



Media statement

18 August 2017

Whakatōhea signs Agreement in Principle with Crown

Whakatōhea Pre-Settlement Claims Trust has today signed an Agreement in Principle with the Crown at Parliament, which it says is a positive step towards settling its historical Treaty of Waitangi claims.

Chairman Graeme Riesterer says Whakatōhea first attempted to settle its raupatu (land confiscation) claims against the Crown over 20 years ago, and is pleased to be getting closer to achieving what its kaumātua set out to do so long ago.

“Today’s signing of the Agreement in Principle is an important milestone for us,” he says.

“Our kaumātua struggled for so long and endured so much hardship to achieve this settlement, and we owe it to them to complete this journey.”

Kaumātua and Trustee Bruce Pukepuke says the settlement is about much more than financial redress, as the iwi can never be adequately compensated for the huge losses they endured.

“This settlement is about us as a people, rediscovering our Whakatōhea identity and coming together as one,” says Mr Pukepuke.

“Although this is a Crown process, it is also an opportunity for our iwi, hapū and whānau to reconnect with our hau kāinga.

“We believe it will allow our people to begin to heal.”

Over the past year Whakatōhea Pre-Settlement Claims Trust has held hui throughout Aotearoa to ensure the views and aspirations of Whakatōhea are reflected in any settlement outcome.

Mr Riesterer says the Trust has been encouraged by feedback from its people around the progress that has been made to date.

“We appreciate that not all our whānau will agree, but we are focused on working to get the best outcome for all of Whakatōhea.

“Our role is to ensure our iwi can look to a brighter future, and facilitate them to thrive culturally, socially, and economically,” Mr Riesterer says.

The Trust will now negotiate the details of the settlement with the Crown, in the hopes of reaching a draft Deed of Settlement in the next 12 to 18 months.

Trustees are calling on all Whakatōhea descendants to register and play a part in the journey.

“If you whakapapa to Whakatōhea, it is your birth-right to be a part of this.”

For more information visit www.whakatoheapresettlement.org.nz

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Media contact

Arihia Tuoro, Project Manager
Whakatōhea Pre-Settlement Claims Trust
Ph: 027 274 2268

Photo caption: Hon. Christopher Finlayson and Trust Chairman Graeme Riesterer sign the Whakatōhea Agreement in Principle at Parliament

About Whakatōhea Pre-Settlement Claims Trust

It is widely acknowledged that Whakatōhea suffered significant prejudice from various Crown acts and omissions since 1840, including the large scale raupatu (confiscation) of Whakatōhea whenua (land) in the 1860s. Whakatōhea first attempted to settle the historical Whakatōhea raupatu claims against the Crown in 1996.

The Whakatōhea Pre-Settlement Claims Trust was set up in October 2016 following an election and appointment process. 91.6% of the iwi voted in favour of the Trust progressing a Whakatōhea Treaty settlement with the Crown.

Whakatōhea Pre-Settlement Claims Trust's vision is "Whāia to pae tawhiti kia tata. Whāia to pae tata kiā maua" – *Pursue the distant pathways of your dreams so they may become your reality.*

It aims to successfully negotiate a Deed of Settlement with the Crown, to secure a robust and enduring platform for Whakatōhea into the future.