

## **1984 Submission from Ngāti Pikiao leads Waitangi Tribunal to abort the proposed discharge of Rotorua's effluent directly into the Kaituna River.**

Following is the submission made to the Waitangi Tribunal by the late Stanley Newton, a leading and greatly respected kaumatua of Ngāti Pikiao and Te Arawa, in strong objection to a proposal which intended to discharge Rotorua city's effluent directly into the Kaituna River. It is widely regarded as being most influential in the decision to abort the proposal after the Tribunal sat at Mourea in Te Tākinga Meeting House in July and October of 1984 to hear the complaint by Ngāti Pikiao against such a discharge of effluent into its sacred river, Kaituna.

### **Submission to Water Right Application to Discharge Sewage Effluent into Kaituna River**

I, Stanley Tetekura Newton, JP QSM, of Mourea, and Chairman of Te Arawa Māori Trust Board wish to express our deepest concern and our strongest objection to the granting of this water right. My Board was established by Parliament in 1922 to represent the interests of the Te Arawa Confederation of Tribes. Subsequent consolidation of the law pertaining to Māori Trust Boards is contained in the Māori Trust Boards Act 1955 and Section 4 (3), provides that 'the beneficiaries of the Board are hereby declared to be the members of the Te Arawa tribe and their descendants'. I am here on behalf of and with full authority of my Board.

The Water Right Application 904/1 seeks to discharge treated sewage effluent into the Kaituna River at a point which is described as Section 14, Recreation Reserve, Gazette Notice 1975 p. 16, Block VI Rotoiti SD I define this area on the Kaituna River with its Māori place name as Pareraurekau.

I am convinced and together with the whole of my Te Arawa people, that a right given to the Rotorua District Council by the Regional Water Board to discharge treated sewage effluent into the Kaituna River would be a complete disregard and an absolute desecration of the historical and environmental significance which we have for this sacred river. The river downstream from Pareraurekau flows through deep gorges with precipitous cliffs on both sides and for many miles from this point. Down to the level country of Paengaroa, one would find a succession of waterfalls, cataracts and turbulent waters flowing between serene and majestic walls of soft rhyolite strata completely clothed in indigenous flora, predominantly of kiekie vines and ferns with a tremendous variety of trees and native shrubs, including our fondest of all the trees, the tanekaha.

Along the sheer cliffs of the river are many caverns and these caverns have been used by my ancestors in pre-European times as burial grounds for their dead. The more accessible of these have been declared as Māori Reserves or urupā, but there are many more unidentified on our modern maps of which nature has secreted into her fold of vine, fern and tree. It is interesting to mention here that one of these huge caverns contains a lake of warm water with an island in the centre forming a hallowed depository for the numerous remains of our ancestors; and there are many more of these caves and secret places along the river from Pareraurekau to Parihaua; to Te Akau reservation; to Kohangakaeaea urupā; to the ancient settlement and pa of Pakotore; to the headlands of that very prominent fortress pa of Rangitihī over-looking the Paengaroa plains which stretch from Maunganui in the west to Maketu; Whakatane in the north and to the East Cape in the distant east.

For generations the Ngāti Pikiao people, sub-tribe of the Te Arawa Tribe, have gathered and used the kiekie flax from the cliffs of this river for weaving tukutuku and turapa panels to adorn most of the 52 meeting houses which my Board is proud to administer and care for in its area. The Ngāti Pikiao tribe own most of the land from Okere to Paengaroa along both sides of the river. This land is used for farming by the Okere and the Taheke Incorporations. Other areas along both sides of the river are unsuitable and too difficult for ordinary farming and these have been used for exotic afforestation by several Trusts.

***And it is into these forests and farms that the effluent should go and we make this plea with all sincerity.***

The Kaituna River has been and will always be the food bowl of the Arawa people and of the Nation. Eels abound in great numbers and the harvest is continuous. At Maketu where the whole river used to flow into the sea, but which is now partly diverted to another outlet, we have the almost inexhaustible supply of shell-fish in cockle, pipi and mussel. The Maketu Estuary is a playground and a food bowl for all New Zealanders; why pollute and despoil it with our own human waste? The idea is completely abhorrent.

The Māori concept of such a thing is catastrophic and the resultant impact would be almost indescribable. Historically it is damnable to our mana and prestige. Culturally it would be a curse upon my tribe, the Ngāti Pikiao, for ever and ever. Of the traditional chants, in Waiata, Pokeka and Oriori and the songs of this most enchanted of all sacred rivers, I shudder in lament:-

*My grief is likened to tear-drops over the dead; my speech is incoherent, my mana, my rangatiratanga has been shattered. I am not able to parry this onslaught with taiaha or mere; with a kotiate or a koikoi. My only weapon is the pakeha pen, which I am using to express the torture which is within me; eating at the very root of my conscience, my hinengaro; and now I turn to my God in heaven and to the spirits of my ancestors to give me peace and rest and to console my inner being, my hinengaro.*

*Don't do it! Put this menace where nature needs it.*

These are the same expressions and sentiments of the people and the Trustees of the:-

Te Arawa Māori Trust Board  
Paehinahina-Mourea Trust  
Matawhaura Lands Trust  
Te Tahuna Golf Course Trust  
Eleven Marae Committees of Ngāti Pikiao  
Eight Land Incorporations of Ngāti Pikiao  
Tribe of Ngāti Pikiao and its many Hapu.

### **Appendage:**

In the Environmental Assessment report on the proposed Nutrient Pipeline in August 1981, together with the Biological Assessment report by the Rotorua District Council, no mention was ever made of the effect, nor the impact that this scheme would have on the Ngāti Pikiao tribe, owners of the land bordering on this river. The late Mr J. E. Carter translated most of the concerns of that tribe in a letter to the B.O.P. Catchment Commission on 10 October 1975 and nothing elsewhere was made about how the effects of such a scheme was going to adversely affect our culture and our environment.

With reference to Application 904/3 a right to discharge treated sewage effluent when it is necessary to dewater the pipeline at the following points: -

- (d) Waingaehe Stream Mouth
- (e) Flood channel - S.H.30
- (t) Waiohewa Stream
- (g) Ohau Channel

We strongly object to the granting of these water rights. These are all residential areas and at Waiohewa there is a Marae there of the same name and situated on the banks of that stream. At Ohau Channel there is Te Tākinga Marae only 100 metres away from the dewatering outlet. And what of the trout fishing in the channel from the bridge right down to the 'Delta'? What of our inanga population, a delicacy which our Māori people have enjoyed ever since Ihenga discovered Te Rotoiti, immediately after the great migration came to New Zealand?

We believe that other methods of disposal should be thoroughly investigated and some alternative scheme adopted. The risk is too great now and it would be greater in the year 2000. The effluent has already cost us many thousands of dollars to treat and we seek to dump it into a harmless river; money down the drain!

*Kia hiwi ra! Kia hiwi ra! Awake! Awake!*

***Acknowledgement: An authorised extract from The West Rotoiti News - Spring 1986***