who was Māori and frightened, so I supported  
 16 her and visited. And you could see that she -- she said, "Oh, are you Deaf?" And I said,  
 17 "Yes, I'm Deaf." And, "Are you Māori?" I said, "Yeah, just like you." And you could see  
 18 the realisation come across her face. "Really?" And they said, "See, he's Māori," and she  
 19 was being naughty and I just briefly said to her, "Hey, no more of this shouting," and she  
 20 straight away changed. The teacher was stunned. She said, "Wow, how did you do that so  
 21 effectively?" And it was the Signing. Your hands are important. I taught her and she  
 22 understood. Talking doesn't work.

23 The teacher was absolutely shocked and over the moon, the girl was happy with me,  
 24 "I want to show you my classroom." So off we went. "The next time you start shouting,  
 25 don't shout at your teacher." "Yes, yes, yes, I know, I will, I will." And she promised, and  
 26 became a good girl. I think she was 12. And still wants me around. "I miss Whiti, I want  
 27 to see him again." But I'm busy now with all of this Royal Commission stuff. I told her  
 28 when I have some free time I'll go see her again.

29 **Q.** So, Whiti, what you're telling us is that it's so important for young Deaf people, but  
 30 particularly young Māori Deaf people to feel heard and connected?

31 **A.** Yeah, Deaf children are just marvellous, you know, they're just so visual, their eyes are  
 32 always on. You know, you used to play that game with the five little rocks and you'd put  
 33 them over your hands and toss them up and down, you'd teach them that game, they get it.  
 34 You know, you draw with them, you teach them with your Signing. If you use oralism it's

1 real difficult for them. You come to classroom, "Do you remember anything that  
 2 happened?" "No, can't remember anything." "I'm not putting you down, it's not your fault,  
 3 we'll try again, we'll try again." And encourage them. I want children to be able to  
 4 improve, I don't want them to be put down. I never want to see that. There are so many  
 5 hearing teachers out there in Deaf Education, how many Deaf teachers? And hearing  
 6 people go, "It's all right, I know what I'm doing," hearing teachers, but they need to follow  
 7 what Deaf people need and that's Signing. They have to.

8 I've done so much work working with Deaf children, teaching them, you know, with  
 9 the boys at the village and they'd have problems, and I'd say, "All right, you come with me  
 10 over to the marae, what's the problem?" And we'd talk it out. I'd say, "Are you okay? Are  
 11 you going to remember?" But the communication was clear, I give them the information,  
 12 we'd sort out the problem, resolve it. And they'd go, "Oh, right, thank you, Whiti, I  
 13 understand." "All right, so don't come back again and if it happens again we'll be at  
 14 Rūaumoko marae, my office is here." But they're comfortable there see, because of the  
 15 wairua, the Deaf wairua, it's a warm feeling there for them.

16 And I think that's really important for them it's not for me. It's for them. And  
 17 I stand strong for those Deaf tamariki, and the Deaf community as well.

18 **Q.** I want to talk to you about that work that you did at Ke Iston village, but just before we  
 19 leave the issue of the gangs, I understand that you left the gang when you were 25?

20 **A.** Yes, 25 I left.

21 **Q.** So it was only a short period of your life?

22 **A.** Yeah, I just felt yeah, it was too much, it didn't suit me being in the gang. You know, it  
 23 was hard to communicate as well. But I've got to think positive, you know, so that's why  
 24 I left. And I realise now -- but, you know, I still do visit the club for drinks and say hello  
 25 and see how everyone is, but that's all.

26 **Q.** When you were part of the two gangs that you were involved with, there were other young  
 27 men, hearing men who had sad stories too, weren't there?

28 **A.** Yes. They were not really in the gang but they helped me, like, how to, you know, teach  
 29 me how to make friends and how to relate with other people based on their experiences as  
 30 well. But yeah, they were lovely, they were really, really lovely.

31 They invited me to their home and I met their children and I was like, "Oh, wow,  
 32 I'm in a gang, I'm rough, oh, how do I learn to think positively?" So anyway, I visited  
 33 them, went ahead and visited their houses and they introduced me to their wives and I said,  
 34 you know, "I'm Deaf." They're like, "That's fine." And they would gesture with me, "Oh,

1 you're beating." "Why?" And they would tell me that it wasn't good to do this kind of  
 2 stuff. So I'm like, "What?" They'd say, "Yeah, you're beating, why? Why are you beating  
 3 people, you know, why, what for?"

4 But communication was really important, I've now realised. When they explained  
 5 that to me, they were really clear. You know, "I know you, you've got a grumpy look on  
 6 your face." They would say, you know, like, if I didn't understand, they'd want to hit and  
 7 fight, because I didn't understand what they were saying, you know, because they were  
 8 talking and I just didn't have a clue what they were saying. But that's wrong for me, really,  
 9 to just lash out like that. I should just check, "Oh, are you okay? You're saying hello? Oh,  
 10 you're just saying hello? Right, okay, this is hello? Okay." So it was hard to learn to  
 11 communicate like that.

12 So yeah, he was a lovely man, he passed away, I think two years ago, I was really  
 13 upset about that because he was so beautiful, he taught me the right way. And yeah, I want  
 14 to learn more from him. But yeah, his wife she was lovely too.

15 **Q.** Matua Whiti, you've talked about the Police arresting you. What was it like for you to be  
 16 arrested by the Police?

17 **A.** Oh, the Police themselves used to catch me because they thought I was rough, you know,  
 18 rough looking, but really, I'd just finished work and I was going back to the pub, I had my  
 19 full jug ready at the pub and the Police came in and to check on the pub and check on  
 20 everybody and here I am with my beer and they caught me and I was like, "Hang on a  
 21 minute, what's going on? What, what, what? I'm Deaf, I'm Deaf." And I was like, "Hang  
 22 on, wait a second, just wait," and I pushed them, you know, I was like, "Hang on, I haven't  
 23 finished my jug yet, I've got to finish my jug first," trying to sign to them "I'm trying to  
 24 finish my jug," and I tried to call the manager over to communicate with them, but no, they  
 25 didn't care about the manager and they took me in the van and locked me up. And I'm like,  
 26 "Huh? What did I do wrong? What was I doing wrong? Why?" Like why, they always  
 27 used to catch me all the time. And the Police would say, you know, ask me different  
 28 questions and -- or write it down and write down and keep it in my file but I didn't know  
 29 how to write back to communicate, I didn't know English, I had no idea what they were  
 30 writing, what they were saying, that's how they used to -- they would make up a story on  
 31 the bit of paper, write a made-up story, but I didn't know what the English was, I couldn't  
 32 read. And I'm like, "Why do you catch me?" It used to happen all the time. The Police  
 33 sergeant, he knew me, you know, because I was always there, always picking on me, I hate  
 34 him.

1           You know, there's a lot of Police around and then they'd always come and pick on  
2 me and lock me up at the Auckland Police station, all the time I had to go to the Auckland  
3 Police station, locked up there, but yeah, there was -- no-one explained to me what was  
4 going on.

5 **Q.** Did you have an interpreter?

6 **A.** No, nothing, no interpreter, nothing whatsoever.

7 **Q.** What about when you went to court?

8 **A.** No, no interpreter, nothing at all. I think later on, and then -- now we get interpreters,  
9 they're amazing, interpreters are beautiful, they help us with the Police or whatever we need  
10 but at that time, no interpreters at all. I just sat there in court, they asked me questions: Are  
11 you guilty or not guilty? And I'm like, "What does that mean? What does guilty/not guilty  
12 mean? I have no idea. No idea what they're talking about, guilty or not guilty." I said,  
13 "Huh?" No idea. And the lawyer just kind of "You'll be right, shh," you know, "just go  
14 home."

15           And then I got a letter in the mail, plenty of letters before in the mail, fines, had to  
16 pay fines, fine after fine. But why? I had no idea. Those Police were cheeky. You know,  
17 they should see: Oh, this person's Deaf, we will try and help him, you know. But no, they  
18 just grabbed me, locked me up. I'd try and fight with them back because I didn't know what  
19 was going on, I'd fight with them back and they would grab each other, more Police would  
20 come, I'd be like, "Leave me alone, what's the problem?" I'm signing, "What's the  
21 problem? Leave me alone." But yeah, so yeah, they'd lock me up. Fed up, all the time in  
22 the Police station again, blah, blah, blah, what's your name? You know. But yeah, I just  
23 stopped asking questions, I just keep quiet.

24 **Q.** So you think that you've probably got some criminal convictions that aren't right because  
25 nobody gave you proper interpreted legal advice?

26 **A.** Yeah, yeah.

27 **Q.** But you've told us that you left behind the gangs and you left behind the Police  
28 involvement, and one of the reasons for that is because you joined Deaf Club and so now  
29 I want you to talk to me about joining Deaf Club and reconnecting with your Deaf culture?

30 **A.** Oh wonderful, amazing Deaf Club, it's amazing, ooh, man, it's a big impact, like, "Oh, who  
31 are you, who are you? You've got long hair now." "Yeah, yeah, that's me." "Oh, yes,  
32 I know you, I know you and you and you and you, wait, hang on." We'd meet all our  
33 friends and we would hug, you know, big bear hugs, and I was so happy, just so happy  
34 being together. You know, I had big long hair and a moustache, and I'm like, "I'm Whiti."



1 "Oh, you're Whiti? You? Oh, you're Whiti?" "Yes, I'm Whiti." "Oh, you were mischief,  
2 right?" You know. "No, no, no, not anymore, I want to -- now I can sign, I want to learn to  
3 sign more" and I started changing and I started learning and changing and, you know,  
4 self-reflection and realised everything I'd done I was wrong in the past and needed to  
5 change to become better.

6 But, amazing, I was so happy at Deaf Club, I used to -- you chat away with  
7 everybody, you know, we wouldn't go to the pub because the Police are there, but yeah, no  
8 Police at Deaf Club, you know, you can just have fun. It was amazing, wonderful, just  
9 chat, chat, chat all night, every time, you know, just go and visit each other and because  
10 that's -- I learned from them other Deaf, I'm really grateful for the Deaf community, really  
11 grateful, Māori Deaf as well, thank you they support me, you know, we're always there for  
12 each other.

13 So yeah, they're in my heart, it's beautiful. Deaf people, yeah, I love them. Thank  
14 you.

15 **Q.** You've used your experiences as a gang member to talk to young Māori Deaf and you take  
16 your gang patch and talk to them about your stories?

17 **A.** Yes, yes. Because, you know, I'm so just dedicated to improving these kids and the staff at  
18 Kelston, at Ko Taku Reo, you know, they saw that and it was working really well. You  
19 know, I didn't graduate as a teacher at all but, you know, I'm just a natural teacher really  
20 and I use that experience and sign with them to teach them. Not like "I'm a teacher, I'm a  
21 teacher, look at me." No, not at all, you know, with the children, Deaf children it's really  
22 hard for people to communicate with them but I could do that, practical with my hands,  
23 visual, signing gesturing. Because, you know, the teacher was always, blah, blah, blah, talk  
24 to them, "watch me, watch me, watch me," but no, it doesn't work that way.

25 You should just tap them, make sure they face you, "Hey, look, watch me. Ready?  
26 Watch me." And they're like, "Yeah, okay, okay, all right." And then you start signing.  
27 Then they understand.

28 **Q.** Before I talk about your work at Kelston village, I just want to briefly mention that for most  
29 of your life you've worked very hard in paid employment, haven't you?

30 **A.** Yes, yes.

31 **Q.** And so you worked at the freezing works?

32 **A.** Yeah, long time ago when I was younger, yeah, I changed jobs after that, different jobs,  
33 you know, had a look here and there, something I didn't know really well, I would try  
34 something to get some new experience, I don't really like that, I'll try something else,

1 maybe a digger, driving a digger. And they're, "Oh, you're Deaf?" "No, I'll be right, I use  
2 my eyes." Away I go, picking up dirt here and there. "Oh, good, wow."

3 So yeah, I use my eyes all the time, you know, who cares about their ears? I can use  
4 my eyes, I can see what's going on, I can look around the digger, eyes visual really, and  
5 even Deaf children, when they sign, their eyes are looking around here and there. So it's  
6 easy. It is, it's easy. Sometimes hearing people when they communicate you're like, "Wait,  
7 what?" They want to try and write it down with us, but it's better if they write it brief, you  
8 know, not big long, huge paragraphs, we're like, "Er, don't know what you're talking about.  
9 Sorry, don't understand that. Can you just make it brief and explain just the, you know,  
10 main points?" "Oh, okay got it, awesome. That's how you communicate, I understand  
11 now."

12 So there's different -- that's the difference.

13 **Q.** So after working for many years in lots of different paid jobs, you started working at  
14 Kelston village and I want you to describe that for us. Firstly, was that in the school or in  
15 the hostel? How is Kelston run?

16 **A.** I think maybe about 30 years old, around 30 years old, and the staff there asked me to come  
17 and work in the village, so I was like, "Oh, well, you know", they knew I'd been naughty in  
18 my past, so really -- so I was more experienced with the students there in the village.  
19 I learned from the other Deaf staff -- Patrick, he's passed away now, he is Māori Deaf, he's  
20 passed away, he asked me to go and learn with the kids and how to have them improve,  
21 how to teach them to improve and observe them and so I asked, I was like, "Oh, do these  
22 kids have problems?" "Yeah, yeah, yeah." I can see by their facial expressions, you know.  
23 And Patrick was like, "Good, you're picking up on that. Wow. Good on you."

24 So all the staff didn't know how to identify that. Patrick was amazing, but yeah,  
25 over time, you know, you wouldn't rush with them, you'd be like, "Are you okay? Do you  
26 want to talk with me later?" "Yeah, yeah, I'll talk with you later." "Okay, no worries, all  
27 good, up to you, your time." And then, you know, I would learn each individually -- about  
28 each kid individually and then yeah, I was asked to do a workshop, I was like, "Oh, okay,"  
29 and the students were really happy, you know. And yeah, they felt safe with me and then  
30 yeah, the students -- I've left now and the students still miss me. I retired a month ago from  
31 Ko Taku Reo and yeah, they really miss me, but I still do visit there. I have to because  
32 I know the boys really well and they can get upset so I visit and check that they're okay.  
33 They're like, "Yes, Whiti's coming, yeah." So yeah, that's really cool.

- 1 **Q.** I understand that when you first started working there you decided to get your tattoos  
2 removed because your tattoos scared the children?
- 3 **A.** Yeah, the children, yeah, that's right, yes, thank you for reminding me. That's good, yes.  
4 So Michael Wi who is a Deaf man that worked there at that time, he's also passed away, he  
5 was just a wonderful man, and he came and said to me, "Hey, I want you to come and teach  
6 with the Māori Deaf children and do some Māori arts." Okay, so I came along and the kids  
7 all stared at me, "Who's that man? Who's that man?" "Don't worry, he's Deaf, he's Deaf."  
8 And they were like, "Oh, he's got lots of tattoos." I saw their faces and realised that they  
9 were frightened of me with all these tattoos. And I said, "You know what am I going to  
10 do?" And I went to the doctor and so they had special free laser removal that you could  
11 have your tattoos removed and they said, "Yes, yes," and it was really cheap, I think I paid  
12 \$20, and so I said, "Yeah, I want to do that now," and I was really keen.
- 13 And so they all went away and all the kids were really cute, when I came back  
14 they said, "Oh, you're back?" "Yes, I'm back." And they said, "Where's those, all those  
15 tattoos?" And I said, "Yeah, they're gone. Look, look," and showed them my arms. "How  
16 come?" I said, "The butterflies took them," I was cheeky with the kids, "the butterflies took  
17 all the tattoos and flew away." And all these kids laughed and laughed. But it was really  
18 cute and that was good for them, you know, it was exciting for them to learn and  
19 understand, you know, through signing that really, you know, I'm a bit sort of sad now at  
20 the moment because I think about, you know, the government saying, you know, the  
21 Ministry saying that Ko Taku Reo owns Rūaumoko marae School and so I've got this  
22 picture from that now, and I've had to accept that and it's not something I can fight against,  
23 but the Ministry of Education is powerful and so I understand now that Ko Taku  
24 Reo -- Rūaumoko Marae is part of Ko Taku Reo, but I spoke to James and I understand  
25 that.
- 26 **Q.** So the marae is part of Kelston village?
- 27 **A.** What do you mean the village? I worked at the village and taught children there at the  
28 marae, we did kapa haka and we did weaving, whaikōrero, that sort of thing and the  
29 teachers would teach, I learned from Michael Wi, who passed away, and he tautokoed me  
30 how to teach the children, and the children were very sad when he passed away, and I told  
31 them I was his brother, "yeah, yeah, I'm his brother, don't worry", they're happy to think I'm  
32 his brother.
- 33 **Q.** But you're saying that that's all owned by the government, that's how they see it?

1 A. That's right, yeah, so I've realised that now. At the time, it would have been it was Kelston  
 2 School for the Deaf, way back, and then they changed to KDEC (Kelston Deaf Education  
 3 Centre), so that was okay, all the children were excited to be there, they liked it being called  
 4 KDEC, then they called it Ko Taku Reo, they changed the name, and I don't really  
 5 understand that. We've had meetings about it, and I've brought up how I feel, it's still a  
 6 government school, so I understand that, you know, and I'm happy to support them.

7 **Q.** Do you feel by changing the name to Ko Taku Reo that the school is inclusive of Māori  
 8 concepts, or it's just a name change?

9 A. They haven't got the word "Deaf" in there, Ko Taku Reo doesn't mention Deafness. So it  
 10 feels hearing, it feels like they're teaching hearing children. They should mention "Deaf"  
 11 because it's our school, you know, that's where we play, that's where we sign, Ko Taku Reo  
 12 sounds like speech and hearing. They still have signing but -- I get it, I get it why they've  
 13 called it that, I accept it, and I still support Ko Taku Reo, because it's what the  
 14 Government's sort of decreed, I can't blame them, and I'm happy with that, I want to  
 15 encourage them and hope that in the future things can improve and then I'll be happy.

16 **Q.** I just want to talk to you about how it was for you growing up learning to be a Māori male.  
 17 You've told us that you had no language for it. Is it still a barrier today for you when you  
 18 go on to the marae, the lack of language?

19 A. Yes. Because when you speak te reo you have to learn how the words go together. That's  
 20 really tough for someone like me, you know, you have hearing people here like in this  
 21 room, you can learn to speak spoken languages, but I need to be able to sign my Māori  
 22 concepts and language, the equivalent in sign language. It's still the same concepts, but  
 23 I know that, you know, to speak te reo Māori as fluently is really tough.

24 The interpreters are able to hear and sign and do all of that at the same time, but it's  
 25 even harder for the interpreters when it's going on for too long. I don't want to be able to  
 26 speak te reo fluently but I want my interpreters to know te reo Māori and then for that  
 27 communication between different groups of people to go really smoothly. So if we go into  
 28 the marae or Te Ao Māori it's different, you know, and people will do a long whaikōrero  
 29 and then someone else will take a turn, and someone else will take a turn, you have  
 30 different systems but, you know, for me, you know, there's only -- I only ever had two, our  
 31 side and your side, you know, because in the Deaf School we didn't have a lot of  
 32 understanding of how to speak te reo Māori, it was all signed.

1           So that supported Māori Deaf. But, you know, I know that you can sign for Māori  
2 concepts and it's something, you know, like when I'm gone, then what happens? Who's  
3 next? Who teaches? I worry about that.

4 **Q.** Do you feel that there are enough people trained to be able to interpret te reo into  
5 New Zealand Sign Language and back again?

6 **A.** No, not enough, definitely not enough interpreters. I think there are about four or five who  
7 can interpret. We need way more, I'd like way more. The problem is that AUT  
8 isn't -- they're not learning to sign. First of all, they learn English, once they've learned  
9 English they move on to te reo Māori, they have to go on and do more training, but they  
10 still fail and it's -- the Pākehā students seem to get through all right but the Māori students  
11 don't. Why do they fail? We need them to get through because they need to do te reo  
12 Māori and sign with the children. It's difficult.

13           Because it's easy if you're learning in English and you're learning to sign but you  
14 don't have the Māori and the Māori signs. When people come to work with me they don't  
15 understand the way I sign and what the concepts are and I really miss having those Māori  
16 interpreters, we need more. It's really hard to find.

17           Just recently we were talking about Te Roopu Waiora Trust, we were talking about  
18 moving to a new office for Māori sign language. And, you know, because AUT teaches the  
19 Pākehā interpreters in English but we need to have something for Māori and that's  
20 potentially a future area, because there's heaps of Māori all over New Zealand, but we face  
21 those barriers, we're stuck.

22           You know, if you go up north it's worse, there's even less access up there. I visit  
23 people I know up there and they say, "You know, I'm poor, I can't go to the doctor." And  
24 you say, "How do you get an interpreter to go to the doctor?" And there's lots of Deaf  
25 children up there, the situation's dire up there. I want to support them in the far north.  
26 There's some lovely kids up there. But how do they access education? There's just not  
27 enough services up there, not enough interpreters in Northland, I think they've only got two  
28 interpreters altogether. They need far more, and a lot of them are Māori. And that's the  
29 problem.

30 **Q.** How important is it for parents of Deaf children to learn to sign with their children?

31 **A.** I mean, you just don't see it, I don't see it. I want to bring them into Ko Taku Reo village or  
32 the marae and have the parents there and check out their signing and see how they're going  
33 and if they're not signing then, you know, they're going to have problems in their family  
34 because the Deaf children are stuck then. They have no access.

- 1 **Q.** Have you noticed that there are particularly young Māori Deaf who don't have access to  
2 support groups like Deaf Club?
- 3 **A.** That's right, yes. Sometimes, you know, they might just have a few fun dramas for children  
4 at Deaf Club. For example, I work with hāngī and bring the children for a kai and support  
5 them, having that, and then get the parents, you know, to come, bring them in, don't be  
6 embarrassed, you know, there's nothing wrong, us Deaf aren't going to be mean to you or  
7 anything, come in, everybody, enjoy it, everybody's welcome. You see how excited the  
8 children are that you're Deaf and you're signing there. "Oh, they're Deaf." Yeah, wow,  
9 really.
- 10 **Q.** So are you saying that you think for many hearing parents they're a little bit nervous about  
11 going into a room where the predominant culture is Deaf culture?
- 12 **A.** Yes, because the parents haven't come before and, you know, you tell them to come, you  
13 say, "Hey, your children are here, you come too," but they don't come.
- 14 There's one massive, massive problem and that's alcohol. Why are they drinking?  
15 Think of your children. You know, drunk, smacking kids, what's that going to achieve?  
16 Children haven't done anything wrong. They're frightened, and you see that going on  
17 generation after generation. I just want to say: Please, stop.
- 18 **Q.** And you're talking about hearing parents, aren't you?
- 19 **A.** Yes.
- 20 **Q.** What do you think needs to change to support both Deaf children and their families but also  
21 Māori Deaf children and their families? What does the government need to do?
- 22 **A.** I know that the Government, you know, they stay there in their offices, sat on their seats,  
23 they don't go out there and see what Deaf people are doing. I want them to come out, come  
24 out and see with your own eyes what's really going on, that's your job, Government, I want  
25 to bring them out of their offices and witness and see what's going on for Deaf children out  
26 there. Don't stay there in your offices going blah, blah, blah all day. What about me?  
27 Come and see me. It's important to see what Deaf children are doing and what it's really  
28 like out there. That's important and then they'd get it, then they'd know.
- 29 **Q.** Before we finish, is there anything else that you would like to tell the Commissioners, or  
30 the government?
- 31 **A.** Oh, yes. Really I just want to thank everybody for being here and watching and listening to  
32 my story, you know, for me it's really, you know, to be honest, it was very a hard life for  
33 me growing up, you know, my parents were really bad, I was always very, very scared and  
34 it never got better. But I'm really happy with my children, they support me, they sign,

1 they're fantastic. I'm getting old now and, you know, that might be less, but I just want to  
 2 say tēnā koutou katoa, thank you for listening and please remember what happens to Māori  
 3 Deaf children and that's important and that's what comes first, they're children first and  
 4 they're important.

5 It's not about me, you know, it's too late for me, we already know, but for those  
 6 children who are still stuck out there now, we need to find them in the world. So please,  
 7 take care of our children.

8 **Q.** Okay, I think what we're going to do now is turn to questions from the Commissioners, and  
 9 we've had a wee discussion, and it's matua Whiti's preference that the interpreters stay here  
 10 and they will indicate who's asking the question so he can keep looking in the one place.

11 So, Commissioner Paul, I'll hand over to you.

12 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Kia ora, thank you, Matua Whiti. I'll ask a couple of questions  
 13 first.

14 What needs to change to get more Deaf teachers around the country?

15 **A.** So there were plenty of Deaf teachers before, plenty, but at the moment they've all pulled  
 16 out, they're just over the hearing -- they're over the hearing teachers, they don't feel  
 17 comfortable. So yeah, they've told me, it's now getting less and less and less. So I want  
 18 them to come back and to teach again because, you know, sign language is important,  
 19 teaching in sign language is important.

20 But yeah, there were a lot of Deaf teachers, and then they kept leaving and leaving  
 21 and leaving, so yeah, that's what I think. It hurts, it hurts, the children especially.

22 **Q.** Thank you. And one last question from me, you mentioned "Deaf wairua". Would you  
 23 like to talk some more about that, what does that mean to you?

24 **A.** So wairua means plenty of, like, plenty of Māori Deaf Māori people in the community,  
 25 they've got rich history that dates back, people have passed away, how to teach Māori  
 26 concepts or how to cook in the Māori way. Because, you know, I didn't know about Deaf  
 27 history. So really, the wairua is tapu and we've got to thank the, you know, thank the  
 28 people who have passed on for their support.

29 And if we talk about the community, Māori Deaf community when they explain  
 30 their stories about their wairua, it's sad sometimes to hear their history about bullying and  
 31 abuse in their history about their parents, and food issues. So their wairua is starving, but  
 32 now we've got plenty of food, we've got TV, we've got phones, but previously we didn't  
 33 have that kind of stuff, so it's just different from then and now.

1                   We need to care for each other and so always keep our wairua close and its value to  
2 us. So yes, that's wairua.

3 **Q.** Thank you, Matua Whiti. It's great to connect with you again. I'll now ask Commissioner  
4 Steenson if she has any questions.

5 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Yes, I have a couple. Ngā mihi, Matua Whiti, mō ō karakia  
6 mō ō kōrero nui i tēnei rā, tēnā koe. Thank you for your karakia this morning and your  
7 statement today. My questions are, firstly, what do you think would be a good way for  
8 Deaf children to make complaints about, say, in their -- about their school? Something  
9 online? Or a place they could go? What are your thoughts?

10 **A.** Good question. Right. So, for me, I didn't know that there was such a way we can do it.  
11 You know, the staff knew yes, but I didn't know, you know. It was hard. Yeah, good  
12 question, good question. I'm a bit stuck on that one. Yeah, I don't know.

13 **Q.** We can come back to it if you'd like --

14 **A.** Okay.

15 **Q.** -- to mull over it. My second question is, do you think there's enough being taught about  
16 Māori culture today at Deaf schools, or could there be more done?

17 **A.** Oh, it should just keep going, it needs to keep going, it's not enough, it needs to keep going  
18 so the kids can grow up and know and they understand, that's all, you know, have a full  
19 understanding about Māori culture, that's what I really want. But yeah, I'm not too sure  
20 now if that's at that level, but yes, there is some, but it needs to keep on going to make sure  
21 that they have a full understanding about Deaf Māori culture and Deaf culture.

22 **Q.** Do you think a Deaf kaupapa Māori school would be a great start?

23 **A.** They're all full mainstream now, schools are more mainstream now, there's no classes at Ko  
24 Taku Reo for that, I think just transition classes, that's all. But yeah, there's plenty of  
25 mainstream classes out there, but yeah, I haven't seen that, kids are all in mainstream at the  
26 moment, so...

27 **Q.** Okay. And then what about governance, Deaf Māori representation in governance of these  
28 schools and organisations that represent Deaf services and things like that?

29 **A.** No, you mean Deaf Māori in high positions you mean?

30 **Q.** Yeah.

31 **A.** No, we don't have one, no.

32 **Q.** Okay. Thank you. And then finally, before we come back to that first question, you talked  
33 a lot about the parents benefitting from learning sign language. So I'm just thinking, would



1 a whānau-centred approach to Deaf Education improve things for Deaf children and the  
2 Deaf community?

3 A. Yes, of course.

4 Q. That's what you're saying?

5 A. Of course, yes. Yeah, it would help them totally. You know, because hearing can learn  
6 sign, you know, they're like, "Please teach us." So that would be great, yeah. It would be  
7 really, really good. That would be really good if they can learn, it doesn't matter if they  
8 make a mistake, it doesn't matter, they can just keep on going and keep teaching and  
9 improve, yeah.

10 Q. And now we've had a bit of time, have you had any more thoughts on a complaint process  
11 for children at a Deaf School?

12 A. Complaints? Maybe they can tell the teacher if they have any complaints, because they  
13 work with them, right? Like, "Oh, what's wrong?" They can make their complaint and the  
14 teacher should be responsible to go forth. It's not the kids' responsibility, it should be the  
15 teacher's responsibility after that. So, yeah, they can complain, "They thieved my ball," or  
16 whatever it is, you know, the teacher can then intervene and sort out what's going wrong,  
17 yeah.

18 Q. Thank you, thank you so much, tēnā koe.

19 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thanks, Commissioner Steenson. I'll now hand over to  
20 Commissioner Shaw for any final questions and a final thanks kaumatua ki te kaumatua.

21 **CHAIR:** I will be addressing him in Māori at some stage, so a Māori interpreter is available. But  
22 before I do that, I have a couple of questions for you, matua. The first one is about the  
23 standard of education that Deaf children are receiving. From your experience in  
24 classrooms, and engaging with young people, do you think that young Deaf people are  
25 getting the same quality education as hearing children?

26 A. Different, no, different, different level.

27 Q. How different?

28 A. Deaf, they're more hands on, you know, hearing are more -- they speak, they speak, it  
29 doesn't match, it's different. They miss too much, yeah, it's not clear for them, you know,  
30 Deaf prefer someone signing to them to teach them, but if they're with spoken it's difficult  
31 for them. So yeah, it's definitely separate.

32 If they're playing outside in the playground and mixing around with each other, you  
33 know, they can sign with each and mix, but if it's in the classroom, it's different. So yeah,  
34 definitely more strong signing.

- 1 **Q.** Can I ask you, are Deaf children getting the opportunity to get academic qualifications, go  
2 to university, etc?
- 3 **A.** I don't know really, I'm not -- yeah, I don't know.
- 4 **Q.** Okay.
- 5 **A.** I guess you'll have to ask a teacher possibly? Or the transition unit, but I'm not probably  
6 the best one to answer that question.
- 7 **Q.** Thank you, and I appreciate that.
- 8 My second question relates to the sort of support that is available for Deaf children  
9 and Deaf people in general for their emotional and their psychological well-being.
- 10 **A.** Yes.
- 11 **Q.** Are you able to comment on that?
- 12 **A.** Deaf Club, Deaf Club, I feel. There's Deaf Club.
- 13 **Q.** So the support and the help is coming from the Deaf community?
- 14 **A.** Yes, Deaf community will support each other.
- 15 **Q.** Yes. What, say, a member of the Deaf community becomes seriously emotionally upset,  
16 disturbed, are there any Deaf professionals or professionals who can communicate properly  
17 to provide help?
- 18 **A.** There's Deaf Aotearoa. If they have any problems you can go to Deaf Aotearoa and they  
19 can support as well.
- 20 **Q.** Right. Good. Kia ora. Engari, kua tae te wā ki te mihi atu ki a koe, Matua. Nāu e hara mai  
21 i tō hītori, tō hītori pōuri, te mea taumaha. Nāu e hara mai i tō mōhiotanga me tō  
22 mātauranga ki a mātou. Tēnei te mihi, tēnei te mihi, tēnei te mihi ki a koe e Matua. Kei a  
23 koe te karakia whakakapi?
- 24 **A.** E te Atua, tēnei ahau e inoi atu ki a koe kia Ūhia tō Māramatanga ki runga ki tēnā, ki tēnā o  
25 tātou, otirā ki tō tātou whānau Turi Māori ... e mihi ana ki a tātou katoa i roto i tēnei whare.  
26 Ki a koutou ngā Kaikōmihana, tēnā koutou, otirā ki a koutou katoa kua tae mai ki te mātaki  
27 i tēnei, kia ora pai koutou katoa. Nō reira, āmine. He aha taku waiata? Te Aroha anō.  
28 (Waiata Te Aroha).
- 29 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Tēnā koe te Matua Whiti, thank you so much for the karakia, the  
30 beautiful karakia. It's our lunchtime and are we resuming at...
- 31 **MS BASIRE:** We are five minutes early but I think we could take that extra five minutes and  
32 come back at 1.45.
- 33 **CHAIR:** 1.45, sure.
- 34 **COMMISSIONER GIBSON:** Thank you.