

Parihaka — is there a lesson for the future

Ruka Broughton

One hundred years ago the village of Parihaka, situated near Rahotu in Taranaki, was surrounded by British troops who had orders to sack the village and disperse the inhabitants.

The people had come from all over Taranaki and the rest of New Zealand to hear the message of the two Taranaki prophets, Tohu Kakahi and Te Whiti-o-rongo-mai.

There was no battle, the prophets urged their people to offer passive resistance rather than violence.

On Friday November 6 last year about 300-400 visitors to Parihaka converged on Parahuka, one of its many marae, being first of many groups of visitors who gathered to mark the centenary.

The welcome for the people from the south- Wellington and Nelson, Friday morning November 6.



The four aunts of Parihaka being interviewed for television. (left to right) Sally Karena, Ena Okeroa, Netta Wharehoka, Marg Rau.

Wailing and chanting

There was wailing, chanting and the occasional exuberant ngeri (haka type performance). And in accordance to local tradition, the menfolk from amongst the visitors approached the tangata whenua for the hongi. Speeches were exchanged and those visitors joined the home people to welcome others.

Up to lunchtime on the Saturday, visitors were still arriving and while waiting for the hakari which was provided by both Parahuka (Te Whiti's marae) and Toroanui (Tohu's marae) local entertainment was provided by the many Taranaki groups present.

Parikaha Spirit

It rained non-stop on the Saturday but this did not stop things from progressing. In fact it brought the people closer together, and as most people asked. What did you get out of Parihaka Day?. My answer is this.

I got the feeling of that omnipresence of the spirit of Parihaka, the spirit of identity with the raukura emblem of peace and Tohu's own manifestations, the spirit of Taranaki mountain the venue of many gatherings of the West Coast prophets, the spirit of togetherness with people.

So for myself and others even if there were not great speeches, no fanfare, no words of wisdom, the greatest thing was that the hui was made of people who came to be together.

The important issue is: Where are we heading? What are we going to do? Or do we wait for the next hundred years Taranaki? What?

A challenging question from one of our elders.

