

1881

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Crown apologises to Parihaka for past horrors

Tara Shaskey · 19:58, Jun 09 2017

67



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People were seen atop a hill at Parihaka with instruments during the powhiri.

Tears coursed down the cheeks of Puna Wano-Bryant as she told of the atrocities suffered by her tupuna following the invasion of Parihaka by 1600 armed constabulary nearly 140 years ago.

"Today we have asked for an apology for our men...for taking them away from their families and leaving our women behind...to be raped...and assaulted by Crown troops," she said weeping.

"Those women were our mothers, our grandmothers... from here."



SIMON O'CONNOR/FAIRFAX NZ

Hundreds gathered at the gates of Parihaka waiting to be called onto the pa.

On Friday hundreds gathered at the coastal Taranaki settlement to hear the Crown apologise for the past horrors endured by the people of Parihaka.

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The long-awaited Parihaka-Crown reconciliation ceremony, He Puanga Haeata, has been three years in the making.

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The manuhiri (visitors) begin their walk onto the pa, welcomed by a chorus of karanga.

As the visitors, which included Chief Justice Dame Sian Elias, Maori Development Minister Te Ururoa Flavell and Labour leader Andrew Little, began their walk onto the pa they were accompanied by the karanga of elders who called out with an obvious pain in their wails.

The children of Parihaka were at the front of the greeting, twirling their poi to a series of waiata - the same way the children welcomed the constabulary who invaded the pa on November 5, 1881.

Treaty Negotiations Minister Chris Finlayson delivered the apology on behalf of the Crown, and introduced it by saying he knew it had been a long time coming.



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A reconciliation ceremony between the people of Parihaka and the Crown will take place today.

"I acknowledge Parihaka has waited a long time for this day," he said.

He said it was important the history of what happened at Parihaka was put on the record.



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The past events, which included the plundering of the pa, the arrest of leaders Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi and the raping of women, were "among the most shameful in the history of our land," Finlayson said.

But they were not understood or known, even today, he said.

"In part, this is because the history of Parihaka is an uncomfortable one - for some it may raise questions we would rather not confront."

He said for many people at the ceremony the history was uncomfortable for a different reason.

"For them the sense of grievance that arises from that history is anything but history, it's remembered, it's lived everyday.

"That is why the Crown comes today offering an apology to the people of Parihaka for actions that were committed in its name almost 140 years ago."

In the apology, Finlayson detailed the Crown's failings which included the imprisonment without trial of residents, the deprivation of the prisoners' basic human rights, the invasion and forced eviction of residents, the sacking of the pa, for the rapes committed by Crown troops and the arrests of Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi.

Finlayson said the Crown regretted these actions, which had burdened it with a legacy of shame.

In addition to the apology, both parties signed two documents, a Deed of reconciliation and a Parihaka-Crown Relationship Agreement.

Wano-Bryant, chair of the Parihaka Papakainga Trust, said the reconciliation - which includes a payment of \$9 million as well as deals for development services from 10 Crown agencies and three local councils - was about more than just money and legislation, it was about the reconciliation of spirit.

"That is the priority, healing and reconciliation inter-generational trauma which still exists today," she said.

"This event will not settle it or take it away, it is not an end, it is only a beginning."

Descendant of William Rolleston, the Native Affairs Minister who signed the proclamation to invade Parihaka, John Rolleston was at the ceremony, along with other descendants of soldiers responsible for the decimation of the village.

He said the reconciliation was important and long overdue.

Jean Hikaka, daughter of Parihaka's Maata Wharehoka, said the ceremony was a good start to rebuilding those relationships.

She said there had been too much pain for too long and her tupuna wouldn't have wanted that.

"If you were the people going through all that mamae (hurt) would you want that to be the inheritance of your people?"

Their legacy was far greater than that, she said.

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