

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY  
TULOOU – OUR PACIFIC VOICES: TATALA E PULONGA**

**Under** The Inquiries Act 2013

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

**Royal Commission:** Judge Coral Shaw (Chair)  
Ali'imua Sandra Alofivae  
Mr Paul Gibson  
Dr Anaru Erueti  
Ms Julia Steenson

**Counsel:** Mr Simon Mount QC, Ms Kerryn Beaton QC,  
Ms Tania Sharkey, Mr Semisi Pohiva, Ms Reina Va'ai, Ms Nicole Copeland, Ms Sonja Cooper, Ms Amanda Hill for the Royal Commission  
Ms Rachael Schmidt-McCleave, Ms Julia White and Ms Alana Ruakere for the Crown  
Mr Alex Winsley for the Bishops and Congregational Leaders of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand

**Venue:** Fale o Samoa  
141 Bader Drive  
Māngere  
AUCKLAND

**Date:** 22 July 2021

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**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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1 We often say one doesn't equal one, meaning you are one story, you are one person, but the  
 2 multiplication factor really brings home the point of why it's so difficult for Pasifika, for  
 3 Pacific to come forward. We've heard it from our survivor advocates and we salute the  
 4 courage of all of our Catholic survivors, some are in the room today, and our advocates  
 5 who know this and stand strongly in support of you.

6 A. Thank you.

7 **Q.** The purpose of the talanoa, of course, is to create the safe spaces, so we are very, very  
 8 grateful to you, to your husband, to your children, to your family for coming forward, for  
 9 lifting this cloud, for allowing us to have this open talanoa with you. And we know that the  
 10 vā between you and your family and all of the other bridges that will need to be rebuilt, we  
 11 just pray for the grace and the favour and the mercy in all of those relationships. That you  
 12 will be blessed with the words to know what to do and that actually your action today will  
 13 stand very tall and very proud for transformative change, because that's what's required,  
 14 both with our Pacific communities and the Churches not just the Catholics, although the  
 15 Catholics is the, you know, the faith that's been discussed this morning, but that's what's  
 16 required is the courage of many, many more of our people to come up to step forward. So  
 17 thank you for honouring us at the Commission with your talanoa.

18 A. Fa'afetai lava.

19 **CHAIR:** Thank you so much. Ms Sharkey or, sorry, Mr Pohiva.

20 [Tongan song]

21 **Adjournment from 3.26 pm to 3.53 pm**

22 **CHAIR:** Thank you Ms Sharkey.

23 **MS SHARKEY:** Thank you Madam Chair. We have William Wilson and I also just wish to  
 24 acknowledge his family who are all here present to support William this afternoon.

25 **CHAIR:** Thank you, they're all very welcome. I'll ask Mr Erueti to administer the affirmation.

26 **WILLIAM ALEXANDER MARSHALL WILSON**

27 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tēnā koe William.

28 A. Kia ora.

29 **Q.** Tēnā koe, ngā mihi nui ki a koe me to whānau, nau mai haere mai. So before I start I'm just  
 30 going to start with the affirmation. Do you solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm  
 31 that the evidence you will give before this Commission will be the truth, the whole truth  
 32 and nothing but the truth?

33 A. I do.

34 **Q.** Kia ora.

- 1 **QUESTIONING BY MS SHARKEY:** You've got some opening remarks you'd like to make?
- 2 A. Yes.
- 3 **Q.** Fantastic. Thank you William. Go ahead.
- 4 A. I am legally known as William Alexander Marshall Wilson. Years ago I was given the  
5 name of "Willow". I've taken the name that I was given at the boarding school as Ko  
6 Raiana Wirihana tōku ingoa and today, whakarongo ki tāku. Thank you.
- 7 **Q.** Thank you William. We're going to go through your statement. You've got your statement  
8 in front of you?
- 9 A. Yes.
- 10 **Q.** All right. So we're just going to now start at paragraph 2 since you've opened now and  
11 we'll start at paragraph 2 and if at any time you need a break or you would like to have a  
12 pause, just look at me, William, we'll have a break. Okay? All right, Well, done. So we'll  
13 start at paragraph 2.
- 14 A. My mum of is Scottish descent and my biological dad is of Samoan descent. I was  
15 physically and emotionally abused at Wesley College, the boarding school I attended from  
16 1991 to 1992. There was a culture of violence and I suffered severe beatings and bullying  
17 from - I went through from happening to anyone else.
- 18 **Q.** That's all right, that's okay William. So just if I can summarise it. You're saying that there  
19 was - would you like a break? Do you want a break or you're happy to carry on?
- 20 A. Yeah.
- 21 **Q.** Okay, so you're saying that you're coming forward to the Inquiry in the hopes that it will -  
22 firstly you want there to be some acknowledgment -
- 23 A. Yes, of what happened to me.
- 24 **Q.** - of what happened to you?
- 25 A. And how the whole school knew me as Willow and treated me as if I was a dwarf and a  
26 nobody.
- 27 **Q.** Okay, thank you. Thank you William. And in addition to that you also don't want what  
28 happened to you to happen to anybody else?
- 29 A. It should never happen in the first place, and it should never happen to anybody ever.
- 30 **Q.** Okay, thank you William. Okay. So can we start, just the next section, paragraph 5 and  
31 we're going up to paragraph 10.
- 32 A. When I was young I was told by my mum that my father was Māori and that he had died in  
33 a car crash. That's all I knew. That's all I believed. I was proud to be Māori and hoped to  
34 one day attend St Stephen's boarding school where a lot of Māori kids attended.

1                   When I was 13 I found out my father was actually Samoan and not Māori. Now  
2 I - I'm learning to consider myself Scottish, Samoan and Māori. My family - mum's - my  
3 mum's - mum's family did not like that mum had been with a Samoan. I also have a sister  
4 who is 3 years older than me. Her father was another Samoan man.

5 When I was eight months old me, my sister and my mum moved to Australia to live with family  
6 over there. We returned to New Zealand when I was 6 years old.

7 When we came back from Australia, we stayed at Whangaparaoa for about a period - for a short  
8 period of time before moving to Paeroa with my grandparents until I was 7 years old. My  
9 granddad directed where we lived, depending on where we worked - where he worked, or  
10 what he did.

11 My grandparents eventually bought a house for mum, me and my sister on Porritt Avenue which  
12 we knew as "Harlem" or "the hood" in Paeroa. My grandparents then moved to Huntly to  
13 stay.

14 **Q.** Okay, just on this next paragraph we're not looking at the first two sentences, we're just  
15 starting on the next one.

16 **A.** Things went downhill for me when my grandparents left. In hindsight I believe that mum  
17 needed my grandparents' support because she could not do even the simple things without  
18 them, like paying bills.

19 **Q.** Okay. Thank you William. So we're now going to move over to paragraph 21 starting at  
20 the health camp.

21 **A.** Yeah. When I was about 10 or 11 years old I was sent to Princess of Wales Health Camp  
22 for a year in Rotorua. The camp was supposed to be for six months. I was bullied there  
23 and tried to run away. Because I tried to run away, they made me stay another six months.

24                   I was told that I had to go to the health camp because I had to lose weight, but  
25 I felt like they were just moving me around because I had been playing up after what  
26 happened to me. I was bullied at the camp by the other kids and by the staff. One of the  
27 staff was pretty bad to me, he was a tall skinny white guy. I remember one time I wet my  
28 bed and he exposed it to the other boys. That was when the other kids and staff started  
29 bullying me. I got laughed at and was ridiculed for wetting the bed and being overweight.

30                   I made a friend there. He was a good friend. He had epilepsy. He and I formed a  
31 friendship because we were both being bullied by others. One day he had been bullied by  
32 the other boys out in the field. He fell down and started shaking and frothing at the mouth.  
33 I yelled at the other boys and helped carry him to the sick bay. I didn't see him after that.  
34 He later died. The staff told me that he fell in a black hole and he couldn't come back.

1           There was no grief counselling or appropriate support and it was very hard for me to  
2           process what happened to my friend.

3   My behaviour was disruptive, it was abusive. I started doing things like breaking windows and  
4           putting holes in the house. I was frustrated about everything that had happened to me and  
5           that mum wasn't helping me. But I know it's not her fault. She didn't know, no one knew,  
6           no one know what to do really.

7   **Q.**   Right, that's all right, okay, thank you William. So now we're moving to the circumstances  
8           leading to Wesley College and your Samoan identity. Are you okay?

9   **A.**   Yeah, I'm good.

10 **Q.**   All right, so we're just going to start at paragraph 27.

11 **A.**   My granddad and the social worker decided to send me to boarding school. They thought I  
12           would learn a thing or two. My records show that because of the costs involved, funding  
13           through grants/scholarships would be sought.

14                 I wanted to go to St Stephen's College. I thought I would have enjoyed it there  
15           because I thought my dad was Māori and it would have been cool. I couldn't understand  
16           then why that wasn't an option.

17                 I enrolled myself into Paeroa College without anyone knowing. I was attending  
18           Paeroa College for a couple of weeks before mum and granddad even knew. My granddad  
19           eventually found out and withdrew me from there.

20                 They initially planned to send me to Dilworth and I went as far as visiting the  
21           school as an introduction at the end of 1990. Instead I ended up being enrolled at Wesley  
22           College. I was 12 years old at the time. Just know that I turned 13 on GRO-C February.  
23           Instead I ended up - yeah, my records show that there were discussions about my  
24           application to Dilworth being unsuccessful, so they looked at Wesley College as an option  
25           because scholarships were available for Polynesian students.

26 **Q.**   Okay, now William we're just going to bring up, or Alex is going to bring up - he's just  
27           seated over here, you know Alex well.

28 **A.**   **[Nods].**

29 **Q.**   So first off we're looking at this report that was done by your social worker dated 25  
30           October 1990.

31 **A.**   Yes.

32 **Q.**   So you were about 12 years old -

33 **A.**   Yes.

- 1 **Q.** - then, yeah?
- 2 **A.** Yes.
- 3 **Q.** We're just bringing that up, this is before you go into Wesley College.
- 4 **A.** Yes.
- 5 **Q.** Can you see what that line says?
- 6 **A.** Yes.
- 7 **Q.** That you're smart, really smart, yeah? You'd agree with that?
- 8 **A.** Some of it.
- 9 **Q.** I think that's a good answer. Right. But that's what the report says, okay, and then we're  
10 just going to go into the next -
- 11 **A.** What I knew was everything my grandfather could teach me and then he couldn't do  
12 anymore for me. He told me, he taught me everything he knew and he knew a lot.
- 13 **Q.** Yeah. And just on the next page, this is where it talks about that application to Dilworth  
14 not being successful.
- 15 **A.** Yeah.
- 16 **Q.** And then, you know, there's some grants available for Polynesian students, so they're going  
17 to apply to Wesley College. And so my question is, when all these discussions were  
18 happening, you didn't know that you were Samoan yet?
- 19 **A.** Correct, it was the time when - it's going to happen soon, yeah.
- 20 **Q.** Yes. Thank you William. Okay, so can we just start at paragraph 32.
- 21 **A.** On my first day at Wesley College it was me, my mum, my granddad and grandma. I will  
22 never forget that moment as we turned into the school driveway my granddad told my mum  
23 to tell me the truth of who I am. My mum then told me that the school was for Pacific  
24 Islanders and that I was an Islander, a Samoan. I didn't want to believe her.
- 25 **Q.** Thank you William.
- 26 **A.** When I jumped out of the car all I could see were these big giant island guys. They were  
27 giants. I was only small and short. I cried to my grandma that I didn't want to stay here.  
28 I wanted - I didn't know much about Islanders before that, I didn't hang out with Islanders,  
29 there was my aunty married to a Cook Island family and that's all I knew really.
- 30 **Q.** Okay William. Thank you. You're all right to carry on?
- 31 **A.** Yeah.
- 32 **Q.** Okay.
- 33 **A.** I knew something was going to happen. I just could feel it and I always have all my life  
34 I could feel things before they happen, just learning to understand that I can't do much to

1 change it, even if I try. Yeah.

2 **Q.** Okay, so now we're moving on to the next section, again, this is where we're talking about  
3 the abuse at Wesley College. If you need a break at any time, William, we can have a  
4 break, okay?

5 **A.** It's okay, thank you Sharkey.

6 **Q.** No worries, okay, carry on.

7 **A.** Early in my stay at Wesley College we had night parades. The parades were run by the  
8 prefects and the dorm prefects. I later learned that this happened every year for you in  
9 students but throughout the year it happened.

10 The night parade happened about two weeks after new students were settled in and  
11 it took place from around 1 am to 3 am in the morning the parade starts by all students in  
12 the junior dormitory being pulled out of bed by the prefects. Woken up different ways,  
13 sometimes a broomstick along the legs while you're still sleeping. Then we were made to  
14 stand on parade in the prep haul, that's where we all study. A few of those students will be  
15 picked on and made an example of by being called out to the front and to face everyone.  
16 For me they made me do lots of things, but 100 press-ups- and I got hit with a broomstick if  
17 I couldn't. This was done to keep others in check. I was the main one to be picked on at  
18 that time. Because I'm not alone, I know that.

19 They would say during the parades that if you ran away they would get a van, the  
20 prefects themselves would be allowed a van from the school to come look for you, they'd  
21 be given a list of different family addresses that you could run to that are near the school.  
22 They said that they would come get you and knock on doors and find you and bring you  
23 back to the school. But while you're coming back to the school, they beat you with towels  
24 on their hands. Some students were given a nickname as part of the night parade. The  
25 nickname I was given was "Willow", which I hated. The students and even the teachers  
26 called me that for almost two years.

27 **Q.** Thank you William, we're just going to bring up an exhibit. This is a letter from you and a  
28 support worker that you had at the time to the social coordinator, is that right?

29 **A.** Yeah.

30 **Q.** Dated 26 September 1991, and that was you expressing -

31 **A.** I was already living terrified in fear. I was trying to speak out but knowing that I couldn't  
32 speak out at all when I first said something to my mum in the first holidays. So this  
33 happened after the second term - third term, third term, before the fourth I think. What it  
34 was was me trying to find some way to say something without it being found out by the



1 wrong people.

2 **Q.** Right.

3 **A.** I was crying for help as little as possible because when I did the loud way, straight away  
4 when I tried to tell my mum, she told the social worker, the social worker told the school,  
5 the school told the prefects. It wasn't good for me when I went back that first time I tried  
6 speaking and then after that I knew I had to try and find other ways to leak it out a little bit  
7 at a time. That's one of them.

8 **Q.** Okay, and just on that document, you're saying that you appreciate the teachers who call  
9 you William. You wanted your name because they had given you that nickname that you  
10 hated.

11 **A.** That's true, only one teacher would call me William, Mr McDonald.

12 **Q.** All right, if you can continue from paragraph 39 please William.

13 **A.** There were several types of punishments at the school by the senior students including the  
14 prefects and dorm prefects. The Samoan Slap or Island Slap, I don't know what it's really  
15 known as, it was where you had to make an air bubble with your mouth and then they  
16 would slap you and you fly, sometimes I nearly fell over from the slap because I'm - held  
17 my ground, I stood well. One time I got slapped so hard I got saliva on the prefect who was  
18 standing in front of me doing it. I received a bigger hiding after that.

19 100 press-ups is where you tried to do 100 press---ups. You got hit with a stick if  
20 you didn't go low enough. I never finished 100 press--ups. Sometimes it's best just to give  
21 it up and take the beating, instead of go through their torture treatment of making you do  
22 stuff.

23 There was also the two-line treatment where boys would line up in two lines of  
24 about 25 boys and you would have to walk through or run through with your shirt on or off.  
25 As you walk through or - you're beaten by the boys. Sometimes they had sticks and  
26 taiahas, mainly on practice times when you have to do the haka they really use the taiaha.  
27 You just had to make your way through. One time they made me do it because they  
28 accused me of stealing bread. It wasn't me, I was a kitchen worker. I didn't need to steal  
29 nothing.

30 Nipple twisting was another punishment, I suffered every day. I was stopped  
31 every day on the way to the shower by a dorm prefect. He would twist my nipple hard and  
32 at the same time tell me to whistle. To this day I can still remember him yelling "whistle  
33 Willow, whistle Willow, whistle." I couldn't whistle because the pain was bad, real bad.

34 Another punishment took place, there's plenty of them. One of them is TV room.

1 The TV room had carpeted bleachers, I'm not sure about bleachers, like stairs where we  
2 could sit. They went up high. I was made to stand on the third row. They would go  
3 running down from the top and clothesline me and I'd roll back on to the bottom and they'd  
4 do that three times in a row. I don't know why three times, they keep doing that to me three  
5 times, different punishments.

6 On those same bleachers I was often made to bend over the corner part of the  
7 bottom. One of the prefects would put on those pointy Church shoes and he would open  
8 that prep door, he'd walk down the prep hall and he'd start running up and kick me. It was a  
9 long run- up. The pain wasn't much in the back end where he connected, it was in the front  
10 where it slammed against the step.

11 Chores were also given out daily by prefects. My name was permanently on that  
12 list every morning. I had to clean their rooms, shine their shoes, make their beds, do  
13 whatever they tell me to in the mornings before school. There were lots of prefects and so  
14 many of them telling me to do chores for them. Sometimes I was stuck on a few rooms and  
15 I couldn't get all the rooms done. So the rooms I couldn't get done I'd get visits in the  
16 evening, but each one of them I couldn't finish. I couldn't complete all the work because  
17 there was too much. I couldn't even study worrying about what's going to happen to me at  
18 the end of the day. I would sit in class knowing I had not finished the morning chores and I  
19 would be beaten for it.

20 **Q.** Okay William. We're now coming to the one that is a big one for you. Are you happy to  
21 continue reading out your statement? Do you need a break?

22 **A.** I'm good.

23 **Q.** Pardon?

24 **A.** I am good thank you Sharkey.

25 **Q.** No worries.

26 **A.** Just a little bit emotional.

27 **Q.** No, I completely understand. Just take your time, have a drink of water if you need one.  
28 Because I know that you're wanting to share your truth and your experience today, okay?

29 **A.** Yeah.

30 **Q.** Take your time.

31 **A.** I'm ready.

32 **Q.** Okay. Paragraph 40.

33 **A.** Okay, before I do paragraph 40 I would like to say some things that I'm appreciative of,  
34 especially with you'se up here listening to me. I spent most of my life trying to speak out.

1 If only you'se could know how I feel.

2 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** We appreciate this William. We're listening.

3 A. The title, I read the title what you name this whole thing about, why we are all here; Tatala  
4 e pulonga. Did I say that right?

5 **QUESTIONING BY MS SHARKEY CONTINUED:** Yes.

6 A. Tatala e pulonga.

7 **Q.** Perfectly.

8 A. Well, in Māori it's te hiki ake o te kapua pōuri, lifting of a dark cloud. To me, for me  
9 personally it's more like lifting up a dark burden. Aveiga se avega pougisa in Samoan. Te  
10 hiki ake i te taumahatanga pōuri in Māori. I'm lifting up my dark burden for all to see,  
11 which means I am vulnerable. You have me at my weakest.

12 **Q.** Paragraph 40, William, when you're ready.

13 A. Island Respect hidings. I'm not sure if this has been spoken about before, but this should be  
14 highlighted that how many times I've been hiding this, it's not funny. I almost died. And  
15 needs to be known I almost died. The Island Respect hidings meant that we were  
16 physically and mentally beaten. For these you would stand facing a prefect who would sit  
17 in front of you just 2 meters away. On either side of you, you got three students standing  
18 on parade facing you. The prefect would order a student from each side to beat you until  
19 you fall down and you have to stand back up. The prefect would tell you what you've done  
20 wrong and call another one from each side to beat you until you fall down again. They  
21 would also verbally abuse you while this is happening. That Island Respect hiding that  
22 I suffered was over two hours. I kept standing up and telling them they were wrong, that  
23 should never happen to me like this.

24 I didn't know anything about Islanders before I even went to the boarding school  
25 properly, you know, I only knew about my cousins, Cook Island, they did a hair plat, that's  
26 the most I knew about Islands. The Island Respect hidings didn't happen that often because  
27 they were dangerous, they could kill someone. But they happened to me.

28 The main teacher promoted the Island Respect hidings. I don't know if - all I'm  
29 going to say here is that he was a well-respected- Tongan and one day he will have his. He  
30 ordered Island Respect hidings on me and on others. I got a bad hiding in my first year, it  
31 started because of an interaction with that Tongan teacher. He heard me say something  
32 disrespectful. It wasn't me, it was a guy standing behind me and he had the same last name  
33 as me. I was outside the computer lab at the time and we were told we're not allowed to go  
34 inside and the one behind me said something rude about GRO-B-3 being in there, the GRO-

1 B-3 and I didn't say it but I was blamed.

2 Before dinner that night everybody kept whispering and saying "Willow, you're  
3 going to get it" and they were standing in line outside. When I got up to the actual serving  
4 part, one of the - a 5th form boy came up to me and told me that I have to go to the junior  
5 school, junior dormitory after dinner and nobody else went that way. Only I walked up that  
6 way by myself, it was quiet. I knew what I was going into, I knew that they were going to  
7 do something to me but I didn't know it was going to be that bad.

8 Everyone else knew what was happening, they were all crowded in the quad. On  
9 the way there I saw another student acting as a look-out. He was on the top of the fire  
10 escape. When I arrived there was a parade of six boys waiting for me, three guys on each  
11 side. They weren't little guys either. To be honest one of those six was a small guy.

12 The main prefect there would call each person to beat me. Each time they beat me  
13 down I kept standing back up. I kept trying to tell them they had the wrong person. They  
14 beat me up so bad that eventually I couldn't stand up anymore. They carried me out, they  
15 bashed me for two and a half hours. The prefects carried me to the main prefect's flat after  
16 that, that was the prefect who beat me, he took me to his flat. He cried over me, wiped my  
17 head with a cloth and said that he hadn't seen anyone get a beating like that ever. I told him  
18 that I will never forgive him. He had ordered people to beat me during that hiding.

19 That night they dressed - he dressed me in my number ones because I was a chapel  
20 monitor and we had a night chapel service with visitors. Number ones were our formal  
21 wear for special occasions. White shirt, tie. We were hosting All Blacks that night.  
22 I couldn't walk so I was carried upstairs in the chapel to sit amongst the prefects where they  
23 could sit, where only the prefects sit and they were hiding me there. As chapel monitor at  
24 the end I was supposed to be standing by the minister that night to wish everyone farewell  
25 and help clean up after. For some reason an All Black, the tall All Black stood by the  
26 minister at the end of the service. Because I was meant to be helping the minister I asked  
27 him to look out for me.

28 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** William, I'll just say - it's Anaru over here - that we want to get all  
29 of this in the transcription, so we just need to moderate the pace of - just to slow it down e  
30 hoa, thank you.

31 A. Yes, kei te pai.

32 Q. Ka pai.

33 A. Because I was meant to be helping, the minister asked to look out for me, so I can help the  
34 minister clean up. So just to make it more understanding, it's not hard to describe me back

1 then. I was the shortest, I was the chubbiest, so minister didn't have anything, you know,  
2 wasn't hard for him to describe me. The prefects tried to carry me out past them both as if  
3 nothing was happening.

4 Once we were outside, they spotted me and pointed me out to the minister, he  
5 spotted me and "Is that him?" Is what he said, I heard, then walked over to us. The  
6 prefects moved away from me, they let go of me and took off and I collapsed to the ground.  
7 And another All Black then helped me to the sick bay, they carried me down to the sick  
8 bay. While I was there the two All Blacks took my shirt off, it was more than two of them,  
9 in the end, at that time, and helped me put on a smock. They saw all my bruising. I later  
10 discovered that I had cracked ribs as well. The All Blacks saw my injuries. While they  
11 were there they signed my number one Church shirt for me.

12 The people at the sick bay were just the nurses. They told - one nurse particularly  
13 told them that they called an ambulance and it was on its way. But they hadn't called for  
14 one. They called the school doctor instead. The All Blacks coach or manager eventually  
15 came in and told them they had to leave. As soon as they left, I don't say a name but I can  
16 say something else.

17 **Q.** You can say something else.

18 **A.** The GRO-B-3 came to the sick bay and took the shirt that the All Blacks signed for me.  
19 Got that? That was the GRO-B-3. He threatened that I would get the bash again if I told  
20 anyone. I'm here, I've been afraid, I've been scared because of what he said to me then. I'm  
21 here to make it clear I lived in fear that long because of what this guy said to me, and  
22 knowing what the whole school was about and that they all stand together and they're good  
23 at hiding and covering up.

24 **Q.** Thank you. You're all right, do you want to continue with paragraph 57?

25 **A.** Yeah.

26 **Q.** Okay.

27 **A.** I stayed hidden there in that sick bay for two months under the care of the school doctor. I  
28 was monitored by him about twice a week. At the time I couldn't breathe properly, I was  
29 coughing up blood. While I was there I received no schooling during that time and I had no  
30 visitors.

31 Later the prefects found out it was actually the other student who made the  
32 disrespectful comment and not me. When he heard he was going to get it, like I got it, he  
33 stole a prefect's car and tried to run away but they caught him. I saw shadows of the  
34 prefect, of the dorm prefect beating him. I still remember the juddering sound as they beat

1 him up.

2 The one thing the beating - the one doing the beating was the dorm prefect who  
3 owned the car. They had to call an ambulance and he was taken away. I heard he was in a  
4 coma or a vegetative state and I don't know if he ever recovered, which meant I don't think  
5 he was able to speak and talk about what happened to him. Later there was a newspaper  
6 article about it which said he was just found in a state, in that state on the number one field  
7 which is in the front of the school and no-one knew anything. That was not true. The  
8 prefect, the dorm prefect beat him. I saw and heard it.

9 I'll need to clarify this. I'm in the bottom dormitory, there's two storeys, that's a  
10 dormitory and a dormitory, two storeys on the intermediate dormitory. Now he's on the  
11 second storey of the intermediate dormitory.

12 **Q.** Just slow down a little bit, William, just a little bit.

13 **A.** Dorm prefect on the second storey of the intermediate dormitory, I'm on the bottom on the  
14 junior dormitory looking out my window looking up, I can see through the windows of the  
15 stairs and between the dormitories on each side. It happened right on the top of those stairs,  
16 there's no curtains. The ambulance came in, I could see everything, the ambulance came in,  
17 wheeled him down those stairs and wheeled him all the way up.

18 **Q.** Paragraph 60.

19 **A.** Thank you. The Island Respect hidings used to happen when teachers and staff were gone.  
20 The staff didn't monitor what was happening, they just turned a blind eye. There was  
21 supposed to be a house manager looking after us. The staff didn't monitor what was  
22 happening. I initially believe - I believe that some of the staff, even the principal himself  
23 knew exactly what was happening.

24 **Q.** We'll come to that a little bit later on.

25 **A.** Yeah. Okay. There was supposed to be a house manager looking after us, but they were  
26 hardly there. The dorm prefects were always there, and they were in charge.

27 At night there was a night watchman on duty, but he couldn't do anything. The  
28 senior dormitory was away from junior and intermediate dormitory on the other side of the  
29 school. The prefects would arrange distractions in the senior dormitory and the prefects  
30 would go into the junior dormitory and do whatever they felt, which is bashing or  
31 tormenting.

32 This type of abuse happened often at Wesley College for many different reasons.  
33 One time I wanted to play soccer and cricket but there weren't enough people. Liars. So I  
34 had to play rugby instead. I didn't even know how to play rugby or what position I was

1 playing. The prefects made me captain for the fourth grade rugby team. The captain would  
2 get hidings when the team lost. We lost a lot of games.

3 **Q.** Thank you William. Paragraph 63.

4 **A.** I loved sport before I went to Wesley. I love soccer and cricket. I just find it hard to do  
5 any sport nowadays. The whole school was in on the abuse and that included the ex-  
6 students who were on the board of trustees. Not just that, all ex-students. That were  
7 prefects and dorm prefects. The tuck shop owners would have known about it because  
8 bullying happened around the tuck shop also. They will claim that they have a camera near  
9 the tuck shop, but the prefects and dorm prefects know exactly where that is.

10 The school staff gave the prefects the powers they had and they encouraged this  
11 abuse. These powers meant that we had to do things for the prefects. For example, we had  
12 to clean their flats on a roster or clean their rugby boots.

13 I feel like the prefects had access to my school file or someone who had access to  
14 it told them things about me. Namely that teacher. They knew what they could do to me  
15 and that I had no back up. What I'm saying here is they knew I only had one mum. They  
16 knew that my mum was a solo mum, so they knew they could manipulate me. I had no  
17 father or family. I always imagined that if I had a strong Islander last name like Opetaiia or  
18 Tuigamala they wouldn't have touched me.

19 **Q.** All right, thank you William. A couple more pages to go, okay?

20 **A.** Yeah.

21 **Q.** All right, so we're just talking about the disclosure of abuse now, starting at paragraph 66.

22 **A.** Yes. I told my mum what was happening to me during the school holidays, that was the  
23 first school holidays, but she didn't do anything. I'm saying that because back then that's  
24 how I felt.

25 **Q.** Yeah.

26 **A.** But really I know now she didn't know what to do.

27 **Q.** Understood William.

28 **A.** And there was some people at the school that I trusted, like a chef and the kitchen ladies at  
29 the back of the kitchen. Sometimes they would hide me when the prefects were looking for  
30 me.

31 There was a teacher I tried to tell after I healed from the big Island Respect hiding.  
32 His name was Graeme Watson. He told me that he won't tell the prefects and was going to  
33 help me stop what was happening. I told him everything. He had a file. However he  
34 passed away while I was on school holidays. There was no one else I trusted enough to

1 tell- about the abuse. I knew I had to leave.

2 **Q.** Carry on.

3 **A.** Watson died while I was on school holidays in Paeroa. That's when I knew I had to run  
4 away. I tried to travel to my sister who was in a boarding school in the South Island. The  
5 Police and Social Welfare eventually found me in Wellington, Police caught me in  
6 Wellington and left me at the Social Welfare doorstep about 5.30, just before they closed. I  
7 was stuck there for a week. That family home was bad too.

8 They returned me to my mum after that. Because I refused to go back to the  
9 boarding school. I said I'll run and run and run. Before coming to the Royal Commission I  
10 had tried to see lawyers about my case. After I told them what happened, they would no  
11 longer be a part of a case against Wesley College.

12 I have been through so many different lawyers. There was only one who agreed to  
13 look at my case, but he was based - at that time he was based in Tauranga and then he got  
14 called up in Wellington and he's still in Wellington now. And honestly I couldn't afford  
15 him, he became a real high lawyer. But I still trust him to this day.

16 I remember in around 2005 or 2006 a former senior student at Wesley College  
17 e-mailed me to meet at Burger King in Hamilton. This was when I was trying to speak to a  
18 lawyer about what happened to me. I had sent messages on Facebook to try and find  
19 witnesses to support what had happened to me. She tried to tell me that what I was doing  
20 was wrecking the families of former students who beat me. She was trying to protect her  
21 school mates. I left Burger King as soon as she said that. I am determined to get my truth  
22 out.

23 **Q.** Okay William, thank you. All right, so we're now going to look at the impacts of what the  
24 abuse at Wesley College did to you, and we're going to start with the medical and the  
25 health. Okay, that's starting at paragraph 72.

26 **A.** Thank you. My school medical records show that in the space of a year, 1991, I was  
27 frequently admitted for medical attention, including several times for blood noses and one  
28 incident of bruising. One entry states that my finger was crushed in a door. These injuries  
29 were caused by other students. The records show that I was also very dependent on  
30 Ventolin inhalers. This was because of the stress and anxiety about the beatings and  
31 bullying, it's the terrorism they gave me, I suffered bad asthma attacks and panic attacks.

32 I had a minor problem with my ears and hearing growing up. That was all right after I was like 7  
33 or 8. But the Island Respect hidings and other beatings I received at Wesley College really  
34 made my ears so much worse. During my time at Wesley College my hearing deteriorated



- 1 significantly.
- 2 **Q.** Okay William, we're just going to put up a document here. 004. This is the letter from the  
3 ENT, the ear nose and throat specialist surgeon dated 16 December 1991. Do you want to  
4 read that out?
- 5 **A.** Yes.
- 6 **Q.** Can you see that?
- 7 **A.** "The whole thing is so unreal as to be almost unbelievable. I cannot imagine that his  
8 hearing has been getting worse like this and that so far he has not required any assistance  
9 with his hearing, as with inferior hearing this bad he should be totally unable to cope with  
10 everyday life without hearing aids."
- 11 **Q.** Right, and you're saying that your hearing had deteriorated so badly because of the beatings  
12 that you were getting at Wesley College?
- 13 **A.** Okay, if anybody knows rugby they have heard of cauliflower ear. I had that continuous.
- 14 **Q.** Thank you William. Are you okay, do you want a little -
- 15 **A.** It's fine, I'm good, I'm thankful I'm able to release.
- 16 **Q.** Thank you William. We're just looking at paragraph 74.
- 17 **A.** My ACC records from 1991 show the excuses I provided for my injuries from the abuse.  
18 I didn't want - I did not tell the truth because I was afraid, I was in fear of what they would  
19 do to me.
- 20 **Q.** Okay. Now we're just going to bring up those two ACC forms from your file. 006. Hang  
21 on William, Alex is just working his magic.
- 22 **MR LEULU:** Sorry William.
- 23 **QUESTIONING BY MS SHARKEY CONTINUED:** Can you see that? Probably not, we need  
24 to zoom in a little bit on that one. But this is one ACC report where it says you tripped  
25 while you were walking to the dormitory and another boy landed on your -
- 26 **A.** Ankle, no, the truth of that one, I was told to say that. Okay, the TV room door is like a fire  
27 stop door, it's thick and it's heavy as and when you go to open it, it will shut itself  
28 automatically. One of the punishments I was given was stick my foot in the doorway and  
29 they push on the door to shut it hard.
- 30 **Q.** Thank you William. We're just going to bring up the next one now.
- 31 **A.** Yeah.
- 32 **Q.** This says - can you see that? You were playing around, the door slammed on your finger,  
33 right middle finger.
- 34 **A.** Same thing as the foot, it's just another punishment.

1 **Q.** Okay. All right. So we're just looking at paragraph 75 now.

2 **A.** Since leaving Wesley College I have gone through bouts of depression, and this has  
3 affected the way I am today. I feel like I never had a chance to be a child and that I lost my  
4 youth, I lost my future.

5 **Q.** Thank you William, 76 to 78.

6 **A.** I'm currently diagnosed with Asperger's which evolved from when I had Post Traumatic  
7 Stress Disorder and Bipolar. I believe this is a result of my abuse at Wesley College and  
8 things that happened to me before that.

9 **Q.** Do you want to go to paragraph 78?

10 **A.** I have also developed OCD for certain things. This is a way for me to ensure that I don't  
11 get hurt or it to ever happen to me again or exposed to any harm.

12 **Q.** Okay, thank you. Now we're looking at the impacts on education, starting from paragraph  
13 79.

14 **A.** My experience at Wesley College also affected my education. Waking up every morning at  
15 Wesley College I lived in fear. I was expecting torture and abuse in the morning before a  
16 shower, at lunch time or prep time. This meant I couldn't focus on any schoolwork.

17 I used to love to learn things. When I was younger, I remember wanting to be a doctor. I spend a  
18 lot of time at St John's Ambulance. I now have no ability to learn the way I did.

19 Everything is just crushed because of struggling to hold information in my head. I have  
20 had to redo courses because I just can't complete them or I just can't deal with it.

21 It's frustrating because if the abuse didn't happen I would be able to do things just the once and  
22 properly and not have problems or accidents. In everyday life now I still have accidents  
23 and it's just because my head wants to shut down and I'm fighting not to let it want to run  
24 away and hide because I feel so little.

25 I now find it hard to control my emotions and feel that I need to have my say before I do something  
26 or lash out. One time after I had left school I saw one of the abusers who called me  
27 Willow. That set me off and I beat him up. And I didn't like myself after that.

28 Because of how I felt about meeting one of my abusers on the street, I started staying home. The  
29 thought made me anxious because I didn't know how I would react and I didn't want to be  
30 like them, so you can imagine I'm fighting in my mind and then I tell myself don't go out,  
31 you'll be fine. And repeat their cycle of abuse, I don't want to do that by beating them up,  
32 I'm not going to be like them.

33 It makes me jealous of others because of what has happened to me and how I am.  
34 I can't have things like others have when they're young. They seem so successful and I've

- 1 struggled. But it was only the struggle within myself of what happened to me.
- 2 **Q.** Now we're looking at culture, paragraph 84.
- 3 **A.** After the abuse at Wesley College I had a deep hatred for Islanders. I just didn't know any  
4 Islanders really. And then Wesley showed me that and what they showed me, I don't -  
5 before when what they showed me after that I believe they're all like that. They had me  
6 feeling and living that way that they're all like that, but they're not. I know they're not now,  
7 I'm learning more. I got to give them a chance.
- 8 **Q.** Okay, we'll look at paragraph 85.
- 9 **A.** Yeah. Not good talk about my dad right now. As for my culture, I now see myself as a  
10 world citizen. I realise that others have suffered like I have but in different ways and  
11 different contexts. When I was little, I could see the difference in races but I couldn't  
12 understand why people were treated differently. I noticed it when I arrived from Australia  
13 and people branded me as an Abo when I spoke with an Australian accent.
- 14 I felt like there were not many mixed race people, but I was only young. But now  
15 I know there are thousands of us with mixed race just like me. For that reason I have  
16 learned to accept who I am, I'm trying to still, and find a balance in my views of general  
17 Islanders.
- 18 To deal with the effects of what happened of what I've been through I tried to shut  
19 myself off from my triggers, which has me wanting to stay at home or doing other things. I  
20 have tried carving, picture colouring, puzzles, and creating art pieces. It all depends on my  
21 mood at any given time, and how long my concentration will last.
- 22 Now I want to feel free of judgment and free to make choices for myself. That's  
23 something I found hard. When I left the boarding school, I couldn't make - I didn't know  
24 how to make any choice whatsoever, I had no support. I didn't know how to even make a  
25 choice. And then I leave it up to others to do it for me. Got used to it.
- 26 But nowadays I'm making my choices. Sometimes they're not good ones, but  
27 they're my own. They're my own.
- 28 **Q.** Thank you William.
- 29 **A.** Now I want to feel free of judgment and free to make choices for myself. When I ran away  
30 from Wesley College I had no way of making the right choices, no way of knowing what is  
31 right and who is wrong. I feel that I am who I am because of all the things that has  
32 happened to me at Wesley College.
- 33 **Q.** Okay. And now we're going to paragraph 107. That's where you talk about redress and  
34 possible change. Just starting at paragraph 107 up the top. You're nearly there, William.

1 Well done.

2 A. What I want, it's not just what I want, I know this is what others want too. So what I feel is  
3 for no one to have to suffer like this, ever. Not like I suffered, not like others have spoken  
4 out, no one should have to suffer like that. I want those that made me suffer to be made  
5 responsible. I don't want them to suffer like I did, I just want them to be aware of what  
6 they done and accept that they were wrong. This includes the school. The school. That  
7 was so wrong. I want the world to acknowledge that what the students and school did to  
8 me and the way they hid it was wrong and I've had to live with it all my life.

9 There's no place in this world for that type of violence and abuse, especially when  
10 you're young. You're never given - you're never given a chance and now that we're older  
11 after all these years we're given a chance. To be honest it's not that easy, being in here. It's  
12 an atmosphere that tells me this is all Island and from what I suffered it's hard. It's hard to  
13 be in here. I know these hidings are what they do in the Islands. Well, I believe that's what  
14 happens. And as far as I am concerned there's no place in New Zealand or in the world for  
15 this. It's just gang bashing with someone telling each person to bash the victim.

16 I need changes to happen sooner. I'm getting old and what I mean is if I could see those changes  
17 myself and be physically a part of those changes, that would be more than enough that I'd  
18 need. But for me I feel like it's getting too late. I feel like that I'm far too old now to have a  
19 good future for myself, but for others there's a chance, for other youngsters out there could  
20 be a chance, give them a chance.

21 I think of the way of people complain of abuse in boarding schools needs to  
22 change. It should be run in a way to help the victim. Why are they helping the bully?  
23 Because, you know, you help the bully, that's fine, but it's the victim that stays 'victimed',  
24 the victim will always feel that, it will never go away. It should not be done with the  
25 school, but with an independent organisation that has a process so people don't know they  
26 are telling on other people.

27 In my life I tell people about things and I get ignored a lot of the time it happens  
28 because it's probably how I - it's probably because of what happened to me at boarding  
29 school and how I present myself because of it. This has happened many times throughout  
30 my life. I have tried to make complaints about the school, but I need a lawyer. It's nearly  
31 impossible without a lawyer to properly complain, especially against a boarding school.  
32 I've tried many lawyers since 2002 and none have been able to help me.

33 Q. Keep going William, you can keep going.

34 A. I was only able to feel like I can complain from 2002 because of the support from Ralph.

1 These people doing wrong at Wesley College like the prefects were being protected, are  
2 being protected still. They are empowered by the system and culture at the school. That's  
3 why I couldn't trust anyone. I can't, it's hard, even if I say I trust him, deep down inside I  
4 can't.

5 **Q.** Are you okay?

6 **A.** Yeah. That's why I couldn't trust anyone, the power and protection needs to change.

7 **Q.** A few more paragraphs to go, last page.

8 **A.** The way boarding schools are run should be changed. They try to hide everything that  
9 would make the school look bad. The old boys that sit in the office or on the board of  
10 trustees continue with the old ways. They need different people, maybe more females in  
11 that world. Females will make sure everything is running the way it should be. They add a  
12 factor of morality.

13 My experiences at boarding school was that male energy caused a lot of problems.  
14 It would be good to have stronger female presence to balance things out and keep things  
15 under control and to add values like compassion and empathy. While I say females,  
16 I meant well-educated, retired, that want to do something, give back to the school. All  
17 those -well-educated-, retired people that have nothing to do and they want to do something  
18 more they can go and look after the students. They can give their knowledge. You don't  
19 need seniors having those powers against juniors. It's wrong.

20 As for redress or compensation, I'm not sure I can put a price tag on what I went  
21 through at Wesley, because it destroyed my future. If I was a doctor, who could say I can't  
22 be, and who can say I could be, if I did become a doctor, I probably wouldn't even be here.  
23 But I'd probably be supporting anything like this.

24 **Q.** So you don't have to read paragraph 119. 120.

25 **A.** I'm glad that.

26 **Q.** You're all right?

27 **A.** Thank you. Thank you Sharkey.

28 **Q.** Okay, you speak that one William.

29 **A.** I don't have to do 119 eh?

30 **Q.** No.

31 **A.** Cool. I think a genuine, meaningful apology from Wesley College acknowledging what  
32 happened to me while I was in their care and an apology from those who abused me would  
33 make a lot of difference. Acknowledgment, yes. One person did that, they messaged me  
34 on Facebook to apologise. He was one of the six who beat me, in that Island Respect

- 1           hiding. I guess even the bad people can't shut it out of their mind.
- 2   **Q.**     Just on the last paragraph William.
- 3   **A.**     I know and accept that everything I am today is because of what happened to me. I accept  
4           that I can evolve and be something more and I hope the process, this process will help me  
5           to do that. A copy of my written consent - thank you, statement of truth.
- 6   **Q.**     You went right to the end, well done William.
- 7   **A.**     Oops.
- 8   **Q.**     Thank you very much for sharing your experience, William. I know it hasn't been easy.  
9           And I know you were wanting to do that in person today and that meant coming here to the  
10          fale, so thank you very much for that, okay? I'll just hand you over to Commissioner Erueti  
11          now. I've already had the discussion we did, okay? So that's all right.
- 12   **A.**     Thank you Sharkey.
- 13   **Q.**     No worries, no worries at all.
- 14   **A.**     Thank you Alex.
- 15   **MR LEULU:** You're welcome William.
- 16   **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tēnā koe William, so well done, and kia ora, ngā mihi nui ki a  
17          koe. You've been very brave and courageous to come here, and I know you were  
18          committed and determined to come in and share your truth as you brought it to us. And we  
19          can see the impacts it has had, this experience at Wesley College on you, on your health  
20          and on your future.
- 21                 And I want to thank you on behalf of my fellow Commissioners for having the  
22          courage and coming speaking to us, because in your statement there is much in there for us  
23          that helps us to understand the nature of the abuse that happens in these schools and we are  
24          learning more and more about abuse and neglect in boarding schools, but your contribution  
25          is really invaluable to our understanding of the nature of the culture of bullying and  
26          violence, the inability to talk to someone in a position of authority because there's no  
27          complaint process for you to use that you can trust, yeah. The lack of oversight by teachers  
28          and staff and the house managers, there should have been people there keeping an eye on  
29          you and what the other students were doing during the day and at night. The need for  
30          accountability for what has happened and a clear apology from the kura to you.
- 31                 So thank you, thank you so much for coming in and talking to us here and also  
32          doing it in a public setting so that the public at large can learn more about the nature of the  
33          violence and abuse that happens in these boarding schools. So ngā mihi nui ki a koe te  
34          rangatira, kia ora.

1 A. Thank you very much. I myself have strange ways of communication, because of my  
2 emotions, and when I speak my voice goes up and goes down, goes up and goes down. But  
3 that's been me ever since I ran away from boarding school. So pretty much the sound of  
4 my voice pretty much gives off my feeling. I'm more of a feeler because of it and, I do not  
5 condemn the whole Island race for what has happened to me. I'm just happy that it's out  
6 now and I hope that they won't turn a blind eye.

7 **Q.** Thank you William, thank you for your time, kia ora.

8 **CHAIR:** William, you can be sure we will not be turning a blind eye and we've heard everything  
9 you have said, thank you. And you are our last witness for the day which means we can all  
10 go home after we've had our lotu, our karakia, and I would invite Reverend Suamalie to  
11 come forward for the karakia. Would you like us to stand?

12 **REVEREND NAISALI:** I'll ask everybody to stand when it's the right time to stand.

13 **CHAIR:** Right, thank you.

14 **REVEREND NAISALI:** But just as it is now.

15 **CHAIR:** We are in your hands.

16 **REVEREND NAISALI:** I'd like to say a few words in Kiribati, it goes like this. [**Opening**  
17 **comments in Kiribati**]. If your way up into the Islands has not been right, make sure that  
18 when you leave the island, make it right. Simple like that.

19 And the serenity of this building, this fale is full of aroha, living stories about the  
20 lives of our people. And as we continue to listen, thank you William, we are reminded  
21 today that the world is squeezing us into its mould and we need to transform our lives into a  
22 better pathway to align ourselves with the moana, with the maunga, with the tangata, with  
23 our culture, with the spiritual world, with the law of the land and live a better life for us.

24 We are going to sing our Kiribati song for the afternoon and then I will - after the  
25 song I will ask everybody to stand and I will say the closing prayer in Kiribati. [**Kiribati**  
26 **song**]. Now I ask everybody to upstand and I will close us with a word of prayer. [**Prayer**]

27 **Hearing adjourned at 5.11 pm to Friday, 23 July 2021 at 10 am**

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