

## A Living Memorial and Heritage Education Centre

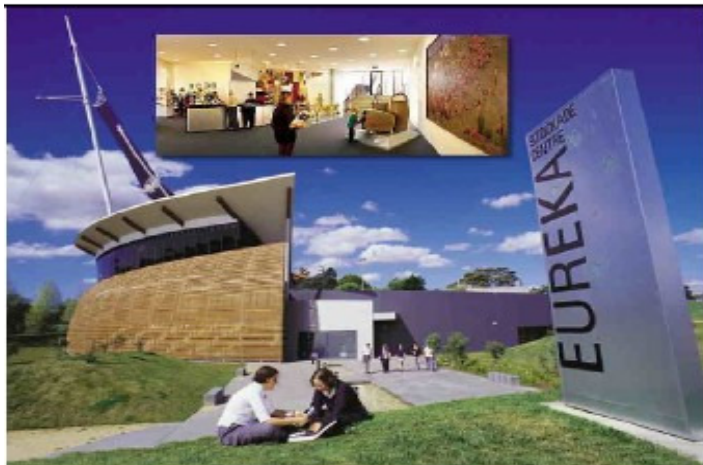
This hand out concerns a plan to establish a World-Class Battle of O-Rākau and Colonial Wars “Living Memorial Heritage Education Centre” at a location near Te Awamutu or Kihikihi. This plan has evolved from preparations to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Battle in 2014. It is hoped that a unique cultural and educational environment could be created and would become an attractive, welcoming meeting place and a major visitor magnet, providing spin off benefits to surrounding towns and the district as a whole.

Many Historians agree that the 1864 Battle of O-Rākau was a pivotal moment in our Nation’s history. It resulted in a major loss of life for the tribal and whānau groups who took part, with harrowing intergenerational consequences. Some of the battle casualties and deaths included women and children. But from it all has grown a stirring legend of sacrifice, courage of humanity and mutual respect. O-Rākau also provides a National legacy, one that beckons us to learn from the past, to extend the hand of respect and empathy to Māori and their unique culture. In the process acknowledge that our modern Nation and vibrant Economy would not exist had tribes not been subjected to death, loss of land and political ill treatment.



It is impossible to undo events from history that arouse deep emotion. But it is possible, as in this instance, to properly acknowledge and honor the long fallen Patriots and Heroes both Maori and European who fell on our shores. It is intended that the educational focus provided by the Centre will include an overview of the causes and outcomes of the Battle, as well as a very detailed interpretation of the build-up, the engagement and the aftermath. Some of the participants in the Battle (perhaps as hologram figures or audio-visually) will recount their part in the battle. Their words will ring down through the years, and speak into the hearts and minds of our future generations. The centre will put O-Rākau into context by embedding it beside the other Wars of our Colonial past.

The Battle of O-Rākau Heritage Society Inc is championing the redevelopment of the memorial site and establishment of the proposed Education Centre. The Society will actively seek funding to assess the feasibility of the proposed Centre and has already begun the process of consultation with whānau / hapuu and key stakeholders mapping out strategies and preparing development plans. This work started in April 2010. The purpose of this fact sheet is to mobilise and encourage community support for the proposed new Colonial Wars Memorial and World Class Centre of Learning in the heart of the Waipa District.



The Eureka Stockade Centre in Ballarat, Victoria, celebrates the December 1854 uprising of gold miners. They too were defeated but many lasting reforms resulted.



Above (right) is a larger-than-life figure of a soldier of the 40 Regiment, which later served during the New Zealand Wars including the Battle of O-Raakau.

It is a little known fact that in addition to British, Scottish and Irish soldiers and NZ colonial military forces, many Australians, most recruited in Victoria, served in the Waikato militia regiments. These men were mercenaries whose payment included promised land in the conquered Māori territory. Some of these men were among those who fell at O-Rākau.

Previously untold family oral histories from the Battle will be shared at the Centre in an extraordinarily moving way, in a place and in context so the deeds and spirits of those who sacrificed so much, would be able to inspire and inform all who visit.

The Heritage Centre would be imbued with both contemporary Māori and Western design elements aimed at creating a future proof, unique and exciting experience. It is proposed that the oral traditions of each of the extended families whose ancestors stood at O-Rākau be told in an interactive digitally stunning visual yet respectful form.



The story of the various military units, their Commanders and men will also be told in a factual and realistic way. The Centre will convey an understanding of the wider social, economic and political context of the Battle and wider Wars, the aftermath and impact these had on New Zealand. Visitors will be encouraged to identify with key historical characters and follow them through their early life, their place in the battle and wars, their eventual fate and will share the views and reflections held by their descendants and closest next of kin living today. The Centre will be a “must see” and will promote intercultural pride and respect.



Manga Maniapoto (Rewi) c.1815-94. From Ngaati Te Raurahu and Ngaati Paretekawa. Commander of the Coalition Defence Forces at O-Raakau. Although Manga and his younger brother Te Raore had no blood issues, the descendants by their sister Te Whakahae (Ripeka), include the Muraahi, Waho and Mokau extended families who are the Ngaati Manga branch of Ngaati Paretekawa affiliated to Napinapi, Te Keeti, Mangarama and an element of the whaanau at Mangatoatoa Marae.

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Hitiri Te Paerata brother of Hone Teri and Ahumai. A son of Te Paerata (formerly Te Hoariri) of Ngati Te Kohera from the Tihoi Pouakani Mokai area of Tuwharetoa and Raukawa. Hitiri's many descendants include the Maniapoto family of Taupo and the Paerata family of Kihikihi and Te Awamutu. Ariki Sir Tumu Te Heuheu of Tuwharetoa is also a descendant of Te Paerata who fell at O-Raakau.

