

Pardon sought for Rua Kenana

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Staff reporter

THE people of Maungapohatu want the Government to officially pardon Maori spiritual leader Rua Kenana.

On Saturday, hundreds gathered at the small village in Te Urewera to commemorate the 100th anniversary of police entering Maungapohatu determined to arrest Kenana for illegally selling alcohol and discouraging followers from enlisting for World War I.

Among the crowd at the commemoration was Waiariki MP and Maori Party co-leader Te Ururoa Flavell, who said he attended because it was an important part of New Zealand's history.

He said during the event Tama Kaimoana, the sub-tribe from Maungapohatu, made it clear they wanted consideration to be given to a pardon for Kenana.

"I have given a commitment to see what can be done, but the precedent has been set by Mokomoko from Opotiki."

Mr Flavell said the



SPIRITUAL LEADER: Rua Kenana discouraged his followers from enlisting for World War I.

people of Tama Kaimoana believed Kenana had been falsely accused and therefore deserved to be pardoned.

The day also involved storytelling and a re-enactment of the day when police arrived at the village to arrest Kenana.

Initially, Kenana offered no resistance. However, when the police moved suddenly to seize him there was a scuffle and a gun went off. No one knows who fired the gun but immediately there was panic and police, who had been expecting an ambush, took to

their guns.

Kenana's son Toko ran for his gun and wounded four policemen before he was shot and killed. Toko's best friend, Te Maipi, was also killed in the fracas.

Mr Flavell said the re-enactment showed that New Zealanders should embrace New Zealand's history, warts and all.

"The re-enactment of the events of the invasion have exposed spectators to the realities Rua Kenana's people faced a century ago, and gave them a personal connection to the mistreatment, deceit and destruction that took place. As a country, we turn a blind eye on our history and that needs to stop.

"We are supporting the call for a day of national remembrance of the New Zealand Wars, as well as promoting Parihaka Day – a day to commemorate the peaceful resistance by the people of Parihaka."

Mr Flavell said the country would be better off with a greater understanding of its history, and an appreciation and respect for the impact war had on tribes such as Tuhoe.