

rents. But, after all, there is no denying the fact that the bulk of the Natives here are very poor, and are incapable of bettering their condition; and it is greatly to their credit that, in spite of their poverty, they never relax their efforts to clothe and house themselves like their European neighbours. The privations they often are forced to undergo, in order to do this, none but those who live amongst them can have any idea of. Their habits of reckless improvidence have produced false impressions on many minds regarding their real condition, the results of thoughtlessness being too generally attributed to the possession of a superabundance of wealth rather than to its real cause.

It is satisfactory to be able again to report favourably of the continued sobriety and general good conduct of the Maori community. There have been no convictions for serious offences against the law, and very few for minor offences. This is in a great measure owing to the supervision exercised over individuals by the runanga which exists in every village, and which, under proper guidance, is a very useful institution.

The long-looked-for sitting of the Native Land Court took place at Kaiapoi in April last, when the balance of the acreage ordered by the Native Land Court in 1868 to be given to the Kaiapoi Natives, for land given out of their reserve to Natives for whom reserves were made elsewhere, was apportioned amongst them. The Court had a difficult task to satisfy the numerous claimants; but, after a lengthy investigation, a settlement was arrived at which appears to have satisfied all but those whose claims were disallowed. This addition of nearly 3,000 acres to the property of the Kaiapoi Natives will materially improve their condition.

Great disappointment was expressed at the inability of the Court to deal with the question of succession to real estate. Nearly fifty applications were rejected, the Court having no jurisdiction in the matter. It is to be hoped that the law will be so amended during the coming session as to enable a speedy settlement of these succession claims to be made. The long delay has proved a serious loss to many, who are kept out of their inheritance by those who hold unlawful possession of it.

The annual allowance of £100 for charitable relief has been expended in affording assistance, principally in the shape of orders for food, to thirty-five persons. Of these, twelve were resident at Kaiapoi, seven at Rapaki, five at Port Levy, four at Akaroa, three at Arowhenua, and four at Wairewa. The number of aged and indigent persons is likely to increase, for except at Kaiapoi most of the Natives are dependent upon their own labour for subsistence. The help hitherto given by the younger people is likely to grow yearly less, owing to the general adoption by them of the European mode of living, which is so much more expensive than the old Maori way. Unless more can be granted for the purpose, I fear that those of the aged who have no near relations living will not unfrequently be allowed to die of starvation. I not long ago met with a case in which an old man was left by his neighbours without food for thirty hours. Seeing that the difficulty the Maoris experience in providing for the wants of the aged and infirm amongst them is mainly owing to our occupation of the country, it would seem only fair and right that more should be undertaken on their behalf by the Government than would be thought necessary in the case of Europeans similarly situated.

The death of Horomona Pohio has deprived the Natives of one of their leading men. Though not a popular chief, he possessed considerable influence, which was long exerted to lead his people in the direction of pakeha ways. Unfortunately, he was induced a few years ago, by ill advisers, to take the law into his own hands, and to endeavour to recover by forcible occupation some portion of the land formerly ceded to the Crown. The failure of his attempt probably aggravated the disease from which he was suffering, and hastened the termination of what, but for this mistake, would have proved a useful life.

Another Native school was opened in January last, at Anuku, near Akaroa. This makes the fourth Native school in this district.

I cannot close my report without alluding to the sitting of the Commission of Inquiry into the Middle Island Native Claims. The Natives have taken the deepest interest in the proceedings, and have formed the highest expectations of the results.

JAMES W. STACK.