



New Zealand  
Wars

# Keenan, 2017

## Story: New Zealand wars

In the 1840s and 1860s conflict over sovereignty and land led to battles between government forces and some Māori tribes. The largest campaign was the clash between the Māori king and the Crown. Land confiscations to punish tribes that fought against the Crown have left a long legacy of grievances.

*Story by Danny Keenan*

Main image: Attack on Titokowaru's village, Te Ngutu-o-te-manu

## Story summary

The New Zealand wars were a series of mid-19th-century battles between some Māori tribes and government forces (which included British and colonial troops) and their Māori allies, who were sometimes known as kūpapa.

### Northland

In March 1845, Ngāpuhi led by Hōne Heke Pōkai and Te Ruki Kawiti attacked Kororāreka (Russell). Their forces fought British troops and other Ngāpuhi led by Tāmāti Wāka Nene until January 1846.

### Wellington

In July 1846 Governor George Grey arrested Ngāti Toa chief Te Rauparaha, whom he accused of supporting attacks on settlers in Hutt Valley. Government forces pursued Ngāti Toa and their allies into the hills behind Pāuatahanui.

### Whanganui

Tensions between Whanganui Māori and settlers were heightened in 1846–47 by the arrival of British troops, the wounding of a chief and the hanging of Māori who killed four Europeans. Upriver Māori attacked Whanganui town, but after a battle at St John's Wood peace was agreed.

### Taranaki

Many Taranaki Māori opposed land sales, and fighting began in 1860 over a disputed land purchase at Waitara. The British army and Pākehā settlers fought local Māori until March 1861.

In 1865 there were battles in South Taranaki, and Major-General Trevor Chute led troops around Mt Taranaki, destroying Māori villages.

### Waikato

The Waikato was the home of the Māori king. The government wanted to punish his followers who had fought in Taranaki, and to make Waikato land available to settlers. Troops invaded in July 1863. Fighting continued until April 1864, when King movement followers withdrew into what became known as the King Country.

## Tauranga

British troops were sent to Tauranga in 1864. Rāwiri Puhirake's men repelled a British attack on Pukehinahina (Gate Pā) but were later defeated at Te Ranga.

## Prophetic movements

Māori prophetic movements emerged to resist land loss. Some tribes which opposed these movements formed alliances with the settler government. The British government began to withdraw its troops.

In 1864 supporters of the Pai Mārire faith attacked British forces in Taranaki and were defeated on Moutoa Island in the Whanganui River by Māori from down-river. Pai Mārire spread to the East Coast, where its supporters were defeated by local Māori and Pākehā forces.

## Titokowaru

Ngā Ruahine leader Riwha Titokowaru wanted to defend Māori land in South Taranaki as settlers moved onto confiscated land. He fought government troops and Whanganui Māori in 1868–69.

## Te Kooti

Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki had been imprisoned on the Chatham Islands, where he developed the Ringatū faith. In July 1868 he escaped and returned to Poverty Bay with 297 followers. He fled inland, and was pursued by Pākehā and Māori forces for almost four years.

## Long-term impact

Figures are uncertain, but about 560 British and colonial troops, 250 kūpapa and 2,000 Māori fighting the Crown may have died in the wars. Māori who had fought the Crown lost large areas of land – a total of about 1 million hectares initially, before some land was returned.

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