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Maori tithes 'sovereign' a nuisance says tribe

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A self-proclaimed Maori "sovereign" at the centre of a court case that saw a woman lose her home has previously tried to lay claim to a wind farm, according to an iwi leader.

Tuhoe chief negotiator Tamati Kruger said Arikinui o Tuhoe was known for turning up at tribal meetings to make claims, and their paths had crossed more than once.

Arikinui o Tuhoe claims she is the sovereign head of the land and that homeowner Charlotte Marsh should give tithes rather than pay rates on her Manurewa, Auckland, property.

Marsh had not paid rates for five years, and her Rogers Rd home was sold by the High Court last week to



Arikinui o Tuhoe claims she has the right to tithes as the 'head of this land', but an Auckland woman has lost her home. Photo: Rory O'Sullivan/Fairfax NZ

cover the debt of \$12,000 owed to Auckland Council. Marsh's three-bedroom home sold at auction for \$597,000.

About three years ago, Arikinui o Tuhoe laid claim to the Te Apiti wind farm in Manawatu, and owner Meridian Energy wrote to him asking if her claims had any legitimacy, Kruger said.

"I said, 'we have nothing to do with her, Tuhoe lays no claims to those properties in that area', and so that was the end of that claim."

Meridian said it had no record of a claim by Arikinui o Tuhoe on the Te Apiti site, when approached by the *Sunday Star-Times* this week.

Kruger said she "travels around the country widely" making such claims.

"Most iwi would be able to tell

you some very entertaining stories about her antics."

A few years earlier she turned up uninvited at a meeting he convened at Waikaremoana just before the Tuhoe Treaty of Waitangi negotiations started.

"We had to eject her out of the meeting, and her two sons, and escort her off the marae," he said.

In a separate incident during the negotiations, she and her family arrived at a Waitangi Tribunal field visit, claiming the tribunal should talk to no-one but her.

"The local Tuhoe women then escorted her away because she was really interrupting proceedings," Kruger said.

"The tribunal judge at the time thanked us very much, because he had also met up with her a few

times elsewhere."

It was thought she came from somewhere around Ohakune, and was at least part Pacific Islander. He had not heard of her taking money from people before, but the situation with Marsh was concerning in the light of scams such as Maori passports.

Arikinui o Tuhoe says her name is a title handed down to her from her ancestors 4000 years ago.

"Me being the sovereign head of this land, I am entitled to have tithing," she said.

"All the churches are making their people tithe and they haven't got the God-given right."

Tuhoe were not an iwi, she said.

"They have no rights, they're a Crown grantee ... They didn't get any rights from the tupuna."