

**Waipapa**  
**Papanui-Innes-Central Community Board**  
**MINUTES ATTACHMENTS**

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**Date:** Thursday 12 September 2024  
**Time:** 4.01 pm  
**Venue:** Board Room, Papanui Service Centre,  
Corner Langdons Road and Restell Street, Papanui

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### The story of Little Poland

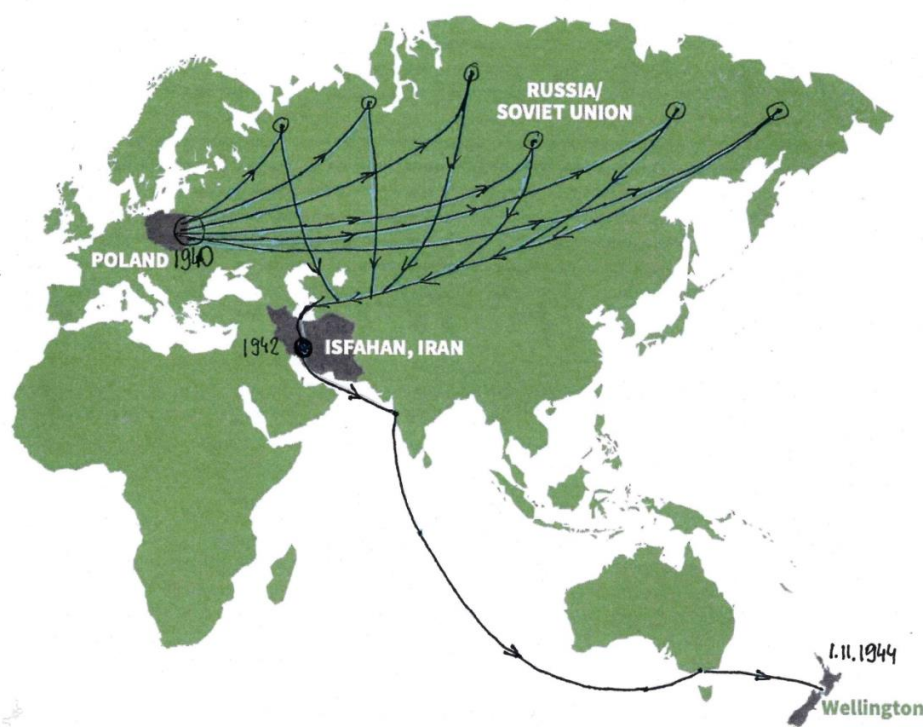
On 1 November 1944, a group of 733 mostly orphaned Polish children and their 105 adult caregivers, arrived in New Zealand as refugees invited by the New Zealand Government. They were accommodated in a refugee camp in Pahiatua, North Island, dubbed Little Poland (Mała Polska).

The children were part of about 1.2 to 1.7 million Polish citizens who in 1940 were forcibly deported from Poland to slave labour camps across the Soviet Union. Conditions in these labour camps were harsh and many died of starvation and diseases. In June 1941, after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Russian government joined the anti-German coalition and agreed to release the Polish citizens from the camps. By the end of 1942, thousands of them were given refuge in Iran, where they awaited to be resettled to different countries.

New Zealand society surrounded the children with tender care and concern. With time they made significant contributions to New Zealand society, becoming doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, commercial pilots, accountants, artists, writers, farmers and professionals in various fields. They remained self-sufficient, hardworking and loyal citizens of New Zealand while maintaining the language and customs of their motherland.

The story of the Polish Children of Pahiatua is a testimony to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity and displacement during one of the darkest periods in human history. Their legacy lives on through the descendants of those who survived, as well as through memorials and commemorations honouring their arrival in Little Poland camp near Pahiatua on 1 November 1944 and the hospitality of the New Zealand people. On the 80th anniversary of their arrival, a few hundred of their descendants live in Christchurch and Canterbury, contributing to the multicultural society of Aotearoa New Zealand.

### From Poland to Little Poland in NZ





In the Soviet Union's forced labour camps



Peter Fraser, Prime Minister of NZ,  
welcomes the Children on 1 November 1944



The Children of Little Poland, in 1945



School time in Little Poland





1960s: the time of weddings



Children of Little Poland with their own children



Children of Little Poland living in Christchurch  
with relatives and friends (2018)



Jozef Kubiak (Child of Little Poland) with his family in Christchurch (2014)  
In 2024: 5 children, 18 grandchildren and 28 great grand children



Families of Children of Little Poland celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of arrival in NZ ,  
Christchurch (2019)

A proposed commemorative plaque under the memorial oak tree in the Park of Little Poland:

Planted on the 80th anniversary of  
the arrival of 732 Polish children  
into the safety of New Zealand in Nov 1944.  
Their legacy lives on through their descendants,  
perpetuated by the generosity and hospitality of  
the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand

**References:**

- “Pahiatua’s “Little Poland” -roadside stories”. NZ History.  
<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/video/pahiatuas-little-poland-roadside-stories>
- “New Zealand’s First Refugees: Pahiatua’s Polish Children”, edit. Adam Manterys, publ. The Polish Childrens Reunion Committee, Wellington, 2004. ISBN 978-0-473-35105-2
- NZ Ministry for Culture and Heritage, “Polish refugees land in New Zealand”.  
<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/page/polish-refugees-land-new-zealand>
- Barbara Scrivens, “Polish History New Zealand”. <https://polishhistorynewzealand.org/1944-2/>

**Sponsors:** the Association of Polish Combatants (SPK) in NZ, Christchurch City Council, Embassy of the Polish Republic in Wellington and the Polish Charitable & Educational Trust (Christchurch).