

Wāre Poaka  
Wāreato  
Pitore  
Mōka  
Wārerahi  
Kewa  
Wai

# He Whakaputanga 1835

Wārema Teti Taurua  
De mana  
Pi  
Kana  
Tareka  
Kawiti  
Pumuka  
Hekeao

HE WHAKAPUTANGA  
THE DECLARATION OF  
INDEPENDENCE  
*1835*

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that were already apparent in the Māori world. The rangatira who assented to He Whakaputanga were, in the words of the Tribunal, 'not mere passive recipients of a declaration conceived and created by agents of Britain'.<sup>34</sup>

He Whakaputanga had deepened Ngāpuhi's existing alliance with the British Crown – something that northern Māori had consciously entered into, firstly through the relationship with Philip Gidley King on Norfolk Island, and later through Te Pahi's trip to Sydney, and Hongi and Waikato's meeting with King George IV in London.<sup>35</sup> At the same time He Whakaputanga had announced their mana and sovereignty to the world. For all of Busby's efforts at indirect rule, rangatira and their communities remained in control of their own affairs. And although Busby never convened the congress of chiefs after 1835, Ngāpuhi witnesses before the Tribunal maintained that Te Whakaminenga had continued to meet after that date.<sup>36</sup> That process of diverse Māori communities coming together to consider how best to manage their own affairs was one that continued long after 1840. It could be seen, for example, in the Kīngitanga, or later in the Kotahitanga movement, which sought unity under a Māori Parliament.

Many of those later movements looked to He Whakaputanga as a source of rights for Māori in the post-1840 world. The text of the document was published in Māori newspapers such as *Te Wananga*, was read aloud during gatherings of iwi at Ōrākei and Waitangi in the early 1880s, and cited by the Māori MPs and in petitions to Parliament as a basis for Māori claims to self-determination. Hōne Heke Ngāpua, the MP for Northern Māori, read the full text of He Whakaputanga in Parliament in 1894, for example, when introducing the second reading of his Native Rights Bill, an unsuccessful attempt to secure constitutional rights for Māori to administer their own affairs.<sup>37</sup>

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He Whakaputanga was – and remains – proof that the rangatiratanga and mana of Māori had been clearly articulated and asserted. New Zealand had been a sovereign land under the authority of the united tribes before 1840; and, according to the Waitangi Tribunal, that sovereignty was not extinguished by the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty itself was another step in the ever-deepening alliance or covenant with Britain. And as later events made clear, Ngāpuhi expected that relationship to be maintained and reciprocated by the Crown after 1840. Instead, matters in the north quickly turned sour.<sup>38</sup>

Like the Treaty, the physical document that is He Whakaputanga has had an interesting and at times severely testing life. It had been nibbled by rats and threatened by fire prior to being transferred to the National Archives (now Archives New Zealand). In 2017 it is finally taking its rightful place alongside Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the 1893 Women's Suffrage Petition, in the *He Tohu* exhibition housed at the National Library of New Zealand. The exhibition and associated publications like this one provide an opportunity to learn more about the rich history of a document that in the past has, at least in non-Māori circles, been much misunderstood and neglected. Signed 112 years before the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act saw New Zealand gain full sovereign status in 1947, He Whakaputanga serves as a powerful reminder of a much earlier assertion of independence and mana.

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