

Te Whakatōhea Historic Moment: First Reading at Parliament for Treaty Settlement

Wellington 17th August 2023: Today marked a significant milestone towards reconciliation and justice of what the Waitangi Tribunal has found to be “among the worst Treaty breaches in this country’s history”. The Treaty Settlement Bill for Te Whakatōhea received its inaugural reading in the halls of Parliament today.

The occasion was met with a palpable sense of anticipation and hope, as representatives from Te Whakatōhea, government officials, and dignitaries gathered to witness this pivotal moment in history. The proposed settlement holds the promise of addressing historical grievances and forging a path towards a stronger and more harmonious future for all parties involved.

Vaughan Payne, chair of the post settlement governance entity Te Tāwharau o Te Whakatōhea, says it is significant to be in parliament 158 years after the Crown waged war on Te Whakatōhea (September 1865).

” Getting here today has been a very long struggle. The struggle started over 100 years ago when our tīpuna commenced the first of numerous petitions to Parliament seeking inquiries into the wrongs inflicted on us.

“I acknowledge those who are no longer physically with us. Those who suffered and sought justice for the atrocities inflicted by the Crown on our whānau, hapū and Iwi over the past 150 years. We are thinking of you, you are in our hearts” says Vaughan.

At dawn yesterday, a bus and a van filled with both elders (pakeke) and youth (rangatahi) embarked on a 10-hour hīkoi (journey) from Ōpōtiki to Wellington. More than 100 whānau members of Te Whakatōhea made the journey to sit in the parliamentary gallery, bearing witness to this inaugural legislative moment.

The deed of settlement includes financial redress of \$100 million, 5000 ha of marine space reserved exclusively for Te Whakatōhea, the transfer of 33 sites as cultural redress, 51 sites as commercial redress,

relationship agreements with various Crown agencies, first right to buy Crown lands in the future and recognition by the Crown of the Treaty breaches, and a formal apology for those breaches.

“We look forward to a future where Whakatōhea can return to prosperity and moving together in a spirit of good faith and partnership. We look forward to the Crown rebuilding and honouring the trust that our rangatira had they signed Te Tiriti o Ōpōtiki, 183 years ago.”

ENDS

About Te Tāwharau o Te Whakatōhea

Te Tāwharau o Te Whakatōhea is the post settlement governance entity that will receive the settlement assets on behalf of ngā uri o Te Whakatōhea.

www.tewhakatohea.co.nz

Te Whakatōhea are based in the Eastern Bay of Plenty centred around the town of Ōpōtiki. Their collective prosperity is recorded in their historical account agreed with the Crown:

“Whakatōhea soon realised the advantage of controlling the transport in the Auckland trade. Beginning in the early 1840s, they acquired their own fleet of ... schooners and cutters. At least 22 ships were registered to Whakatōhea owners, comprising a significant proportion of the New Zealand registered vessels over that period.”

“Whakatōhea also developed the local and regional infrastructure. They were involved in building a new road, opened by March 1841, linking Ōpōtiki and Tūranga (Gisborne) and in establishing a postal service between the two centres. Within their own rohe Whakatōhea built ‘miles of good roads’, and several bridges of exceptional workmanship, ‘equal to many on the [Great] South Road’. In the early 1860s this road system provided access to a flour mill. The Whakatōhea hapū Ngāti Ira, under their rangatira Hira Te Popo, built this mill in 1858 for the cost of £800 and transported their produce to Auckland on their own cutter the Hira.”

“Whakatōhea developed political structures to deal with the changes in their economy and society. In 1861 a visiting Crown official reported that two large rūnanga were operating in Ōpōtiki; one for young people and one for adults.”

In the 1860s Te Whakatōhea tīpuna supported the Kingitanga and other Iwi to defend their lands from Crown invasions. In 1864 they united with other East Coast Iwi including Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau ā Apanui and Ngāti Awa to form an 800 strong taua who fought in numerous Waikato and wider Bay of Plenty battles: Tapuaeharuru, Ōrākau, Pukehinahina – Gate Pā, Maketu, and Te Kaokaoroa. On 8

September 1865, **Te Whakatōhea** were invaded by Crown troops. During the ensuing battles they lost highly valued and needed leaders and whānau members. The impact of this loss is felt by us to this day.

The Waitangi Tribunal found that the grievances of **Te Whakatōhea** are “among the worst Treaty breaches in this country’s history”. The historical account further states”:

“The confiscation caused utter devastation for Whakatōhea, who lost everything between Ōhiwa Harbour and the Waiaua River including ‘all the flat and useful land’, the rich alluvial soils surrounding Ōpōtiki and Pākōwhai. The Crown confiscated around 18 of the approximately 21 miles (approximately 29 of 34 km or 86%) of the Whakatōhea coastline. ... The Crown destroyed Whakatōhea homes, villages and took taonga. The Crown also took control of the infrastructure Whakatōhea had built up in their rohe, including ships, roads and bridges. The Crown sold looted Whakatōhea property to Pākehā buyers, including horses, cattle and the complete machinery of the Ngāti Ira flour mill. ... The raupatu, along with the Crown violence and looting that preceded it, largely destroyed the thriving economy that Whakatōhea had built up since the 1840s.”

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