The Labour government created the Tribunal to hear Māori claims of breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi. It has evolved ever since, adapting to the demands of claimants, government and public.

The Tribunal was created to report on and suggest settlements for contemporary Māori claims, and to ensure that future legislation was consistent with the treaty. Claims were relatively rare in its first decade, and most of the Tribunal's early inquiries addressed local environmental and planning issues.

In 1985, a new Labour government extended its jurisdiction to claims about any alleged breach of the treaty since 1840. This resulted in a huge increase in the number of claims and an expansion of the Tribunal's activities. The Tribunal concluded that governments had breached the treaty on countless occasions since 1840, and that Pākehā New Zealand had been built on many broken promises and bad deals. These conclusions were highly controversial, and a public backlash followed.
Despite these controversies, the Tribunal has made a major contribution to remedying some of the more unsettling aspects of New Zealand’s colonial legacy.

Read more on NZHistory
Treaty events since 1950 – Treaty timeline
Waitangi Day 1970s – Waitangi Day
The Treaty in brief – The Treaty in brief
The Treaty debated – The Treaty in practice
Political and constitutional timeline – Political and constitutional timeline
1975 - key events – The 1970s

External links
Waitangi Tribunal (Waitangi Tribunal)
Matiu Rata's enduring legacy (Beehive)
Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 (Statutes of NZ)
The origins of nationhood (Te Ara)
The Ngāi Tahu settlement (Te Ara)