

In concluding this report, I must apologize for its great length, but consider that the importance of the events that have occurred in this district during the past year warrant my reporting as fully as I have done upon them.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE T. WILKINSON,
Native Agent.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

No. 9.

Mr. H. W. BRABANT, R.M., Tauranga, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Native Office, Tauranga, 31st May, 1881.

I have the honor to submit, for the information of the Hon. the Native Minister, the following annual report on Native affairs in the districts under my charge.

1. *Tauranga District.*

It becomes yearly more difficult to write a report on the condition of the Natives, because, as I stated in my last, there is so little difference in their condition and habits from year to year. The census just taken shows that its population is not materially decreasing; the Natives have not shown any mortality above the average during the past year. The only death worthy of note is that of Hori Tupaea, the principal chief of the Ngaiterangi, at a good old age. The festivities indulged in by Natives on the occasion of the death of a chief of his note were continued for some months, and are even now commenced anew when any strangers visit the district.

In this district, during the past year, the Native crops have been below the average both in quantity and quality; the tribes of the western end of the district have from time to time employed themselves in digging gum, while those at the eastern end have earned some money from the County Council in forming portions of the Tauranga and Te Puke Road, on which they are still working. The arranging for this road to go through the various blocks has been a work of much difficulty, and has taken up much of my time, the Natives, contrary to their former practice, having been strongly opposed to its being made unless they were paid for the land taken for the road. They were first, I believe, induced to make this demand from the circumstance of the Government having thought it expedient to pay other tribes for the opening of the Cambridge and Rotorua Road; the Tauranga Natives, who had hitherto given land for main lines of road through their lands, arguing that if Government paid for one road they should pay for the other. After a great deal of negotiation, an arrangement was made by the Hon. the Native Minister with the Natives that the road should be allowed to go through, provided the work was given to the Native owners at the County Engineer's estimate, and that cultivations really damaged by the road should be fenced.

In this, as in other districts, the Natives show an increased desire to dispose of their surplus lands. When at the commencement of the year the Government ordered that, in addition to my other duties, I should undertake those of Commissioner of Tauranga Lands, I was besieged with applications to investigate the title of nearly the whole of the 70,000 acres now left of the land returned by the Government to the Ngaiterangi Tribe. They are disposed to sell, I believe, nearly all the land which the Commissioner may certify is not requisite for their own support, if Government should think fit to allow them to do so.

I have held up to date about forty sittings of the Commissioner's Court, and the certificates showing the results of these negotiations will shortly be forwarded to your office.

In the Police Court, Tauranga, the number of charges against aboriginal Natives during the past year has been fifteen, of which ten resulted in convictions; two of the latter were for assaults, two for larceny, and the rest for drunkenness and minor offences; the return showing a considerable decrease from the previous year. In the Resident Magistrate's Court seventeen cases were tried between Natives and Europeans, but none in which both plaintiff and defendant were Natives. I find that their disputes are generally now settled by their Committee, or referred to the Native Assessor; they allege that the fees of the Court are too heavy for them to avail themselves of it in petty disputes.

There are now nine boys in the boarding establishment for the sons of chiefs; these boys attend the European district school, and have made good progress. The teacher informs me that one (Raureti Tanira) will shortly be fit to go up for the Junior Civil Service examination. The Education Department propose, at the request of the Natives, again to establish a Native school in this district. It is to be at Maungatapu, on the east side of the harbour; a good situation, in my opinion, as there are enough children within easy distance to form a good school if the Natives would combine in the matter and forget their intertribal jealousies; it was their failure to do so which caused the old school to be closed.

2. *Maketu District.*

I have visited Ohinemutu and the Lake country once a month during the past year, to hold the Resident Magistrate's Court; Mr. Bush, R.M., of Opotiki, taking that at Maketu. An arrangement has been made by which that gentleman will take Ohinemutu as well, whenever the Tauranga Commissioners' Court is sitting.

Unlike those at Tauranga, the Natives of the Maketu and Lake Districts are litigious and give the Magistrates plenty of employment settling their disputes, which are chiefly cases of trespass and disputed ownership of horses and cattle.

At Ohinemutu the principal event during the year has been the Natives giving their consent to Judge Fenton's scheme for laying out and selling a township there. They appear to have gone heartily into the project, and the Court is now sitting to investigate title to the proposed township. The importance of this step will be seen when it is remembered that for years the Natives have persistently opposed the sitting of a Land Court in the Lake country; probably it is the thin end of the wedge which will eventually open their lands to European settlement and enterprise.

I regret to remark the extent to which the Natives of this district now neglect cultivation, depending in a great measure on what they get from tourists and other precarious sources for a living, resulting about this time last year in distress nearly approaching famine. They have, however, shown a disposition to accept employment on roads. A portion of the road between Maketu and Te Puke has been formed by them, and some individuals and parties have been employed on the Tauranga-Taupo and the