

Remembering the hikoi

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On April 22, 2004, hundreds of Maori gathered at Te Rerenga Wairua before the historic foreshore and seabed hikoi, organised and led by Hone Harawira, left on a two-week journey to Parliament in Wellington.

The march quickly took on a life of its own, building to more than 10,000 by the time it crossed the Auckland Harbour Bridge and eventually culminating into 50,000 marching on Parliament on 5 May 2004.

"That march gave birth to the Maori Party," says Harawira, "and the beginning of an independent voice for Maori in government."

Five years later, the Maori Party has entered into a landmark partnership with National, and the Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004 is under review.

This morning, descendants of the five tribes of Te Hiku o Te Ika are gathering at Te Rerenga wairua to celebrate the 5th anniversary of the beginning of that historic march.

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Reuben Porter, organiser for the anniversary, says that the kaumatua and kuia insisted on this commemoration for the hikoi with a karakia service to recognise that the work had been done, but not quite completed.

"We are inviting everyone who was there on that day to travel again with us to Te Rerenga wairua and along Te Oneroa a Tohe," says Mr Porter, who is from Ahipara.

"Everyone who was part of the march in 2004, is invited to come and celebrate together. And we want to honour those who travelled 1000kms over 14 days and nights, through the autumn rain and the cold of May, who marched proudly through Aotearoa, and showed the love for this land that can be born only from a relationship spanning more than 20 generations."

The kaumatua and kuia of Te Hiku will leave Kaitaia at 7am today for Te Rerenga wairua for a karakia service.

They will then travel from Te Paki stream and down Te Oneroa a Tohe while doing korero and whakapapa about the takutaimoana and what it means to them, to ensure that the issue is kept alive.

The day will end with a powhiri and hakari at Ahipara.

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