

**-ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
MĀORI 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: Ms Julia Steenson
Dr Anaru Erueti
Mr Paul Gibson
Judge Coral Shaw
Ali'imuumua Sandra Alofivae

Counsel: Ms Julia Spelman, Mr Kingi Snelgar, Mr Wiremu Rikihana,
Mr Luke Claasen, Ms Maia Wikaira, Ms Alisha Castle,
Ms Tracey Norton, Ms Season-Mary Downs, Ms Alana Thomas, Mr Winston McCarthy, Mr Simon Mount QC,
Ms Kerryn Beaton QC for the Royal Commission
Ms Melanie Baker, Ms Julia White and Mr Max Clarke-Parker for the Crown
Mr James Meagher for the Catholic Church
Ms Fiona Guy Kidd for the Anglican Church
Ms Sonya Cooper, Ms Amanda Hill as other counsel attending

Venue: Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Tumutumuwhenua Marae
59b Kitemoana Road
Ōrākei
AUCKLAND

Date: 9 March 2022

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1 **[10.00 am]**

2 **KAUMĀTUA WYLLIS:** Whiti ora ki te whaiao ki te ao mārama, whiti ki runga, whiti ki raro. E
3 ngungu ki te kōhatu, e ngungu ki te rākau. Tītaha ki tēnei taha, tītaha ki tērā taha. Tihei
4 mauri ora.

5 Mōrena e te whānau. I te ata nei ka waiatatia e tātou katoa te hīmene ‘Whakaaria
6 Mai’, kātahi te karakia mō te rā, kātahi he poto mihi, whai atu i tērā he waiata hei hiki i te
7 wairua o te rā. Nō reira tēnā tātou e te whānau, he wai:

8 [English: Good morning whānau. This morning we will all sing the hymn ‘Whakaaria Mai’,
9 and then a prayer to commence our proceedings for the day, and then a short speech of
10 acknowledgement, following that will be another song to uplift our spirits on this day. And
11 so, greetings to the whānau, a song:]

12 Waiata: Whakaaria Mai - Whakaaria mai tōu rīpeka ki au,. Tīaho mai rā roto i te pō.
13 Hei konā au titiro atu ai. Ora, mate, hei au koe noho ai. Whakaaria mai tō rīpeka ki au.
14 Tīaho mai rā roto i te pō. Hei konā au titiro atu ai. Ora, mate, hei au koe noho ai. Ora, mate,
15 hei au koe noho ai. Āmine.

16 [English: Song Whakaaria Mai - show your cross to me, let it shine in the darkness.
17 Over yonder I will be looking for you. In life and in death let me rest with thee. Show
18 your cross to me and let it shine in the darkness. And over yonder I will be looking for you
19 in life and in death. Let me rest with you in life and in death. Let me rest with you.
20 Amen.]

21 Ka kī te rangi ki te whenua ki tō korōriatanga e te Atua kaha rawa. Tīaho mai tōu
22 rīpeka ki a mātou katoa i tēnei rā, kia harikoa te rangi, kia kaha te rangi, kia māia te rangi,
23 kia māia hoki rātou e honohono mai nei ki tēnei o ngā huihuinga. Nō reira, tēnei ngā
24 whakawhetai, ngā whakamoemiti ki a koe kia korowaitia tēnei huihuinga i tēnei ata, ki
25 runga i te ingoa tapu o Ihu Karaiti. Ake, ake, āmine.

26 [English: The heavens and earth are filled with your honour and glory, o Lord. May
27 your cross shine upon us today so that we may we have a pleasant day, a strong day, a
28 courageous day, and may those who are connecting in with us during this gathering also be
29 courageous. And so, we give thanks to you, so that the gathering this morning may be
30 sheltered by your cloak, in your holy name, o Jesus Christ. For ever and ever, amen.]

31 Tēnā tātou e te whānau. He mihi tēnei ki a koutou e mātakitaki mai nei. Ko koutou
32 hoki e kaha nei, e māia nei ki te haere mai ki te kōrero ki te Kōmihana i te rā nei. Ngā mihi
33 ki a koutou, kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawanui i tēnei rā. Ahakoa te taumaha kei runga i a
34 koe, ahakoa ngā kōrero ka kōrerohia i te rā nei. Kia kaha i roto i te whakaaro kia whārikihia

1 ngā kōrero ki mua i te aroaro. Nō reira, tēnei te mihi atu ki a koutou. Otirā, ngā kaimahi o
 2 tēnei wāhi, mōrena ki a tātou katoa. Kia harikoa te rā, kia pai te rā, kia tino ngāwari te rā ki
 3 runga i a koutou. Ko te tūmanako ka whai hua tēnei rā pērā i ērā rā o mua, ērā rā kua
 4 pahure. Nō reira, ki runga i tēnā, ka tukua tēnei waiata e whai ake nei 'Purea Nei' kia
 5 makere ana ngā here ki runga i a koe, ki runga i a tātou katoa i tēnei rā. Tēnā koutou, tēnā
 6 tātou katoa i tēnei rā.

7 [English: Greetings whānau. I want to acknowledge everyone watching. I also
 8 acknowledge you who are showing your strength and courage in joining in and giving
 9 evidence before the Commission. I acknowledge you, and so be strong, be steadfast and be
 10 courageous today. In spite of the heaviness that is upon you, and the evidence that will be
 11 given today. Have strength in knowing that the evidence will be laid out in our presence. To
 12 the staff of this place, good morning to everyone. May we have a happy day, a good day,
 13 and a very easy day for you all. It is hoped that we will benefit from this day as in recent
 14 days. With that in mind we sing this song, Purea Nei, which speaks of removing the bonds
 15 upon you, and upon all of us on this day. Thank you, thank you everyone.]

16 Waiata Purea Nei – Purea nei e te hau. Horoia e te ua. Whitiwhitia e te rā. Mahea
 17 ake ngā pōraruraru. Makere ana ngā here. E rere, wairua e rere ki ngā ao o te rangi.
 18 Whitiwhitia e te rā. Mahea ake ngā pōraruraru. Makere ana ngā here, makere ana ngā here.

19 [English: Song Purea Nei - cleansed by the wind, and washed by the rain and as the
 20 sun shines upon us, the bonds are removed and all of those difficulties are also removed.
 21 Let the spirit soar to the highest heavens. As the sun shines upon us the troubles are
 22 cleared, and the bonds are removed. The bonds are removed.]

23 Nō reira mauri whātua, mauri tū, mauri ora ki a tātou katoa i tēnei rā. Tēnā koutou.

24 [English: And so, we wish to have a settled and thriving mauri today. Thank you
 25 very much.]

26 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe Matua Wyllis i tō karakia, nāu i ora ai i ngā kawa
 27 nei. Tēnā koutou katoa, ata mārie tātou. Nau mai haere mai ki Tumutumuhenua o Ngāti
 28 Whātua Ōrākei i tēnei rā. (Thank you, Matua Wyllis, for your karakia and for following
 29 protocol. Good morning and welcome to Tumutumuhenua of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei on
 30 this day).

31 Okay, this morning we are going to welcome in day 3 of our Māori hearing with
 32 warm greetings which is what I've just said. And I just want to say a priority for the Royal
 33 Commission is to ensure that we've got accessible access to this hearing and so once again
 34 I just mention that we have sign language interpreters and we also have a stenographer who

1 is writing the closed captions and we have Māori, Te Reo Māori interpreters who are
2 assisting with the translation, and we also have the transcript of the hearing.

3 So ata mārie, Ms Spelman, ngā mihi o te wā (good morning, Ms Spelman, greetings
4 of the time). Can you provide us with an overview of today, please.

5 **MS SPELMAN:** Ata mārie e te Heamana otirā ki ngā Kaikōmihana katoa. E mihi ake ki tō tātou
6 pou whakawairua o te rā, Matua Wyllis, e mihi ana ki a koe.

7 [English: Good morning, Madam Chair and to your fellow Commissioners. I want to
8 acknowledge our spiritual pillar, Matua Wyllis.]

9 Good morning, Commissioner Steenson and all Commissioners. I just wanted to thank
10 Matua Wyllis for opening us up today. Before I make my opening remarks, Madam Chair,
11 I'll just note that there is another two counsel appearing this morning; that is Counsel
12 Assisting for the Royal Commission, Alisha Castle, who is here in the whare with us, and
13 another counsel who will be making an appearance just at the beginning now on AVL.

14 So, if we could just turn to the AVL counsel, thank you. I'll just pause you,
15 Mr Meagher, we can't hear you at the moment. Yes - we can hear you now.

16 **MR MEAGHER:** Ata mārie ngā Kaikōmihana (Good morning to the Commissioners). Thank
17 you for the brief opportunity to note our presence this morning. I appear here on behalf of
18 the Catholic Church to acknowledge the evidence of Ms AF. I just wanted to note that also
19 watching via the livestream to listen and bear witness to Ms AF's testimony this morning
20 are representatives of the Catholic Church, including the Good Shepherd Sisters, the Sisters
21 of Our Lady of the Missions and the Archdiocese of Wellington, along with representatives
22 from Sacred Heart College and St Joseph's School in New Plymouth, kia ora (thank you).

23 **MS SPELMAN:** Tēnā anō e te Heamana. Ko tēnei te rā tuatoru e tautoko ana au i ngā mihi kua
24 mihia ki ngā purapura i tū ki ngā rā kua hipa.

25 [English: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is the third day I endorse the acknowledgments
26 that have been expressed towards the survivors over the past few days.]

27 As has been said, today is our third day and it's important to just acknowledge those
28 survivors who have stood in the last couple of days to share their experiences and we move
29 now to today's witnesses.

30 Tokorua ngā kaiwhakaatu i te rangi nei. Ngā whakataukī e rua hei kai mā tātou i te
31 wā e whakarongo ana. (Translation follows, provided by the speaker).

32 We have two witnesses who will be speaking today and there are two whakataukī I
33 would like to speak to as sustenance for us all as we listen to the experiences that are to
34 follow.

1 Ko te tuatahi (the first), “he hono tangata, e kore e motu, kāpā he taura waka, e
2 motu.” Unlike a canoe rope, a human bond cannot be severed. Ko te tuarua (the second),
3 “e kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea.” I will never be lost as I am the seed
4 sown from greatness.

5 I've referred to these whakataukī, Madam Chair, that speak to the essence of being
6 Māori and the potential that is passed down from our tūpuna. And I note that one of our
7 witnesses will speak to that whakataukī as well. These whakataukī again speak in a way
8 that makes sense in Te Ao Māori to the strength of the bonds of whakapapa and how they
9 cannot be severed. This experience will be explored today through the experience of these
10 witnesses through adoption. The abuse inherent in the process of closed adoption for
11 tamariki Māori (Māori children), the abuse experienced from closed adoption families and
12 in the case of these two witnesses, the intergenerational harm that that has had on their
13 connection to whakapapa and to their culture.

14 Both the witnesses today will be giving their experiences anonymously. The first
15 one, Madam Chair, will be through AVL, mā Counsel Assisting Alisha Castle e tiaki ana i
16 tērā kaiwhakaatu (Counsel Assisting Alisha Castle will take care of that witness).

17 Ms Castle will be the counsel who will be looking after our first witness, and in the
18 afternoon the second witness, mā Counsel Assisting Tracey Norton e tiaki i a ia (Counsel
19 Assisting Tracey Norton will take care of them).

20 From another location, we will be joined this afternoon by Tracey Norton who will
21 be together with the witness. So those are the witnesses that we will have for the day.

22 If I could now pass, Madam Chair, to Ms Castle for the first witness, tēnā koe, tēnā
23 tātou (thank you and thank you all).

24 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Ngā mihi, Ms Spelman.

25 **MS CASTLE:** Tēnā koe e te Heamana. Hei te whare, tēnā tātou i runga i te kaupapa o te wā, tēnei
26 kaupapa whakahirahira. Mātua rā, ko te mihi tuatahi ki ō tātou tūpuna kua wehe i te pō.
27 Haere atu koutou, haere, haere. Ki a koutou ngā kanohi ora, tēnā tātou katoa. Ki te hau
28 kāinga o tēnei whare, o tēnei whenua, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, ka nui te mihi ki a koutou
29 katoa. Kei aku rangatira kei te tēpu, tēnā kourua. Otirā, koutou ngā Kaikōmihana kei ō
30 koutou ngā kāinga, tēnā koutou. E te rangatira, Ms AF, e mihi kau ana ki a koe me ō kōrero
31 tino whakahirahira ka tukuna ki a mātou i te rā nei. E mihi kau ana hoki ki tō hoa rangatira,
32 ō tamariki, ō mokopuna, otirā, ki tō whānau katoa he kaha tautoko ana i a koe. Tēnā
33 koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

34 [English: Thank you Madam Chair. To the house, greetings to everyone on the matter

1 before us, a most important matter. Firstly, I must acknowledge our ancestors who have
2 passed to the night, farewell, farewell. To the living, greetings. To the home people of this
3 ancestral house and of this land, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, I want to acknowledge you. To the
4 Commissioners on the table, greetings and to the other Commissioners Zooming in at
5 home, greetings. To you Ms AF, I want to thank you very much for your important
6 evidence that will be provided to us today. I also want to thank your partner, your children,
7 your grandchildren, and to all of your whānau who are providing great support for you.
8 Thank you, thank you, thank you, one and all.]

9 Before we begin, I just want to acknowledge you, Ms AF, and your bravery and
10 courage in coming forward and sharing your very important kōrero with us today. I want to
11 acknowledge that it hasn't been an easy process for you getting to this point, to express the
12 appreciation of the Commission and to say that it is my honour and absolute privilege to
13 assist you in the presentation of your evidence today.

14 E te Heamana (Madam Chair), I'll hand over to you to please take the affirmation
15 from Ms AF.

16 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Ngā mihi (thank you). Mōrena, Ms AF (good morning, Ms
17 AF).

18 A. Mōrena (good morning).

19 **Q.** Before I start, I just want to let you know who is in the room here with us at the whareniui,
20 Tumutumuwhenua?

21 A. Thank you.

22 **Q.** So, myself, Commissioner Steenson, and I'm joined by Commissioner Gibson. We also
23 have our haukāinga (home people) in the room, we have our tech team, we have our Māori
24 investigation team, we have our sign language interpreters, and remotely but at the marae
25 we also have our Māori Te Reo interpreters, Te Reo Māori. Joining us by video is the other
26 Commissioners. We have our panel who will appear on the last day of the hearing
27 reflecting on the witness statements. We have also our members of Sage and Te Taumata
28 and of course we have all those live streaming in from all over the motu and elsewhere.

29 I just want to check before I ask you to take the affirmation, Ms AF, to -- I just
30 want to check with our tech people, is the anonymous working? Can you please
31 confirm? -Okay, I have a positive sign there,- -no -- one moment. -Yes, it looks like we
32 are good to go. Okay, would you like to take the affirmation in Te Reo Māori or in
33 English?

34 A. In English, please.

1 Q. Okay.

2 MS AF (Affirmed)

3 **QUESTIONING BY MS CASTLE:** Tēnā koe e te Heamana (thank you, Madam Chair). Ms AF,
4 to begin you say near the beginning of your statement that your ancestors are from all four
5 corners of the world. Can you please describe?--

6 A. Āe. Thank you. I have Sámi whakapapa through my biological father, and Navajo,
7 Aboriginal and Māori whakapapa through my biological mother. Nō Ngāti Tahinga me
8 Whakatōhea ōku iwi Māori (Ngāti Tahinga and Te Whakatōhea are my Māori tribes). I am
9 from the (Koivu) clan on my Sámi side and the Jillimanjara mob from the Northern
10 Territory.

11 Q. Tēnā koe. You also say near the beginning of your statement that you are whānau hauā
12 (disabled person). Can you explain to us what that means?

13 A. The late Donny Rangiahau of Tūhoe gifted to us the term whānau hauā. And the term was
14 gifted because we are whānau members first and foremost in every aspect. We are not our
15 disability, we are our whānau. And the hauā is talking about the fact that we have different
16 needs but we're still whānau, we remain whānau, we will always be whānau first and
17 foremost. That's in a, - a- brief way of describing that.

18 Q. Do you have any comments to make about whānau hauā in precolonial times?

19 A. Precolonially, whānau hauā were not separated, institutionalised or demonised, most were
20 not. If you were born where they could see that you were going to die early, then they gave
21 you that merciful death. But generally, they just accepted our disabilities as a taonga and
22 for instance a blind person would be the keeper of the whakapapa, of the history of the
23 marae, of the village, because their knowledge and memory was so good. Our deaf whānau
24 would be scouts, they could silently move around the forest and all the areas. Our
25 intellectually disabled, all these labels we have today, they cared for the children, for the
26 sick, for the elderly, they did the gardens, they were an active part of the whānau. And in
27 most areas, we were just included and a part of our community. Whereas post colonially
28 that all changed. And I think post colonially what we got was institutionalisation,
29 marginalisation, and the disparities that we experience today are all a part of that, whereas
30 prior to that, we were just whānau.

31 Q. Tēnā koe. This is probably more for my benefit, but I just want to give a brief reminder
32 that we have our sign language interpreters operating at the same time. If we can both just
33 keep an eye on our pace so that all of your kōrero can be captured.

34 A. Thank you.

- 1 **Q.** Turning to a key focus of your evidence, which is your adoption as a pēpē. Can you tell us
2 about your biological parents and what was happening for them at the time you were born?
- 3 **A.** Certainly. My mum was about 15 when she got pregnant, 16, just turned 16 when she had
4 me. My dad was about 18 at the time. Young, silly, you know, young teenagers, they got
5 into trouble and got pregnant with me. Mum was already experiencing abuse from her
6 stepfather, and she was the oldest, so she was caring for her siblings. Dad and mum - they
7 were in love, they later got married and they had five other siblings. But at that time, they
8 were being - you know - it was early 1960s, they basically got into a lot of trouble for
9 getting pregnant. But they were working, they were the average young couple, mum was
10 nursing, dad was a dry cleaner, I think at the time, and they were told by their
11 parents-- well, dad's side of the family wanted me, but mum's side told her she had to give
12 me up. And that's where we ended up back to where she went to, to give birth to me.
- 13 **Q.** And you were born prematurely with a hole in your heart?
- 14 **A.** Well-, actually no, that's what they told mum and dad. But I was born a month early and
15 they therefore assumed that I was, in their words, on the adoption forms that nobody can
16 find, that I was an imbecile and an idiot. That was the language they used at that time. And
17 so, they basically told mum and dad I had a hole in the heart, I didn't have long to live, and
18 it was better that they left me at the home and go back and live their lives and forget- that I
19 was ever born.
- 20 **Q.** What were your parents told would happen to you when they left you there?
- 21 **A.** They were told that there was a doctor with sons who would look after me and give me a
22 good life until my life ended and that they wouldn't have to worry about me at all. So
23 - --and mum had just lost her brother, because she'd breastfed me for three days, and she
24 lost her five year old- brother, he drowned. And as the oldest in the family, she was under
25 pressure to go back and look after the siblings. And she did, because that was what you did
26 back then. If you were underage and your parents told you to go back, you went back, and
27 that wasn't questioned. So, they felt it was the best -thing, was- to pretend I was already
28 dead, and to go back and start their lives again. And they did.
- 29 **Q.** So, you talk in your statement about how you were subsequently adopted, and you describe
30 your adoption as the sale and purchase of a baby. Can you please explain to us what you
31 mean by that?
- 32 **A.** The only people that have rights in adoption are the adoptive parents. The birth parents
33 have less rights and the baby has no rights. It's a contract between the adoption agency,
34 which back then were orphanages - were what they called DSW, Department of Social

1 Welfare. If you were Māori and they identified you as Māori, it was the Ministry of Māori
2 Affairs also did that. So, under those circumstances if they didn't - if- they wanted to make
3 sure you're adopted and you were born light skinned, despite having a Mongolian spot, as
4 they used to call it, you were classed as white so they didn't- have to put you through the
5 Ministry of Māori Affairs. And it was to avoid the process of making sure you were
6 adopted within your whānau, it was to avoid all of that, and basically there were so many
7 babies up for adoption that it was easier to try and put you in the mainstream. And so, they
8 told my adoptive parents who had - my-- adoptive mother specifically asked for a
9 non--Māori baby, she wanted a Pākehā baby, a white baby. So, they changed my birth
10 certificate to Caucasian and changed my birth mother to Caucasian so that then I was
11 deemed legally white and could be adopted more easily. If I was darker in skin, then
12 I probably would not have had that happen. But where they could, they actually modified a
13 legal document and made it null and void and illegal by changing my ethnicity. But it's a
14 contract. Adoption is a contract. And that contract does not include me or my birth
15 parents. It included the State and the adoptive parents only.

16 **Q.** Tēnā koe (thank you). You were adopted by a Pākehā family that were of the Catholic
17 faith. Do you know what role, if any, the church had in your adoption process?

18 **A.** The only role that the church would have had at that point was giving references to my
19 parents. My adoptive parents were very good Catholics, they were deemed, I guess, a good
20 Pākehā Catholic family, and the priest would have endorsed that. Mum and dad were very
21 close to the church and very close to the priesthood. We had - I discovered within that
22 family a lot of priests and nuns that were whānau to them. So those type of relationships
23 held a lot of sway back in the day, more than anything that talked about their medical
24 backgrounds, it would have been: Were they suitable? Yes, they're good church people,
25 that makes them automatically suitable. More so than, say, someone who didn't go to
26 church. It was very important that you had that church relationship in many cases. They
27 deemed that a good thing.

28 **Q.** I'm going to ask you some questions about your adoptive family.

29 **A.** Yes.

30 **Q.** Can you tell us what your adoptive parents were like?

31 **A.** They were an older couple. They married later in life, so they were in their mid 30s and
32 they were told they couldn't have children. So, they adopted me and then three and a half
33 years later they had their own child. That often happens, not unusual. I guess they felt they
34 couldn't have children. They were just an average working couple. They worked hard,

1 mum was a cleaner, house maid, she was a great florist, she really enjoyed flowers and
 2 working with them. Dad was a hard worker and he worked doing three jobs at a time, you
 3 know, nothing unusual like a lot of our Pasifika whānau today that hold two to three jobs,
 4 that was my whānau.

5 They were an ordinary couple, gone through the depression so they understood
 6 hardship. And mum was a fantastic cook as a result of that. We never - even though we
 7 were poor, I didn't know we were poor, we never went without food. She could make a
 8 feast out of nothing. You know - knew how to scrape for veggies and fruit and bruised
 9 fruits and everything else, knew how to make jams and pickles. So, we had a whānau that
 10 were very productive and able to do those things.

11 But there was a dark side to her in that she suffered from severe depression that
 12 nobody talked about, and she was an alcoholic. My father, however, wasn't. He was a
 13 hardworking, good man and he loved mum with all his heart and soul, and he'd do anything
 14 for her. And he protected her a lot of times when she got sick and unwell. But that's what a
 15 good husband does, isn't it? It's what a good partner does. They were just an ordinary
 16 family. Mum's side of the family, there were definitely issues there, but nobody brought
 17 them out because everything was secretive, mental health histories were secretive, violence
 18 was secretive, all those things you didn't know about because no one- talked about them
 19 back in the day.

20 **Q.** Can you tell us a bit about how your adoptive mother treated you, the things she would say
 21 to you, the things she would do?

22 **A.** Well, she was very good - -dad never touched us, he never raised a finger, he didn't believe
 23 that women should ever be treated badly. Mum, on the other hand, was the disciplinarian
 24 and sometimes she would use a wooden spoon, leather belt, the buckle end of the belt, and
 25 beat us basically. That was normal. It wasn't unusual. That was deemed appropriate
 26 parenting back in those days, whereas today, you know, if it's any more than a smack on the
 27 hand it's pretty much frowned upon. Back then, you could even legally kill your child and
 28 pretty much get away with it. So, violence was quite endemic in every aspect, your
 29 schooling, in- home, everywhere you went. As a child you had no rights. And we bore the
 30 brunt of that.

31 **Q.** Were you subject to any racist comments from your adoptive family growing up?

32 **A.** Oh, yes, well, I think we're going to get on to the uncle - but - mum's- brother, but yes, he
 33 told me particularly that it's because I wasn't white, wasn't of their bloodline that he could
 34 do whatever he wanted to me, and that no one would believe -me and no one would listen.

1 So, I believed from -the age- -- from earliest memory I have, aged 3, that I wasn't good
2 enough. I remember I sat there when my sister was born three and a half years later. I very
3 clearly remember this, that nana and mum and dad were fighting -over, -I remember her
4 saying to them, "Just remember you've got another daughter." So, there was often these
5 arguments, because when they had their own daughter they started - you know - really
6 pleased and happy and of course, but they started to forget about me a little bit, and so you
7 get pushed to the side slightly. And I was three and a half, so it might have been a feeling,
8 but I remember hearing that from nana. And I felt nana protected me, and she did, she
9 protected me throughout my life until she passed, and even beyond. -

10 **Q.** Just to clarify, so notwithstanding that your birth certificate recorded your ethnicity as
11 European, your adoptive family knew that you were Māori?

12 **A.** Yes. They apparently knew more, it might have been after, but they had found out, there
13 were little quips and stories, put downs, they told me that Māori were savages, dirty,
14 unclean people and I remember when I told my mum my Māori name that was gifted to me
15 by a kuia that - why would I want to be that when you're nothing but - you know, when
16 they're nothing but dirty savages, they're dirty people. And she couldn't understand why I
17 would want to be Māori. I'm white enough, I look white enough, why would I want to be
18 that way? And I couldn't understand why she would say that. It's my whakapapa. Would
19 you not be proud of what you know who you are? Instead, it was deemed negative. And I
20 was raised to believe that to be Māori was negative.

21 **Q.** Your statement talks about your adoptive mother's family thinking that you were
22 intellectually disabled. How did that influence the way that they treated you?

23 **A.** I wasn't encouraged in school; I wasn't encouraged in anything. I didn't share any dreams I
24 had, I think the only thing that I really shared was with my adoptive dad who had the most
25 beautiful, velvety voice and recorded in the 50s. He and I sang together, harmonised
26 together, I couldn't read music, I'm dyscalculic as well as dyslexic, but with my father, he
27 and I sang - and they were the old hymns, folk music, songs, things I remember. And that's
28 what I remember most of him, is his beautiful voice. And so that was the only thing we
29 really shared, but all these other things I couldn't share. One day my mum's cousin said to
30 me - she was a music teacher and she said, you know, "I put you forward to train under
31 Dame Mary Leo", who trained Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, and she said, "You came second."
32 The other girl turned down the scholarship, but mum and dad refused to accept it because
33 they didn't feel that I had the ability.

34 So, I was never told until many years later by my mum's cousin and I felt sad

1 because I was actually - -I loved opera, I loved rhythm and blues, I loved gospel and soul,
 2 and I could have enjoyed a career in that. -I was also -- I'm cartoonist by hobby, and I also
 3 wanted to do commercial art and I was told "no." And so, what they didn't- -- they
 4 didn't- see the benefits in those - they,-- I remember the nuns saying to me once - -I had this
 5 dream of becoming a nun actually. I've always had a sense of the Atua, a sense of the
 6 wairua world, and I so wanted to be in a place where I could help others, and they laughed
 7 at me and said you'll only ever be a mother and a housewife, don't think you'll be anything
 8 else. And my dreams kept being stamped on my whole life. Everyone kept saying you
 9 couldn't do this, you couldn't do that. So, I set out when I was old enough to prove them
 10 wrong. And I have. But none of them are now alive for me to tell them and show them-.

11 **Q.** Tēnā koe. You talk in your statement about your adoptive uncle, your adoptive mother's
 12 brother. You describe him as being one of the worst abusers in that family. I understand
 13 that you want to talk about that today, is that something that you're still wanting to do?

14 **A.** Yes. It's important, because remembering again, children had no rights back then. We
 15 were chattels legally, until the 1970s when we started pushing for women's rights, we were
 16 chattels. And so therefore we were owned by our parents and by that family. My uncle
 17 was my abuser. The reason why I could never tell anybody is that he didn't touch the other
 18 kids, they were all bloodline to that family, I was the only adopted one. And he would
 19 -- I- remember as far back as the age of 3, I mean, it seems silly, people would laugh at this,
 20 but it was the beginning really of later abuse.

21 But he used to grab me, put me over his shoulder, --against my will, I'd fight
 22 him -and then he'd pull down my pants and draw a face on my arse-, and he'd laugh, and he
 23 did that in front of my cousins, aunties and uncles and they'd all be drunk, and they'd laugh,
 24 and they'd mock me. Then they'd pull my pants up, and I'd go down and I'd run off for a
 25 while and cry. No -one protected me there. I know my nana was never there, she was at
 26 home. But no -one protected me, no -one stood up for me. No -one told him to stop. Then
 27 there was worse abuse later, there was the sexual abuse, that he said no one will believe me
 28 and I believed that because back then children weren't believed-.

29 So, I grew up knowing - --he stopped I think when I was about nine or ten, but
 30 - -when nana died, he stopped. But he was a horrible, horrible person, and even now I can
 31 still smell him, I can still feel it, and I can feel the sweat from his body, and you don't forget
 32 those things. You don't forget what it feels like to have a heavy, fat man on top of you or
 33 abusing you. You can't forget it. It was the psychological abuse, I think, the telling you,
 34 "no one will ever believe you." It stops you talking out. When I was 14, I was raped by

1 what I thought was a stranger, it turns out - I found out years later he was a good friend of
2 my uncle's. This man got seven years in jail. That was very rare back in
3 1977-. -And -yeah, I had to give evidence in court, which turned a lot of my life around
4 back then. But it wasn't until 2010, which was the last time I saw my family, was when my
5 uncle told me that he had always known and that he hated me. This is my godfather, my
6 god family. Him, his wife and his daughter pulled me up on a corner of my mother's house
7 on Christmas Day in 2000 and started beating me and telling me how much they hated me.
8 And this was over the fact my mother was so drunk we were cleaning her up and they'd
9 given her a bottle of gin. I took it off her and put it down the sink, she contacted him, even
10 though she could barely talk, and they came over to beat me. That's the last time I've- ever
11 seen my family.

12 **Q.** I just want to check, Ms AF, if you want to take a moment or a brief adjournment at this
13 point?

14 **A.** I'm okay, thank you.

15 **Q.** You've talked to us about your adoptive mother's issues with mental health and alcohol and
16 the abuse that you suffered at the hands of your adoptive family. What process do you
17 understand the State went through to ensure that your parents were fit to be your
18 caregivers?

19 **A.** There was no process. They got the letter from the priest, they got other letters from
20 leaders in that community, and they were white, so they were the perfect family according
21 to our State. If they were Māori they would have only -- if we'd- gone through the Ministry
22 of Māori Affairs, if they hadn't altered my birth document falsely, state I was Pākehā,
23 I probably could have grown up under a different environment. I don't know. But the State
24 back then didn't delve deeper into Pākehā families. I mean, I grew up with a lot of adoptive
25 friends, many of them have since GRO-C. singer, the other is a world-famous hairdresser
26 now living in London. And they've done okay, but they grew up with lots of abuse as well.
27 A lot of my friends GRO-C because of their experiences

28 Adoption back then, they didn't protect the child, they were more interested in
29 knocking us off to somebody because there were so many of us. If we didn't get adopted,
30 you'd go into foster care. And whāngai adoptions were illegal. So, 1955, you weren't
31 allowed to be adopted as Māori among Māori in a whāngai way. That was explicitly
32 illegal, whereas in the 1898, 1907 Native Lands Act, one of those years, it was kind of
33 starting to seep in back there and then over those decades they slowly made it more and
34 more to the point that they explicitly made it illegal to whāngai adopt. As a result, it meant

1 babies like me - it was my Māori whānau that sought a stranger transracial adoption, not
2 my Sámi whānau that wanted me, but the man had no rights so his whānau had no rights.
3 On my birth mother's side, it was the stepfather, who was not her father, and my nana, she
4 had less of, -she had less rights, or less of a say than what her parents had, or my
5 grandmother had. It was the step grandfather that made the decision. And to him it
6 was:- give her away, she's not one of us.

7 **Q.** You referred to letters and you talked about your adoption process. Have you seen any
8 records that relate to that?

9 **A.** I have been requesting,- every few years I request to see my original records. I have not
10 legally seen them,- they keep telling me they've disappeared. Ironically in 1980 my father
11 got me to work with him. He was a social worker working for the Department of Social
12 Welfare in New Plymouth. They gave me the task, it was pre--computers, they gave me the
13 task of sorting out the files. I found my adoption files. It was far too --- I was far too
14 scared back then and we didn't have photocopying machines. I now wish I'd just taken the
15 bloody things because they've lost them.

16 But that's where I read that I was deemed an imbecile and an idiot because I was
17 born a month early. It was that language. It was all of those things. Everything that sat
18 there. I found out as well that my rapist that got seven years was released after two years
19 and was given full support, rehabilitation-, funding, the whole lot. I got nothing. He got it
20 all. So, I knew that was my file and I put it back, filed it correctly, and I now- to this day
21 wonder why they think they've lost my file. Because I know it exists, or it existed in 1980,
22 it just doesn't seem to exist now.

23 **Q.** Just to clarify, how old were you when you sighted those records?

24 **A.** 18. 18.

25 **Q.** While you were in the care of your adoptive family, and you were experiencing the abuse
26 that you've told us about, did anyone from the State, social workers and the like, ever come
27 to check on you?

28 **A.** No. It was a full adoption as a baby. I never saw any social worker again. And I think it
29 went through Plunket, and back then they had Karitane nurses and Plunket and all of that.
30 But they didn't have follow ups, we weren't monitored, we weren't -- -there wasn't a -six
31 month-, one -year, two year- follow -up, we were just adopted and handed over, like a
32 purchase and a sale, you know, offer and receive.

33 **Q.** If you were checked on, what do you think might have happened?

34 **A.** I don't know, I don't think anything back then, because, as I say, it was legal to not

1 prioritise the child's needs. It was more the needs of the adoptive parents that they would
2 follow, not mine. And so, I doubt whether the welfare system back then, and even today in
3 some ways, were there for the best interests of the child. Because I don't think they really
4 cared. It was, you know, the child's in with a good Pākehā whānau so we don't need to
5 continue to monitor them because they're okay, they've had a letter from the priest and a
6 letter from maybe the mayor or someone else. But I know my adoptive parents, they would
7 have made sure they had a letter from the priest. That would have been my father's top
8 priority. He was very much involved in the church.

9 **Q.** Tēnā koe (thank you). Moving now to your education. You attended both Catholic and
10 State schools. Can you tell us what schools you attended and how old you were?

11 **A.** I was five. We didn't go to kindergarten, mum didn't believe in that. She believed that we
12 needed to that- she needed to raise us until five years of age. So, at five I went to
13 St Joseph's for a couple of years. At the age of nine I went to the Paremuremo Primary
14 School, my only State school experience, loved it. And then I returned back- to St Joseph's,
15 I- think I was six when I went to Paremuremo primary. Then I was nine and I returned
16 back- to New Plymouth or Taranaki for St Joseph's and then I went to Sacred Heart when I
17 turned,-- for intermediate and high school.

18 **Q.** Can you tell us about your experience attending the Catholic schools and how that
19 compared to your time at the State school?

20 **A.** When I started in primary school there were no lay teachers and they were just coming out
21 of the old way of the old uniforms and stuff and moving into the modern Catholic Church
22 period. You know, the old Latin days into -- I even remember Monsignor Minogue talking
23 about the whole new process and I was very much a young one then. So, we had these
24 nuns. I have to say I experienced a lot of violence in primary school from them. I was such
25 a scaredy cat-, so scared that when we had those old-fashioned ink pens and we were
26 learning to write, that if I ran out of ink, I'd pretend to write so they didn't see me not
27 writing so I wouldn't get the strap. That's how scared I was. I used to watch them chasing
28 with eraser dusters on the top of the desk chasing the boys who were mocking them, and
29 they were losing their tempers with them. Then they'd start throwing the dusters at all of
30 us. And, you know, everyone would laugh but there was something -definitely distressing
31 them. High school was different. I used to be known as Smiley by them all because I'd
32 help those in need and I just enjoyed helping the ones getting bullied by others and, you
33 know, it's something I've always done, I guess, you know, I knew to become a lawyer was
34 going to be my job one day because I always looked out for the ones in

1 trouble. -I remember -- they were okay, we had our nicknames for them, not always the
2 best nicknames, but, you know, I mean, they just asked for it at the schools, because it was
3 so easy to put nicknames to the nuns. -But we had a couple of lay teachers there, men,
4 which was quite exciting for young girls at a single-sex school. We had - they were okay,
5 but they always saw me as dumb. I was just shortsighted. I didn't achieve anything. They
6 didn't put me -in anything that I could have learned from. And it's when they mocked me
7 and told me I'd be nothing more than a housewife and a mother, as though that was
8 something bad. I-t was -- they were less violent than the primary school nuns, put it that
9 way. And it was actually the head mistress, who was the nun, who was also a relative of
10 my family, who came to me to the rape place because I wouldn't let the family come, and
11 she sat by me the whole time.-

12 So, it was her that gave me that support I needed. But I still don't think they
13 understood me. I left school at 15, and I've never actually --- I've never been invited to any
14 reunions, I've never been celebrated for any of my awards or achievements from my school.
15 So, I don't feel I belong to Sacred Heart because I was never part of it. They never saw me
16 as anything, to be honest, and I think the day I left they were kind of glad to erase me from
17 their memory.

18 **Q.** You say in your statement that confession while you were at school was used to protect
19 everyone. Can you tell us more about what you mean by that?

20 **A.** Confession? You know, they would make you go to see the priest, I think it was once a
21 week, I think, and you'd all have to sit there in a line and do your confessions, which is a bit
22 ridiculous. I never really told them what happened because the priests and the nuns were
23 also relatives. Why would I go and give confession to a cousin of my parents knowing that
24 that could get back to them? I didn't trust them. They're human beings and the same as
25 anyone else. Whenever I met them -- whenever they were at home, they didn't act like they
26 did out in the school and in the church, they would drink, they would smoke and they
27 would swear, just the same as every other human. And I didn't- feel -- so I'd just do the
28 silly things like, oh, I was naughty at home, you know, naughty at school, and I'd get my
29 ten Hail Marys, three Our Fathers and then I was cleansed again for another week. So, it
30 just wasn't- anything real for me, they just --- I just went through the ropes really, got
31 through it and then,- so I could avoid going back to church later in life. Did what you have
32 to do to survive.-

33 **Q.** At the time while you were attending school, you had ADHD but it went undiagnosed. Can
34 you tell us some more about that and what support was available to you?

1 A. Very little diagnosis was done of ADHD back in the day, dyslexia, dyscalculia. They
2 didn't really - they don't do what -- they didn't do then what they do now and even then,
3 they don't do that very well because we have a shortage of people who can diagnose autism,
4 ADHD, neurodiversity. So being a female it presents differently. I'm more ADD, but what
5 it did for me is I couldn't fit in anywhere, couldn't understand things, and I was more
6 immature than other kids my age. So, I didn't get it half the time. -And I -- another feature
7 of it is you don't feel a belonging anywhere. So, one, you're adopted and the next, you've
8 got this ADD and you don't feel like you belong with anybody. You don't feel like people
9 know you or want you around and you just don't know yourself-.

10 So, it's compounded by adoption, but that's also part of the ADD. I wasn't
11 diagnosed. There was no support and no support to pursue opportunities and things. So, it
12 wasn't until my youngest son was born that we had to see a pediatrician as he's got
13 disabilities, and the pediatrician looked at me and said, "And I can see where he gets it
14 from." He was diagnosed ADHD. For me, that was a relief, I didn't need drugs, I didn't
15 need treatment therapy, I just suddenly understood what was going on. And I was able to
16 move on with things. So that was quite relieving. But that was, yeah, that was how I found
17 out, and that just -- it also meant university worked better for me than school. University
18 works well with people with ADD, ADHD because it's- self-learning, self-responsibility.
19 School does not allow the structure to work for kids that have got behavioural cognitive
20 neurodiversity issues, because it's a generic model, and everyone -has to fit in there. If you
21 don't fit, you're not in, it's that simple. You have problems-.

22 Q. How did that -- your- living with undiagnosed ADHD and the lack of support around that,
23 and what you've told us about the treatment by the nuns and how they taught you, how did
24 that impact on your education at the time?

25 A. I didn't get an education. I was deemed too dumb. I was deemed to be special needs and so
26 they went through the motions of teaching me, but nobody took me aside to believe in me.
27 I remember my dad was well known in the church and in the community and I remember
28 one teacher, the music teacher, looking at me and going, "You are your father's daughter,
29 and you can't read music?" And I remember being so humiliated in that class that day that,
30 you know, I had learned to just stay in the background and shut up and that just made me
31 shut up more. Although they could all tell I had talent in music, nobody understood why
32 I couldn't read music. And so, I didn't achieve at all. I had no real education at school, as
33 many kids who are ADD, ADHD live with trauma often fail at school, but can, if they're
34 able, succeed at university with supports these days. None of that existed back then.

1 **Q.** Notwithstanding that, and you've referred previously to how your experience at university
2 worked a lot better for you, do you want to tell us briefly about what you've gone on to
3 achieve?

4 **A.** I spent 17 years at uni. I did two undergraduate degrees, an LLB and a BSocSci, so
5 I majored in law and psychology. I did an LLM, with first class honours, distinction, and
6 I focused on human rights elements of law. I was trained by some of the best, in my
7 opinion, the best in law that I could know. They went on to achieve the greatest of things
8 themselves, such as being Attorney Generals, leading in other things, going overseas, being
9 special rapporteur of mental health and all the things, I've always dreamt of being, but due
10 to being disabled I keep being knocked back on.

11 But I have a great passion for human rights because of my experience with those
12 lecturers, and then I went on and got a PhD in law and Tikanga Māori. And from there I
13 have held Crown board positions. I am currently in research, and I hold several advisory
14 roles. I'm so busy I've had to do something I dreamt I'd never have to do, and that is
15 decline taking on roles. A lot of it's down to the fact my disabilities are now progressing
16 rather rapidly and so -- I guess it's an age thing too. I have a dream that I want to fulfil
17 next year, so I'm retiring at the end of this year from individual advocacy and work, and I'll
18 just focus on my goals, and I'll still continue- with systemic advocacy.

19 But I never dreamt I was going down this road. I actually went to university to
20 become a social worker, and I won a scholarship but that year I became --- my first year at
21 university I became assistant --- I was -- of the student union,- I was the assistant president
22 and after that I became the first disability rights officer. I worked on ensuring that the
23 LGBTQ community had their representation and voice, and we grew the disability rights
24 stuff from 2.5 hours a week of an advisor to the fulltime roles being held now to get more
25 disabled through university. So, when I started,- we probably had about ten disabled
26 students. We now have hundreds attending.

27 But we still don't have lecturers that are disabled, we still don't have leadership of
28 disabled within the university environment in the same way we don't have disabled in
29 Parliament. So, we're still facing the barriers that while we're getting more and more
30 educated, we're not seeing them leading examples with lived experience in places of
31 leadership yet. But I'm proud of that. That's what I've achieved and learned so far. But, of
32 course, my greatest achievements are my sons and my grandsons. They always will be.

33 **Q.** Tēnā rawe atu koe (thank you very much). I just want to acknowledge that despite the
34 adversity that you've faced, and that you've spent time telling us about - your achievements

1 and many successes.

2 A. Thank you.

3 Q. If we move now to your time -- just- actually before we do, I just want to check how you're
4 going and whether you want to --

5 A. I'm good.

6 Q. -- take a break. Okay.

7 A. No, I'm good.

8 Q. The next kaupapa is your time spent at Barrett Street hospital. And you were sent there by
9 your parents when you were 14 years old. Can you tell us what your understanding is of
10 why they sent you there?

11 A. Absolutely. I was raped in January of that year and the doctors gave me loads of valium.
12 Now, I'd never known much about drugs, or you only have a limit, you should follow the
13 instructions that are actually on the label. And my depression got worse and worse and
14 worse, my fear of going to court. I didn't have -- there was no such thing as rape crisis
15 centres, there were women centres, but I didn't know anything about them. No one offered
16 support or help-. So, I GRO-C, ended up in Barrett Street, two weeks there, and in- that
17 time I -- there were other teenagers, and we would be deemed the naughty ones. So,
18 I refused to eat for that two weeks, it's the only thing I had control over my life in. And they
19 wanted to feed me, so they captured me one day, held me down, and force--fed me with a
20 metal spoon while I was gritting my teeth. They broke my two front teeth-.

21 They -- because of that treatment I developed more trauma about organised groups
22 or organisations such as mental health institutions, Police, anyone that lived in social
23 services and worked in them, because I felt that they were perpetuating trauma. We lived
24 in long wards with men and women mixed so it wasn't unusual to be sexually interfered
25 with, to be raped, to be abused. I met hidden lesbians back then, some of the nurses, and
26 you kind of picked it up, but you couldn't be open because of the risk of abuse. But that's
27 when I discovered that there was such a thing, I'd never heard of a lesbian before that. That
28 was how naive I was, I wasn't given a sexual education as a child. I certainly got my own
29 education as an adult on- that regard. But they would beat you and they would bully you
30 and that was the kind of treatment you got. They would drug you, so you'd be stoned half
31 the time on the medications they gave you. And their way of treating you was to beat you.

32 So, I had a psychiatrist, who was English, who wore gumboots, or wellies as she
33 called them, a fur coat and an umbrella in the middle of summer walking around like that
34 and yet she had the audacity to diagnose people, you know, as having mental health issues,

1 when I looked at her and wondered, you know, whether she was okay. And all I got at the
2 end of that two weeks, the day after they beat me to feed me, they called my parents and
3 sent me back and said, nah, she's just a spoilt brat, she can go and present her evidence in
4 court. So, I had to. And that's why the nun, the Mother --- the principal nun that came,
5 that's why she supported me, she was the only one there that did. And I'm always grateful
6 for what she did in that regard.

7 **Q.** How were threats to send people to Lake Alice used during your time at Barrett Street?

8 **A.** Yes, that's right. I was told if I didn't behave, they would send me to Lake Alice to have
9 electric shock treatments. They routinely sent young people, young teenagers from the age
10 of 11, and I had two cases myself that I managed to get financial reparation for that went
11 there as 11-year- -old's and were electric shocked, simply because they were ADHD or just
12 naughty little kids. They weren't criminals, they weren't mentally unwell, but it was used to
13 punish children that were regarded as being belligerent, naughty. I got threatened with that
14 multiple times by her, and I thought, "well stuff you, lady", you know. -So, what had
15 happened, after that experience when I went home --- when I ended up back in because I
16 was quite suicidal for a few years, I would play the game, I would tell the
17 psychologist -- I didn't realise it, but that's how I knew I had a good brain. I learned how to
18 manipulate them. It was so easy.-

19 Yes, I'm sorry I did that, no, I just wasn't coping, you know, I'm definitely not
20 suicidal now, no. I'm okay, you know, and I got out. And then I'd get out angry, angry at
21 the State, angry at the system, angry at everything around them because no -one protected
22 me. And I was thinking and behaving like a victim. So back then, I would take drugs, you
23 know, angel dust, dope, anything I could get my hands on, alcohol, to escape everything.
24 I didn't --- any time I didn't want memories, I was sexually --- I was loose, I wasn't --- I
25 was -- I didn't care about myself, I hated myself, so I'd get drunk to have sex, I'd get drunk,
26 doped, whatever, not realising- there was probably a good reason why I didn't really enjoy
27 sex with men -- I have to- be gay. But I didn't know that because no one told me what that
28 was or what it meant. So,- I didn't know what I was feeling, and I was a bit of a tomboy as
29 a kid anyway, my nickname was Steve. It's okay, no one else knows that name, but that
30 was my nickname. You know, probably, I don't know, I don't think I wanted to be, you
31 know, transgendered, it was just I didn't like being a female because females get abused.
32 But I could beat up my cousin so easy-, so I enjoyed that part of it. That was how I lashed
33 out. And these were the boys.

34 But I didn't actually really like being a female for a long time and I remember at

1 the age of ten my whānau would -- I was on the trampoline one day and my aunties ran out
2 there and told me to get off and not get back on it because the boy cousins were looking at
3 me while I was on the trampoline, not realising I probably needed a bra at that stage. But,
4 you know, it was those things, it was hard to explain what goes on in your mind, but I just
5 didn't like who I was, so I was angry. And all of these things that happened just increased
6 my anger, increased my desire to end my life and get out of this world. And so, I was like
7 that for many years. It ended when I finally got help and spent three years in really
8 hard- therapy. And I haven't looked back, I've got the tools now to deal with things a lot
9 easier. But --- they still come up, but I've got better coping mechanisms than I used to
10 have.

11 **Q.** Just to clarify, did you receive any support outside of Barrett Street hospital for the issues
12 that ---

13 **A.** No.

14 **Q.** -- they were aware of?

15 **A.** No, nothing. No, I didn't.

16 **Q.** Is there anything else you want to tell us about your time spent there or that experience
17 before we move on?

18 **A.** No, I think -- I guess, just picturing, you've got a young person that had abuse as a child,
19 got raped as a teenager, coming out of all that after the court case, leaving school at 15,
20 working from the age of 15, a lot of anger, a lot of dysfunctionality, a lot of self hate-, -self
21 destruction was happening. So really, that was what I was going into when I was living my
22 early adulthood and, I guess, in that context just understanding that some of the things I got
23 into and did weren't- good for me. But at that time there was no support, there was no
24 guidance, there was no one- there to walk me through, to help me find a healthier pathway
25 until years later when those pathways were starting to happen or exist.

26 **Q.** Tēnā koe. When you were 18 years old you became pregnant with your first son?

27 **A.** Yeah. I did.

28 **Q.** Aroha mai (apologies).

29 **A.** No, I did. And I guess -- I went to the Catholic home for unwed mothers. Mum and dad
30 didn't ask me, they told me and drove me there. That was Rosanna in Lower Hutt. They
31 sent me there because they were ashamed, they were so upset, and I was so ashamed that it
32 was as soon as I started to show they sent me through to the home. I - They didn't want
33 people to know, I wasn't allowed to talk about it, I wasn't allowed to tell anybody. -I guess,
34 the other members of the whānau - I was working by that stage, they just said I was off

1 working in Wellington for a while. And they were okay, we got our three meals, you
2 know, we were scallywags, it was a whole bunch of young pregnant women. I - It wasn't
3 like what happened in Ireland around young pregnant women with the Madeleine Sisters,
4 this was not quite like that. They had their rules, which we routinely tried to break, as most
5 young people do, and I did that at the nursing homes when I was working in hospitals and
6 things, we always -- if there was a rule, you break it. And we would be very big, well, I
7 was really big, I'm short, so I was carrying very large, and we would take off to the nearby
8 orchard and steal some of the apples and oranges and run back with full you know - tops
9 full of fruit. We would run out and try and get to town via the train and you can imagine a
10 whole bunch of women waddling like ducks heading down there. -

11 It wasn't all bad, it was like being in school again but with people that all had the
12 same experience. So, it was a bit like that. But I had one nun that tried to advise me after
13 the birth to keep expressing my milk, even though my son was gone, to keep expressing it
14 rather than not and to let them stop producing milk, and that was one of the mis-advice. I
15 don't think they really knew much about what to do post birth when your child isn't
16 there. -But, I mean, I gave birth, I remember -- I was induced because each case - I had
17 toxemia, which is quite dangerous if your blood pressure goes too high, so they induced me
18 just on time with him. I remember the birth. Who can forget their birth? I remember
19 nothing else other than them taking my son off me and then everything became a blur. I
20 don't remember having anybody coming in and talking to me about my rights, about my
21 options, it was just given that I was giving my son up. Now yes, I legally had capacity, I
22 was 18. But again, I was ADD and I was very young and very naive, growing up in a
23 Catholic household. I had no idea of the real world, I had no idea that I had rights.
24 Remembering, too, I grew up at a time when children did not have rights. Realising I was
25 an adult, but I hadn't been told about rights-.

26 I just remember my parents sitting there with the lawyer ten days later signing a
27 piece of paper. That's it, I didn't get a copy or if I did it went to mum and dad. Never
28 found that copy. The only right I had was to choose out of three prospective families, they
29 were all Pākehā, and I chose a family that couldn't have children because I didn't want him
30 to feel hurt or treated differently because they have a biological child later. So, I wanted
31 him to know he was the child that they really wanted, and that's why I chose the family
32 I chose. Again, I only had three and there were no other options, and my parents told me
33 they had to be Catholic, so I did what they told me.

34 We had a sponsor, and one was a famous sports broadcaster, my one. Nobody

1 ever really was there for you, they were there to ensure you behaved yourself and you were
2 prepared for adoption. They were really not there for me. No one talked to me at all about
3 what I could do, whether I'd make a good parent or not. And of course, at 18 I was
4 terrified, remembering they'd only just brought in the DPB so that was a stigma thing, and
5 I wasn't- wanting - because my father, being a social worker then, I felt the stigma of DPB
6 and I didn't - - and we weren't comfortable because we were raised that benefits are bad,
7 that you work for a living, that you give and you don't take off the State. So, I didn't feel I
8 had a choice. I didn't have a stable job. I didn't have a stable home to take them back. So,
9 I did what they told me to do, and I signed those papers-.

10 **Q.** You referred to your parents and the lawyer bringing the paperwork to you to sign. Do you
11 recall what role the nuns had in that process?

12 **A.** They were there just to support in the background, they allowed my parents to have a
13 bigger role. Their role was to make sure that I had baby, and that I was well and healthy
14 enough and that baby's well and healthy for the adoption, and that I was well and healthy,
15 you know, to leave. My mental health wasn't their concern, it was to make sure that the
16 adoption happened without incident. You know, and they provided a safe space for mother
17 and child, I guess, in a time when some of them could have been beaten by their parents or
18 could have been kicked out of home, had nowhere else to go. So, they provided that, which
19 I think was really good because we have got a lot of young pregnant women now who can't
20 get housing and that type of support, and I think it's still needed in some cases, especially
21 with young parents. And I have a friend who runs a residential for young mothers, young
22 teenage mothers with babies, which is definitely needed for certain demographics and
23 certain age groups and needs.

24 **Q.** We talked earlier about your birth certificate and your ethnicity being falsely recorded. Did
25 you ever sight your son's birth certificate?

26 **A.** No. And I didn't know I was Māori at that stage, so I guess they would have put down New
27 Zealander or European New Zealander. But no, I never saw his birth certificate. I probably
28 have a copy somewhere. I named him, I named him after my adoptive father and my
29 adoptive grandfather. I wanted strong names and they were strong names. They renamed
30 him, and that's fine, that was their right. I had contact with him for seven years
31 through -- not with him but letters from them and photos for the first seven years and then
32 they suddenly dropped. That was also the reason why I approved them for the adoption,
33 they promised to have an open adoption. I never asked to see him, I never requested
34 anything, because I didn't want to overstep or cause them to not want to have contact with

1 me, but they suddenly abruptly stopped the contact when he was aged 7, which broke my
2 heart at that time. But I didn't want to upset them any further, so I stayed away.-

3 **Q.** Did you receive any support when you went home from the hospital?

4 **A.** No, no, nothing, I was told, "Do not talk about him, he's gone. Erase him from your mind."
5 No mother erases their baby from their mind, no one. Whether you abort a child, whether
6 you miscarry or whether you give birth, no one erases that child from their mind.

7 **Q.** Do you have a relationship with your son now?

8 **A.** Yes. At the age of 16 they couldn't control him, he was angry. I get that, I was angry at
9 that age too for other reasons, and being adopted. He was angry, so I took my nine year old
10 other son with me and we met him. His anger spilled over, and the reason was: Why didn't
11 you raise me? Why did you give me up, you didn't give him up? And he was so angry that
12 all I could do was give him my contact details and tell him that I'll be there for him any
13 time when he's ready. I heard from him again 20 years later and I've been in his life since.
14 But at the moment he's gone down the rabbit hole, he lives overseas. He's gone down the
15 rabbit hole of conspiracies, and his own life is falling apart and it's all coming down to now,
16 the fact that he was adopted and the fact he doesn't know who he is. Even though he's 41
17 he does not understand his pain and I'm watching him exploding overseas and I can't get to
18 him. I'm watching him killing himself. And I can't do anything for him other than tell him
19 I'm here and I love him, and I'll be here for him always.

20 He's also got the same issue I had with my adoptive parents versus birth parents,
21 which is the adoptive family don't want him to have contact with me, and my adoptive
22 family did the same with me when I met my birth family. And I just said to him, "You do
23 what you have to do, but I'm not going to put that kind of pressure on you. They raised
24 you, they're your mum and dad. I'm your other mum, and I'm here for you whenever you
25 want me to be", and that's all I can say and do for them. And, you know, you can't do any
26 more than love your child. And love is, of course, healing, but his anger can't see it right
27 now and one day it will. I hope.

28 **Q.** Does your son have any connection to his Māoritanga or the other aspects of his whakapapa
29 that you described to us at the beginning?

30 **A.** No, and he doesn't know how to do it. He won't come back to Aotearoa. He's got a few
31 Māori mates over there, and they've helped him understand a little bit of who he is. But
32 he's also resisting a little bit because he's scared as well, you know, he needs to sort a few
33 things out, but he hasn't got anybody -- I've tried to get him to reach out to his uncles who
34 live over there, I've- tried to -- because they're initiated as Aboriginal. -My siblings -- I've

1 got three siblings that live in Australia,- and they follow the kawa of the Aboriginal --- of
 2 our Aboriginal tīpuna. They've been initiated, they live their lives, they go walkabout at
 3 times, they understand it and they've offered to initiate him and get him into the Aboriginal
 4 side. As yet, he hasn't, because he can't see past himself right now, because he's so much
 5 in- pain. But that offer will be there for him when he's ready.

6 The Māori side will be harder because he doesn't want to come back here. This is
 7 his pain. And he also owes on student loan that he's not been making payments on, so he
 8 might have a bit of difficulty coming home.

9 **Q.** Tēnā koe. Is there anything else about that experience and the adoption of your son that
 10 you want to talk about before we move on?

11 **A.** There is no process for us -- to enable us to heal and to be able to heal our pasts. -We have
 12 four adoptions, five adoptions, I think, in our whānau, and those five adoptions, they started
 13 with me. My son. My older sister had a daughter, and it goes on, and so adoption is an
 14 insidious beast that has permeated our whānau and disconnected most of us from our
 15 marae, from our whakapapa, from who we are, from our whenua, our tūrangawaewae.
 16 Because I'm not legally deemed Māori by my birth certificate and because of the Adoption
 17 Act I'm legally unable to reclaim my whenua. I'm legally unable to, under the Te Ture
 18 Whenua Act and the Adoption Act, claim myself as Māori. I tried to succeed to my
 19 mother's whenua, but - for my siblings to set up a trust -- my siblings have all said, "Sis,
 20 we'll include you." But that's extremely hard to do when they don't know exactly who you
 21 are. And they don't- -- and when the State says, "No, she and her descendants cannot
 22 claim." That's- the biggest Treaty breach I believe that our process of adoption has created
 23 for Māori in Aotearoa.

24 **Q.** Tēnā koe, Ms AF. E te Heamana Steenson (Madam Chair) I'm mindful of the time and
 25 we're about to move on to a new kaupapa and we'll certainly come back to the last topic
 26 that Ms AF was talking about when we talk about the broader impacts of what she's
 27 experienced, but I wonder if now's an appropriate time to break for the morning
 28 adjournment?

29 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Yes, thank you. Thank you, Ms Castle, and thank you Ms AF.
 30 Certainly, this morning has provided a lot of important information for us. I think it is a
 31 good time to take a break. We'll take a 20 minute adjournment and then we'll return. So
 32 can we please pause the livestream, and we'll return shortly. Thank you.

33 **Adjournment from 11.22 am to 11.48 am**

34 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Kia ora anō, welcome back, everybody. I just want to check

1 that we are ready with our tech people, we're anonymous. Yes? Okay. Kei a koe (over to
2 you), Ms Castle. Let me just make sure that Ms Castles -

3 **QUESTIONING BY MS CASTLE CONTINUED:** Tēnā koe e te Heamana Steenson (Thank
4 you Madam Chair). Ms AF, the next topic relates to disclosing abuse. You talked this
5 morning about your experiences and the abuse you've suffered in care. What barriers did
6 you experience to disclosing that abuse?

7 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Ms AF, let's just check first. Can we just check that you can
8 hear us and we can hear you please?

9 A. Hi.

10 **Q.** Kia ora, you can hear us?

11 A. Yes, I can.

12 **Q.** And we can hear you, so that's great.

13 A. Awesome.

14 **Q.** Haere tonu (please continue).

15 A. Thank you. Sorry. The church, it was part of my family's life, we went every Sunday. We
16 followed every single thing, mum would go I think every lunchtime, so they were very
17 involved. The nuns and priests weren't directly involved, other than the one that supported
18 me in court, but they had a huge influence. They were cousins of my parents. And so we'd
19 go to church, everyone acted all pious and behaved. We'd go home where you could see
20 the parents start to hit their kids on the way out of church, but we'd go home and then they'd
21 come over and they'd be drinking, smoking, swearing and doing all of that, I found it quite
22 contradictory to what I was told at school, to what we were told publicly and to meeting
23 them as relatives. It kind of conflicted in my head that I didn't think you were able to do
24 some of that stuff, so I got confused because my ADD brain says, well, how come you can
25 do all that and yet you condemn people for the same behaviour.

26 So, that's really the only influence they had. But I didn't trust anyone to talk to.
27 So, I didn't talk to the nuns and the priests, and the only reason I opened up to the principal
28 was because of the actual court case and the rape, and that's the only thing, I couldn't talk to
29 any of them about my family abuse because they were an upstanding Catholic family. Who
30 do you go to? They were respected, you know, it's easy for the State to go after families
31 that haven't got that respect in the community. It's a heck of a lot harder to be proven when
32 you come from families that are deemed respectable. And that's where I had that difficulty.

33 **QUESTIONING BY MS CASTLE CONTINUED:** Were you concerned that if you did disclose
34 the abuse you wouldn't be believed?

1 A. Oh, that was clear from day one. I mean, my uncle drummed it into me from the age of 3
 2 that anything I talked about, everyone would just laugh at me and call me a liar because
 3 that's in my blood to be a liar. That they would discredit me. In fact, I've had that happen a
 4 lot over the years. I've always believed you tell the truth, it's far better than trying to fudge
 5 anything and I get into trouble a lot, even now for refusing to lie. And that's because I don't
 6 see the reason why. Why am I lying? No one was going to believe me, so I didn't go to
 7 anybody for help. Because I had no way of knowing who I could talk to for help. You
 8 know, we came from a culture of you don't talk about these things.

9 When my nana died, I know now as a Māori wahine (woman) why I felt this way,
 10 but when my nana died at the age of 9, I wasn't allowed to go and see her until we were
 11 paraded in when she was at the funeral home. I remember touching her and she was cold,
 12 and it didn't feel right, and it was a cold funeral, it didn't - it wasn't nana. It was this cold
 13 process, you know, rituals and all of that, I just wanted to hold her, and nobody would let
 14 me. No one talked to us about death and dying. -No one talked to us about anything. We
 15 were not worth the value enough to educate us and talk to us about life, and the hard things
 16 in life, and you couldn't talk to anybody. The doors were closed. They didn't want to hear
 17 from us, we were not valuable as adults, we were valueless children and young people.
 18 There was no place for us back then-.

19 **Q.** In terms of the impact that the abuse you've experienced has had on you, I note that
 20 included near the end of your statement is a poem that you've written about the forced
 21 adoption of your son and your experience being adopted. Do you want to read that out for
 22 the benefit of those listening today?

23 A. Yeah, I'd love to. This comes from my heart. And I wrote this, I did a creative writing for
 24 Māori and Pasifika while I was going through a breast cancer episode, and it was healing in
 25 a lot of ways, but it also exposed me why I really wanted to connect with my boy. So, this
 26 is my poem.

27 "A child stolen, a woman broken, a child taken, a woman lost, photo unseen, a
 28 stolen second, stolen moment, give him back, they're gone, forever."

29 "I glance at her as I sit cross legged-" - actually, this is the one for my own
 30 adoption, meeting my birth mother, I don't think the other one is in here. So, I'll read this,
 31 but this was actually my- encounter with my birth mother, my birth parents.

32 "I glanced at her as I sit cross legged this woman I know, yet have never met.
 33 I glance at him as I straighten my dress, this man of mine, this stranger dad. My siblings
 34 around me straightened and fussed, our closeness is never to be, our memories are stuck in

1 a vortex of time and pain so unyielding, yet I belong to these people, for we are blood, we
 2 are family. Given away at birth by them, they now reclaim what they lost. Feeling alone
 3 and already rejected I hold back for fear of the pain, for fear there will be no gain. This
 4 family of mine use the right words, they call me daughter and sister. I respond in kind,
 5 although not in heart. Yet what does it all mean? As I kiss my mother goodbye only to
 6 know my other mum is left to cry over the fear of losing me, not knowing I was never hers
 7 to claim. I was never theirs to claim, ko wai ahau (who am I?), I cannot say, -kāo (no) who
 8 knows? So many years, so many tears. Yet I love you all for having me, for raising me,
 9 more importantly for loving me. I belong to no one yet here we are, we have met. We say
 10 we love and we connect. -I still have to say though that through all of this, that adoption is
 11 cruel."

12 Apologise, that's the wrong poem, but, yeah, that was my one of my first
 13 encounter, meeting my family, my birth family.

14 **Q.** Is there another poem that relates to this kaupapa that you want to read out today?

15 **A.** Yes, is it in -- I couldn't find it, hang on. Sorry. I hadn't realised- I had the wrong one
 16 there. There is --- let me just quickly. Oh heck. You know, I'm going to have to find it.

17 **Q.** Okay, if you want.--

18 **A.** I will have to.

19 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Would you like to come back to it once you've had a moment
 20 to find it perhaps?

21 **A.** Yeah, I think I will. If that's all right? Oh, it's on page 16 apparently of my statement,
 22 there you go. Number 16. Let me --- no, that's the wrong one. It was meant to be the one
 23 of my --- hang on, 16. No, that wasn't the one. That was the one I just read out which was
 24 the wrong one, that was another adoption one. Let me just see if this is the one.

25 **Q.** Perhaps -- it's- Commissioner Steenson here --

26 **A.** Yes.

27 **Q.** -- Ms AF. Perhaps we'll get somebody to help you with that at your end and in the
 28 meantime if Ms Castle can continue and we'll come back to that if that's okay with you?

29 **A.** That's fine.

30 **Q.** Okay, let's do that.

31 **A.** Thank you.

32 **QUESTIONING BY MS CASTLE CONTINUED:** Ms AF, before the break you started talking
 33 to us about the legal implications of your adoption and how your ethnicity was recorded on
 34 your birth certificate and you say in your statement, "They stole my whakapapa and my

1 whenua from me and my descendants." Can you please elaborate for us on what you mean
2 by that?

3 A. It's a legal document, the birth certificate, and the adoption papers. In my mind, and I guess
4 it could be the lawyer in me, I believe that the State colluded in falsifying a legal document.
5 That legal document should legally have my ethnicity correct on it. They removed that.
6 Whether it was the doctors, the social workers or the legal team, I don't know. But the
7 Crown has to face ultimate responsibility for the falsification of the documents because that
8 was genocide and assimilation in action. The minute they change the ethnicity of a person
9 they have actually genocided that person's whakapapa from their page.

10 **Q.** What impact has that on your connection to your Māoritanga?

11 A. I have no legal say, no legal rights to my whenua, to my mother's side of the whānau. My
12 kaumātua and kuia from there do not acknowledge me. My cousins do and -- sorry. My
13 cousins do and - but my aunties, my uncles, my nannies and my koro do not. So
14 essentially, I've- been erased by my whānau on both sides. I have been erased out of their
15 memory. And that's the saddest part because they've said to me, I don't belong, they will
16 never acknowledge me. Their younger family members, though, I have met, and they fully
17 embrace me, and I go home often but the kaumātua, kuia will not acknowledge me at all.
18 And that's down to the adoption. I found the poem.

19 **Q.** Do you want to share that with us now?

20 A. Sure. "I saw your face that cold May, I saw the black of your eyes, you looked up at me
21 and smiled not a care in the world. A noise in the room, the sounds of the voices, the
22 whispers too loud to hide, the looks too open to shun, I pulled you towards me, I could
23 smell your skin. I felt your face close to mine, I knew this was our time, the tears flowed
24 on to each other, drowning you, washing you, I held you close, heartbeat to heartbeat. The
25 sounds of doctors, the movements of nuns, the pulling back of blinds, they have come for
26 you. I look up, I look upwards, I look pleading, I look begging, I look helpless. They take
27 you away, they force you from me, you were never mine, my son, my child, my first."

28 That was my poem for my boy. I never wanted him to ever feel forgotten and
29 unloved as I felt for many years. I never wanted him to sense that feeling of rejection as
30 I've had my entire life. I wanted him to know that I loved him and that it wasn't really my
31 choice, even though I signed the papers, it was the choice of all the adults around me
32 because, back then, we weren't given that ability to have our voice, you hear the lippy ones
33 these days, they're lippy because they're allowed to have a voice and I think good on them.
34 And I have hope for our future because of our rangatahi (youth) and their voices. But when

- 1 I was 18, I wasn't given that choice, not really.
- 2 **Q.** What impact did it have on you, having that choice taken away from you?
- 3 **A.** I felt he was dead, I felt a grief the same as you feel when you lose someone you love
4 dearly. I tried to move on with life, but I still had the negative behaviours of using alcohol
5 and drugs to numb myself. But I worked, and I worked hard. But of course, I was still very
6 suicidal back then and I attempted. And I ended up in a coma and almost died. And the
7 Atua must have decided it's not my time because it was one of dad's cousins that came in
8 and rescued me, broke down my door, he was an ambulance man, the whānau couldn't get
9 in, and he broke it down and gave me the CPR. I got --- on the way to the hospital, my
10 heart stopped again, more CPR, and at the hospital I was in a coma for two weeks and
11 I only came out because of my best friend talking to me and, you know, really pushing to
12 try and let me hear what she was saying. I had to -- when I did finally come through, I had
13 no memory of a lot of things for about three months' time, and I woke up actually in the
14 psych ward and they had decided they didn't know what to do with me. I had to come out, I
15 was hallucinating badly. I had to come off all those drugs, and I then couldn't eat, talk,
16 walk, do anything by myself. So, I slowly got better, 12 months later I took off and went
17 down south hitchhiking, did a bit of fruit picking which I was bloody useless at and got to
18 Dunedin and started nursing and giving back to others, because I'd been training when my
19 son was born, my oldest. So, I did some nurse aiding from then on and that gave me an
20 ability to work with others, so I didn't have to think about myself. But I still struggled with
21 abuse. I hated myself still-.
- 22 Dad had had -- was a very sick man by that stage, my adoptive dad, and they
23 asked me to come home and help care for him and I did, for a time. But I was always
24 restless, always restless. And once he was stable again, I went to Auckland and worked
25 there for a time. And that's where I ended up with my youngest son being born. I loved it
26 in Auckland. I worked at a place called the GRO-B-1 which - for young people. One of
27 the saddest, most damaged children I've ever met and realised how fortunate I was in some
28 ways that the abuse I had was just one form of abuse, that it was kept hidden, and that it
29 wasn't endemic with everyone in that family, just me. These children saw things I never
30 saw. -These children lived through those things and -- so until I had to leave after I became
31 pregnant, I worked there and then I had my baby and, you know, carried on with a different
32 path at that point-.
- 33 **Q.** Have your -- aroha mai, haere tonu- (please continue).
- 34 **A.** No, no, you go.

1 **Q.** Have your experiences impacted on your ability to form and maintain relationships with
2 people?

3 **A.** People say to me, you don't have problems with relationships. Look, you're always
4 confident in the media, whatever, if I'm with mates and groups. I actually hate it. I hate
5 every second of connecting with other people. I'm nervous, I need to watch what I say and
6 do all the time, I'm always aware that I could do the wrong thing, and that's ADD, that's
7 knowing when I was younger, I would say and do the wrong thing. I'm always careful, but
8 I'm also --- I just -- I'm never comfortable. It takes me a long time to prepare myself, takes
9 me a couple of days if I know I'm going to be sociable. Don't hit me with a sudden
10 impulsive idea of going out to the clubs or the parties or anything, I look at them and go,
11 "Hell no. I'm going to bed." It's just easier. I don't like socialising, I'm comfortable by
12 myself. If I could I'd probably be a hermit. But it's not functional, everyone has to have
13 relationships in order to function, so I force that on myself-.

14 I have very, very few close contacts that I trust. In fact, some of them are listening
15 to this now and I know that I can trust them and love them. But I just don't like socialising.
16 I - When I'm out and about I look at it as I'm doing my work, but to socialise in my
17 personal capacity, very uncomfortable. And so when I am in situations where, say, I'm at a
18 conference, whatever, I don't go to dinner, I don't end up in the lunch area, I go and take
19 myself off somewhere for a little while and have some quiet time to cope.

20 So I'm a bit of a loner. And I'm scared of relationships. In fact who I'm with now,
21 we've been together 20 years, is probably the one person that understands me more than
22 anyone else ever has, with the exception of my youngest son. And they know me inside
23 and out, but other than that, I've struggled with relationships for a long time, and my oldest
24 that was adopted struggles with relationships as well. It's that sense of rejection at birth, the
25 sense of being unwanted, that you're thrown away like a piece of rubbish. And you have to
26 piece it together because everyone gives you this little, -soppy little story.
27 Oranga- Tamariki now, it used to be CYFS then it was DSW, they send you these stories
28 and they're pathetic, you know: Your mummy and daddy, they loved you so much that they
29 gave you up for birth to this other family that loved you so much and they so wanted you.
30 It leaves you with the question, well, why didn't my birth family want me if they loved me
31 so much?

32 You know, don't fudge this information. Make it real, be honest. Lies have a
33 habit of being found out, and then trust is broken. I always knew I was adopted. But to be
34 honest, I was told I was adopted because I was wanted. So, when my younger sister, who

1 was born and of course biological to them, when we were fighting, I'd say to her, "Ha, at
2 least I was chosen. You were just a mistake", you know. I could hit that with a nastiest of
3 things and it's sad because that's how I had to validate myself and I had to validate it by,
4 you know, hurting her. It's the only way I could feel like I belonged. It was ridiculous, but
5 that's how it came out.

6 **Q.** You spoke earlier today about the impact that the adoption of your son has had on him and
7 how he's doing at the moment. How have you observed that other members of your
8 whānau or tamariki, mokopuna have been impacted by the abuse that you experienced?

9 **A.** My oldest boy, he's going through hell, and he has two beautiful children, but he's also got
10 two wives, now both ex-wives, and he doesn't know how to have relationships. He's
11 damaged as heck. He can't, he wants to but when he walks away from the wives he walks
12 away from his boys. So finally, after a number of years he's now got a relationship with
13 both of his children together, but there's a long way to go, he needs therapy, he needs help.
14 Anything I can say to him won't help him, he's the kind of guy that needs a man to be there
15 for him and he doesn't know anybody that can help him. He's got some negative influences
16 in his life unfortunately. It's impacted on him very hard.

17 My youngest, he's a very connected, together young man and he is absolutely
18 healthy. He's a loner, like his mamma, but he's comfortable with that. His relationship
19 with his fiancé is that they're both loners, so it suits him, it's just the way he is, but he has a
20 healthy sense of relationships with others. So, in a way he's healed me in some ways, and
21 he's helped me in a lot of ways, but he's also -- I don't worry about him at all. And he
22 knows that, he knows that I worry about my older one, but the younger one's fine, but he
23 doesn't have a relationship with his brother because his brother isn't ready yet to have a
24 relationship with him. So, they're- both -- I mean, my baby, he would - 35 and he's- still
25 my baby, but he would -- he just said to me, "When he's ready mum, I don't really care
26 because, you know, it's him that's got to sort his issues out." So, he's a healthy man. My
27 oldest one is not. But I'll always love him, but I don't like the choices he's making-.

28 Also, both of them have no relationship to our whenua, to our uri, so I can't take
29 them home. I can, but I can't say for sure where they belong because I've been denied that
30 as well.

31 **Q.** What has that meant for you, for example has that impacted on your ability to speak Te Reo
32 Māori and your tamariki and mokopuna?

33 **A.** Absolutely, although when I went to the State school a lot of the kids were Māori, because
34 it was way out in the country back in the day and these days, of course, it's now part of the

1 city, I actually learned Te Reo then from the kids because it was our way of excluding what
 2 we wanted to do that was naughty behind our parents' back. So, you know, I'm talking
 3 about the Pākehā ones. We weren't allowed to go down the river, that was dangerous, so
 4 we would speak Te Reo and know where we were going to meet. You know, we got into
 5 lots of naughty things at that age. So, I did speak it once. Then my brain injury in 1996
 6 meant that I lost Te Reo. But I also have tried to relearn, and I'm determined to. I
 7 understand it when it's said to me, but I can't kōrero back because I tend to stutter and I
 8 don't want to pronounce wrong and I get all tongue twisted and tongue tied because I get so
 9 nervous because it's such a beautiful reo, but I can't say it fluently back.

10 So, I don't feel adequate about Te Reo enough to say it. But it has impacted,
 11 because then I don't feel good enough. Probably if I had grown up with my whānau and we
 12 were part of our marae I would probably have been considered someone who could have
 13 done kaikaranga, and I know others have said that to me, but there was only one time I've
 14 done kaikaranga and that was at my nana's, my biological nana's tangi. It was a Pākehā
 15 funeral because the whānau are pretty disconnected. But all of a sudden, because of my
 16 matakite nature, all of a sudden, I heard my tūpuna saying -- actually, great nanny Selena
 17 saying to me, "You do a karanga for my daughter", then my cousin who was a nun who got
 18 me back to my marae and actually said to me, "You heard them." So, I did this karanga in
 19 Te Reo and it was perfectly right, but I've never done it before, and I haven't done it since.
 20 So, the Atua were acknowledging the gift that should have been given to me and in that
 21 moment, I could honour my nana and send her home to her people, to our people. And that
 22 was an honour. -Sorry.

23 **Q.** No. Haere tonu (please continue).

24 **A.** No, I was just saying that was a huge honour for me and I felt the closeness to my Atua at
 25 that time and my tūpuna (gods and ancestors).

26 **Q.** What has speaking to your tūpuna and to the Atua meant in terms of your healing journey?

27 **A.** I have rejected my religious beliefs a long time ago. I never felt peace with it. It's too
 28 ritualistic for me, and reading the history, the papal bull document, which is the foundation
 29 of modern colonisation, understanding the influences they had in the early days of
 30 colonisation within Aotearoa, I turned my back a long time ago. Not against the Atua, I
 31 don't stop believing in Atua, whatever that means for us, but I've actually connected with
 32 Buddha, with the Buddha's belief system, it's the closest to an indigenous belief system in
 33 that everything has a mauri or a life essence, everything around us is impacted by what we
 34 do, everything has a consequence.

1 So, my tīpuna, I often talk to them, and I meditate, and they come into my
 2 meditations a lot. They guide me, they talk to me. I mean, I've been having knots in my
 3 puku from day one of this, knowing it was happening, it's been put off so often that it was
 4 like, oh, heck it's happening now. So, I just immediately close my eyes and I see them, and
 5 they talk to me and I'm okay, because I know they know I'm okay, and they are my mentors
 6 now. As I'm getting older, knowing my life expectancy is now getting less, I'm not a
 7 Benjamin Button, I'm going the other way, and I just feel closer to them day -to day, I see
 8 them, I feel them. When I'm really sick, they're right there. I actually disconnect- from the
 9 living world when I'm so close to my tīpuna, it's so beautiful being with them. So, they get
 10 me through. You know, they're the ones that told me I'm Māori, they're the ones that give
 11 me my understanding etc. And my cousins now help to confirm and enhance that. So, they
 12 help me cope. They help me understand things I don't really understand.

13 **Q.** What has it meant for you discovering that you are Māori and reconnecting with your
 14 biological whānau?

15 **A.** I always felt it. Even though they kept telling me Māori were dirty, you know, they were
 16 uncivilised and horrid people, I always looked at the Māori at Sacred Heart that were doing
 17 kapa haka and doing Te Reo classes and doing the waiata and, you know, all of that, and I'd
 18 look at them with envy going, "Gosh, I wish I was Māori, I'd love to do some of that stuff."
 19 You know, you just felt it, but I was too scared, I thought, "Oh, they won't like me being
 20 there", so I stayed away from it, feeling I didn't belong. To know it, to have it confirmed
 21 was to me a validation of what I felt my entire life.

22 So, when I saw my mother for the first time and my baby brother who's, oh, a
 23 humongous man, size, he was only 16 and he was still over 6 foot. But when I met them, it
 24 was, like, wow, it confirmed everything. I'm Māori, I belong, I'm Mana Whenua, I belong.
 25 I'm not just born here but my ancestral history is here and that for me was a validation that
 26 what my tīpuna were telling me is that this is my place and then I began to believe it. That
 27 was the start of my healing.

28 **Q.** While those who are watching on the livestream can't see it, I understand that you are
 29 happy for us to discuss the fact that you proudly wear why your moko kauae?

30 **A.** Āe.

31 **Q.** What does that represent for you?

32 **A.** It took me 20 years. It began way back. I was at a hui for the Māori Women's Welfare
 33 League in Kawhia, and I was at this marae waiting back there, and my mate, who's my
 34 partner now, we were there together and I looked and I could see my nannies dancing, you

1 know, I could see them in my minds eye and I talked to my mate and I said, "I've got my
 2 nannies here, I can see her, I can see Nanny Selena, Nana Mary." I said, "They're dancing."
 3 She said, "Well, there's two wāhine on this pou at the front." She said, "They're
 4 acknowledging them." And they were acknowledging this is one of your marae. So, I went
 5 in there and I could feel the power of who they are and that's when I started to begin that
 6 journey.

7 But it happened a few years earlier. I was at Parihaka, my best friend, her husband
 8 was from there and he'd died and we went back to see his grave and I met his mother and
 9 she is the woman -- I went in there with this Pākehā attitude, looked at my watch, my
 10 baby was about 2, said we'll be a couple of hours, and he went off and played, and she sat
 11 me down and she introduced me to who I am. Six hours later it was getting dark, I hadn't
 12 seen my son once, and she'd gifted me my name, and that's when I knew that it was my
 13 beginning of my journey. So, utilising my new name, going -- moving forward, I knew that
 14 I was getting this, but I kept thinking I need Te Reo, I need Te Reo-.

15 Then I spoke to people like Dr Papaarangi Reid and she said, "I don't know mine,
 16 it's not what gives you a moko kauae, it's your whakapapa." And I listened to Moana
 17 Jackson and heard others, so I was building up my knowledge, and I'd had Māori saying to
 18 me, "You're not Māori anymore, you were adopted" and I'd had all of this happening and it
 19 wasn't until last year, I was in hospital with a kidney cyst, and treatment for what was a
 20 TIA, or a trans ischemic attack, and I'd spoken about having it and I talked to my tā moko
 21 artist and said, "I don't think I'm ready yet." She said, "you'll know." August last year, I
 22 rang her and said, "I'm ready." And it all came together. Marae were closed for Covid and
 23 stuff. Well, we had one marae organised, they wanted to hold it, it just flowed, and it just
 24 happened.

25 And from that moment I knew then that my whakapapa will forever be there for
 26 my tūpuna, for my descendants and for all of those that follow, they will never again, they
 27 might legally say I'm not Māori, but my tūpuna told me I'm Māori and it sits right here on
 28 my face. You will never ever know I am not Māori. And that is because you --- stop trying
 29 to tell me I'm too Pākehā -looking to have one of these. Stop telling me I look too white to
 30 be Māori. That's what I was raised with: You look white, why would you bother to go
 31 down that road? I bother to go down that road because it's my whakapapa, it is who I am,
 32 good or bad, I claim because I am proud to be who I am. And I cannot --- I cannot change
 33 who my tūpuna are and I don't want to.

34 **Q.** Tēnā koe (thank you). Just a brief reminder to keep an eye on our pace because what you're

1 saying is so important and I just want to make sure that it's accurately captured.

2 A. Thank you.

3 Q. I want to talk now about your recommendations for change and how things could be done
4 differently. You say in your statement that it's not about money. What role, if any, do you
5 think monetary compensation has in the redress process?

6 A. I think it has a practical role in acknowledging that there's been abuses of the State that's
7 actually prevented me in a number of ways from truly following a path of life that could
8 have netted me to be fully independent from the State by now. But because of the trauma,
9 because of the pain, there have been incidents in my life where it has created barriers
10 towards achieving that fully. In that sense, money can help. But I've never actually really
11 lived by the code of needing money or wanting money. I'm not in deep debt of anything,
12 I live within our means. But there's other things that need to be done. How are we going to
13 reconcile broken whānau, disconnected whānau?

14 First of all, the Adoption Act is an insidious genocidal act. It has genocided some whānau from
15 each other. It has removed some people's ethnicities through illegal actions such as
16 changing your ethnicity at birth, it has created chasms that for some have been so traumatic
17 people have died as a result of that. It has created variance in people's lives that have
18 damaged them permanently. Too many people I know have GRO-C . So, we need to
19 have a way of reconciling people where we can. We need to have an acknowledgment that
20 what was done was a form of theft. I remember a documentary about 20 years ago and they
21 called it "He iwi ngaro" (the lost people), the lost generation or the lost children or the lost
22 people. But we're not lost. Everything that was done against us was intentional. We are
23 not lost. We were stolen. We were erased.

24 And in the same way my birth mother told me when I met her, she's passed since,
25 but told me, the first thing she said to me was, "You know, darl, we would have knocked
26 you on the head at birth because you're disabled eh." And I looked at her and so that's why
27 I did my PhD. Because I'd also had a male Māori leader tell me that I carry a mākutu and a
28 hara for being disabled. So, I needed to examine those claims and that's why my PhD was
29 written the way it was. But it was her thinking around it, you know, it just doesn't reconcile
30 with me. What the heck has gone on that she was willing, even though her brother had
31 died, and she had to go back, why wouldn't they give me to my father's family who wanted
32 me?

33 There's far too many questions, and too many people have died to answer them. But I believe that
34 we should have a Whānau Ora approach for disabled, but remembering a lot of us have our

1 whānau overseas, and Whānau Ora doesn't cover that. I cannot reconcile with my siblings
 2 properly because I can't get to them. I can't arrange it, because we can't get that resource to
 3 help us do that reconciliation because they live overseas. But we should be looking at a
 4 process of bringing people back into the fold of our iwi, our hapū, our whānau. We need to
 5 get rid of that Act, we need to get rid of those references, we need to remember, we need to
 6 be able to succeed back to our whenua. We need to be able to have that right as Māori to
 7 claim our right as Māori. I don't care how many generations gone, I'm not blood quantum
 8 like my grandfather was as a Navajo, from the Navajo nation. I'm not blood quantum,
 9 neither am I Aboriginal whānau, my Sámi whānau or my Māori whānau, I am all of them, e
 10 ngā hau e whā (from the four winds). I am from the four winds of this earth, and I will go
 11 back to the four winds of this earth when I pass.

12 I acknowledge all my ancestry, but I was born in Aotearoa and being born here as
 13 Mana Whenua I have that right to reclaim my land, my whakapapa, my tūpuna. No one can
 14 take that away from me anymore and that's what my moko kauae represents and what my tā
 15 moko on my arm represents, which is my ethnicity and my children, and I'm about to add
 16 my grandchildren on there-.

17 **Q.** I just want to clarify, you said you think money can have a practical effect. Is it one of your
 18 suggested recommendations that there be resourcing available for that reconnection process
 19 you were just talking about?

20 **A.** Yes. That a- similar like a -Whānau Ora approach but where we have whānau overseas that
 21 they enable that to be allowed as well because we --- if we put in a plan of what -- I mean,
 22 I do plans all the time. If we submit an application and state why, I have so many
 23 mokopuna, nieces and nephews overseas that I so would love to meet and know. I would
 24 like to help my son,- my grandchildren connect to their whānau. If they could help me do
 25 that then I can help them heal. And it would heal further for us all. And maybe we would
 26 stop the pattern of theft, of foster care and adoption in our whānau. I don't believe that is an
 27 unreasonable request given they've taken so much away from us.

28 **Q.** In terms of your birth certificate, what can the New Zealand Government do to remedy the
 29 impacts flowing from that?

30 **A.** Well, you know, there's certain documents you're not allowed to amend, or change, but in
 31 the same way that the transgender community is seeking, you know, a change, quite rightly
 32 so, to be able to be identified with who they believe they are, how about letting us also have
 33 the same right to have our ethnicity correctly amended. Because, you know, it's not
 34 enough, I could -- I could go further on that legally if I really wanted to cause a problem,

1 because we have to- ask the question why the State was so willing to falsify ethnicity on a
2 very important document. And that means all the records that have been kept, census,
3 everything else, for the last 60 years in my life, are wrong. And it could mean that we have
4 more Māori in Aotearoa than what they officially have recorded, because there are so many
5 more out there that have had their ethnicities removed from them. They can fix that. The
6 Crown can do whatever they like. So isn't it about time, you know, within reason, without
7 us having an overthrow of Government, but, you know, there is an obligation I believe of
8 the Crown to rectify the wrong that has existed in the falsification of the documentation of
9 the adoption.

10 **Q.** What role do you think a Crown apology has in the redress process?

11 **A.** An apology is fantastic if it follows through with a change. You can't just say, I'm sorry,
12 you know, I wasn't born then but, you know, I'm really sorry. It's a complete waste.
13 I mean, you have to have a follow up with the apology.

14 It is time, like Australia did, that they apologise to all birth mothers who had
15 forced adoptions. It is time, also, to apologise to all the adoptees, and not all of them had a
16 bad life, but for all the adoptees that they neglected by not doing proper screening, and by
17 denying them the truth. Because that is where the real damage occurs, and remembering
18 epigenetics, and multigenerational trauma, the only way you change that is you rectify from
19 identifying the cause and then you rectify the damage. And, to me, the damage can only be
20 reconciled through whatever the adoptees believe will help them and in my case, I believe
21 it's- reconciling properly with my whānau, spending that time and helping my son connect
22 to his whakapapa in Australia at least, so he can understand who he is and gain the benefits
23 of that identity. And part of that will be -- they have very good policies over there around
24 mortgages for Aboriginals and other stuff, jobs and things, that it might help
25 him -with -- might help my grandchildren get scholarships for university, etcetera in the
26 future. But on the practical side, it will help him understand a bit about himself and I think
27 he will grow-.

28 So, it's not just for me, but it's for the whole whānau. I have another sister that
29 was adopted as well, but she's my youngest sister. Her and I get on like a house on fire.
30 She lives in Aotearoa. But she was adopted by an aunty and that aunty doesn't
31 acknowledge me either. But she'll acknowledge her daughter, my sister. And as a result,
32 she doesn't have the issues around knowing her whakapapa, knowing who she is, she does
33 know all that. But she just grew up in a different whānau, and - but we've had to do a lot of
34 healing for her as well around my siblings and that, because we are so broken. And they

1 are the product of foster care, through her adoption actually, everything went wrong for a
2 little while. And their foster care was filled with rape and abuse.

3 So, I have another sister who's a raging alcoholic and two brothers who are
4 fundamentalist extremist Christians and that is the product of the trauma they went through
5 in their own childhood, and that is the damage, the cumulative damage of breaking down
6 whānau as we've been so good at doing through CYFS, Oranga Tamariki, the old DSW.

7 **Q.** You have identified in your statement the system that Tūhoe has in place as a key model
8 you think serves as a good example of what works for Māori. Can you tell us a bit more
9 about that?

10 **A.** I was so -- I've been watching a lot of settlements and the settlement for that was different
11 to previous settlements in that they gave partial sovereignty or partial tino rangatiratanga
12 back to the iwi and that meant that they had a bigger involvement in foster care, adoption,
13 family issues, bigger involvement in education, bigger involvement in health, a bigger
14 involvement in just about every- Government entity aspect within their hapū, their iwi.
15 And this partial sovereignty means that the iwi gets involved. If there's, say, a young
16 mother and they don't think she can raise the child, instead of removing her, the iwi come in
17 and they look at what is the best process. Is it because mum has no home, isn't well
18 connected, has an unstable whānau, and doesn't know how to raise a child? So, they can
19 find their solutions within.

20 And that, to me, is a far healthier process for Māori babies and children coming in
21 under care, because it puts it back in our hands. So, the State can have an overriding, like
22 they provide the resources, but honestly, the frontline work should be led by the iwi
23 themselves. So, they have their own social worker, they have their own iwi hapū liaison,
24 their own family advisors and supporters. And if they get it right, that means they can get
25 far more resourcing and support and bring in an extended whānau approach to ensuring
26 those babies are growing up healthy and well. I remember the Nia Glassie case.

27 I remember reading about -- it was horrific, but I read about those adults that abused and
28 they were raised in horrific circumstances too. So, they repeated what was done to them.
29 No excuse, but I remember when the iwi had their hui, and they came out and said we lost
30 them, and it was their job to find the lost ones. It's the job of the Crown to enable the iwi
31 around the motu to help them to find the lost ones for them. -Not just adopted, but foster
32 kids, kids in the Police system, kids in the - you know, whānau that are all broken up. We
33 need to bring them back.

34 And I believe that we can do that, and Tūhoe have given us one option which is I

1 believe the healthiest approach when we're living in a bicultural environment is that we
2 have the iwi take, you know, partial sovereignty alongside the Crown in a true partnership,
3 it will make a big difference to those that come up under the foster and the adoption system.
4 And a healthier approach. And it doesn't genocide our babies away from our iwi, our hapū,
5 our whānau.

6 **Q.** Are there any other changes that you think should be implemented by the Crown,
7 particularly in terms of remedying the impacts of adoption or in terms of the care
8 framework for the disabled community that you haven't had a chance to talk about yet?

9 **A.** Well, it's interesting, because a lot of disabled were adopted as well, or put into institutions,
10 and I know of quite a few Māori that ended up in foster care, with my old hearing
11 impairments, ended up in institutions. And when they got older and they got compensation
12 for the abuse that happened in those institutions, they then had their money taken off them
13 as they were placed in old folks' homes because they needed long term care. So, you know,
14 if they're going to compensate, don't take it off them again, don't take it off us. It's so
15 important that they make sure that what they give they don't take from again, if that makes
16 any sense.

17 I can't think -- I -just, - I- just want -- for me it's- the --- it is the -- we need to
18 reindigenise our health, our fostering system, in fact we need to reindigenise our
19 institutional environments. Every single one of those institutions we have in Aotearoa were
20 all born in the global north. They brought with them the concept of violence, and that's our
21 health system, our welfare system, our housing system, every single one of them. And so,
22 you can put lipstick on a pig but it's- still a pig, so you can change the name to a lovely
23 flash Māori name, but it's still got the abuse underlying it. We need to reindigenise. I'm
24 not talking decolonise, I've done loads of those myself and others do it. We actually need
25 to bring back the indigenous concepts, we live down under, we live in Pasifika rim, we live
26 in a Polynesian environment with many other cultures with us.

27 But we need to reindigenise, because the only people that really are struggling to a
28 huge extent are the indigenous. The others that are struggling are struggling because
29 institutions were never healthy anyway. But if we reindigenised in the way that Tūhoe are
30 starting to do, I could see us actually reclaiming over time our voice, our place, and our
31 partnership. Reindigenising is a very healthy way of doing it. We bring in the good
32 concepts of the cultures, and we get rid of those negative bad things that have just stuck
33 around but aren't productive at all.

34 And, in all honesty, if you were to look at, say, the concept of housing, and you

1 brought in multigenerational housing, where many generations, it's big enough, built in a
 2 way where they can all live their independent lives, but they gather together- in the
 3 common room, the kitchen area, or outside where you're gathering,- gardening, you reduce
 4 the need for the State. The reasoning? You've got young people can look after the old
 5 people. Older people can look after the babies. The adults can go working and studying
 6 and actually be more productive. You're pulling resources and you're pulling knowledge
 7 together, in the same way we did on the pā- where all the generations had a value to each
 8 other, we could re-do that and provide a far healthier outcome for kids at risk, for our
 9 disabled, for our seniors, and reduce the need for institutional care and treatment.

10 So, I'm a firm believer in the reindigenising of systems, and that's for all of our disabled and it's for
 11 all of our people. Because it's not just Māori that live intergenerationally; it's Pasifika
 12 people, it's migrants, refugees, eastern Europeans do it, you know, it's not just because one's
 13 brown and indigenous, it's because there are a lot of cultures that do that type of thing, and
 14 if we were to do that more collective action towards the well-being of those most at risk or
 15 are being abused, we reduce the need for the State to be involved, because we know we've
 16 got people there that can keep others safe. I think it's quite an easy thing to do, but it seems
 17 very difficult to try and teach bureaucracy how to be different.

18 **Q.** Is there anything that you think the Catholic Church could do to remedy the abuse that you
 19 experienced in Catholic institutions?

20 **A.** I think Pope Francis has actually progressed the church a long way from even 20 years ago.
 21 And a lot of it is he's challenging, the church has still got a problem with takatāpui
 22 (homosexual) people and there's issues with -- I know it's hard recognising the paedophilia
 23 and the abuse of some within the church. I think they're trying, and they have made some
 24 changes. I mean I'm very impressed with Pope Francis. I'd love to meet him one day, but
 25 I doubt I ever will, because I think he is a man of reason and deeply cares about those living
 26 in poverty and hardship. But the church does need to just acknowledge the past,
 27 acknowledge what was done, acknowledge what caused pain. I mean a lot of the nuns, they
 28 were good people, but a lot of them shouldn't have been teachers in all honesty. And a lot
 29 of the priests and stuff, not all of them were abusers, but there was abuse. We now have
 30 mechanisms in place to prevent a lot of this stuff-.

31 So, I think, you know, an apology and a commitment to changing how they
 32 approach the protection of those in their care for me would reconcile my issues with the
 33 church. It doesn't stop the fact that I don't believe in religion and Buddha is not a religion
 34 but a philosophy. It doesn't also stop the fact that I believe in an Atua or many Atua. So,

1 I'm okay with religion, but I don't want to be a part of religion. That's my issue, and that's
2 my choice. But for them I need them to say sorry to all of us and make that commitment to
3 ensure that they become the tenets of what they believe, in action not just in words. I think
4 Pope Francis is part of that change, and I'd love to see further popes go further and further
5 as they make the changes towards the better.

6 **Q.** Tēnā koe (thank you). We're approaching the end of your evidence. Do you have any
7 messages for survivors who are considering whether to come forward and share their
8 experiences?

9 **A.** Do it. It's freeing. One of the things I found when I thought like a victim is the whole
10 world was against me, I'm sure my kōrero, if anyone said, "How are you today?" I'd be
11 going, you know, "Actually I feel like shit", you know, all that sort of thing. Sometimes I'd
12 just go -and I learned to start saying when I didn't feel happy, they'd go, "How are you"?
13 I'd go, "I'm fine", but actually that just meant I was f'd, insecure, neurotic and emotional,
14 and they could take it any way they liked, but I'd still said how I truly felt because I think
15 people go, "How are you?" and it's not always genuine, they don't really want an answer,
16 and if you're going to stand there for half an hour and tell them your whole life story it's a
17 problem-.

18 I went and put myself into counselling for three years and at the beginning of it
19 I went to her, and I said I'm going to be manipulative, because there are some things, I'm
20 not ready to face, but I'm telling you so that I can face it, because I don't want to be like
21 this. Three and a half years later when I finished, I said, "Thank you, I think I'm ready."
22 And she gave me the tools. And I walked out multiple times. But I learnt enough tools to
23 know that I am okay, and I haven't attempted suicide since my boy was 9, he's 35. So that's
24 over 20 years, and I haven't touched --- apart from medicinal --- legal,- medicinal cannabis
25 which has changed my life as well for the better, I haven't touched any drugs and alcohol
26 for 33 years. Get off the substances, recognise the issue, go and get help, and reclaim your
27 life, because as an adult, it's on you what decisions you make. Make healthy ones-.

28 But also, know you're not alone. Reach out, there are others out there like me,
29 there are others out there that will understand, reach out to those that can help you, link up
30 and just be honest, live your truth, once you actually share it, it becomes less of the beast,
31 and you begin to have control. Be the one who has control. Be proud. You've made it this
32 far.

33 **Q.** Is there anything else that you want to say that you haven't had an opportunity to say yet
34 during the course of our kōrero?

1 A. Just that we're all human, we all have different experiences, so mine is not yours. Not
2 everyone's had a bad adoption experience, but for me it wasn't great. It doesn't mean they
3 were evil people, they were also a product of their upbringing, their life. But for Māori, I
4 would love us to find a way for our kaumātua, our kuia, our elders and those who deny us
5 who we are as Māori to please recognise us, acknowledge us and embrace us, we are your
6 whānau, we are your whakapapa, you are mine, stop turning your back on us and embrace
7 us, please. I don't know how else to say that. But I think it's time our iwi make statements
8 and stands and start themselves taking charge and repairing some of the damage the State
9 did. I don't want to keep doing this on my own. I need to do it in a collective manner with
10 our iwi, our hapū, our whānau. That's all.

11 Q. Tēnā koe. Are there any acknowledgments in terms of people important to you or those
12 who have supported you that you want to make before we close?

13 A. I would really like to acknowledge Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei for the kindness of gifting the
14 name they gave for this hearing, the kindness of allowing us to be heard here. There's a lot
15 of mamae in a lot of our statements and that mamae is lessened knowing we're in a place
16 where we are safe. I would like to acknowledge my wife and her whānau for their love and
17 their support over these years. I'd like to acknowledge my sons, my grandsons who are my
18 life, and my in-laws, many mokopuna, tamariki that I love and care for, and my tūpuna, my
19 Atua, for all they've done. I would also like to thank the Catholic Church for their
20 responses and for their honesty in what they perceive to be their truth. And I'm hoping that
21 through this kōrero we can all find a way forward in our healing. Thank you.

22 Q. Tēnā rawe atu koe, Ms AF (thank you very much Ms AF). That concludes my questions.
23 If you're comfortable with the questions from the Commissioners, I'll hand it over to them
24 now.

25 A. Yes, I am.

26 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe, Ms AF. Tēnā koe i tō kōrero nui i tēnei rā. (Thank
27 you Ms AF. Thank you for your important evidence today). And tēnā koe to you Ms Castle
28 for taking us through Ms AF's statement today. So, we do have some questions and it's
29 good to hear that you are comfortable to take those. Commissioner Gibson has advised that
30 he doesn't have any questions for you, so I will start if that's all right.

31 Now, I'm just reflecting on so much kōrero, so much rich kōrero. When you were
32 speaking about your young years where you experienced the abuse, particularly from the
33 likes of your uncle, I just was wondering whether you --whether anyone knew about it?
34 I mean, you made it very clear that it was very hard for you to tell anybody, but did

1 anybody, do you think, know about what was going on, because I'd like to know your
2 thoughts on how those who have been adopted could be better protected, you know, how
3 could they tell somebody in that difficult, horrendous situation?

4 A. Well, when he started doing the things around like painting on my butt and making fun of
5 me in front of everybody, they all knew that part, and they all thought it was funny and they
6 giggled and laughed and everything else. But the sexual and physical violence he did just
7 between he and I, but there was never --- we never talked about that stuff, you didn't see it
8 on TV, and we weren't allowed to watch the news and stuff, so no. There was nowhere to
9 go, no one- to talk to, the schools didn't offer a safe space. We didn't have social workers
10 then in the schools, we only had the murder house and dental nurses. So, we had nobody to
11 go to. And I didn't know I could, because adults were the way they were, they would beat
12 you easily, adults were adults, we were children, we weren't --- they didn't listen to us. So,
13 there was nobody.

14 Q. And so now do you think if there had been somebody at school, say a counsellor or
15 something, that you felt you could speak to, that may have been something that you would
16 have considered, or would that still ... --

17 A. Absolutely, I think technology today allows for kids to find what they're looking for, but I
18 think a presence at the schools, along with maybe a schoolwide little webinar or something
19 to all the children around, you know, "These are the people you can go to if you want to
20 talk to somebody about anything." And encouraging an environment where there's
21 somebody safe children can approach for any issue, will actually stop it stigmatising kids
22 that might go to them over violence and abuse, just because some kids will go to them for,
23 say, some petty stuff, it opens the door to allow them to know there's somebody they can
24 trust. And it's finding that trust that's the really important part. But we never had anything
25 like that, but children have got many more avenues now.

26 Q. Okay, thank you. And, I mean, clearly, you're an incredibly educated, intelligent wahine
27 toa and you talked about the generic school models where those with neurodiversity are
28 likely to -- more likely to be abused as a result and I'm just wondering how you see
29 that- being improved for those with neurodiversity?

30 A. Basically, it's --- for neurodiverse children, there's a varying range, there's some that are
31 highly articulate and quite cognitive and then you've got the ones that are nonverbal. So,
32 it's a variety of approaches, but I think, you know, providing again a safe environment, if
33 someone's starting to act out and have behavioural- issues, instead of coming down on
34 them, there needs to be a process for which we find a way to give them timeout but have

1 someone there to talk to when they calm down. So, I had my son and his behaviours to
 2 deal with and instead of drugs, we decided through his paediatrician, he and I would do
 3 behavioural- modification together. And that benefited both of us and hence he's done very
 4 well in life.

5 The problem with our education system is they view behaviour as a thing that will
 6 lead to criminality later or they view it in a negative way. We need to actually find ways to
 7 just pull them out of that room for a few minutes, take them somewhere quiet, let them
 8 calm down, and then just listen to what they're trying to say. And if they're non-verbal,
 9 have someone skilled in that area and just look at the body language, work out yes/no
 10 answers, work with them, you'll find that they will respond if there's- a way of
 11 communicating.

12 I just think we need to have a more compassionate approach in our schools. We
 13 don't need to go down the American system of locking kids into dark rooms to desensitise
 14 them and then arresting them because they've attacked a teacher. We need a more
 15 compassionate, empathetic approach. Children don't act out unless something has
 16 happened to them.

17 **Q.** Absolutely, thank you.

18 **A.** So, we stop that, yeah.

19 **Q.** Thank you. I can certainly relate to when you talked about your, or speak about your
 20 experience and feelings with nerves around Te Reo Māori, and I'm certainly learning and I
 21 think many of us still are. And it's important for Māori to hear the disconnect that's been
 22 created with -- the intergenerational disconnect that you speak of around your uri- and your
 23 whenua, because you clearly have a strong relationship with your tūpuna (ancestors).

24 **A.** Āe.

25 **Q.** And so, yeah, I just want to say kia kaha (be strong) and thank you so much for all of your
 26 rich kōrero. I'm going to pass now to my fellow Commissioners, if that's all right with you
 27 Ms AF, and ask if they have any pātai (questions)?

28 **A.** Āe, thank you.

29 **Q.** Thank you. Commissioner Shaw, do you have any pātai for Ms AF?

30 **COMMISSIONER SHAW:** Tēnā koe e te māreikura. Tēnei te mihi ki a koe mō tō kōrero
 31 (Greetings. I want to thank you for your evidence). I have just one question, and it relates
 32 to the adoption process and your links back to what you referred to your rights to your
 33 whenua, etcetera. Now in your case - and I'm learning here, in your case, yours was
 34 particularly complicated because your ethnicity was not acknowledged on your birth

1 certificate, so you're starting several paces back. But I understand, and this is from
 2 somebody -- I'm- now asking you as an expert in this area, I understand that even if you had
 3 been acknowledged as being Māori or whatever your ethnicity was on your birth certificate,
 4 you still aren't able to exercise your rights of inheritance in relation to your Māori ancestry.
 5 Is that correct?

6 A. Well, I went to the Māori Land Court to try and succeed to my mother's land. I actually
 7 managed to help my mum succeed to her mother's land because she never had. So,
 8 I managed to get it succeeded into mum and then she passed away two months later. But I
 9 was told no, I can't --- I can do it for my siblings, but I can't be added or included because
 10 I'm not --- I was legally adopted out.

11 Q. Yes.

12 A. I haven't examined it further and I need to explore what that exactly means, but I've tried to
 13 find out and I'm just told, "No, you've got no rights to claim."

14 Q. Yes, and I believe, and again we will have to defer to experts and do some more work on
 15 this, but I believe that it is the mere act of adoption which takes you from your whānau,
 16 turns you into another whānau which means you then -- the- link to your rights is
 17 completely severed. Is that your understanding?

18 A. Yes, it is. In other words, I've got an Irish name, I've got a full Irish history, but it's not
 19 mine, but apparently that's mine now. So, I've been adopted by the Irish. And I am not
 20 allowed to have my Navajo, Sámi, Aboriginal, Māori background because while that is my
 21 whakapapa, my bloodlines, it's not my adoptive lines.

22 Q. It's been taken from you by the process of adoption?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Thank you for clarifying that. Thank you for all of your very rich and extraordinary
 25 evidence. It's going to take a long time for me personally to properly digest it and to place
 26 it into context, but you've given a wonderful platform for us to work from in this very
 27 important and difficult area of adoption, so tēnei te mihi mahana ki a koe e te māreikura
 28 (and so I want to warmly acknowledge you, highly esteemed woman).

29 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Tēnā koe, Commissioner Shaw. Commissioner Alofivae, do
 30 you have any pātai for Ms AF? No questions, that's fine. I'll pass it to you then,
 31 Commissioner Erueti, I'm getting there, just for you to have any pātai and to mihi to Ms AF
 32 on behalf of the Royal Commission.

33 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tēnā koe whaea. Kei te mihi atu ki a koe. Me te mōhio he uaua kē
 34 ki te hoki mahara ki ngā wā o pōuri me te mamae. Tūturu nā mātou i rongohia, i mātauria,

1 ō kupu, oati te rangi nei. Ngā manaakitanga ki runga ki a koe me tō whānau.

2 [English: Thank you. I want to acknowledge you. We are aware of how difficult it is to
3 remember those sad times and those painful times and we heard as you gave your statement
4 and affirmation today. May you and your whānau be taken care of.]

5 It's very humbling for me to be able to thank you on behalf of the Inquiry for
6 coming and sharing your insight, with your thoughtful and powerful articulate voice, with
7 inspiration for us and for everyone listening and watching the Inquiry today. Because
8 despite all those many put downs and slurs, being told that you'd never amount to anything,
9 your determination has shone through, and you can put them in their place. And you've
10 been here before us today and, as Coral said, it's really rich evidence, there's so much in
11 here, you know reforms to Te Ture Whenua Māori, the Adoption Act, your insights about
12 the Tūhoe model, something for us to look at closely, there's much in this evidence.

13 And so, you know, from the bottom of my heart I want to thank you, whaea, for
14 having your courage and your determination, for being the unique person that you are, and
15 for your support there, your whānau, and for your tūpuna and for your tamariki and moko.
16 Ngā mihi mahana ki a koe e te rangatira. Tēnā koe. (Warm acknowledgements to you.
17 Thank you.)

18 A. Ngā mihi, thank you.

19 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Yes, tautoko Commissioner Erueti thank you. E mihi ana anō
20 ki a koe Ms AF i tō kōrero i tēnei rā. (I support Commissioner Erueti. Many thanks, once
21 again to you, Ms AF, for your evidence today). Thank you so much again for sharing your
22 experiences and whakaaro today. Truly, truly rich and we're very grateful to you.

23 **MS CASTLE:** E te Heamana (Madam Chair), before we proceed, I understand that Ms AF is
24 going to grace us with her beautiful voice and share a waiata with us and before she does,
25 we'll briefly explain why she's chosen this waiata.

26 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Ka pai.

27 A. A quick drink. I'm more nervous about this, but I was actually, as I said earlier, I almost
28 trained under Dame Mary Leo. But I've actually got a weaker voice now due to my
29 impairment. But this song came out through the movie The Rose when my oldest was
30 born, and I really struggled to find love in myself and in others, and this song still resonates
31 to me today. So, I hope I can do it justice, my voice is not as strong, but I'll give it a go. So
32 here we go. (Waiata: The Rose). Kia ora.

33 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Ātaahua whaea, rawe (beautiful singing). Absolutely
34 beautiful, beautiful voice, thank you, thank you so much for that.

1 A. Thank you. I hope for others they see it, that even though there's hardship there's always
2 hope. Find that hope, find that vision.

3 **Q.** Thank you. Ms Castle.

4 **MS CASTLE:** Ko te whai ake atu, e whai ake nei, ka tīmata ā te 2.15 pm. He wā pai tēnei hei
5 hiki i te nohoanga. (The following witness starts at 2.15 pm. This is perhaps a good time to
6 have a break). The next witness will be at 2.15 pm so perhaps now we break for lunch.

7 **COMMISSIONER STEENSON:** Āe, thank you, we will resume the hearing after lunch at 2.15,
8 so ka kite i a koutou ākuanei (so we'll see you all soon). See you all soon, if we can just
9 stop the livestream, pause the livestream, please.

10 **Lunch adjournment from 1.09 pm to 2.22 pm**