

Press Release - Wai 262 - Te Tai Tokerau Claimants **30 June 2011**

General Te Tai Tokerau Claimant Website

www.wai262.weebly.com

“Something really major has been achieved with this Wai 262 report, now something much more has to be achieved” says Dr Oliver Sutherland, a long-standing advocate and supporter of the claimants who have taken forward the Wai 262 claim. “To finally receive the report is a major achievement for those elders who were visionaries and among the most radical thinkers in the country. The issues they raised about taonga species, Maori knowledge, the environment and so on are now right out in the open for public debate. That is positive.”

The Waitangi Tribunal releases its three-volume report on the Wai 262 report on Saturday at Roma Marae in Ahipara. It is the result of a twenty-year process of hearings, evidence and legal submissions on a broad range of issues concerning the protection and promotion of matauranga Maori – traditional knowledge in which Maori have obligations of *kaitiakitanga* or guardianship.

The last remaining claimant still living today, Whaea Saana Murray of Ngati Kuri, received an embargoed version of the Tribunal report with a broad smile and a waiata. “There is no limit to aroha” she said. “Aroha is at the heart of our Maori culture. We retain our tino rangatiratanga, our authority, to all of our taonga.”

At a hui of Te Tai Tokerau claimants to discuss the implications of the report, representatives from Ngatiwai, Ngati Kuri and Te Rarawa stated that there was an urgent need to engage with the Crown as to how the Tribunal’s findings can be implemented as part of law reform. “Much will depend on the goodwill of the Treaty partners, and the resources available to whanau and hapu, to really bring out the potential of the Tribunal’s recommendations” says Maui Solomon, a lawyer for the claimants. “This could be a watershed opportunity for the Crown to reach a standard of partnership with Maori which truly reflects what our ancestors had intended should occur when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed.”

Hori Parata is a passionate supporter of the environment and the role of kaitiaki in the health of our species and the environment. “Ngatiwai has always stood alongside those two whaea, Del Wihongi and Saana Murray, and we continue to support their vision and kaupapa.”

The hui noted that the Tribunal had supported the claimants’ concerns about matauranga Maori and in particular:

- That current law does not recognize or support the kaitiaki relationships with artistic and cultural works that are significant to the culture and identity of Maori;
- That a new system be established to prevent offensive public use of “taonga works” or traditional knowledge, and that the holders of that knowledge be entitled to object to commercial uses of Maori knowledge which have not obtained prior consent;
- That bioprospecting in the conservation estate be undertaken in partnership with tangata whenua.
- That a range of reform proposals are made to improve the relationship between the Crown and Maori wherever matauranga Maori is at issue.