

NEW ZEALAND

Apology to Parihaka: 'The Crown res
tyranny'

9 Jun, 2017 4:24pm

NZ Herald, 2017a

NZ Herald
Attorney General Chris Finlayson. PHOTO/ John Stone

The people of Parihaka have been given a long-awaited apology by the Crown for actions in the late 1800s at a reconciliation ceremony attended by hundreds.

Attorney General Chris Finlayson delivered the apology, saying acknowledging the suffering the Crown's actions caused for many generations at Parihaka was an important part of reconciliation, but looking forward was also important.

"For the vision of Tohu Kakahi and Te Whiti o Rongomai was not one of protest and resistance. Theirs was a vision of self-determination, co-operation and peace.

"In the past, the Crown felt threatened by that vision and sought to undermine it. Today the Crown comes to Parihaka to make a contribution to the fulfilment of that vision.

"Parihaka has waited a long time for this day."

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.

It was also acknowledged in the formal apology, which referred to the songs and gifts of food as their village was 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 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".

It apologised in particular for imprisoning Parihaka residents for acts of passive resistance, such as ploughing settlers' fields, with imprisonment without trial and for the sacking of Parihaka in 1881, including forcible evictions, desecrating homes and sacred buildings. It also apologised for the rape by Crown troops after that invasion "and for the immeasurable and enduring harm that this caused to the women of Parihaka, their families and their uri (descendants) until the present day".

It addressed the arrests and detention of Te Whiti and Tohu Kakahi for 16 months without trial.

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.

The Parihaka agreement was not a Treaty of Waitangi settlement because the community is made up of people from several iwi.

Finlayson said despite that, the reconciliation with Parihaka was an important step in addressing the historic grievances in Taranaki.

Finlayson said the events at Parihaka were among the most shameful in the history of the country, but were not well understood. He said the Crown's actions left the people "impoverished, demoralised and vilified," causing harm for generations of Maori in the Taranaki.

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

The full text of the Apology in English and te reo Maori:

Crown Apology

In 1866, the settlement of Parihaka was established as a final refuge for Taranaki hapū whose homes and cultivations had been repeatedly destroyed by Crown troops, and who had recently suffered the indiscriminate confiscation of traditional lands that had sustained them and their tupuna for generations, and which formed the very bedrock of their identity.

At a time of unprecedented loss and continuing Crown violence, the people of Parihaka chose to establish their new community under principles of compassion, equality, unity, and self-sufficiency. Under the leadership of Tohu Kākahi and Te Whiti o Rongomai, the community at Parihaka asserted their customary rights to land and political autonomy through symbolic acts of protest while promoting peaceful engagement between Māori and Pākehā. Parihaka became a place of refuge and a source of inspiration for thousands of people from across Taranaki and from elsewhere in Aotearoa.

The Crown acknowledges that it failed to recognise or respect the vision of self-determination and partnership that Parihaka represented. The Crown responded to peace with tyranny, to unity with division, and to autonomy with oppression.

The Crown therefore offers its deepest apologies to the people of Parihaka for all its failures, and in particular for the following actions:

- For imprisoning Parihaka residents for their participation in the ploughing and fencing campaigns of 1879 and 1880, and for promoting laws that breached natural justice by enabling those protestors to be held in South Island jails without trial for periods that assumed the character of indefinite detention;
- For depriving those political prisoners of their basic human rights, and for inflicting unwarranted hardships both on them and on members of their whānau and hapu who remained behind and sustained Parihaka in their absence;
- For invading Parihaka in November 1881, forcibly evicting many people who had sought refuge there, dismantling and desecrating their homes and sacred buildings, stealing heirlooms, and systematically destroying their cultivations and livestock;
- For the rapes committed by Crown troops in the aftermath of the invasion, and for the immeasurable and enduring harm that this caused to the women of Parihaka, their families, and their uri until the present day;
- For the arrest and detention of Tohu Kākahi and Te Whiti o Rongomai for 16 months without trial in the South Island;
- For its imposition of a pass system which regulated entry into Parihaka, denied residents the freedom of movement, and prevented supporters from providing Parihaka with supplies following the invasion;
- For compounding these injustices by returning land under a regime that deprived owners of control and ultimately the ownership of much of the Parihaka reserves, and which remain in place to this day.

The Crown denied Parihaka the right to develop and sustain itself on its own terms, and then failed for many years to address the resulting grievances in an appropriate way.

The Crown profoundly regrets these actions, which have burdened the people of Parihaka with an intergenerational legacy of grievance and deprivation, and which have burdened the Crown with a legacy of shame.

On the 7th day of November every year, the whānau of Parihaka come together to remember those tupuna who, in 1881, met the Crown's soldiers with songs and gifts of food, and who honoured their commitment to peace while their homes and gardens were destroyed and leaders imprisoned.

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.