

**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,
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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: 11 March 2022

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Tēnā koutou katoa. Nau mai hoki mai ki Tumutumuhenua. (Greetings and welcome back to Tumutumuhenua). Welcome back from paramanawa. I just again have to apologise, we had to make sure that at our witness end we could hear and see them properly. And I understand now we have the green light that we can. So now I am going to pass to Counsel Assist Ms Spelman to present our next witness.

MS SPELMAN: Tēnā koe te Heamana (thank you, Chair). Tēnā koe Te Aroha (Thank you, Te Aroha, greetings, Te Aroha).

A. Hi Julia.

Q. Kia ora, whaea. Madam Chair, it's been my privilege to work with Te Aroha preparing for today and before we begin her prerecorded video, I'd just like to hand over to her so that she's able to introduce herself and those who are in the room with her. Kei a koe, whaea (over to you, whaea).

A. Kia ora, my name is Te Aroha Knox and I'm a Tainui Ngāpuhi descendant. I have my support person here who is Hiwai Te Rangi, and she has been a part of my core journey of healing for myself and going forward. So yes, kia ora, everyone.

Q. Kia ora, whaea. E te Heamana, just over to you briefly to introduce from our side (To the Chair, over to you).

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Tēnā koe Ms Spelman and Kia ora, Ms Knox, tēnā koe Ms Knox. Before we start, I will just let you know who is here in the whareniui with us. Obviously myself, Commissioner Steenson, we have our haukainga, we have our tech team, our Māori investigation team, and our sign language interpreters, and we also have our te reo Māori interpreters remotely at the marae. And joining us by video listening in are the other Commissioners from around the motu, our panel presenting on the last day, our Sage and Taumata, we also have the Crown as core participants and Aotearoa.

Can we please begin, I understand you're happy for us to move straight to your recorded evidence. Can we please begin.

A. Yes please.

(Video played).

MS SPELMAN: "Kia ora ano Te Aroha, e, mihi ana ki a koe i te rangi nei. (Hello again, Te Aroha, I'd just like to acknowledge you again for coming.) I just want to begin by acknowledging you for coming along today to share your experience with the Royal Commission. E mōhio ana taua, engari ko Julia Spelman tōku ingoa. (We both know, however, my name is Julia Spelman). We know each other already, I'm Julia Spelman, I'm

one of the Counsel Assisting the Māori investigation team for the Royal Commission. And we are here in Nelson on today which is 15 December 2021.

I just would like to start, as we discussed, with the affirmation. I'll give you this one.

TE AROHA KNOX (sworn)

QUESTIONING BY MS SPELMAN: E mihi ana ki a koe, thank you Te Aroha. I'll pass over to you to introduce yourself, if you could tell us ko wai koe, no whea koe (who are you and where are you from).

A. Kia ora, my name is Te Aroha Knox. My mum is Ngāpuhi and my dad is Tainui.

Q. Thank you. It's good to be here with you today.

A. Yes.

Q. And I know that you're a mother as well as a nanny to some moko. You've got two sons, is that right?

A. Yes, I have one son who stays here in Nelson, and I have another son who stays in Australia. I have seven mokopunas who I love dearly. Yeah.

Q. And I've got a copy here, Te Aroha, of your statement, I know we don't need to refer to that but just for you to confirm that this is the signed copy of the statement that we've prepared together?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. So, if we could begin, Te Aroha, in the beginning for you, and if you would like to share with the Commission about your whānau growing up before you went into State care.

A. So, my upbringing for my whānau with my mum and dad, I've got five sisters and one brother. My dad worked in several jobs working at the timber mills, so we were living in different locations for like 10 schools within like five years of my upbringing. My dad was an alcoholic, and my mum and dad had a shotgun wedding for my older sister. So, my mum was basically a solo mother by the time she had six children, you can basically see that.

Q. When you were born, Te Aroha, and given your name, what is the significance of that name in your whānau?

A. So how I got my name was through my grandmother who – her name was Te Aroha, and my mum was hapū with me at the time and so my grandmother saw my dad beating my mum, so she decided to protect my mum and me, myself. So, she decided to give him a

hiding, my dad, and then said to my mum that that baby that she's going to have, which is me, be named after her. So that's how I got my name.

Q. And is it right you had a different name or a nickname that was used when you were growing up?

A. Yeah, I had – they – my name was Lovey. The only reason why that name was okay for me to talk to me about while I was at school is because my teachers didn't know how to pronounce my name, so I just went with it, not knowing that that name now...

Q. It's okay, just take the time you need, Te Aroha.

A. It means a lot to me, yeah. It means a lot to me because I've got to live and breathe it. So yeah, that's just what it's like to be – to go through all of this and still stand for my name. It's not my name, it's my grandmother's name. But I love my grandmother –

Q. Yeah.

A. - for that. Yeah, so that's my name.

Q. And so, your name that you use now, nowadays as an adult, you've gone back to the name that was gifted from your grandmother?

A. Yes, I chose to go back to it because I realised it's an important name. Growing up now and seeing how – what life has brought me now I have to start putting it into action.

Q. Yeah.

A. It's no longer a name on a piece of paper but it's now a living, breathing name that I have to put into action, whether I sing that through waiata or whether I do rongoā Māori, whether I do Te Ao Māori, (Māori medicine and Māori worldview), I've just got to put it into action.

Q. Tēnā koe, thank you for sharing that with us. In terms of your tamarikitanga (childhood) when you were growing up, you said both your parents were Māori, what was it like growing up in terms of being connected with your Māori side and your Māori whānau, how was that when you were younger?

A. My Tainui side, on my dad's side, even though my dad was an alcoholic, he always took us back to the marae. No matter – if there was any tangihana we would still go. And it was the same with my mum, if there was any tangihana on her side we would still go. I was so lucky to have both – to meet both my grandparents. Because it shows where I come from, how strong my bloodlines are. Yeah.

Q. And how did you find that as a child going back to the marae and visiting with your whānau, how was that for you?

A. Yeah, it was – on my mum's side, the Ngāpuhi side it was great. We just don't do enough of it now. And same with my dad's side it was great as well. So, it teaches me a lot of

things and what my aunties and uncles said then, it counts now, they said it for reasons, so I take that into consideration.

- Q.** And your parents have their own connection to their environment and te tai ao, learning about some tikanga growing up, was that something that you enjoyed, that learning from your parents?
- A.** My dad was a very spiritual man for his Tainui side, he was quite fluent in our reo. But he had some not very good upbringing because he was whāngai'd out to his whāngai dad who didn't treat him very well. So, he had already learned to be violent. And my mum's upbringing was, yeah, she was raped, so they met each other and then they had a one-night stand and had my sister and that was it. We came along.
- Q.** So, they were both pretty young parents themselves?
- A.** Yeah.
- Q.** Yeah. And obviously your parents both carried with them their own pain of their upbringings and you mentioned the violence from your father. Can you tell us a bit more about what that time was like for you and your siblings growing up?
- A.** It was horrible. It was survival. It wasn't very nice. The three elders of my family, my older sister, my older brother and myself, yeah, all three of us just got the blunt end of everything from my dad, and if it wasn't my dad, it was my mum. So, there's no – not very – my word for that would be very painful, so I wouldn't want to say any more to that.
- Q.** Kei te pai. And Te Aroha, is it right that there was something that happened within the whānau when you were around 10 years old that sort of changed things? Could you tell us a bit about what happened at that time, when your dad went away?
- A.** Yeah. My dad went to prison, Rangipo prison because he was being violent when he came back from the pub and then he would beat us as children, and my mum as well. So, he did six months in prison and my mum went into Tokanui hospital for respite. And then we just got left with an aunty and uncle who already had two children at the time, and they helped us – helped look after us.
- Q.** And whereabouts were you all living at that time?
- A.** In Mangakino. And as soon as my dad came out of prison it just turned to shit. It just repeated the same behaviours over again between my mum and dad, so we just saw violence again.
- Q.** And what happened after that?
- A.** My mum went to Auckland and went into a State house in Mangere and then we went from there – my mum was a solo mother, as I said, back then and was looking after six of us and

me and my brother and my sister just, we just had no guidance at all, as much as we tried to or – there was nothing, we didn't get anything. No guidance from nobody.

Q. Yeah.

A. So...

Q. So, she was struggling herself but that meant that you kids were left to look after yourselves really?

A. Yeah, she was already on medication, which was Valium, so she was not really all right, she's not there, her whole mind's not even there, so that was the medication she had while she was in Tokanui hospital. So, when she came back to us, she was not mentally right, so we had to fend for ourselves, whatever that looked like.

Q. So, in terms of going into care, how did that come to be for the kids, for your siblings and yourself?

A. Yeah, we would be stealing food from the dairies or taking food from the Foodtown back then, just to survive. I know I've done it and my mum goes, "What are you doing that for?" And I'm going, "Mum, we've got no food." So, it was the truth but what could you do? So that was my relationship with my mum and my brother and sister. They all knew it was about survival. It was about survival. So that's how we ended up getting Police records for shoplifting, burglary, you name it, we just had all this, all these things just – it was out of control, it was really out of control. And then we just – my sister went into Weymouth Girls' Home and then I went to a family home, me and my brother, in Kenderdine, which is Papatoetoe, and that's where I got raped by one of the boys there. Would have been boys but the other one, my brother had caught in the room. So, I said to my brother then, "I don't want to be here anymore." So, we ran away and then that's when we ended up in mainstream boys' home, mainstream girls' home and then my sister went to Weymouth and then my brother went to – down – Hokio Boys' Home down on the west side there of the North Island, and then I went to – long-term I went to Fareham House which is in Featherston on the North Island.

Q. So just to make sure I've got this right, Te Aroha, so when you first went into care, that was at the Papatoetoe home, the Kenderdine Road one?

A. Yeah.

Q. You were about 10 years old at that time?

A. Yeah.

Q. It was there, that's where you described to us you were first sexually assaulted in that home?

A. Yeah.

Q. You mentioned two people, was that –

A. Yeah.

Q. Is that right?

A. Yeah. And the other person shared rooms, so would talk to the other person, which was in the room, and then they would share these secrets between each other. So, one was like the older one and the other one was younger than him by a couple of years.

Q. So how old were those boys around about?

A. Yeah, he would have been 18, and then his friend was like 16.

Q. And then you mentioned that when you spoke to your brother that you two decided to run away to get out of there together?

A. The only reason why that happened is because the other person that came into the room, my brother said, "What was he doing in here?" And he – and I said, "He was trying to rape me," and then I said to him, "I don't want to be here," but I didn't tell my brother I was raped before that by his, what do you call it, the person that he shares the room with, the older person, I never told him that.

Q. Okay. So, is it right then you, yeah, you both ran away but eventually got caught and were sent off to different homes?

A. Yeah.

Q. And did you go to Allendale Girls' Home?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. What was it like there for you?

A. I hated it. Because I always used to be fighting with the girls because there was a lot of miscommunication and trust.

Q. At Allendale did anyone know about what had happened to you previously?

A. No.

Q. Did any of them ask?

A. No.

Q. And what were the staff like in terms of how they treated the girls there?

A. I hated them. I just wanted to – was very violent, very young, very naive, very unsupported.

Q. In terms of those girls' home, I think you also spent some time at Bollard?

A. Yeah.

Q. What can you tell us about your time at Bollard?

- A. So, when I was getting into trouble I would go there as well. They were for older girls too. I didn't like it there either. I didn't like it at any of them.
- Q. Yeah. What was it like in terms of how the other girls were? We've heard from other survivors that on arrival there were sometimes certain practices that went on for newbies coming in?
- A. Yeah, yeah.
- Q. Did you experience that?
- A. Yeah, you have to fight your way through everything, like you have to claim your – who you are and what you're doing here and why, what are you doing here. Violence was the big – a big deal, you had to have a fight to be able to be bullied or be the bullier. So that's the difference between the two, anyway. But I was already violent anyway. I've already seen it from my dad, you know. That's what he's taught me.
- Q. And being at those girls' homes, were there – was it a majority of Māori girls, were there some Pākehā girls? We've heard a bit about the numbers, what was that like from your experience?
- A. Yeah, there was quite a few Māori girls who were there for different reasons. But I never heard anybody talk about they were raped during this time or that time while in care. It was always gang related or something like that.
- Q. And in terms of the staff, what sort of background did the staff come from?
- A. I don't know, I just – I didn't really ask them about their backgrounds.
- Q. Yeah.
- A. I didn't – I just didn't have – I didn't really have a relationship with any of them, because who could you trust?
- Q. Did they have many Māori staff at those girls' homes?
- A. Maybe one. There was one lady there that was from the Chatham Islands. But you wouldn't even think that. So yeah, there were only very few.
- Q. But no one there that you felt you could trust or tell about what had happened to you?
- A. No, no.
- Q. Okay. You mentioned just before that at some point you were sent to Fareham House?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. That's the one in the Wairarapa?
- A. Yes.
- Q. So how did it come about you were sent there?

- A. Because I wasn't – I wasn't behaving myself in Avondale or Bollard Girls' Home, so they just sent me to Fareham House as a long-term punishment, I guess. I guess. I don't know. They just sent me there anyway, because I wasn't behaving very well.
- Q. And when you arrived there, what was it like, how many other kids were there?
- A. I think there was about 18 of us. There were a few Māori girls from Wellington and a few from the East Coast and then there was quite a few of us, maybe there might have been 10 of us Māori girls and the rest were Pākehā girls.
- Q. And you've mentioned, you know, not enjoying your time at Fareham at all?
- A. No. They had two staff members, one was a Māori, and two sisters were Māori Samoans, and they were really good, the sisters, because they would allow us to do kapa haka. But there was – other than that, that was all that we were connected to for our Māoritanga there.
- Q. How did you find doing that when you were there?
- A. Yeah, it was great.
- Q. Yeah?
- A. Yeah, that was the only time I think I was happy when we were doing our own cultural awareness.
- Q. Yeah.
- A. Growing up, because those are the connections that keeps me connected, yeah.
- Q. And I know you were at Fareham House for about two years. What was it like in terms of school and education while you were there?
- A. Yeah, we did sewing and cooking and – but in terms of academic stuff I never did any of it. We didn't do like we do here at – this school here, right here. We never did any of that.
- Q. So just in terms of reading and writing and all the book learning?
- A. No.
- Q. You didn't focus on that?
- A. No, none of it. Education was zero.
- Q. You mentioned a lot of violence at the girls' homes in Auckland. What was that side of it like at Fareham House?
- A. Still the same. I would fight with anybody, even the staff. I was so out of control.
- Q. Yeah?
- A. Yeah, to me it's funny now, but then I was like, wow, I've got – I've got balls. Yeah, but it shouldn't have happened, but it did.
- Q. Yeah. So, you were just taking on anyone who came up?
- A. [Nods]. Bad and ugly.

- Q.** Yeah.
- A.** Yeah, only if they knew why I was being violent. Only if they knew, but they don't.
- Q.** They didn't know what was happening and they didn't ask?
- A.** No. And a lack of communication on my part because all I did was action it out.
- Q.** When you're looking back at that time now, Te Aroha, obviously you were still young, you were still a child, what do you think about that time now, looking back at your younger self of how you were back then?
- A.** I was so lost. I was so lost. Yeah, I was so lost, and I don't know how I got to see myself through all of it. But I saw other friends who, they were other Māori girls that went through the same trauma who ended up on medication. They lost weight, they were very schizophrenic or psychotic, because they didn't know how to deal with the trauma. But what kept me going as I look back at myself then, that I was so determined to see myself go through this, all of that and still be able to share it today. Because it was a lot, it was over years, it was just so much stuff going on.
- Q.** And through that time obviously you were carrying with you what had happened when you were just a child and didn't have any help to deal with that in any of these later placements?
- A.** No.
- Q.** And is it right that one of your ways of coping was just – was to run away –
- A.** Yeah.
- Q.** - from Fareham House, was just to get away from there?
- A.** They call it flight fright or – and I was always that: Don't even bother fighting it's just too much energy, just run away. That's how I saw my whole life. If I couldn't speak it, then I would just run away. If I did speak it nobody would understand anyway, so what was the point in speaking? I'm already quiet as it is then, but now I don't do it anymore, I just speak my mind.
- Q.** You mentioned, Te Aroha, running away from Fareham House, which you'd do quite often. What would happen when you ran away? Where would you go?
- A.** Everywhere, anywhere, I think back then they had the Black Power and the Mongrel Mob running the whole big scene then in the 70s. So, I would just run away to them.
- Q.** How was that?
- A.** It was horrible, it's still horrible. Nothing's ever nice in any gangs. But where else would you go if you're just being a street kid? So yeah, that wasn't much fun. But then I'd get caught and then I'd go back to the Fareham House and then that's when I would really get treated like shit from everybody, including the staff.

- Q.** When they caught you after you'd run away, did you have to go into a secure unit at that time?
- A.** Yeah, yeah.
- Q.** Could you tell us a bit about what it was like coming back and having to be in secure?
- A.** So, when I come back, they would take my clothes off me, take my bedding, so I'd just go and sit in the corner, just sit there and not do anything. Just numb myself from whatever's happening.
- Q.** So, Te Aroha, you were telling us about running away from Fareham House as one of your coping strategies. Could you tell us a little bit about that?
- A.** Yeah. Running away was – yeah, that was my way of coping with everything, was just running away. So, I would run away every three months and I'd make it like an issue for myself to get out of there, no matter what I was doing, whether I was getting on the trains or hitchhiking or whatever it took to get out of there.
- Q.** And when you ran away, where did you go, what happened to you?
- A.** As long as I would make it to Wellington, I'd meet up with friends there. And of course, they were friends of my friends that were already in the girls' homes, it would be their cousins or brothers or, yeah. So, I would ask, you know, all the other girls, "Do you want to run away? Let's run away." So that's how we would run – I would other way run away by myself or run away with others.
- Q.** Yeah. And who was out there, was anyone out there looking out for kids like you who were running away?
- A.** Mostly the gangs they would look after anybody basically, you'd just end up being a street kid.
- Q.** And eventually you'd get caught again by the Police?
- A.** Yeah.
- Q.** And what would happen then?
- A.** Then I'd get taken back to Fareham House and then they'd lock me up in the secure unit and I'd have no blankets or pillows or – they'd take it all off me, take all my clothes off me and then I'd just sit in the corner until the next day.
- Q.** Was the secure unit a separate part of the building at Fareham House?
- A.** Yeah, it was a separate part of the building. Not every visitor who would come to come and visit would be asking what does – what's that particular part of the building for?
- Q.** And when you got put into the secure unit, how long did you have to stay there for?
- A.** Three days.

- Q.** On your own?
- A.** Yeah, on my own.
- Q.** How was that for you as a young person?
- A.** It was horrible. It wasn't very good. It was – yeah, I didn't like it. But that was all a part of the punishment if you keep running away.
- Q.** So, it was used as a punishment if you'd run away, and was it also used as a punishment if things happened at the house?
- A.** Yeah, if you get into fights with the other girls or – you would get locked up for being – causing trouble, violence. I already went up there because I was having a fight with the staff. So, I'd have a fight with the girls and then he would take me and drag me up there to the secure unit because I was just too violent.
- Q.** So that's one of the staff members taking you?
- A.** Yeah, yeah, the woman staff couldn't control me, so it had to be the male staff.
- Q.** And so, for the girls that lived at Fareham House, how often would that happen, being sent to secure as a punishment?
- A.** Every week. Yeah, there was not much help in any way or form.
- Q.** And was it the same girls being sent to secure? Or how did that work?
- A.** Yeah, same ones. You could always tell which ones were the ones that would make trouble. I was always a part of the troublemakers.
- Q.** You mentioned in your statement that you thought that the Māori girls were targeted in terms of being sent to lockup.
- A.** Yeah.
- Q.** Can you tell us a bit more about that, how did the staff do that?
- A.** Yeah, so when the staff see others – the girls fighting between each other, they would usually take out the violent one because there'd be only one secure unit for one person, so they'll take the violent, most violent one first to the secure unit and then just warn the other one that wasn't so violent, just get a warning.
- Q.** Yeah. And that's – you're talking mostly about the violence amongst the girls. Did you ever experience any violence from the staff towards you?
- A.** Yeah, because – yeah. Yeah, there was one that didn't like me just because I was acting out. So, when I was acting out and being violent, he just always picked on me, "Come on, you just – you need to go, go into secure unit." I would always fight. It was to the point you already knew, being so bigger than me, I was like not very – I was like only seven stone, so he was like 14 stone, and he was – he knew he could take me down, so ...

- Q.** Were you injured when that happened?
- A.** Yeah, I got injured, my ribs got squashed because he went and jumped on my ribs, because that was the only way to take your breath away, it's the only quick way to do it. Yeah. Just got dragged up to the secure unit, and that was it, locked in there for another three days.
- Q.** So, it's a bit of a cycle?
- A.** Yeah, it's a cycle. It's a mad cycle, but it's a cycle that they can only do for people like me. People who would go through those – the situation I went through. What else could they do? They didn't understand what was happening to me. Yeah, so I do understand how their – what their job was, but I understand what my job was.
- Q.** Yeah.
- A.** That was my job to run away because I already had all the damages done to me.
- Q.** And in terms of that, you know, you have the staff you've described as being focused on keeping the peace and, you know, doing the punishment; what about in terms of people who you could talk to? Did you have a social worker that ever visited?
- A.** No.
- Q.** Did they have any counsellors on the staff there?
- A.** No.
- Q.** And each time you ran away, did someone try to speak to you about why you'd run away?
- A.** No.
- Q.** So, there wasn't really anyone for you to speak to?
- A.** No. It's all "no" to the above questions.
- Q.** Yeah.
- A.** It's "no".
- Q.** And what did that mean, Te Aroha, in terms of how you saw yourself during that period?
- A.** Broken. I was a broken child. I can't – very broken.
- Q.** You just wanted to get out of there?
- A.** [Nods]. I couldn't wait to get out of there.
- Q.** Yeah.
- A.** I couldn't wait. Who knows if I had have stayed on it would have been – I wouldn't be sitting here.
- Q.** When you – you'd had about two years at Fareham House, and I know you wanted to go back to live with your mother. What did Social Welfare say about that?
- A.** My mum didn't want me back because I was too much for her which was understandable.
- Q.** She still had your three younger siblings with her.

- A. Yeah, she still had those three to look after.
- Q. Yeah. And so, you weren't able to go back to your mum's place, so where did you get placed after that?
- A. So, they sent me to a family home in Paeroa. The only good thing about that I was able to learn. I loved – it was awesome, I loved the teachers there.
- Q. Yeah?
- A. They had counsellors there, I learned to smoke cannabis there. Before that I was sniffing glue and then my friend said to me, "Don't sniff glue, just smoke cannabis." But it just saved my life. Because I didn't even know I was suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress.
- Q. So, there were some good things about moving to that home in Paeroa. Who ran the home, was it a family home?
- A. Yeah, we had a Christian couple who had church services on Sunday, so that's what we would be doing every Sunday is doing church services. But one of the boys there was – also raped me as well, so it was like, wow, I just repeated what had just happened two years, three years before that. So, I already had – knowing I had a low self-esteem, I was already broken again.
- Q. Yeah.
- A. And then my counsellor from school said to me that I had to go back to my mum because the boys were starting to fight with me at school. So, there's another part of the violence that went – that I carried around with me, even through Paeroa College. And that's how I ended up back at my mum's, because the counsellor suggested to my social worker that I needed to not go back to Paeroa College anymore because I was fighting with the boys.
- Q. Did your counsellor know about what had happened to you at the home?
- A. No. Nobody knew. But nobody asked, again.
- Q. The same as before?
- A. Yeah. "Why are you fighting? Why have you been so violent?"
- Q. And that, what happened to you, Te Aroha, was that with a boy who was also living at that same family home?
- A. Yeah, same thing.
- Q. And then after that it was just that the fighting and –
- A. Yeah, because I wanted to be able to address it again, I ended up fighting with the boys at school. Yeah, because they think that I deserve whatever it is that – whatever that I say or do to anybody would make them jealous so they would just fight, have a fight with me for some stupid reason. Maybe it was a lack of communication on my part again. Who knows.

- Q.** And at this point, you know, when things were getting out of hand at the school, were you wanting to leave and go back to Auckland?
- A.** Yeah.
- Q.** Yeah?
- A.** I already knew I needed to go back to my mum's.
- Q.** And how old were you around this time?
- A.** So, I was 16 at the time.
- Q.** You were 16, okay.
- A.** Because I went to Tapuwae College and I stayed there – oh, 15, I was, and then I went to Tapuwae College and finished school at 16.
- Q.** And you were back living with your mum when you were at Nga Tapuwae?
- A.** Yeah, I was living back with my mum.
- Q.** What was it like going back to live with your mum?
- A.** It was great, because I missed my mum, I missed my family.
- Q.** And your younger siblings were still staying with her?
- A.** Yeah, they were good sisters. All my sisters were really good, they're well behaved.
- Q.** And in terms of that time, that was when you officially left State care and you would transition back to your mum?
- A.** Yeah, that was my long-term goal but not having the support for me to go through what had happened during the time I was in care, I just addressed all of this nine years ago.
- Q.** Yeah.
- A.** Because I was repeating the same behaviours with everyone I met.
- Q.** And when you were – you did try to seek some help when you were younger from – you went to ACC, is that right?
- A.** Yeah, I've been to, like lots of counsellors. So, when I went to seeking help I would leave – go to Auckland, then I left Auckland, went to Christchurch, left Christchurch and then went back to Auckland. And then stopped doing that now, I'm back in Nelson and just address it, address it.
- Q.** That trauma that you've carried from your time and, you know, you mentioned the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, I just – in terms of how that has impacted you through the rest of your life, could you talk us through a little bit about that, how did it impact the relationships that you went on to have and what you did in your life after care?

- A. So, two of my children's dad, they didn't have any idea what had happened to me before they met me. So, my trust was really – wasn't even trust. So, I was having fights with them, you know, blaming them for everything.
- Q. Do you want to have a little break, Te Aroha?
- A. No.
- Q. No? So, in terms of your – those relationships, obviously you're carrying that with you and not having had a chance to deal with it –
- A. Yeah.
- Q. - then that went on to the sort of relationships you got into it, yeah?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. What about with your own kids, how has what happened to you as a child impacted in terms of your relationships with your kids?
- A. My sons are so supportive. They get me. And they support me. Even my son in Australia says, "Mum, you've got this, you're loved." Same with my son here in Nelson. I'm so loved. And my mokopunas also know that I'm loved by them, no matter what.
- Q. So, you've been able to change that within your whānau?
- A. Yeah. I have to change it. I've got to change it because it starts with me, going back to the real me and who I'm really about and what am I really about. So those are the changes that I've had to make on all levels, spiritually, mentally, physically.
- Q. What was that – how has that journey been for you in terms of making those changes? Where did it start?
- A. When I decided to commit to myself and say no more relationships with males, until I figure out what was really wrong with me.
- Q. So, you've been on your own for some time now?
- A. Yeah, for that reason.
- Q. Yeah.
- A. That was my commitment to myself, because I've already put through a lot of people a lot of pain, unnecessarily pain, because that's all it was.
- Q. In terms of this healing journey that you've been on, it sounds as though you've really had to put that work in yourself, you haven't really had people helping you with that, you had to go out and look for that support yourself?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. What have you – when you started looking and reconnecting, you know, with your Taha Māori, what did you find in terms of that healing journey?

- A. It was already there. I just had to ask for those who need to come into my life to teach me what it is that I've missed out on for a while.
- Q. And did people come into your life that could teach you that?
- A. Yeah, lots, kaiakos, males, females, all of them. I worked off the marae in Manurewa and we had a whare for those who needed healing. So, all the nans there would support me for what I was doing for the community and myself, because it was about myself, and I had lots of teachers from Ngāpuhi, Tūhoe, everybody from all four corners, and then I realised then that's what it was really about, was really connecting properly, that's why I committed myself to go, "Right, this is what it's really about." So therefore, I don't need to be seeking what was outside of me but what was already here in me. And all they did was come along and activate it. I had massive healings, for activations, karakias, because they could see the potential that I couldn't see with my own, I couldn't see it, I was just blinded by what had traumatised me before. So now I already see it for what it is. So, for what it is today, it's such a changing world today that I've got to be there for the next generation, that's what I'm really here for.
- Q. Yeah.
- A. To help the mokopunas get through what's happening now.
- Q. Yeah.
- A. 2021.
- Q. Mmmhmm. And what do you think about that in terms of wanting your experience, you know, to be used so that the same sorts of things aren't happening to other kids?
- A. I would love it for somebody to have this as a case study, the videos, the paperwork, the documentation, all the kōrero that is available for this to be a case study so that it doesn't happen to others, whether they're Māori women or Māori men, it just doesn't happen to them.
- Q. Yeah.
- A. And the tamarikis, the same, it doesn't matter what age they are, just that they get the support and the love that they well deserve, being in – under State care.
- Q. Yeah. And looking back, you know, as your experience as an example, what do you think should have been done differently, what would have made a difference to you?
- A. I would have been different if I had a social worker, counsellor, everything and anything to do with structured rape cases and be able to look at that as in a Tikanga Māori way. But that was not available, so I can only say that now, because it wasn't available then.

- Q.** Yeah. But you can see that if it had have been that could have really changed things for you?
- A.** Massive difference, it would have been a massive difference. Education is the key thing today, and I didn't have any of that, I didn't have an opportunity to it. So, yeah.
- Q.** Yeah, in terms of that, you know, that lost opportunity of not being able to get the education that you should have got when you were a child, like every child should have.
- A.** Yeah.
- Q.** As an adult now looking back, what do you think about that in terms of what could have been?
- A.** I would have been so happy. I would have been so happy to be able to go to university just to learn something that belongs to me, and I'm all just experiencing it now – now I'm in my 50s, I'm just experiencing it now.
- Q.** And that's in terms of the learning that you're doing here?
- A.** Yeah.
- Q.** Can you tell us a little bit about that?
- A.** I'm learning the new words I never got to when I was growing up. My world was black and white because I suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress, but now the words on a piece of paper just colours my world. Now I'm able to express the words properly and understand what it means. That's what's happening now.
- Q.** And that's through doing the literacy courses that they have here in Nelson?
- A.** Yeah, Literacy Aotearoa.
- Q.** Yeah.
- A.** It's my next level of really truly learning about myself.
- Q.** And being able to express yourself?
- A.** Properly, without any misunderstandings. Pause when I say "no" and listen to the other person's reply. To understand why it's said, what does it mean to say "no", because if I said "no" or if I said "yes" it would come out of violence. How dare you say "no". How dare you say "yes".
- Q.** So, as you said, you're now in your 50s learning about these things?
- A.** Yeah.
- Q.** And it's making a difference in terms of the options you'll have going forward in life?
- A.** Yeah. Yes.

- Q.** What has your experience been in terms of work opportunities, given, you know, the impacts that you've had from your time in care? What has work looked like during your life?
- A.** So, all the jobs I've have had have been real physical labour jobs. I've worked in companies where they're doing – to do with food, Sealord's, apple packing, and those sorts of hands-on jobs. But now that I've – I'm doing a course for being a teacher, a kaiako, so now I'm collaborating my story of my upbringing to share with those who've been through the – who have been through these experiences to say to them: It's okay, you can do it, whatever goals you choose in your life you can do it. If I can, you can. Just to let them know that they're supported, and manaakitanga, – all of those become my world –
- Q.** Yeah.
- A.** – permanently, everything becomes my world permanently.
- Q.** Mimm. I'm just conscious of our time and this might be a good –
- A.** Yeah.
- Q.** – time to have a short break, and then we'll come back and have a few more questions after this?
- A.** Yeah.
- Q.** Okay. **[Break taken]**. Kia ora ano, Te Aroha, (hello again, Te Aroha). So we've had our lunch break and we're back, and before lunch you were speaking to us about, you know, the things that you've learned now as an adult and some of the education that you're able to access now, and I'm just looking back in your statement to what you said about some of the things that you're learning and reconnecting, taking you back to things that you learned way back when you were a child with your parents. I just wondered if you wanted to speak to us a little bit about that connection back to when you were a child?
- A.** So, the positives that I got from my dad, the positives and the good that I got from my dad is he – we went on a bush walk into the ngahere and – this was in Rotorua of course. And yeah, he saw some asparagus, which is the pikopiko, and said to me that to eat it, which I did, and it was so yummy, to me it was yummy because that was the first time, I ever got to taste it.

With my mum and with her good and positive that she taught me was the Karaka Berry which you need to boil to take all the poison out of it, but she just said to me that was like a peanut butter to us. So those would be – all of that would be the rongoā Māori (Māori medicine) to me. I had learned that at a young age, and it was my connection back to the rākaus or back to the vegetables that we can find in the ngahere today, still today. So

that was my great introduction to the connections of what it was to be Māori at that age, which was really young. I was like under five years old.

Q. So then when you were learning, some of the courses that you did at Manurewa Marae, it wasn't that you were learning things for the first time?

A. No.

Q. You were remembering back?

A. Yeah, and those were the connections I had already – knew then – that I picked up at that time that this is our natural, normal way of connecting back to what is it that we already know.

Q. Yeah.

A. So that's what I learnt, and the positive was to learn these things that weren't new to me, but it was making things a lot more brighter and understanding of what world I really come from. That world, Te Ao Māori world.

Q. Because other than that brief time you mentioned, doing kapa haka at one of the girls' homes, for the rest of your time in care it doesn't sound like there was much focus on being Māori or connections to Te Ao Māori?

A. No, there was no connection. So, when I decided to commit to myself and to re-learn what is it, I missed out on, that's where I had to fully commit to everything, waiata, rongoā Māori, karakia, all of it. The unseen, the seen, of who we are. So that's what I learned from the Manurewa Marae, and I still hold on to those precious – what I've been taught from those who already seen it, who had it all their lives.

Q. Yeah.

A. So, I hold on to those precious memories of what they've taught me, so, yeah.

Q. And I suppose one other part of that, you mentioned that your father did speak some te reo when you were growing up?

A. Yeah.

Q. How was your experience with te reo in terms of learning throughout childhood, or having any exposure to that?

A. Yeah, well, it was – if it had have been 1983 and I had my son and that was the year that I would have had the opportunities to expose myself to it fully, emerge, emerge. But I was still disconnected from, you know, from – still suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress, even then. Yeah. I missed out a lot then.

Q. Is that something that you're now exploring?

- A. Yeah, I'm now exploring that now because it's a part of who I am, yeah, and I need to explore it now because it's the next generation that needs to know exactly what they need in their lives.
- Q. Te Aroha, I want to move now to asking you about redress or times that you sought accountability for what happened to you when you were a child. And I know that the first time that you did that was – you were still pretty young, only 23, and that was when you made a complaint to ACC about what happened when you were in care. Could you tell us a little bit about how that happened and what that experience was like for you?
- A. Yeah, reaching out for help even at that age just didn't really happen. It didn't really – it didn't really – it fell on deaf ears. I mean, if I had to break the law, then it would have got addressed, but even at that age I didn't think that it would be worth breaking the law again just to be heard, hear my voice.
- Q. And we know from your records that your claim was supported by your social worker at the time?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Did anyone talk to you about whether you wanted to make a complaint to the Police?
- A. No. No, no, there was no help, and where to from here and what to do and how to do it, I was never shown the process or this is the way you've got to do it or this is the way it works, there was no help in that area.
- Q. And in terms of the – there's a mention of the HELP Foundation and some brief counselling, did you find that to be helpful for you?
- A. No. No. It's been no, no, all the way, I can't really explain why either.
- Q. Yeah.
- A. Maybe they just didn't have the professional stuff happening then than what they are now today. It's all there available, the wraparound services are available now, but during the 80s, 70s, there was no services then, so ...
- Q. And then more recently when you were still living in Auckland, was the time that you got in touch with the Ministry of Social Development –
- A. Yeah.
- Q. – in terms of wanting to talk to them?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. So how did that come about?
- A. I decided then to commit to myself because I was too – I had to stop repeating my behaviours, my negative behaviours, and I already knew that I needed to get in touch, to

officially get in touch with the Ministry of Social Development, because then my records come up again, and that's when I know I get heard. When I really start looking into what the Ministry of Development really do, supposed to be doing, because it's their job –

Q. Yeah.

A. – that's when I knew, oh, this is the people I need to really, really address what it is that's been affecting my life.

Q. And so, what was the process that they had? How did it go?

A. Yeah, I went in there, gave them my pepeha and then sat down and then they just said okay, you know, they looked up my files and I just told them that I wanted them to look at what it is that, you know, go right beneath, underneath all the documentation and look at my psychological stuff, but that didn't happen, so what they did was just, you know, saw me a couple of times and then said, right, here's like money to help fix whatever pain that you went through, and that was it. There was no follow-up on, you know, you need professional – an assessment, this, this, this, this and all, you know. Yeah, it never, never happened.

Q. And in terms of any sort of cultural process or following tikanga, did they know much about that?

A. No.

Q. Were they Māori staff members?

A. No, they were not Māori's, they were just doing their job, Pākehā doing their job.

Q. And did they explain to you how they had got to the number that they gave, the compensation?

A. No, no, no explanation.

Q. And we've seen in the file that the Ministry accepted your claim in terms of the sexual abuse by the two boys at the first family home, and also the sexual abuse by the other boy at the Paeroa family home, from the notes that they have on their site and also one of those boys went on to be arrested for other similar offences. What did you think when you heard from them that they were accepting what you were saying? How did that make you feel?

A. Man, I was shocked. I was really shocked. I was like, what? I couldn't believe it. I was like, wow. What? Yeah.

Q. And they gave you a – I think, a letter of apology and the payment?

A. Yeah, it was a letter of apology and a payment, but there was – that was just the surface stuff. To me, when that was acknowledged then it was just the surface stuff, it's the stuff

that's underneath that that I wanted to be readdressed. And to do it the Tikanga Māori way would have been better.

Q. Yeah.

A. But it's never going to happen that way and it's just where our country is at the moment. Yeah, there's a lot of people suffering out there, so you know, I'm just one of those voices that are trying to help those move through these different ways and processes that's happening now.

Q. Because what happened with you, that didn't resolve things for you, did it?

A. No, no. I'm still going through what I am going through psychologically today and I'm trying to change it ever so slightly, whatever it is I need to change, I'm doing it the way I know how. And that's all a part of connecting back to the ngahere, Tangaroa, back to mother earth, sky father, back to Te Ao Māori, where I was supposed to be before that middle part of my life was – had happened.

Q. Mmm. Let's just take a little pause there.

A. Yeah. **[Break taken]**.

Q. So, your experience shows us in many ways how things shouldn't be done.

A. Yeah.

Q. What is your message you want to send in terms of how things should be changed for the future?

A. I am just so – I appreciate the time that I'm able to share my story, but my wero back to the Commissioners who are looking at everybody's statements is that if you need to get back to me and need to follow up on my statements and if there are any changes, just get back to me, because I'm willing to, able to help see what that structure looks like and how it can work for, not just myself, but others who have already been through it.

Q. And what would you like to see come out of this Royal Commission process? What changes do you want to see to the system?

A. So, if I'm going to get a case study, I'm sure, you know, the other 20 others or 19 others would like to have a case study, because I'm sure – their statements are more, yeah, they've gone through a lot as well, you know, that might have been more harsher than what I've been through, but yeah, I'm sure they'd be able to contribute to it as well. So let not my statement be the last; let others also have case studies for themselves as well, if they allow it, if they allow it.

Q. And in terms of finishing up our kōrero today, Te Aroha, is there anything else that you wanted to share or say before we come to the end?

A. Yes, I'd like to say hello to Paul because Paul knows me and this is my second time, my statement that I have had. So, he already will know me, what I'm going through now. So yeah, he's always gone back to the people, to taniwha, and that was the Tainui kōrero that we had when I last spoke to him. So, yeah.

Q. Yes, that's our Commissioner Paul, isn't it?

A. Yeah, Commissioner Paul. So, he had other, yeah, he had other – because he was blind, but he also had, you know, you hear with your ears, you see with your eyes, with your mouth, so those were the other gifts he had. So yeah, kia ora to Paul. Yes, and thank you for having me.

Q. And thank you for your time today in terms of doing this recording, and we're hoping that we will also have you at the hearing when we get to it in March next year.

A. Yeah, yeah. So, I'm looking forward to it actually, I'm excited, yeah.

Q. He mihi ana ki a koe, Te Aroha (I would like to acknowledge you, Te Aroha, thank you). Thank you for your time today, we will finish up here.”

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Ngā mihi Ms Knox. So right now, I understand you're happy for Commissioners to ask questions?

A. Yes.

Q. That's wonderful, okay, so I'm going to start by asking whether Commissioner Shaw has any pātai for you?

COMMISSIONER SHAW: Kia ora Te Aroha.

A. Kia ora.

Q. Kia ora. I don't have any questions; I think you have given your account so wonderfully. First of all, to Paul and then being so generous with offering to come back and do it again for this very public hearing. I just want to acknowledge that, acknowledge your whakapapa on both sides, and acknowledge that you've taken a brave and long journey to get to where you have today, and I truly admire the fact that that broken child has become such a powerful and determined woman to go ahead in Te Ao Māori. So tēnei te mihi ki a koe (this is my very heartfelt thanks to you).

A. Kia ora Coral.

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Thank you Commissioner Shaw. I also want to just quickly say ngā mihi, thank you for standing in your mana, you're a wahine toa (a heroine) and speaking your truth for those who, as you say in your statement, the girls that haven't had the opportunity to do so.

I do have one pātai for you if that's all right. It's with regards to – in your statement you say the Commission needs to focus on mana wāhine. I was wondering if you have any further thoughts or comments that you want to make around that for us?

A. Yes, I have mana wāhine for our women, it's very – we all come from lived experience, we should be able to share those stories with each other. That makes us stronger to move forward in our lives. That's all I want, is to move forward. So kia ora, thank you for that question.

Q. Thank you whaea. I am going to actually pass now to Commissioner Gibson, because he really was very keen to thank you today. Kei a koe Commissioner Gibson (over to you Commissioner Gibson).

COMMISSIONER GIBSON: Kia ora Te Aroha. First, thank you for your thanks. As a Pākehā when I hear the use of te reo used inappropriately or as a sort of a band aid over something that doesn't change, what I hold on to is you, your name, your understanding of your name and going back to the session, what I learned from you and how we finished off with a waiata then. So kia ora to that first little bit of a gift.

I did have, before I'd like to fully thank you, a bit of a question, a bit of a reflection. Your mother, for her mental wellbeing, spent time in Tokanui. There are times things were done for your wellbeing, use of counsellors, HELP Foundation, perhaps social development, and there are other times when you were at the Manurewa Marae and there was more of a focus on karakia, tikanga, went through the ngahere. Do you want to say more about the contrast between what was offered to you when you were younger, to your mother and to yourself in Te Ao Māori?

A. Oh, what was the question again, sorry, I didn't hear it, sorry Paul.

Q. What your mother was offered when she was not well, she ended up in Tokanui and medicated.

A. Yes.

Q. And my sense is that didn't help her, it didn't aid her ability to be a mother, to be a nan or anything like that, and you experienced something different through Manurewa Marae. What should your mother, what should have been available to your mother do you think?

A. Yeah, just having exactly what I was experiencing, the reconnections back to the Ngāpuhi side, with rongoā Māori, even though she was already experienced in rongoā Māori, but she just didn't have the support to bring six of us up on her own. So, the male support wasn't there. And she was a Christian lady, who found that church was the only place to bring us up. And as hard as she tried, we had to find our own way in life with her support in the

way she could. She was never a perfect mother, and so was my dad, they were never perfect parents. There are no perfect parents, so I just have to come to the realisation of it and help myself move on from it. So hopefully that's answered your question, Paul. Sorry, I didn't hear you the first time.

Q. Kia ora, apologies. My privilege to thank you. Thank you for your tears, the tears that fall on Taupiri fall on kings and queens, they run to the Waikato River, passing many taniwha there. You descend from taniwha on both sides, you have that unique combination of strength of those, the wisdom of kings and queens, and you yourself present more than anyone, you are purapura ora (a survivor), you are the seed born of greatness that cannot be crushed. You've come to us and shared the horrific tale of much of your life. The failures of the system, the exposure to rapes, abuse, racism in the system, a lack of oversight and here you are today sharing your story, sharing what you've learned.

Thank you for also taking us through the walk in the ngahere through the bush to a better place, and we hope, through what we've learned from you, we know through what we've learned from you, there will be more who can take that walk as well. And there are many others like you who are the purapura, the seeds that cannot be crushed. Thank you for your sharing.

A. Kia ora Paul, thank you.

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Yes, thank you Commissioner Gibson. I just also want to say thank you so much, so much for all of your courage today whaea. We would like to sing a waiata for you now and I'm going to pass over to Ms Spelman to lead that. (Waiata Te Aroha love, faith, peace, binds us all. It is love, faith, peace and goodwill that binds us all).

MS SPELMAN: Tēnā ano Te Aroha (greetings again and thank you once again Te Aroha), thank you again.

Madam Chair, that's the end of this session. I know that we are running a little behind time, but we do have our next session starting at 2.15pm, so if we could take just a shorter 30minute break now and come back again at 2.15pm.

COMMISSIONER STEENSON: Thank you, ae, we'll resume from lunch at 2.15pm, thank you.

Lunch adjournment from 1.46 pm to 2.15 pm