

12

Mitchell, H., &amp; Mitchell, J., 2009

## Story: Te Tau Ihu tribes

Page 4 – Land loss

### Colonisation and settlement

In 1839 Colonel William Wakefield had to work with the conquering tribes to establish the New Zealand Company's Wellington and Nelson settlement schemes. After three very dubious purchases (since discredited) the company acquired 1.2 million hectares on both sides of Cook Strait. Soon after, the Treaty of Waitangi was signed at three locations in the Marlborough districts, but Nelson chiefs were not given a chance to consider the matter. Wellington, the first company settlement, was established almost immediately, and the Nelson scheme was launched two years later under Captain Arthur Wakefield, William's brother. Arthur Wakefield had to negotiate with the resident chiefs for rights to settle the Nelson districts.

### Commerce and trade

Initially relationships between settlers and Māori were good, and Māori harvests and catches sustained settler families as they cleared land for their own crops. However, relations deteriorated as New Zealand Company and Crown officials reneged on terms of the 'purchases', and disputes over land ownership, boundaries and trespass erupted from time to time.

Despite these setbacks, Nelson Māori continued to participate in the new economy. Māori-owned ships worked the New Zealand coast, carrying Māori and European produce within Nelson–Marlborough and to North Island ports. More than 400 hectares under Māori cultivation produced hundreds of tons of potatoes and thousands of bushels of wheat for sale at Nelson markets, the whaling stations, Wellington and further afield.

### The Wairau incident

The New Zealand Company's Nelson settlement scheme called for 1,100 allotments of 201 acres each, which had to be 'arable, cultivable land'. In total 221,100 acres (89,433 hectares) was required, of which one-tenth would become the 'Native Tenths Reserves'.

Unfortunately, there was not enough suitable land, and in early 1843 company surveyors were sent to the unpurchased Wairau plains. Te Rauparaha and other Ngāti Toa chiefs immediately objected that these lands had not been included in the company's 1839 'purchases'.

After months of fruitless protest and lobbying, in early June 1843 the Ngāti Toa chiefs evicted the surveyors and burnt their temporary shelters. Te Rauparaha reasoned that these were built from materials growing on his lands. Arthur Wakefield and Police Magistrate Henry Thompson responded by arming a settler militia and attempting to arrest the chiefs at Wairau. On June 17 the situation deteriorated into a confrontation in which 22 Europeans and at least four Māori were killed.

The effect was catastrophic: relations between Māori and Pākehā were never to be the same again.

### Loss of land

In 1853 Governor George Grey took 371 hectares of Motueka Native Reserve lands for the Anglican Church's Whakarewa School, without offering compensation. This removed the best of the Nelson tribes' productive lands, leaving them bereft of income; they were evicted from their homes and cultivations. Land Commissioner Don

1843

## Wairau Incident



Tāmāti Pirimona  
Marino



Scene of the Wairau  
massacre



Whakarewa School  
buildings, Motueka

McLean's 'Waipounamu purchases' of 1853–56, together with the Native Reserves Act 1856 and later amendments, set the scene for 120 years of Māori alienation from their lands.

Considerable damage was done by perpetually renewable leases (in the 1880s), the targeting of native reserves for public purposes, the Crown's compulsory acquisition of 'uneconomic interests' (in the 1950s), and the freeholding of Māori reserves to lessees (in the 1960s and 1970s).

The Crown facilitated these actions by appointing trustees of native reserves, leaving Māori owners with no influence on the management of their lands. By the 1970s Nelson Māori were left with little more than 3,000 of approximately 20,000 acres (1,200 of 8,000 hectares) guaranteed by the 1840s land purchase agreements. These losses were devastating and contributed to poor health, low educational achievement and the scattering of the Māori population from the area.

**How to cite this page:**

Hilary Mitchell and John Mitchell. 'Te Tau Ihu tribes - Land loss', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 4-Mar-09  
URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/te-tau-ihu-tribes/4>

All text licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 New Zealand Licence unless otherwise stated.  
Commercial re-use may be allowed on request. All non-text content is subject to specific conditions. © Crown Copyright.