

“Margaret Morgan has Maori in her.”

Those were the words 67 years ago, Margaret Morgan-Allen says first made the blue-eyed, light-haired primary schoolgirl aware of her whakapapa.

They were also a spark for her crusade decades later for the recognition of her whanau bloodlines to ancestor Te Paea to be recognised as an autonomous hapu - Ngati Hikitanga Te Paea. It is a campaign she has taken all the way to the Waitangi Tribunal.

Mrs Morgan-Allen says she was 12 when she heard the remark from a couple of other young girls. She waited till her father, Gwyn Morgan, who was in the army, came home for the weekend to ask him about her heritage.

“Haven’t you looked at the photographs of your great grandmother Matilda (Matiria) and your great great grandmother Rangiuira (who had a moko),” she recalls her dad saying. “I said yes, but it had not sunk in. I had blue eyes, light colour hair, though I did have olive skin.”

A further revelation about her ancestry came out of the blue via a letter from an author and researcher of Maori history around the Kapiti Coast.

A fellow college pupil had asked if her surname was Morgan, and then said they were related through Matilda and her mother Rangiuira, Mrs Morgan-Allen recalls. She says she told other girl that couldn’t be, as to her knowledge neither of her tupuna had siblings. “We became friends and the relationship was never mentioned again.”

Some 14 years later, however, Gwyn received the letter from the researcher revealing Rangiuira (Te Paea’s daughter) was also known by the name Rakera, and had two brothers, Mrs Morgan-Allen says. Her father and uncles were astonished by the news, and her grandfather David Morgan - Rangiuira’s grandson - was in shock, she says.

It is historic actions of the Crown and its agencies which resulted in the loss of the lands of her ancestors that is at the heart of that confusion around their heritage, Mrs Morgan-Allen believes.

That loss of land resulted in a loss of mana, opportunity and identity, she believes. She is attempting to redress that with the Wai 977 claim. Mrs Morgan-Allen is a member of the Tumatanui Incorporated Society, which represents Wai 977 and 13 other Waitangi claims in the Porirua ki Manawatu District.

Ngati Hikitanga Te Paea’s ancestor, Te Paea (whose grandmother was Hikitanga), migrated south to the Horowhenua from the Waikato about 1827 in one of the heke (migration) featuring Ngati Toa rangitira Te Rauparaha, Mrs Morgan-Allen says.

Te Rauparaha and his sister Waitohi allocated land to Te Paea at Mahoenui (Rangiuira's birthplace), on the north-west side of Lake Waiwiri (Papaitonga), she says.

Te Paea also held rights over other land around Lake Waiwiri during his lifetime plus several prominent areas in Horowhenua and Otaki, Mrs Morgan-Allen says.

But her ancestors lost the Mahoenui land in a decision by the Native Land Court of New Zealand (the forerunner of the Maori Land Court) in 1873, the Wai 977 claim says - rendering hapu members "from being the property owners to evictees from the land that they had been reared upon".

The claim says the Crown also failed to recognize Ngati Hikitunga Te Paea's customary rights over Hokio Stream, which "led to a marginalization of the hapu as a whole".

As a result of those acts, as well as the loss of further lands through actions of the Crown and its agencies, the hapu has suffered a "loss of mana and rangatiratanga, and a consequential loss of economic, culture and political autonomy", Wai 977 claims.

The claim asks for Ngati Hikitunga Te Paea to be recognised as an autonomous hapu, reparation for the use of a number of customary lands, and an apology from the Crown.

Mrs Morgan-Allen, who submitted Wai 977, was instrumental in the uncovering of the history of the descendants of Te Paea.

The mother-of-four, who lives in Marton, applied the same determination and energy to her campaign that had seen her play representative softball and hockey, and continue to compete in Hockey until she was 47.

She searched through newspaper and magazine articles to find descendants of Te Paea, and helped reunite them in an inaugural hui in 2001 at Ohau Domain, Levin.

Inspired by their newly acknowledged links to their past, several went on to enroll in certificate courses in Te Teo, Mauri Ora and weaving, Mrs Morgan-Allen says. She and two others attended a training course for Maori trustees.

Mrs Morgan-Allen wants Wai 977 to redress any historic wrongs done to her hapu and provide recompense, so Ngati Hikitunga Te Paea of today "can look forward to a brighter future for our descendants, than the future that awaited the descendants of Rangiuira/Rakera after (the loss of their lands)".

