

He Tohu The Women's Suffrage Petition

Te Petihana Whakamana Pōti Wahine 1893

Introduction by Barbara Brookes

Notes for
Teaching History

The Women's Suffrage Petition | *Te Petihana Whakamana Pōti Wahine 1893* is one of three books developed to accompany the He Tohu exhibition at the National Library. He Tohu features three iconic New Zealand documents:

- He Whakaputanga | The Declaration of Independence 1835
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi | The Treaty of Waitangi 1840
- The Women's Suffrage Petition | Te Petihana Whakamana Pōti Wahine 1893.

Women campaigned long and hard to win the vote in New Zealand, and the 1893 Women's Suffrage Petition was the final in a series of three such petitions presented to Parliament. The successful petition of 1893 was signed by some 24,000 women from all walks of life (approximately 18 per cent of adult women) and some men. To widespread acclaim, New Zealand became the first country to allow universal suffrage – and women voted in droves in the 1893 election.

KEY FEATURES

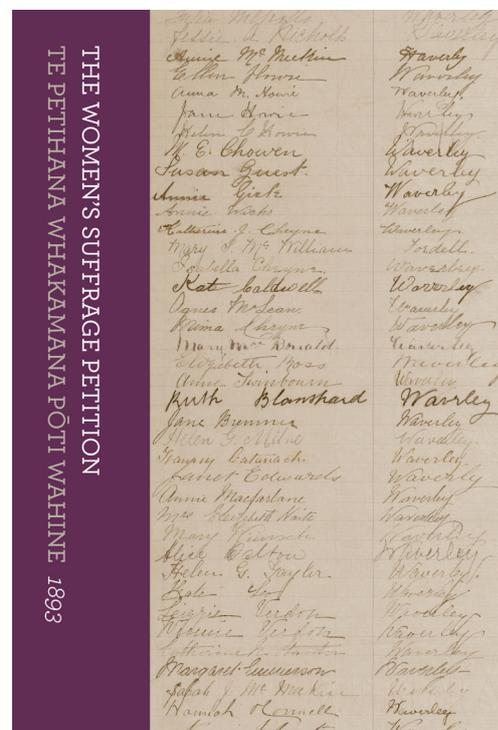
- An introduction by Barbara Brookes that explains the context for the petition.
- Portraits of some signatories.
- Full-colour reproductions of some petition sheets, organised in regions, and accompanied by a brief description of the petition.
- Lively biographies of more than 150 of the signatories, indicating the great variety of women who signed.
- The text of the petition.
- The archival story of the petition.

RELEVANT UNIT AND ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

Level 1

AS91001 (1.1) Carry out an investigation of an historical event or place that is of significance to New Zealanders

AS91004 (1.2) Demonstrate understanding of different perspectives of people in an historical event of significance to New Zealanders



ABOUT THE INTRODUCTION AUTHOR

Barbara Brookes is a professor of History at the University of Otago. She is an internationally acclaimed researcher and writer who has produced a range of publications on health, colonial, gender and women's history. Her recent book, *A History of New Zealand Women* (BWB, 2016) won the 2016 Ockham Award (Illustrated Non-Fiction Section).

Books in School Libraries

Level 2

AS91230 (2.2) Examine an historical event, or place, of significance to New Zealanders

AS91232 (2.4) Interpret different perspectives of people in an historical event that is of significance to New Zealanders

Level 3

AS91434 (3.1) Research an historical event or place of significance to New Zealanders, using primary and secondary sources

AS91436 (3.3) Analyse evidence relating to an historical event of significance to New Zealanders

AS91437 (3.4) Analyse different perspectives of a contested event of significance to New Zealanders

AS91439 (3.7) Analyse a significant historical trend and the force(s) that influenced it

USING THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE PETITION | TE PETIHANA WHAKAMANA PŌTI WAHINE 1893 IN YOUR HISTORY PROGRAMME

The Women's Suffrage Petition | Te Petihana Whakamana Pōti Wahine 1893 can be used:

- as a source of primary and secondary material for inquiry into the campaign for women's suffrage
- to learn about the context in which the petition was organised and signed
- to examine the concept of a *constitution* and the kinds of documents and agreements it may entail
- to examine what it means to be a citizen
- to investigate *changing roles* and *gender and race relations* in New Zealand
- to explore how the physical history of a document might reflect changing perceptions of its meaning and significance.

Students might respond to *The Women's Suffrage Petition | Te Petihana Whakamana Pōti Wahine 1893* by:

- investigating the place of the 1893 petition in the campaign for women's suffrage
- writing a diary entry imagining the experience of voting for the first time
- creating a timeline tracing the impact of colonisation on the rights of Māori women
- comparing the campaign for women's suffrage in New Zealand with other countries and asking why this was the first country to enfranchise women
- examining why the temperance movement appealed to many nineteenth-century social reformers, and creating a process drama in which they hold a town hall meeting on the issue
- drawing from the biographies and supporting text to create a visual representation of the diversity of the signatories
- creating the front page for the local newspaper the day after suffrage was granted
- exploring the biographies representing particular groups of women and drawing out themes from their stories (for example, Māori women, local women, WCTU women, single women)
- using the sources described by the editors (page 23) and others noted below to find out more about local signatories
- researching and debating why the vote was so important to women.

INDEPENDENT ENQUIRY IDEAS

This book is centred around a critical primary source – an important New Zealand document. As indicated by the suggestions above, it offers a springboard for independent enquiry.

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

Social sciences and English

Use the National Library's He Tohu resource to support inquiry into the concept of *gender equality*, focusing on the gender pay gap.

Technology

Students could read ‘The Archival Story’ and consider the petition as a technological outcome. *What do we learn about the characteristics of the document itself, and how it has been stored? How has time and context, including social context, affected the handling of this important document? This was one of New Zealand’s first constitutional documents. How might such a document be created today?* The students could investigate how this and the other documents were stored at National Archives (Archives New Zealand) and how they were transported to their current resting place. *What new technological knowledge and capabilities have made this possible?*

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Print

Barbara Brookes, *A History of New Zealand Women*, Bridget Williams Books, 2016 (part of the 2017 BiSL distribution)

Sandra Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine: A History of New Zealand Women Since they Won the Vote*, Viking, 1993

Megan Hutching, *Leading the Way: How New Zealand Women Won the Vote*, HarperCollins, 2010

Bridget Williams (ed.), Charlotte Macdonald (ed.), Merimeri Penfold (ed.), *The Book of New Zealand Women / Ko Kui Ma Te Kaupapa*, Bridget Williams Books, 1991

Online

BWB Collections: <http://bwb.co.nz/collections>

BWB’s Women Studies and New Zealand History collections offer a rich array of digitised texts to support teaching and learning about the suffrage and other themes in the history of New Zealand women. These digital Collections are available to libraries through subscription access; for information, please contact collections@bwb.co.nz.

He Tohu: <https://natlib.govt.nz/he-tohu>

The National Library has built a website with a package of resources to support teaching and learning around He Tohu. These include videos representing a range of contemporary perspectives on the three documents, and resources to support social inquiry into gender equality and cultural interaction. The Library encourages class visits and offers free hour-long programmes that are designed for students in years 5–10 but can be adapted for students at other levels.

Women and the Vote: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/womens-suffrage>

Note that the NZHistory website offers the opportunity to search a database of petition signatories.

The BWB Publishing Trust: Books in School Libraries

Books in School Libraries sets out to enrich school library collections and enhance New Zealand students’ understanding of their country. The project allows supporters to sponsor titles from the Bridget Williams Books catalogue for donation to secondary school libraries.

The Freemasons Foundation

We thank the Freemasons Foundation for their generous support for *The Women’s Suffrage Petition | Te Petihana Whakamana Pōti Wahine 1893* in the Books in School Libraries Programme.