



## REMEMBERING PARIHAKA NOVEMBER 5<sup>th</sup> 2017

### What was Parihaka?

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Aotearoa-New Zealand was a place of war. Land was taken from Maori by new settlers through dodgy deals, false promises and brute force. Maori responded violently and were met by further violence. In the 1870's the Parihaka settlement in Taranaki became a focal point for Maori seeking a different response than violence. People travelled to Parihaka on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of each month to talk over the issues.

Under the leadership of **Te Whiti o Rongomai** and **Tohu Kakahi**, a decision was taken to put aside practices of revenge. It was argued that nothing good would come from violence but it was still necessary to resist the injustices of land confiscations and the loss of control over their lives.

Instead of taking up arms against the settlers who were taking their land, the people of Parihaka sent out men to plough the land and erect fences. They were arrested but offered no resistance. More men were sent to replace them. They too were arrested, offered no resistance, and others took their place. On **5<sup>th</sup> November 1881** government troops invaded the settlement of Parihaka and arrested the leaders and many of the men. Homes and cultivations were burned, the women were raped and livestock was destroyed.

Parliament passed special laws to enable the men of Parihaka to be imprisoned without charge. No trials were held and the men were taken to labour on projects in Wellington and Dunedin (where they were "housed" in caves)

In the subsequent years, the story of Parihaka's non-violent resistance to colonial land-grabbing gained both local and international recognition. Fifty years before Gandhi's better known non-violent resistance to British rule of India, the people of Parihaka found a peaceful way to protest against injustice.

### The Crown Apologises:

The people of Parihaka have lived with grievance for well over 100 years. They have demanded that, at the very least, the Crown should apologise for the savage and unjust treatment of their people in the 1880's.

In 2017 this finally happened. At a ceremony in June, attended by hundreds, the people of Parihaka were given this long-awaited apology by the Crown in the person of Attorney-General, Chris Finlayson.

In a symbolic move, the Crown party was met at Parihaka by children singing - an echo back to the invasion of the township by Crown military forces on November 5, 1881. On that day, the troops were greeted by children performing a haka and singing before being offered loaves of bread baked for them. The troops sacked much of the village and arrested the leaders as well as many of the men.

This was fully acknowledged in the formal apology, which referred to the way the people sang songs and provided gifts of food as their homes were destroyed.

*"The Crown now joins Parihaka in paying tribute to the men, women and children who responded to the Crown's tyranny with dignity, discipline and immense courage."*

The Crown apology spoke of the goals of Te Whiti and Tohu Kakahi, saying that while Parihaka had promoted peaceful engagement between Maori and Pakeha, *"the Crown responded to peace with tyranny, to unity with division, and to autonomy with oppression"*.

The formal apology was part of a reconciliation package for the community, including a Deed of Reconciliation and \$9 million for Parihaka to use for their development - including new buildings, as well as archaeological work.

It is aimed at continuing the legacy of the community's founding prophets Te Whiti and Tohu Kakahi, who set up Parihaka in 1866 after being forced off their own lands during the Land Wars.

Legislation will be introduced to Parliament for the reconciliation package to take effect.

The Deed itself said, among many other things,

*The Crown now joins Parihaka in paying tribute to the men, women, and children who responded to the Crown's tyranny with dignity, discipline and immense courage. It is the Crown's sincerest hope that through this apology, Parihaka and the Crown can now acknowledge their shared past, move beyond it, and begin to work together to fulfil the vision of peaceful coexistence that Tohu and Te Whiti described.*