Maori New Zealanders occupy Raglan Golf Course, win back land rights, 1975-1983

1975 to: 1983

Country: New Zealand
Location City/State/Province: Raglan County
Location Description: Native burial ground and other traditionally important land

Goals:
To restore sacred land to its indigenous owners after its seizure for the development of a golf course.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 004. Signed public statements
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 038. Marches
- 082. Refusal to let or sell property

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 082. Refusal to let or sell property
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 020. Prayer and worship
- 029. Symbolic reclaimations
- 037. Singing
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 082. Refusal to let or sell property
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 4th segment:

- 082. Refusal to let or sell property
- 173. Nonviolent occupation
- 178. Guerrilla theatre
Methods in 5th segment:

- 082. Refusal to let or sell property
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 6th segment:

- 082. Refusal to let or sell property
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 020. Prayer and worship
- 137. Refusal of an assemblage or meeting to disperse
- 138. Sitdown
- 170. Nonviolent invasion
- 183. Nonviolent land seizure

Notes on Methods:
The many occupations of the golf course seemed to continue throughout the campaign for different intervals.

Classifications

Classification:
Defense
Cluster:
Human Rights
National/Ethnic Identity

Group characterization:

- Indigenous Maori people of New Zealand

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Eva Rickard

Partners:
Te Roopu o Te Matakite (Land March Organizers)

External allies:
Not known

Involvement of social elites:
Raglan County Council

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:
During World War I, the New Zealand government seized burial grounds and traditionally valuable land from the Tainui Awhiro people to build an air base and bunker. Ten years after the end of the war, in 1928, the Public Works Act codified the government’s justification for keeping the land.

In 1967, the tribal people were evicted and forced to rebuild their community nearby. The government sold the land to the Raglan Golf Course without consultation with the Maoris. The golf course razed homes and graves and spanned sixty-three acres. The government offered the people money in exchange for the land, but the community rejected the bid because the government did not offer to restore the land to its original owners.

In 1972 Eva Rickard began her campaign to restore land rights to her tribe, the Tainui Awhiro people. While Rickard had often played golf at the course, a new plan to destroy burial grounds to extend the course sparked her protest.

Rickard wrote letters and petitions to the Raglan County Council, the Raglan Golf Course and the Ministers of Maori Affairs, gradually building momentum in the native community. In 1975, the Tainui Awhiro allied their cause with the Roopu o Te Matakite, who organized a powerful Land March early that year. Five thousand people marched from Far North to Wellington to
deliver Prime Minister Bill Rowling a “Memorial of Rights,” stating Maori claims to the land. The petition had 60,000
signatures, including those of 200 tribal elders.

Shortly thereafter, Parliament signed the Waitangi Tribunal, granting Maori claims an official process of consideration through
government channels.

Between 1975 and 1978, Eva Rickard led several protests and occupations at the Raglan Golf Club. Their largest protest began
on 12 February 1978, with 250 members of the Tainui Awhiro tribe and their allies. They focused on the desecration of sacred
burial grounds as the main violation of their rights. Tribal elders held a traditional religious service to sanctify the work of the
protesters.

The tribespeople arrived at the golf course at nine in the morning that day, preventing patrons from playing the game. At noon,
twelve tohunga, who are traditional religious leaders, arrived to hold a ceremony.

When police approached the tohunga, the elders linked arms with the other protesters and sang. They also danced a traditional
hoka, or dance, of welcome. They would not speak to the police, and so the arrests began.

One elderly woman wanted to be arrested and the police would not take her. But when a protest leader arrived that afternoon, he
was arrested before he could step out of his car.

The police targeted people who had been involved in the 1975 Land March. Eva Rickard and seventeen of her fellow organizers
were arrested. Rickard was taken away by two police officers at the ninth hole of the golf course. Their brutality left her with a
permanent injury to her wrist.

The arrest was televised and garnered great media attention. Those arrested were transported to a nearby city and released that
night. When they returned to the village, the protesters assembled again at Eva Rickard’s home to plan their court case.

Later that month, Te Matakite leader Ben Matthews responded to the arrests by playing a televised round of golf on Parliament’s
front lawn.

The occupations continued in the following months. The Tainiu Awhiro in Raglan collaborated with tribespeople living in
nearby Wellington, who drove in overnight to attend the protests, and sleep in Rickards’ home during their stay.

As the protests continued, so did the police brutality; people lying down on the golf course were picked up and carried into
police vans. Nonetheless, when the case went to court later in the year, all trespass charges were dropped.

Over the next year, as the media began to pay attention to Rickard and her campaign, support for native land rights causes
exploded across New Zealand. On 25 May 1978, protesters occupied nearby Bastion Point for 507 days (see, Maoris in New
Zealand occupy to reclaim Bastion Point in Auckland, 1977-1978).

Eventually the Prime Minister called Eva Rickard at home, offering to sell the land to the tribe. Rickard refused, arguing that the
government had never paid for the land when it was seized in 1914.

The Maoris continued their civil disobedience, followed by arrests and court cases. Finally, in 1983, the government surrendered
and freely returned the land to the tribe. It is now the site of a community center open to everybody living in Raglan County.

Research Notes

Influences:
The protests surrounding the Raglan Golf Club directly inspired the large scale occupation of Bastion Point (see Maoris in
New Zealand occupy to reclaim Bastion Point in Auckland, 1977-1978) (2).
Sources:


Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy: Lydia Bailey, 09/02/2013

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