NZ History Lesson: Four
Parihaka
Homelessness has become an increasingly concerning problem in New Zealand, but it is not new. Many Māori became homeless in the early days of colonisation in New Zealand as their land was confiscated, sold, surveyed, and removed from iwi ownership. The new laws brought in by the British after the Treaty of Waitangi was signed did not protect Māori who were trying to keep their land. Instead the laws enabled new settlers to buy and use land in a different way. From 1866, many of the people who had lost their land made their way to the settlement of Parihaka in the Taranaki region. There, they could live in the settlement no matter what iwi they were from, and found acceptance, peace, and order. They had the ability there to look after themselves according to Māori custom.

Right now, history is being made with the effects of COVID-19 changing the way we live. We are all being asked to do things which we would normally rebel against - stay home, don’t visit friends, restrict your spending, be aware of social distancing, sanitise, sanitise, sanitise! We are not used to any of this - but we are adapting quickly and looking at the greater good that our actions will have.

Most of us are able to stay within our bubble, not infecting or being infected by others. For the homeless of our country, however, it is much more difficult to be in a safe bubble. It is also challenging for those who care for our homeless citizens.

Te Whiti o Rongomai and his relation, Tohu Kakahi, were the leaders of Parihaka. They took care of the homeless who had lost their lands through dodgy deals, false promises, and by force. Think about how the homeless felt when they initially lost their homes, and how they felt after being accepted by the Parihaka community. Now consider our homeless citizens in our current situation.

For each of the activities that follow:

- **Read** about the community of Parihaka.
- **Reflect** on how homelessness is a continuing problem in New Zealand today.
- **Respond** to the questions or instructions at the end of each section.
Activity 1: Establishment of Parihaka

By the 1870s Parihaka had become a focal point for Māori seeking a new way of responding to the violence which had followed them for more than thirty years. The principles of discipline, faith, organisation and unwavering dedication were the important ones at Parihaka, and people flourished there.

- The population grew steadily as those who had been displaced and dispossessed by the war and confiscation looked for refuge.
- Under the inspiration of Te Whiti, Tohu, and other Taranaki iwi leaders, Parihaka’s **pre-eminence** grew. Te Whiti and Tohu became the leaders of the whole central district of Taranaki (Hangatahua River to the Waingongoro River).
- The leaders established monthly meetings on the 18th day of each month. Māori and Pākehā leaders were invited to attend the meetings to discuss the injustices and plan for resistance to land **alienation** and **assimilation**.
- The decision was taken to put aside practices of the past of vengeance and revenge. It was realised that nothing would come of reverting to violence.
- However, it was still important to resist the injustice of land confiscations and the loss of control over their lives.

1a What skills do you think the homeless Māori had to offer the community at Parihaka?
1b Do you think the same sort of opportunities exist for the homeless today?
1c How do you think the past influences the present?
Activity 2: Parihaka: Self-Sufficiency

The settlement of Parihaka was a model of Māori autonomy in the 19th century, blending European innovation with traditional Māori values.

- By the end of the 1870s it had a permanent population of about 1,500 people.
- Parihaka had its own bank, and systems to keep order.
- A large area of land was cultivated, and modern agricultural equipment such as reaping and threshing machines were used.
- The inhabitants harvested, hunted and gathered food to feed their many visitors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>self-sufficiency</th>
<th>autonomy</th>
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<td>Being able to look after, and meet the needs of people independently.</td>
<td>The right or condition of self-government.</td>
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2a How do you think self-sufficiency improved the lives of the homeless who came to Parihaka?
2b Do self-sufficiency and care for others go hand in hand? Explain your answer.
2c What advantage does self-sufficiency have for New Zealanders in today’s COVID-19 lockdown situation?
2d Members of the Parihaka community wore white feathers. These became a symbol of peaceful protest. Find out what they meant and if they are still relevant today.
Activity 3: Passive Resistance

In 1878 the government began surveying the confiscated southern Taranaki lands for European settlement. In May 1879, under the initial direction of Tohu, Parihaka reclaimed this land by ploughing it.

- Instead of fighting, the people of Parihaka sent out ploughmen to cultivate the land and workers to build fences.
- The first ploughmen were arrested but offered no resistance. Others came to take their place. They too were arrested.

“Go, put your hands to the plough. Look not back. If any come with guns, be not afraid. If they smite you, smite not in return. If they rend you, be not discouraged. Another will take up the good work.”

- Te Whiti o Rongomai, Parihaka, 1879

- None of the arrested men were given a fair trial. Instead special laws were passed, first to put off the trials and then to not bother with the trials at all. Subsequently, all the prisoners were shipped to jail in Dunedin, Hokitika, Littleton and Ripapa Island for two years on charges of forcible entry, malicious injury to property, and rioting.

1879

Māori ploughmen were sent to plough confiscated lands to reassert their rights to the land. Te Whiti calls for no violence or fighting. The ploughmen were arrested but did not resist.

3a Passive resistance is non-violent opposition to authority, especially a refusal to cooperate with legal requirements. This was how the residents of Parihaka resisted the injustices of land confiscations.

Research two other famous leaders in world history who have used this method of protest.

3b Why do you think sending prisoners to the South Island without trial would be worse than keeping the men in the Taranaki area? There are several reasons.

3c Re-read the quote from Te Whiti. What do you think it means in modern day language?

The early beginnings of Parihaka can be seen in Warea where Tohu Kākahi and Te Whiti o Rongomai were groomed as young leaders. Warea becomes a large community focused on food cultivation as an economic base. It was a community living in peace under the leadership of Paora Kukutai of Ngāti Moeahu.

- From Museum of South Taranaki Website
Activity 4: The Attack

On November 5\(^{th}\), 1881 the colonist militia of 1600 volunteers and Constabulary Field Force troops arrived at Parihaka. The residents sat quietly with children playing and singing around them. The members of the non-Taranaki iwi were given the opportunity to leave but everyone chose to stay. Under the leadership of John Bryce, the arrest of the leaders, and the destruction of much of the village occurred.

- The Whanganui farmer John Bryce, viewed Parihaka as a ‘headquarters of fanaticism and disaffection’.
- Māori referred to Bryce as a ‘murderous man’ after an incident where he and some of his Kai Iwi men chased and murdered several Māori children, but he was never held accountable for this crime.
- The Sim Commission which investigated what happened at Parihaka, in the 1920’s, learned that many children were born as a result of the assaults by some of the militia.
- Pressmen, officially banned from the scene by Bryce, were ambivalent about the government’s actions, but most colonists approved of them.
- Te Whiti and Tohu were detained without trial for 16 months. The government managed to delay the publication in New Zealand of the official documents relating to these events for several years.
- In the absence of their leaders Parihaka was rebuilt. Ploughing campaigns continued until the late 1890s, as did the imprisonment of Parihaka protesters without trial.

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<th>fanaticism</th>
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<td>Having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone.</td>
<td>Being filled with excessive and single-minded zeal, especially for an extreme religious or political cause.</td>
<td>A state or feeling of being dissatisfied, especially with people in authority or a system of control.</td>
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1881

1920’s
The Sim Commission recommended a single payment of £300 in acknowledgement of “the wrong that was done to the natives at Parihaka”, including the destruction of crops and the looting of residents’ properties.

4a Watch [https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9\&v=u-FsfNCaNYM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=u-FsfNCaNYM) about Parihaka. What do you think about the question of having November 5th remembered for Parihaka instead of Guy Fawke’s?

4b Conditions today in Parihaka are still poor compared to much of New Zealand but there is a positive belief in the community. Research this community through statistics and news articles to find out what they are doing to care for all of their people.

4c Listen to the song, ‘Parihaka’ by Tim Finn. Look at some of Colin McMahon’s paintings about Parihaka. How have the arts helped make more people aware of the history of the Parihaka region?
In the world today there are many displaced people. Some have had to leave their homes because of persecution by majority groups, some because of war, some because of famine, some because of poverty.

The current pandemic highlights the added concerns for those homeless people who are already struggling to get through each day.

Here are some activities that can further your understanding:

- **Keep a diary** - diaries are important because they tell us how individuals saw the world changing around them. People like Anne Frank were hidden for over two years, unable to go outside or freely move around. Anne recorded her thoughts, feelings, and events which we are able to access today. Despite all of the fear and sadness she wrote, “Think of all the beauty still left around you and be happy.” **Take photos** of your family and your surroundings. Add them to your diaries. Stay within your ‘bubble’ and stay safe.

- **Check out** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_homeless_population](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_homeless_population). This will give you an idea of how many people are homeless worldwide. What special problems do they have to control the spread of COVID-19?

- **Check out** [https://www.unicef.org.nz/](https://www.unicef.org.nz/) UNICEF have been helping homeless and sick families for many years. Read about their work.

- **View the film** Tatarakihi: the children of Parihaka (NZ On Screen);

- **Check out this website** Future Focused Parihaka

- **Read** ‘Ask that Mountain’ by Dick Scott.

Bibliography:


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URL: [https://nzhistory.govt.nz/occupation-pacifist-settlement-at-parihaka](https://nzhistory.govt.nz/occupation-pacifist-settlement-at-parihaka),
(Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 12-Dec-2019. (accessed 1 April 2020)

‘Te Tangata Kōhuru: The Murderous Man’,