

Transcript of the Crown apology to Moriori

“To the Moriori people tchakat henu (tangata whenua) and waina pono (original inhabitants) of Rēkohu (the Chatham Islands), to your karāpuna and mokopū (ancestors and descendants), the Crown is profoundly sorry that for too long it failed to uphold the partnership and provide the protection envisaged by Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi and its principles and sought by Moriori karāpuna since the 1840’s.

The Crown expresses its deep remorse for the pain and hurt its breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi and its principles have caused to you and to generations of Moriori people and offers this apology.

The Crown was aware in 1842, when it assumed responsibility for the Chatham Islands, that Moriori were enslaved and many had died at the hands of their captors. The Crown profoundly regrets that it failed for many years to take action to end Moriori enslavement, and that your karāpuna continued to suffer greatly in oppressive conditions which cause many more to die including some who died of an illness known to Moriori as ‘kongenge’ a deep despair of the spirit. The Crown acknowledges the protests of your karāpuna who actively sought from the Crown, the protection owed to them under the Treaty of Waitangi and unreservedly apologises for its prolonged failure to act to end your people’s enslavement.

The Crown did not consult your karāpuna when it promoted the native land laws in the late 1860’s. After the 1870 hearings of the Native Land Court on Rēkohu, you were left virtually landless. Your tribal structures were undermined and you were severed from your land, your wahi tchap’ (sacred sites) and your responsibilities as guardians and hosts. For its failure to ensure that you retained sufficient lands for your present and future needs, the Crown is deeply sorry.

By the beginning of the twentieth century ta rē (the Moriori language) as a living language had been lost to Moriori and Aotearoa New Zealand. For its failure to actively protect this miheke (taonga), the Crown apologises sincerely.

Over a period of many years the Crown, through the Colonial Museum, collected, removed and traded kōimi tchakat (Moriori human remains) from Rēkohu. For these actions, which violated the tchap of these miheke and caused great distress, the Crown is profoundly sorry.

The Crown contributed through its dissemination of derogatory stories in the School Journal, to the wrongful stigmatisation of Moriori as a racially inferior people who became extinct. For its part in spreading this myth to generations of New Zealanders and the suffering and hardship it caused, especially to children of Moriori descent, the Crown apologises unreservedly.

The Crown pays tribute to you and your karāpuna for your persistence in this long search for justice. You have held strong to your principles of peace, known today as Nunuku’s Law, and preserved the mana and Manawa of Moriori. The Crown is humbled by your example.

Through this settlement the Crown seeks to atone for the wrongs of the past, and to renew the relationship between Moriori and its Crown under Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi and its principles. May this renewed relationship lead us towards a future of justice and peace – a future worthy of the vision offered to us by the Moriori imi (iwi) and your karāpuna.

Signed Hon. Andrew Little,
Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations