**Media Statement regarding Wai 262 Claim Report**

**From: Haami Piripi, Te Runanga o Te Rarawa**

**July 1st 2011**

In preparing to receive the Waitangi Tribunal WAI 262 Claim report it has been useful for claimant Iwi, Hapu and Whanau to reflect upon the efficacy of our own indigenous paradigm. Within this focus is the essence of our claim which relies upon our genealogical affiliation to a pantheon of elemental deities spanning the eons of our planetary existence. It is an explanation of the universe that is uniquely Maori with an utterly independent cosmology and theology concerning our existence. Tangata Maori are the traditional repositories of the histories and dynamics of these relationships and this is indelibly reflected in the rich fabric of nomenclature and practices of our forebears spanning the earth to the stars and encompassing the sacredness of the divine.

In the context of this acknowledgement we recall the dedication of the Rangatira who have have initiated this claim and then in their death passed it on to make the claim intergenerational and ecologically perpetual in nature. They were warriors fighting for the ethical sanctity of Maori cultural and intellectual rights and for achieving parity in the protection and nurturing of indigenous knowledge within the legislative and regulatory regime of the New Zealand Government. Our obligation as todays voice of the claim is to maintain their standards and momentum.

Given the breadth and depth of this claim it is not surprising that the Judiciary have taken so long to produce a report which we hope will be of some real significance to the intellectual, cultural and property right laws of this country. Unfortunately with the passing of time, many of the concerns and issues that we have raised in the course of the hearings have been overtaken by contemporary Crown actions which have often exacerbated and in some instances created, fresh injustices.

Successive governments have refused to address the importance of the issue and in their ongoing inaction, have failed to protect our intellectual and cultural potential as the indigenous people of this land. The resulting situation is a legislative and policy environment that is not conducive to the achievement of our claimant aspirations and this makes the strength and recommendations of the report all the more important.

We were heartened by the early release of the chapter on Te Reo Maori which was released in order to be considered by the 2011 Ministerial review on Maori language. However we are also equally disheartened by the lack of government response to the chapter.

As a claimant group of six iwi supported by a vast network of resource people and organisations we expect that this report will take up the weight of this claim as an issue of national importance and recommend it worthy of national high level discussions .

We are also hopeful that the report will enable the Crown to find ways in which they can work together with us to develop initiatives by which effective redress might be achieved. We understand that any fruits coming from the ongoing dialogue between ourselves and the Crown will depend on the quality of our relationship and we urge the Crown to be bold in addressing this issue as a matter of urgency.

He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi remain the constitutional cornerstones of our fundamental right to exercise our kaitiaki responsibilities for the environment and the path to reconciliation over this claim lies within the mana of those historic contracts. Unless the Crown is prepared to take this report seriously the process for resolution could take far longer than the time it has taken to produce the report.

For our part as claimants we were here at the beginning and we will still be here at the end, for us there is no choice, only ongoing hard work.