

Witness Name: Roy Joseph Takiaho

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ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF ROY JOSEPH TAKIAHO

I, Roy Joseph Takiaho, say as follows: -

Introduction

- 1 My name is Roy Joseph Takiaho.
- 2 My date of birth is 1972.
- 3 I am studying psychology at the Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTERC).

Who I am

- 4 I am Māori. I am of Ngāpuhi descent, from the far North.
- 5 I was born in Auckland.

My experience of being in care and the abuse and/or neglect I suffered there

- 6 I became a state ward when I was two years old.
- 7 My father was always in and out of jail. Mum wasn't able to cope with four children when my father wasn't really there.
- 8 Three of my siblings were taken into care at the same time as me, but they were back at home within months.

- 9 The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) decided that I should not be placed back with my parents, due to the overload for my mother. After a year of my being in care, my parents tried to get me back but DSW decided it wasn't right.
- 10 Mum and Dad fought hard to get me back with the help of the family. But DSW thought I would be better with the placement they had put me with.

GRO-B-92 *Family*

- 11 I was placed with a Pakeha family in West Auckland. I was there for the majority of my young life, from two to twelve years old.
- 12 My other siblings weren't placed with me at the GRO-B-92 family. Two of my brothers ended up at The Nest which was run by the Salvation Army.
- 13 I went to New Windsor Primary, Wesley Intermediate and Avondale College while I was living there.
- 14 I had contact with whānau once during the ten years I lived there. The visit with my family was when I was 8 or 9 years old. DSW set it up. I didn't feel like it was my family. I wasn't accepted by my brothers at the time. But on the day, I had a good time. I felt like I was meeting my family for the first time. I wasn't going to be beaten up or abused by them. But there was a separation between my family and myself. After the visit, I didn't want to go. My parents didn't want me to go. DSW said I wasn't allowed to stay with them.
- 15 The GRO-B-92 was a disciplinary household. There were a lot of beatings and physical abuse. This was by my foster brothers, who were adopted by the GRO-B-92. They were much older than me.
- 16 Sometimes I was locked in the bathroom. I wasn't allowed to do anything. When I went to school it was just school then straight home. I wasn't able to make friends or do anything. The only person I could turn to was my sister.
- 17 We would often be taken to the local clubrooms where there were a lot of predators. I was subjected to those predators at those clubrooms. I didn't tell anyone what happened. The GRO-B-92 didn't know what was happening either. I was abused at the local clubrooms multiple times, by different perpetrators.

- 18 DSW visited now and then but anything that was happening in the home was covered over, they signed it off that I was just a brat of a child. I was kept home from school sometimes, and DSW would sometimes visit me on those days.
- 19 I have seen documentation where my social worker said that there was "something of a change in Roy's behaviour" but they were "unable to determine why". DSW sent me to an early child psychologist but I didn't speak to them.
- 20 I never told my social worker, or the psychologist what was happening. I didn't feel comfortable talking to them.
- 21 When I started to realise I was a Māori in this Pakeha family, I started to rebel against the rules of my foster parents.
- 22 That's where the older brothers would get involved as the punishers and executioners. I was subject to constant beatings, I was pushed down and suppressed.
- 23 I was seen to be erratic and out of control, so DSW started bouncing me off to boys homes. Boys homes introduced me to hate, violence and hate against the system. Which later on introduced me to the borstals; it all started going upside down.

Owairaka Boys Home

- 24 I was 11 or 12 years old when I was first sent to Owairaka Boys Home.
- 25 The decision to move me was made by DSW. DSW found that the easiest place to control me was in an institution.
- 26 There was a lot of violence at Owairaka. As an initiation you got a hiding. You worked yourself up to eventually dealing the hidings out. The longer you were there the more you knew how to protect yourself and survive. You eventually become the abuser.
- 27 It was natural to go through that, but it shouldn't have been acceptable. I don't think DSW were given the details about what actually happened there.
- 28 I was subject to sexual, mental and physical abuse at Owairaka.
- 29 Sometimes the perpetrators were the older kids, but sometimes it was also the house masters.

- 30 We were chosen to be put into secure and the staff members would make an excuse like "you're going to run away" and they'd say we need to be guarded 24/7.
- 31 I still don't understand why they would lock 11 and 12 year old kids in a cell.
- 32 Secure was used for non-compliance, for example not eating dinner, or not being in line with the way the home was run. It was a regime and if you stood out of line you were subject to a beating. The beatings weren't just a slap or punch, they were adult beatings.
- 33 You could be put in secure for weeks at a time. It was a lock up. It was a cell, with big doors and thick locks like in old jails. The secure unit housed about a dozen at a time. We weren't given anything to do while we were in secure.
- 34 I got beatings in secure on a number of occasions.
- 35 There was a pattern in secure where a child would get put in a single cell overnight. If you got put in a single cell, you'd be visited later that evening by a house master and sexually abused. The other cells were double cells, so you were in with another kid. But if you were put in a single cell, you knew what was going to happen later that night. Everyone else knew too. The play was transparent.
- 36 I remember a staff member called Mr [GRO-B-95], I will never forget him. He was Māori too. He was one of those predators in the early hours of the morning in the single cell.
- 37 I also remember Mr [GRO-B-96], he was a Pakeha house master. He would also sexually abuse me.
- 38 Our cook was an elderly lady that we could all talk to. We could be sad with her. She probably had an idea what was happening, but she never acted on it.
- 39 Mr [GRO-B-97] ran the gym and he was a physical abuser too. He would give you a jab and a boot, sometimes a hiding.
- 40 The abuse would always be covered over with movie night or something. The staff would give us chocolate and a movie to watch. It was a cover up. They were abusing children and then giving the children something to make them think the better of the person who abused them.

- 41 There was a school at Owairaka but when you were in secure we weren't allowed to go. I didn't receive any schooling at Owairaka as most of the time I was in secure.
- 42 The second time I saw my whānau was when I was in Owairaka. I was about 11 years old. I got recognised by my cousin who was there too. He brought his Mum, my Auntie in, and she recognised me too. My Mum came to visit me the next day. My Mum didn't even know I was there.
- 43 I was in and out of Owairaka on a regular basis for the next few years. I would just escape. I would escape the abuse and everything that went on there.

Family Home – GRO-B-93 *Family*

- 44 I was moved to GRO-B and GRO-B-93 house when I was about 13 years old. The family home was in Te Atatu, Auckland. I was there for 3-6 months. GRO-B-93 was a very abusive man.
- 45 He had his own family living there, his daughter and sons lived there. There were three of us that were brought in from DSW to stay with them. We were seen to be in the way. The three of us were the same age. We were subject to a lot of beatings from GRO-B-93.
- 46 If things were going wrong in his family, we bore the brunt of it. We'd go without meals. We were beaten. But when everything was good with his family, we were given leeway, we were allowed to go and play.
- 47 However, I felt like we were always separated from the main family, because we were the bad bastards.

Family Home

- 48 The GRO-B-93 found that I wasn't fitting in. I was moved to a different family home. I don't remember the name. There was a Pakeha father and a Māori mother. I was only there for three months.

Running away

- 49 I went rogue after that. I went out and experienced life in the city. I got involved with people who were in the same boat as myself.

- 50 We were outcasts. We were able to associate with each other. We didn't have to share our experiences or anything but we all knew we could fit in with each other.
- 51 We wanted to experience drugs and alcohol, we wanted to experience life.
- 52 This went on for years; whenever I had the chance to get back to that, that's where I went. This felt safe. I was with other people who had experienced the same as me.
- 53 I was picked up by DSW and Hodderville was introduced.

Hodderville Boys Home

- 54 I was 13 years old when I went to Hodderville Boys Home.
- 55 I was there for a year. I went to Putaruru public school.
- 56 Hodderville is one of the ugliest places on the earth. It's very deceitful and dirty.
- 57 I experienced sexual, mental and physical abuse while I was at Hodderville.
- 58 Hodderville wasn't the first time I was sexually abused, but it was the worst time I was sexually abused.
- 59 I remember two predators from Hodderville, Allan Galley and Captain GRO-B-91.
- 60 Allan Galley was the enforcer. He preyed on young Māori boys. That was his preference.
- 61 Assaults by Allan Galley usually took place in the shower blocks. It was in an area where he felt comfortable. If it wasn't in the bathrooms, it was in his office. I was coerced into going into his office as punishment.
- 62 There were a couple of Pakeha kids at Hodderville, but the Māori boys got given a special place to stay at the top of the house. We had our own kitchen and our own showers and cubicle areas, whereas down the bottom where the other kids stayed there were cubicles with 10 kids on each side.
- 63 It was all Māori boys in the top area. We felt privileged to be there. We were seen as the "onto it" kids, who were able to help the younger kids out. We were allowed to do more adult things around the place, and we were exempt from certain things the younger kids had to do.

- 64 There was a lot of violence, as kids we were always fighting each other. We formed a welcome initiation for the kids that arrived. We would plan it during the day, we knew when we had a new kid coming and we'd plan the initiation for that night.
- 65 I went through an initiation beating when I arrived. And then I became one of the people involved in the initiations.
- 66 The staff never intervened in fighting. If anything, they encouraged it.
- 67 There was a room with boxing gloves and the staff would tell us to go in there and fight each other. If you come away from the fight as the loser, you were given another hiding by the staff.
- 68 Sometimes we would be taken to the house masters home in small groups. We would spend time with their immediate family, they usually had their own kids.
- 69 That was disturbing because we knew what was happening to us and wondered whether it was happening to the house masters own children. I think they would use the home trips to cover everything over and to try and show us that they aren't bad people.
- 70 It was pushed upon us constantly that we were nobody. We were told that no one wanted us. The staff would line us up and tell us we were there for a reason, because no one wants us. They would tell us, "we're the only ones who love you" and "no one else wants you".
- 71 We were forced into this Christianity belief. They told us that the only way we were going to get our souls saved was to repent. It was a strict regime that we had to abide by.
- 72 We were taken to church every Sunday. There was no choice. We were put out at the front of the church and the church was told to pray for the kids because no one wants them apart from God.

GRO-B
-92

Family Home

- 73 After Hodderville, I was moved back to the GRO-B
-92 Family.
- 74 I didn't stick around long. My sister who I had grown up with at that home was gone.
- 75 My sister and I were formed as a family by then. We had formed a bond that we still have to this day.

76 I didn't want to stay there without her, so I ran away again.

Impact of the abuse

77 As a result of the abuse I suffered, I became the abuser. I used physical abuse. I wanted to hurt people. I became a person who wanted to administer pain.

78 I never backed down from anything. It took me a long time to break away from that person.

79 At the boys homes as a child, gang colours were introduced to us, and you chose which one you wanted to be part of. You fitted yourself into that organisation. These organisations were against the system and against everything we hated. I wanted to be part of something that didn't asked questions, where it didn't matter where you came from.

80 I have spent time in prison. Lock up in prison is nothing new to what I had already experienced as a child. It's just a bigger place.

81 Many of those I spent time with at Owairaka I saw in prison. When we would say we spent time at Owairaka, we knew exactly what each other had been through.

82 Every day I think about what happened to me. I'll never be the same, regardless of counselling. I am living with what happened to me.

83 It impacts on me with my mokos, I just want to hold them, and I worry that my son might see me as an abuser.

84 To my kids, I can't be the father they want or have wanted because I still find it hard to communicate in certain ways. I'm only just starting to be able to say, "I love you, son" and mean it, rather than just saying it.

85 In crowds I am worried people are looking at me. I can't be amongst people that I don't know. I become aggressive and a different person, so I avoid that. I stick to people I know.

86 I am studying psychology, and this is helping me come out of my shell a bit. I wish I could tell my story to my class, but I can't, because I limit the number of people that I tell my story to.

Redress

- 87 In 2004, I heard rumours in prison about people meeting with a lawyer, Sonja Cooper, to settle claims about their experiences of abuse in care.
- 88 That was the first time I met with a lawyer and talked about what happened in my childhood.
- 89 I wanted to engage so I could get back a bit of quality of life; I wanted to understand why this had happened and I wanted answers.
- 90 Why were DSW part of my life? Why was I subjected to their rules and regulation at such a young age? When I was old enough to not be in their care anymore, they just flicked me off. But it was too late, they had already ruined my life.
- 91 The financial part of the process meant nothing to me; it was something to help my family. I didn't want money, I wanted answers.
- 92 Those answers came but in the form of money because that's the only way the Government could answer it, they just give a couple of dollars and sweep it under the carpet.
- 93 Even though I also experienced abuse in Owairaka Boys Home, I never made a claim against DSW. I gave my lawyers some information about my experience at Owairaka, and I got news from Cooper Legal about what was going on, but it seemed to be a repetitive cycle, the same things being said, there was no real end. Those cases were getting dragged on.
- 94 I didn't want to engage in a process which was going to keep dragging on like that, so I decided to only pursue the Salvation Army claim.
- 95 I got some answers from that process. I now understand why sexual and physical abuse happen. It's because that person went through something bad in their own life, and they carried that on in older age to use against us, the young ones.
- 96 I didn't get any real answers though, I still don't know why I wasn't placed back with my family when they clearly wanted me back? My parents went to DSW and asked to have me back home, but they wouldn't let me go home. I still don't know the answer to that.

- 97 The process with the Salvation Army took about two years until I got a settlement.
- 98 I met with one of the Salvation Army field workers. His name was Murray Houston and he came to meet me in prison.
- 99 Murray Houston wanted straight facts, he wanted to know exactly what happened. He asked me, "do you remember the time?", "do you remember the date?" I didn't remember specifics because I was a kid at the time.
- 100 The perpetrators who I had accused from Hodderville had passed away by this time.
- 101 I remember Murray Houston kept asking, "how can we make this better?" I said I want someone to be held accountable. That never happened.
- 102 I felt like Murray Houston was accepting of what I was saying. The interview lasted eight-hours. it was quite intense.
- 103 Some time later, I received an apology. It was a piece of paper, it had a bit of writing on it. That's all I saw it as. It really meant nothing to me.
- 104 I received \$25,000 in the settlement. \$5,000 of that amount was to go toward counselling. My legal fees were also paid (\$2,600). I was in jail at the time so the money I received was used to help my family.
- 105 Cooper Legal's response to my settlement was that it was a great achievement to have gotten the Salvation Army to realise and recognise the abuse.
- 106 It wasn't about the money for me. It was about someone being held accountable.
- 107 I felt as though the Salvation Army were very astute about getting it finalised and dealing with it as soon as possible. They wanted the case to be closed as soon as possible. It wasn't satisfying in any way even though I received a settlement.
- 108 I was looking for these people to be held accountable properly, but instead, these places have offered us money and swept it all under the carpet.
- 109 I found the process very frustrating. After my eight-hour interview with Murray Houston, I acted out and I ended up stabbing someone in prison a few days later. The person I stabbed was a convicted paedophile who was in my unit. I knew it was wrong, but I didn't care about the consequences.

110 I received six more years imprisonment for that.

111 I hadn't been given the material or skills to deal with my feelings. The only way I knew was to act out, so I stabbed someone. I didn't know how to deal with what happened to me in my childhood, I had opened the can of worms during that interview. And I was just sent back to the violent prison environment afterwards.

112 Counselling was offered to me at the interview, but it wasn't available straight away, when I needed it.

113 I didn't want to sit down and tell my life story for eight hours. After I did that, the best way I knew how to deal with my frustration was with violence.

114 I want more accountability from the Salvation Army.

115 I want to tell them how I feel. I want to explain to them what I am living with.

116 How can I respect an organisation that on the one hand are giving settlements and saying that they acknowledge what happened, but on the other hand are sweeping it under the rug and not properly acknowledging anything?

117 I felt like the redress process was just a way that they could make the problem go away quickly by giving money away.

Conclusion

118 I am now studying psychology. My goal is to help children at the pathway where I was, at 13 or 14 years old. I want to help defer them away from going to those dark places that I lived in for a long time.

119 I don't want to see what happened to me, happen to our rangatahi.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and was made by me knowing that it may be used as evidence by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

Signed: _____

GRO-C

Dated: _____

23/9/2020

