

Whakatōhea to initial Deed of Settlement

Ōpōtiki, 22 December 2021: East Coast Iwi, Te Whakatōhea, will be initialling their Deed of Settlement tomorrow, 23rd December 2021. This is a major milestone which will see Whakatōhea ratify their Settlement next year.

The Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations, Hon. Minister Andrew Little, will be in attendance to lead the proceedings on behalf of the Crown.

Chairman of the Whakatōhea Pre Settlement Claims Trust (WPCT), Graeme Riesterer says this is an historic day and a step towards a brighter future for our people.

“First and foremost, I would like to recognise all of our pakeke (elders) that have been involved on this Settlement journey, especially those who have not been able to see the process through. We have carried this burden for almost 30 years now, and we are so close to finishing our hīkoi (journey). My aspiration is that this no longer remains a weight on the shoulders of our tamariki (children) and our mokopuna (grandchildren), instead we are leaving them a taonga to treasure and take care of”.

Mr Riesterer goes on to say “Ōpōtiki and the people of Te Whakatōhea can only benefit from Settlement. The Settlement will be able to build on all the amazing things that are already happening in our rohe. Things like the mussel farm. If Whakatōhea support Settlement, we will receive 5000ha of marine space that we can farm, that our people can be part of, benefit from and be kaitiaki of. Settlement will enable Whakatōhea to be one of the largest aquaculture farms in the world”.

The Whakatōhea Settlement package consists of a Crown Apology and Acknowledgements, Historical Account, 33 cultural properties totalling 6692ha, 18 commercial properties and 10 deferred selection properties, the establishment of Whakatōhea Kaitiaki Forum, a chapter in BOP Conservation Management Strategy, relationship agreements with Crown agencies, \$100m, and the reservation of 5000ha of marine space that will enable the expansion of the current Whakatōhea mussel farm. This is the first time that marine space has been negotiated as part of a Settlement package.

Maui Hudson, WPCT Negotiator says that the recent Waitangi Tribunal report reinforces the fairness of the parallel process which supports the completion of the Settlement and the continuation of the Waitangi Tribunal Inquiry.

“I believe this is an immense opportunity for all of Whakatōhea. Whakatōhea are the first Iwi in Aotearoa to be given a parallel process. This is significant because our people get the best of both worlds, the benefits of settlement and the opportunity to address our grievances to an independent body.”

The North Eastern Bay of Plenty (NEBOP) hearing will look into both historical and contemporary claims, and the Tribunal’s Priority report also recommends that they retain recommendatory power for the historical claims even if Whakatōhea decides to settle them.

“The report makes findings and recommendations on the next steps in the process. The WPCT and the Crown and will consider the findings and recommendations in the new year so that we can give Whakatōhea a chance to have vote on the Settlement offer. It’s in their hands now”.

The initialing will be held at Ngāti Ngāhere marae, Ōpōtiki. With current COVID-19 restrictions in place, there will be a limit of 100 attendees onsite.

ENDS

About Whakatōhea Pre Settlement Claims Trust

The Whakatōhea Pre Settlement Claims Trust (WPCT) was established in October 2016 following an election and appointment process with its mandate recognised in December 2016. 91.6% of the iwi voted in favour of the Trust progressing a Whakatōhea Treaty settlement with the Crown and an Agreement in Principle was signed with the Crown in August 2017. The 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. For more information on the Trust and its work, visit www.whakatoheapresettlement.org.nz

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