

**stuff****Parihaka: Reconciling the past and paving the way for the future**

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Last updated 15:13, June 9 2017

Parihaka, a settlement on the South Taranaki coast, has been synonymous with peace and non-violent resistance, a legacy created by prophets Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi.

Trevor Read

*A new chapter in the history of Parihaka has begun. Deena Coster reports.*

Te Akau Wharehoka believes reviving the vision of his ancestors is now within grasp.

As a resident of Parihaka, a settlement along Taranaki's southern coast, the 27-year-old is acutely aware of the losses and injustices faced by his people in the wake of the 1881 invasion by armed troops. But he believes there will be a time when it will become a thriving, busy community again.

Robert Charles

The pathway to reconciliation for Parihaka has been years in the making.

"It's amazing to think it's pretty much going to happen in our generation," he says.

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On Friday, a reconciliation ceremony, known as He Puanga Haeata, took place between the people of Parihaka and the Crown, 135 years on from the invasion which decimated the settlement.

ARCHIVE

Depiction of what Parihaka looked like in 1881 before the devastating invasion.

The reconciliation package includes a \$9 million development fund, a set of relationship agreements between local and central government and legislation that legally binds the government's commitment to Parihaka.

Wharehoka says it also creates a relationship between Parihaka and the Crown which has not existed before.

It is something Parihaka's famous prophets Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi had always wanted too - a harmonious relationship between Maori and Pakeha, he says.

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Te Whiti O Rongomai was the subject of a biography written by Dr Danny Keenan.

"For a long time, it was about Parihaka being able to maintain its own integrity and autonomy and now, with this reconciliation process, our rangatahi feel like we have that relationship," he says.

"That's a huge thing."

In the years before November 5, 1881, Parihaka was flourishing.

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Historian Dr Danny Keenan believes reconciliation enables a chance for recovery for the people of Parihaka.

About 1500 people lived there, sustained by produce grown in its communal gardens, with extra supplies used to help feed the thousands of visitors who turned up every month to listen to the messages of peace spoken by prophets Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi.

The men spoke of passive resistance, a non-violent alternative to picking up arms, even in the face of the land conflicts which had broken out in the 1860s around the province.

But on November 5, 1881, the self-autonomous village was destroyed when 1600 armed constabulary and volunteers raided the settlement, shattering the peace.

CHARLOTTE CURD/Fairfax NZ

Former New Plymouth mayor Andrew Judd spearheaded a peace walk to Parihaka last year, accompanied by hundreds of people.

The two prophets were arrested, the people of Parihaka evicted from their homes, properties which were then pillaged by soldiers, who made off with treasured possessions, including greenstone, mats and cloaks.

Women were also raped during the invasion.

Growing up at Parihaka, Wharehoka says he has a strong sense of the pain suffered by his tupuna and the toll the violence and the loss of land and opportunities had on them.

Hagen Hopkins

Attorney-General Chris Finlayson has represented the government in its negotiations with the people of Parihaka and has described the reconciliation ceremony as a "day of national significance".

Aware of its significant place in New Zealand history, Wharehoka says what happened at Parihaka has shaped the lives of its residents, but does not define them.

"It's made us a lot more resilient in ourselves and more sure of ourselves and how we want our future to play out," he says.

The reconciliation process gives the people of Parihaka "a new, fresh start," he says.

Cameron Burnell

For several years, the Parihaka Peace Festival was held at the South Taranaki settlement.

"He Puanga Haeata is about that break of dawn, that first light that comes through."

It also means "the process of healing can start," he says.

Friday's apology was not the first given by the government which referenced the horrors it bestowed on the people of Parihaka.

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Dr Rachel Buchanan, who has researched and written about Parihaka, says everyone in Taranaki is connected to the sacred settlement in some way.

The injustices have been referred to when the Crown has given their official apologies to iwi around the region, as part of previous treaty settlement agreements.

Historian Dr Danny Keenan says despite the extensive losses faced by its people, Parihaka remains "a huge moral victory" for Taranaki Maori.

Maori history can be defined as the survival of mana, despite the odds, he says.

ANDY JACKSON/Fairfax NZ

Traditional ploughing techniques have been used to create communal gardens at Parihaka.

"In light of this then Parihaka was important - in the context of hurt, dispossession and grievous loss, Taranaki Maori were able to maintain and assert their mana, which was never lost and of course is much in evidence today," he says.

Keenan says what's important about the reconciliation process is that it aids recovery.

"This has enabled Maori to embark upon economic development, social enhancement and communal regeneration, building upon those cultural elements that were never lost," he says.

Reconciliation has been a theme in other countries where atrocities and injustices have been suffered by indigenous people.

Following the abolition of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, a truth and reconciliation commission was set up to help deal with the aftermath, including the impact the violence and human rights abuses had on the population.

It was designed to help South Africans come to terms with its past.

Canada also established a truth and reconciliation commission in 2009 to listen to the stories shared by the survivors of a regime of assimilation involving First Nations people.

More than 150,000 children were sent away to residential schools run by the state and church where some suffered physical and sexual abuse.

Last month, hundreds of aboriginal leaders in Australia met together to discuss constitutional reform, which included setting up a commission and establishing a 'truth-telling' process about how indigenous people were treated.

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Former New Plymouth mayor Andrew Judd, who headed up a peace walk to Parihaka last year, says the reconciliation ceremony has global significance due to the message of peace Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi promoted.

"What they did, and how they did it, was a message to the world," he says.

The three day hikoi in 2016, which traversed the 43 kilometres between New Plymouth and Parihaka, was Judd's idea and motivated by his desire to begin a new conversation about racial inclusion in the province.

It was prompted by the amount of abuse he copped for his support of Maori representation on the New Plymouth District Council.

It's a journey Judd still finds himself on today and his personal connection with Parihaka and its history has been a key part of this.

"It's incumbent on all of us to know our past," he says.

The needs of Parihaka were highlighted in May 2014, when the Taranaki iwi trustees and its treaty negotiators withdrew from signing its deal with the Crown until a way to provide redress for the settlement was established.

What followed was the formation of a working party, known as Kawe Tutaki, along with a series of assessments by the trust, which provided the government with a clear understanding of the priorities and aspirations the people of Parihaka had.

The money will be used to develop the settlement, with funding channelled into different projects the people of Parihaka have deemed to be high priority for them.

This includes addressing the settlement's infrastructure needs, which will help future-proof the site and provide it with the potential to grow.

It's support Dr Rachel Buchanan believes has been a long time coming.

Connected to Parihaka through whakapapa, Buchanan has researched and written about the sacred settlement during her long career as a historian and journalist.

It's a place she has also visited, including in 2001, when she says she was "shocked" by the poor state of the housing and infrastructure, something which contrasted starkly with the wealth stories and history connected to the place.

One essay she wrote called *Beating Shame: Parihaka and the very long sorry*, examines the impact land confiscation had on the psyche of Maori and how the ongoing trauma has affected people through the generations.

"So much of Taranaki history can be understood by what happened at Parihaka. Parihaka explains a lot of things," she says.

Buchanan says she believes more needed to be done to educate the wider community about the province's land war history and what happened at Parihaka.

"Every Taranaki person is connected to that place in some way," she says.

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Between 50 to 70 people currently live at the settlement, a small proportion of people who called it home in the 1870s.

While inadequate infrastructure and a lack of employment opportunities have been challenges in the past for the settlement, Wharehoka says it has not stopped progress being made.

Monthly meetings at Parihaka are held, where stories and history is shared and work to maintain the maara kai or community garden is done.

"It's all happened through the efforts of our own people," he says.

maara

Wharehoka says the contribution of kaumatua, both living and those who had since passed away, had also been tremendous.

"It was a lot of their effort that got Parihaka to the point where it is today," he says.

His own hopes for Parihaka are simple - that it will be a place filled with whanau, who speak Te Reo Maori and live off the land, while staying true to the values and teachings of their tupuna.

"This is home," he says. "It's our paradise."

#### Road to reconciliation:

May 2014: Taranaki iwi treaty negotiators put settlement on hold until process to develop plan for Parihaka confirmed

January 2015: Advisory group, known as Kawe Tutaki, formed