

Treaty timeline

Page 1 – Introduction

MCH, 2016a Nation Dates FINAL

For more information about the years before the Treaty of Waitangi see topics under Pre-1840 contact.

1814 First mission

✓ Reverend Samuel Marsden of the Church Missionary Society preached the first sermon in New Zealand, on Christmas Day 1814. Three lay missionaries, William Hall, Thomas Kendall and John King, helped him set up the first mission in New Zealand, at Rangihoua. The local chief, Ruatara, who had met Marsden on a ship returning to Australia from England, interpreted the sermon for Māori.

1831 Māori petition the British government

✓ Growing lawlessness among Europeans in New Zealand and fears of a French annexation of the country led 13 northern chiefs to ask King William IV for his protection. Missionary William Yate helped the chiefs draft the letter to the King. The Crown acknowledged the petition and promised protection.

1833 British Resident arrives

✓ To protect Māori, the growing number of British settlers and its own trade interest, the British government appointed James Busby as its official British Resident – a type of junior consular representative with little power. He arrived in May 1833 and built a house on land he bought at Waitangi.

1835 Declaration of Independence

✓ He Wakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirene (the Declaration of Independence of New Zealand) was drawn up by British Resident James Busby without authorisation from his superiors. It asserted the independence of New Zealand, with all sovereign power and authority resting with the hereditary chiefs and tribes. By 1839 the declaration had been signed by 52 Māori chiefs.

1837 Britain decides to establish a colony

Add In December 1837 the British government decided in principle to intervene in New Zealand to ensure that colonisation was regulated and that land transactions that defrauded Māori were stopped. The government had initially tried to avoid assuming responsibility. Instead it had attempted to influence the interaction of Māori and British settlers through the missionaries and by sending British Resident James Busby to work with chiefs. In mid-1839 the British government decided to annex at least part of New Zealand to New South Wales.

1839 *Tory* sets sail

Add # The first of the New Zealand Company ships, the *Tory*, set sail for New Zealand in May 1839. The company had an ambitious plan to settle New Zealand, and its agents aboard the *Tory* were to buy land at Port Nicholson (Wellington Harbour). The first shiploads of company emigrants left for New Zealand in September 1839.

1839 Consul appointed

✓ The British government appointed William Hobson as consul to New Zealand in 1839. Hobson was instructed to obtain sovereignty over all or part of New Zealand with the consent of a sufficient number of chiefs. New Zealand would come under the authority of George Gipps, the governor of New South Wales, and Hobson would become Gipps' lieutenant-governor. Land-buying agents continued swarming over New Zealand in anticipation of purchases.

1840 Land purchases prohibited

Add Governor Gipps prohibited further private land purchases from Māori, and no existing claims were to be recognised until they had been investigated by the authorities. William Hobson repeated the proclamation at the Bay of Islands on 30 January 1840.

1840 Treaty of Waitangi signed

The Treaty of Waitangi was signed on 6 February 1840. The previous day a draft of the Treaty in English and Māori was discussed before about 500 Māori and 200 Pākehā. Many Māori were suspicious of what was intended, but Tāmāti Wāka Nene among others helped sway the chiefs towards acceptance. The meeting reassembled on 6 February; the text was read again, and signing commenced. About 40 chiefs signed on the first day; by September 1840 another 500 chiefs around the country had signed. Almost all of the chiefs signed copies of the Māori text of the Treaty.

1840 Sovereignty proclaimed over New Zealand

On 21 May William Hobson proclaimed sovereignty over all of New Zealand: over the North Island on the basis of cession through the Treaty of Waitangi and over the southern islands by right of discovery. Māori agreement to the terms of the Treaty was still being sought. Hobson may have wanted to declare the Crown's authority over the whole country because he had learned of possible moves by the New Zealand Company to set up its own administration around Cook Strait. His deputy, Major Thomas Bunbury, also made proclamations of sovereignty over Stewart Island on 5 June by right of discovery (he claimed that no Māori could be found there to sign the Treaty), and over the South Island on 17 June by virtue of cession.

1841 Native Protectorate Department created

Lay missionary George Clarke became chief protector of aborigines in 1841. Clarke and his staff were also given a second and conflicting role as land purchasers for the Crown. Clarke persuaded the governor to free him of land-purchasing responsibilities, but his sub-protectors retained their dual roles. In 1846 Governor George Grey, suspicious of anyone other than himself exercising influence over Māori, disbanded the Native Protectorate and appointed a native secretary to implement his instructions.

1842 Land purchases investigated

From 1842 land claims commissioners investigated all land purchases made before the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. If the commissioners concluded that a purchase was made in good faith, they could validate it and award a Crown Grant of up to 4 square miles (1037 ha). If the purchase was invalid or exceeded that size, the excess land became Crown land. Commissioner William Spain investigated the huge purchases claimed by the New Zealand Company. He determined that most of those in Wellington and elsewhere were invalid, but not all his recommendations were acted upon. There was subsequently a shift to arbitrating agreements with Māori to allow settlement in Wellington to go ahead.

1842 Māori deemed under Crown authority

New Zealand and its inhabitants were considered to be under British sovereignty from 1840. This did not mean that British law had to be imposed immediately upon Māori. Inter-tribal conflict in 1842 led to suggestions that chiefs who had not signed the Treaty of Waitangi (such as one of the leaders in the fighting) might not be bound by the Crown's authority. All Māori were now deemed to be under Crown authority.

1843 Wairau incident

Europeans and Māori clashed in the Wairau Valley in the north-east of the South Island in June 1843. Local Māori had denied selling land in the valley to the New Zealand Company. When a group led by Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata disrupted surveyors, a party led by Nelson's police magistrate, Henry Thompson, and New Zealand Company representative, Arthur Wakefield, set out to arrest them. A musket accidentally went off and a wife of Te Rangihaeata was killed. In the fracas that broke out, up to five more Māori were killed; 22 Europeans were killed, including nine who had surrendered, in utu (revenge) for the Māori deaths.

1844 Private land purchases allowed

The Treaty of Waitangi gave the Crown the exclusive right to purchase Māori land. Governor Robert FitzRoy gave in to demands from both Māori and settlers and waived this right.

1844-5 Heke cuts down the flagpole

Hone Heke attacked the Union Jack flagstaff at Kororāreka (now Russell) four times between July 1844 and March 1845. He saw the flag as a symbol that Māori had lost their status and their country to the British. Bringing down the flag struck at British sovereignty without affecting settlers or the economic benefits of trade. However, after the flagstaff was felled in March 1845, Kororāreka was sacked and pillaged, and most of its buildings burned down. The townsfolk were evacuated to Auckland.

1845-6 War in the north

In the north in 1845 British troops and their Māori allies fought against Māori led by Hōne Heke and Kawiti after these chiefs' forces sacked Kororāreka. There were three major engagements: Māori victories at Puketutu and Ōhaeawai, and, on 11 January 1846, a British victory – of sorts – at Ruapekapeka. Governor George Grey claimed victory and Māori submission.

1846 Surplus land taken

In 1846, the British government instructed that all Māori landownership was to be registered; land deemed to be unused or surplus was to become Crown land. Governor George Grey reinstated the exclusive Crown right to purchase Māori land provided for in the Treaty of Waitangi. Crown agents developed some dubious practices to persuade Māori to sell, and they could offer whatever the government was prepared to pay, rather than a market rate. The government was the arbiter as well as the defendant when Māori complained.



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Classroom topics

