

Brief of Evidence of Jane Alison Green

Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care and Faith Based Institutions

Contextual Hearing 29 October to 8 November 2019

‘Te kuaka marangaranga, kotahi manu i tau ki te tahuna: tau atu, tau ra¹’

Ko wai ahau | Introduction

1. My name is Jane Alison Green; my preferred name is Alison.
2. My affiliations are: Ngāti Awa (Ngāti Pūkeko) from Whakatāne, Ngāti Ranginui (Ngāitamarawaho) from Tauranga, Ngaiterangi from Tauranga, and Ngāti Pūkenga from Manaia. I am the mother of three grown children, two of whom have recently had their first babies. I am raising my 14-year old mokopuna who is the second child of one of my nieces. Prior to him coming to live with me, the Department of Child, Youth and Family removed my mokopuna from my niece and his father when he was two years old and placed him with three lots of caregivers.
3. I have a PhD (2018) in Maori and Indigenous Development from the University of Waikato. My doctoral research compared Indigenous knowledges in health legislation in Aotearoa New Zealand and Saskatchewan, Canada. In April 2019, I won the inaugural international Indigenous Misiweskamik Post-Doctoral Fellowship to the University of Saskatchewan. My post-doctoral research compares legislation and policy for the removal of Indigenous children from families in Aotearoa New Zealand and Canada.
4. I am the chair of the Ngāti Awa Community Development Trust for Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa for whom I periodically undertake voluntary work. In 2007, I won a University of Waikato scholarship to produce a report on the co-production of social policy for the Rūnanga. In 2018, I produced a peer-reviewed report for Ngāti Awa Group Holdings Ltd titled ‘Reducing offending, victimisation and traffic accidents involving Maori in the Eastern Bay of Plenty’.
5. I am also a party to a claim currently before the Waitangi Tribunal WAI 2494, which is joined with WAI 2615 and 2619 regarding Maori in State Care. I am a party to that claim because my whānau has experienced three generations of the removal of our children. Whānau vulnerability to child removal and the practice of removing Māori children and babies is enabled by assimilative Crown legislation, policies and practices and supported by the ahistorical and racist attitudes of New Zealand’s socio-economic systems.

¹ In the context of this Brief of Evidence, the whakataukī likens the kuaka in flight and landing, one-by-one, on sandbars to whānau taking a stand against government removal of Māori children. A handful of whānau are voicing their opposition right now, but they will be joined by more.

1958 - My removal

6. I am the eldest of seven children of Peter Mason of Ngāti Awa (hapū of Ngāti Pūkeko) and Ngāti Ranginui (hapū of Ngāitamarawaho) and I was removed from my whānau under the Adoption Act 1955 and the policy and practice of closed adoption. Born in 1958, I was removed soon after birth and raised by Pākehā parents. As a consequence of closed adoption, I was separated from my whānau, whakapapa and whenua for nearly three decades.
7. My father and mother met at a dance in Tauranga where he was playing in a band. My Pākehā mother was a qualified nurse and, with her girlfriends, attended the dance. My father and mother dated for about eight months at which point unbeknown to my father, she became pregnant with me and returned to Auckland to her parents. She gave birth to me, unattended, in a hallway outside the kitchen area of a maternity home for married mothers. She worked at the maternity home in return for board, meals and my adoption. The nursing home, with the Department of Social Welfare, arranged the adoption.
8. My mother told me she was persuaded by a social worker from the Department of Social Welfare that as a half-caste child my life outcomes would be better if I were adopted out of my whānau and raised as a Pākehā New Zealander. My adoptive Pākehā parents told me that a social worker from the Department of Social Welfare told them that the colour of my skin was due to the fact of my having 'a touch of Spanish blood'. They were encouraged to tell me that I had Spanish heritage and that I was adopted because my mother and father did not want me.
9. Growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand without whakapapa, whenua and whānau was traumatic, painful, and at times accompanied by feelings of low self-worth. Although the Adult Adoption Information Act 1985 provided a mechanism for me to locate my father's whānau and build relationships, the time that I could have spent with whānau could not be regained.
10. When I was a student at Victoria University in 1979, Professor Hirini Moko Mead and his wife June (now deceased) generously offered to whāngai me so that I could develop a Māori sense of belonging that closed adoption had prevented. Although I did not accept the offer, nonetheless their care and support was important to my Māori sense of self-worth.
11. As a consequence of the Adult Adoption Information Act, I was able to trace my Pākehā mother and in 1989 she told me my Māori father's name and where he was from. Shortly afterwards I phoned Professor Mead to ask if he knew the Mason whānau from Tauranga. Professor Mead laughed and said that I should contact Joe Mason whose office at the Ngāti Awa Trust Board was right next to his! When I visited Joe Mason he told me that the Masons in Tauranga were the same Masons as in Whakatāne and that he and I were closely related. His grandmother was Ngāitamarawaho and he recalled my father as a child when, as a teacher trainee, he'd stayed with my grandmother and grandfather in Tauranga. Later that year I met my father's sisters and brother who were living in Tauranga, and then my brothers and sisters who were living in Wellington. I have spent the last 30 years building my relationships with my Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Ranginui whānau; as much for my own wellbeing as for that of my children and theirs.

Whakapapa

12. I and my six sisters and brothers descend from well-known and respected tupuna of Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Ranginui. My great great grandfather is Pouawhā Meihana (1860 – 1925) and his statue stands at our marae 'Pūkeko' at Poroporo, Whakatane. Pouawha's account of hapū and whānau whakapapa to land blocks are a feature of the Native Land Court Minute Books for the Whakatāne region. My great great great great grandmother Te Monotahuna (1798 – 1900) of Tauranga Moana was an acclaimed composer of waiata. She composed a waiata to celebrate the immense joy that her daughter Matatu Monotahuna (1824 – 1896) brought her. To this day, the waiata is widely sung by Ngāti Ranginui.
13. My whānau descent to Ngāti Ranginui and in particular Ngāitamarawaho is from Te Monotahuna, then to her daughter Matatu Monotahuna. Matatu was born in Tauranga in 1824 and, with Te Rauhea Paraone Koikoi, had 9 children including Ngawhetu Miria Paraone. Ngawhetu, with Mikaere Taoki from Ngāti Pūkenga in Manaia, had 13 children, the eldest of whom was Ngawaimatao Mikaere. Ngaiwaimatao, with Nepia Te Atatu Kohu, had my great grandmother Te Kahupine Nepia. Te Kahupine and Piua Te Pua Tukaokao had Te Piwa (Iwa) Tukaokao who, with my grandfather Louis Tamati Mason from Ngāti Pūkeko, had my father Peter Mason. This whakapapa was given to me by my father's youngest sister Te Iwi Pearson (nee Mason).
14. My descent to Ngāti Awa and in particular Ngāti Pūkeko is from Te Wharetapu who had Whakamomoke, who had Te Waha Atu, who with Makoha had Te Wao Koraurau. Te Wao Koraurau with Te Koiki had Hauruia who with Kokoti had Kaperiera Te Meihana Koata who, with Horiaana, had Pouawha Meihana. Pouawha Meihana with Te Hihiri (Ngāti Hokopu) had Tamati Meihana who, with Mauhuhi Marupo from Ngai Taiwhakaea in Whakatane and Ngāpuhi at Oromahoe, had my grandfather Louis (Hauruia) Tamati Mason. Louis Mason, with Te Iwa Tukaokao, had my father Peter Mason. My great grandmother Te Kahupine Nepia was related to Ngāti Awa through her father Nepia Te Atatu Kohu whose father was Te Atatu Whakaturou, whose own father was Matiu Taiahiahi who was the younger brother of Hauruia. This whakapapa was given to me by my grand-uncle Joe Mason. Koro Joe's father was Mataika, and Mataika's father was Hone Meihana, younger brother of Pouawha Meihana. Koro Joe's grandmother Hana Rewi is from Ngāitamarawaho. Joe Mason is an expert on the whakapapa of Ngāti Pūkeko in particular, and more generally, the whakapapa of Ngāti Awa.

Colonisation

15. How was it that in the space of three generations, government agencies such as Oranga Tamariki, its predecessor Child, Youth and Family Services, and the Departments of Social Welfare and Māori Affairs, saw fit to be party to removing descendants of respected tupuna of Ngāti Ranginui and Ngāti Awa?
16. The Waitangi Tribunal's Tauranga Moana (1997) and Ngāti Awa (1999) reports describe the extent to which governments breached the Treaty of Waitangi and usurped tribal authority, confiscating and then facilitating the alienation of tribal lands and resources. Usurping whānau authority by removing children is, I allege, an extension of government breaches of the Treaty.
17. Colonising legislation, policies and practices driven by racism have pervaded Aotearoa since the Treaty. Taken together, these appear to have caused some Māori families to be more vulnerable than others to child removal. My whānau who are descendants of my father Peter

Mason (1938-1970), is one such whānau. It is acknowledged by governments that the usurpation of iwi and hapū authority and separating collective groupings from land and other vital resources has had far-reaching consequences for Māori. What is not well documented is an account of the relationship between these far-reaching consequences of colonisation and the vulnerability of some whānau to child removal. In my own whānau there are clues; however, research into these matters is overdue.

18. This notwithstanding, I have reviewed whānau events of the past 75 years based upon stories told to me by my fathers' sisters, and relevant minutes of the Māori Land Court and have identified factors that I would argue have created our whānau vulnerability to child removal.
19. The sudden and early deaths of my grandfather Louis Tamati Mason (1945, aged 27 years), my grandmother Te Iwa Tukaokao (1958, aged 39 years), and my father (1970, aged 32 years) weakened our relationship to whakapapa, whenua and whānau. Specifically, after my grandfather Louis Tamati Mason died, the knowledge of whakapapa, our interests in the Matahina, Omataroa, Rangitikei, Rurima, Taiwhakaea, Waimana, Waiohau and Whakapaupakihi land blocks, and crucial relationships with our Ngāti Pūkeko and Ngāti Awa whānau dramatically decreased. When my father died and my siblings and their mother moved to Wainuiomata for work, the knowledge of whakapapa, our interests in the Hairini, Huria, Manaia, Matapihi, Paengaroa, Pakikaitutu, Taiwhakaea and Tuhua land blocks and our relationships with Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāitamarawaho, Ngai Te Rangi and Ngāti Pūkenga were severely weakened.
20. Added to weakened knowledge and lived experience of whakapapa, whenua, and whānau, the education system failed five out of six of my siblings. Raised away from iwi and hapū and without stable employment, exemplary whānau role models and the guidance of older, respected whānau members, the outcome was poverty, abuse, addiction and gang affiliation. On the surface of it, these appear to be the far-reaching consequences of colonisation AND common antecedents to government removal of children from our whānau.
21. My father Peter (1938 – 1970) was the eldest of Louis Tamati Mason (Ngāti Pūkeko) and Te Iwa Tukaokao's (Ngāitamarawaho) four children. He was born at my great great grandfather Pouawha Meihana's home on Ngāti Pūkeko and Ngāti Hokupū lands next to Wairaka Marae, Whakatāne. The following year, my grandmother Te Iwa Tukaokao gave birth to a second child who died shortly after birth. My grandmother and grandfather took the baby's body to my grandmother's people at Huria, Tauranga, and it was there that my father and his younger brother and sisters grew up. After my grandfather died in 1945, my grandmother Te Iwa Tukaokao travelled to Whakatāne to the Land Court and transferred succession of her husband Louis Tamati Mason's land interests to my father and his siblings. There is no record in Māori Land Court or land block trust minutes of involvement by my father and his siblings in the administration of land blocks through Louis Tamati Mason's interests, Pouawha Meihana's interests and Mauhuhi Marupo's interests.
22. In April 1970 my father died suddenly as a result of rugby-induced head trauma. He was 32 years old, a manual labourer, and he died at Auckland Hospital. I was 12 years old, I had a Māori Affairs scholarship and was a boarder at Epsom Girls Grammar School in Auckland. I didn't know his name or that he'd died a few kilometres away but I felt his passing.

23. My aunties described my father as a bright student who was sent away to Hato Petera boarding school in Auckland in 1954 by their grandmother Te Kahupine Nepia. The expectation of my great grandmother was that as the eldest, the whānau and hapū would benefit from my father having a good education. Ngāitamarawaho is a hapū that has long-valued education. Te Kahupine who largely raised my father and two of his three siblings, was immensely proud of her relation Maharaiā Winiata of Ngāitamarawaho. Maharaiā was the first Māori to graduate in 1952 with a PhD. It is possible that Te Kahupine had similar aspirations for my father. However, in 1955 after a year of paying boarding school fees, Te Kahupine could no longer afford for my father to continue at Hato Petera in Auckland so he returned to Tauranga to finish his schooling.
24. Ngāitamarawaho and the peoples of Ngāti Ranginui were hit hard by the confiscation of tribal land and subjugation of rangatiratanga from the time of the Treaty of Waitangi onwards. In 1891, Pope described the lands of Ngāitamarawaho as ‘...little in quantity and poor in quality...These Natives live a miserable existence at Huria, endeavouring to get some return from their ungrateful glebe, or working precariously for neighbouring Europeans...or wearing out their constitutions on the gumfields’ (Waitangi Tribunal, 2004, p. 359). Today, the papakāinga at Huria and Te Reti where some of my Ngāitamarawaho whānau members still live, are tiny areas of land, reduced in size by national and Tauranga City Council road and housing legislation and by-laws.
25. Ngāti Pūkeko and the peoples of Ngāti Awa suffered as a result of baseless accusations of rebellion that justified the government’s blanket confiscation of their lands and subjugation of traditional law and authority. In short, Ngāti Awa’s status and future as a tribal people was undermined by the government (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999, pp. 63 - 92). The flow-on effect of confiscation and alienation was insufficient land of suitable quality to sustain whānau, arguments among whānau about customary entitlements, migration to cities for work, and poverty. Reporting on the situation faced by Ngāti Awa, the Tribunal wrote ‘There is nothing in the record to satisfy us that the Government complied with even minimal protective standards to maintain its fiduciary obligations to Māori people. On the contrary, the record points to a Government plan to reduce the effectiveness of tribal operations and to acquire land for European settlement’ (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999, p. 129).

1970s - Removal of my siblings

26. Separated from the protective influence of whānau in Tauranga and Whakatane, my brothers and sisters did not benefit from the ‘pavlova paradise’ as New Zealand was called in the 1970s (Mitchell, 1972, Christchurch). The welfare state, full employment and post-war prosperity largely benefitted Pākehā New Zealanders. Ironically it was during these years when New Zealand was prospering that my brothers and sisters were removed for periods of time from our whānau. Rather than removal through the Adoption Act 1955, I understand that their removals were facilitated by the Maori Welfare Act 1962 and the Department of Social Welfare Act 1971.
27. According to a niece, two of my sisters spent time in what in the 1970s were called girls homes - specifically Miramar Girls Home in Wellington - and at least one brother spent time in foster care. Growing up in Wellington, my sisters and brothers are all proud to be Māori although their knowledge of the specifics of whakapapa, whenua and whānau is slim. For some of my

brothers and sisters who were marginalised from the benefits of the 'pavlova paradise', the culture and relationships formed within the gangs and prisons became a constant in their lives and the lives of their children.

28. Today I have one sister in prison for methamphetamine-related assault, and a brother who has been in prison most of his adult life. My sister is, at her core, a very good person. However, the trauma of her own childhood, her grief at the death of her own daughter combined with poverty and addiction, were a fatal combination. My youngest brother has spent most of his adult life in prison and I have only met him once. He has three lovely daughters who, like my brother, grew up in the care of others.

1988 - Puao-Te-Ata-Tu

29. In 1986, the *Puao-Te-Ata-Tu* report was released. John Rangihau was the Chairman of the Committee that wrote the report and I had been at Victoria University with two of John Rangihau's daughters. I first read the report in about 1989 after I had been asked by Ngā Kaiwhakamarama i Te Ture in Wellington (Wellington Māori Legal Service) to provide an affidavit to support Billie Tait-Jones' (deceased) application for shared custody of her grandchild. Briefly, Billie's son had had a child with a Pākehā woman and when the couple separated the young woman's parents sought to adopt their grandchild. Billie was concerned that closed adoption would sever her grandchild from Billie and her whānau. My affidavit drew upon my experience of closed adoption and separation from whakapapa, whenua and whānau to support Billie's request to share custody of her grandchild with her daughter-in-law's family. Te Puao-Te-Ata-Tu notes that placements for Māori children should be made with regard to the views of their hapū, not just the views of birthparents, and 'such an approach should also apply to adoption, by way of an amendment to the Adoption Act 1955' (Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Māori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare, 1986, Wellington). Current adoption legislation does not comply with Puao-Te-Ata-Tu.
30. In 1992, a colleague and I researched and wrote 'Te murunga tamariki ki kainga tauhou: Māori children in out-of-family care' which was the Māori section of a report for the Human Rights Commission entitled 'Who cares for the kids? A study of children and young people in out-of-family care'. When consulting with Māori, hui participants told us they '...were concerned that it appeared that Puao-Te-Ata-Tu had disappeared from the corporate plan of DSW. This, it was felt, had resulted in a lack of commitment by DSW to any real bicultural development. Instead, a superficial involvement in such development exists, one that generated more negative than positive responses'. One participant told us 'Māori concepts like aroha have been hijacked by DSW, trivialised, and then used against us' (Human Rights Commission, 1992, p. 91).
31. I agree that the Puao-Te-Ata-Tu report was sidelined by government after it was launched. Reflecting on my experience of closed adoption and my siblings' experiences of removal from whānau, Recommendations 1, 2 and 13 of Puao-Te-Ata-Tu focus on systemic changes. Had these recommendations been adopted by government, the antecedents to child removal - racism, poverty, the subjugation of tikanga and te reo Māori, gangs and addiction - might not have created a vulnerability to child removal that some of my nieces, nephews and mokopuna are experiencing right now.
32. Further, I posit that the Puao-Te-Ata-Tu report did not have a material effect on the development of current legislation for the care and protection of Māori children.

Recommendation 4 (c) specifically advocated for future reviews of the Children and Young Persons Act to proceed with regard to key principles (i) to (iiiv) that speak to the centrality of a child's hapū to their wellbeing, and the responsibility of the hapū for that child's wellbeing. My hapū were not consulted about my wellbeing at the time that I was placed for adoption, nor were the hapū of my sisters and brothers and my nieces and nephews when decisions were made as to their removal.

33. Last, current legislation and legislation at the time of Puaoteata (Children and Young Persons Act 1974) approaches the care and protection of Māori children through the lens of what the report describes as 'the welfare of the child shall be regarded as the first and paramount consideration' (Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Māori perspective for the Department of Social Welfare, 1986, p.29). Puaoteata, by comparison, speaks to the right of hapū and whānau in that 'The Māori child is not to be viewed in isolation, even as part of nuclear family, but as a member of a wider kin group or hapū community that has traditionally exercised responsibility for a child's care and placement. The technique, in the Committee's opinion, must be to reaffirm the hapū bonds and capitalise on the traditional strengths of the wider group' (Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Māori perspective for the Department of Social Welfare, 1986, p.29).

1990s Removal of my nieces and nephews

34. A number of my nieces and nephews have been removed from the care of my sisters and brothers. One of my nieces remembers attending meetings in Porirua in the early 1990s with lawyers, social workers and the New Zealand Police. At the meeting, my niece and her siblings had to answer questions and draw pictures depicting their home life and the relationships they had with the adults in their lives. Later, she and a younger sister were removed to a CYFS-approved caregiver in Titahi Bay where they lived in a room with an observation port through which the carer watched them.
35. In the early 1990s some of my nieces lived in Hamilton with their children and, at times, up to eighteen whānau members. According to a niece, they requested help to obtain a house big enough for the whānau. The outcome of that request was that, over a period of time, six children were removed from their care. Removal was enabled by the Children Young Persons and their Families (CYFS) Act 1989 and no legal advice, support, or advocacy was provided to help them navigate CYFS-related policies and processes in ways that would maintain parental, whānau and hapu roles and responsibilities for the children.
36. Instead, CYFS alleged that my nieces' children were in need of care and protection due to what social workers described as family violence, overcrowding and unkempt living conditions. Rather than providing support to address longstanding issues associated with movement to cities for work, separation from respected hapū and whānau members, poverty and addiction, CYFS maintained the children would be better off being raised by other people. CYFS social workers said to one of my nieces, words to the effect that they had to remove the children because Māori children were being murdered in New Zealand and had my nieces not seen these events on television?
37. In my assessment, social worker practice was, in this instance, influenced by racist media and a public discourse about child protection that sought to vilify Māori. In the absence of legislation and policy that recognised and gave practical effect to the centrality of hapū and

whānau in decision-making regarding Māori children (i.e. Puao-Te-Ata-Tu) the decision to remove my niece's children was made by CYFS. CYFS made an erroneous association between long-term effects of colonisation and problems of poverty affecting my niece's whānau, and imminent child abuse.

Removal of my grandchildren

38. One of my nieces had three boys removed from her care (a 6-week old baby, a 2-year-old and a 4-year-old). Little effort was made by CYFS and associated agencies to support that particular niece to maintain her relationship with the boys, and the relationship between the boys and their respective hapū. Instead, interim orders became permanent orders, supervised access never happened, phone calls dwindled to letters, and eventually all contact ceased. For more than a decade the boys lived a thousand or so kilometres from their mother and father, both of whom struggled with poverty, inadequate housing, violence, self-medication with drugs and alcohol, trauma from their respective childhoods, and the impact of the removal of their boys.
39. During the decade when the boys were in care, my niece was the recipient of false and misleading information about the wellbeing of her boys. CYFS reported that the boys were thriving, yet the boys described being hit and pitted against each other by caregivers. They were told that they were removed because their parents did not want them, that their parents abandoned them on a pool table. The quality of some CYFS approved caregivers that the boys were placed with was unjustifiable.
40. Some caregivers were positive toward the boys when they were in public places, yet negative and abusive in private. Similarly, some caregiver homes were clean and tidy when inspected, but for the most part these homes were unkempt; ironic, given the reasons CYFS cited for uplift in the first place.
41. In 2018, my niece was contacted by an Oranga Tamariki support worker. This was initiated by the support worker via Facebook. She was advised that the CYFS file recorded her as being unfindable and not wanting care of the two boys. Around this time, Oranga Tamariki had approved moving the boys to live with two sisters (non-whānau) in Dunedin. The move to Dunedin was proposed as a solution to the boys running away from caregivers in Ashburton. The move was justified on the basis that the two sisters did not have criminal convictions and each boy could have his own "mother". My niece asked for her boys, and in September 2018 Oranga Tamariki agreed that two of three boys would be returned to her care in Tauranga. When two of the boys were returned they were aged 15 years and 13 years old (I would add neither boy had involvement with Youth Justice).
42. Following the boys return to their mother in October 2018 up until March 2019, Oranga Tamariki did not provide the kind of sustained, positive and strength-based support that my niece required to build new relationships with her estranged teenage boys and engage with whānau and hapū. My niece experienced trauma during her own childhood, and was further traumatised when her boys were removed in infancy, yet the Oranga Tamariki social worker saw fit to visit her for five minutes once or twice over a four-month period. No advocacy or support was provided, particularly with regard to addiction services and support to engage with whānau and hapū, both of which were required to enable a successful transition and ongoing whānau wellbeing.

43. Then in March 2019, Oranga Tamariki embarked on a heavy-handed and abusive campaign to once again remove the boys from my niece's care. The issues were non-compliance with the FGC plan, non-attendance at school, an unaddressed addiction, and poor care of her children. From my perspective, my niece and her boys required intensive support until such time as substantive trauma-related addiction issues could be addressed. In mid April, I supported my niece and attended meetings with her and Oranga Tamariki. However, a week later, the Oranga Tamariki Social Worker accompanied by the NZ Police removed my niece's 15-year-old and took him to a caregiver on the North Shore Auckland, with people he had never met and to a place he had never been before. In the meantime, the 13-year-old went into hiding from the Oranga Tamariki and the Police.
44. Just three days later, the 15-year-old ran away from the North Shore Caregiver and made his way to his mother in Hamilton. Shortly after, the 13-year-old was located and reunited with his mother and brothers and I brought my niece and boys together to live at Te Whakaruruhau – Waikato Women's Refuge where they received 24hr wraparound support. By early May 2019, the boys were enrolled in a local college, sport and visits to their hapū lands.
45. As could be expected, the journey to whānau wellbeing is not smooth or easy. The problem of the subjugation of whakapapa, whenua and whānau had its origins in the colonial ideology of European superiority that was brought to Aotearoa in the 1800s. Ngāti Ranginui and Ngāti Awa suffered immense trauma as a result of legislation for the confiscation of land and resources, and suppression of self-governing authority from the 1800s onwards. For the descendants of Peter Mason, that trauma arising from the separation from whakapapa, whenua and whānau was intensified in 1945 with the sudden death of my grandfather Louis Tamati Mason, the sudden death of my father in 1970, and the relocation of my siblings to Wainuiomata where they were without the support and safety of hapū and whānau. I and my siblings endured further trauma as a consequence of legislation that removed us for periods of time from our whānau, and we live with the impact of that trauma. Gangs, incarceration, and abuse are the correlates of being removed, and drugs and alcohol are what some whānau members use to address their trauma. The removal by Oranga Tamariki - formerly the Children, Young Persons and Families Services and the Department of Social Welfare - of our children and our mokopuna adds to the trauma that we already carry.
46. The trauma we are carrying is killing us. I agreed to give evidence at this hearing because I want my whānau to have better lives, to be respected as the young people they are, and the elders they will be. Hardly a day goes by when I'm not reminded of the trauma we live. I can see it in my grandson who was separated from whakapapa, whenua and whānau at 2 years old, who daily struggles within himself and struggles with the world. I can feel it in the Minute Books from the 1880s when I read the evidence that my tupuna Pouawha Meihana and others gave in the Native Land Courts. Separation from whakapapa, whenua and whānau must stop. Puao-Te-Ata-Tu is a rich source of knowledge and a guide to repealing current legislation and policies in favour of the rangatiratanga of iwi, hapū, whānau and the descendants of Peter Mason. Nei rā te mihi.