

10.

Global comparison

Note: This overview provides a background to the policies and practices that affected Indigenous people in New Zealand. It is not intended to be used as a comprehensive historical document.

Aotearoa and the 'Pakeha' (White people)

The Maori first settled Aotearoa around 500 years before the first Europeans visited the North Island. The Maori established unique cultural practices and systems of law, mainly across the North Island.

After Tasman, the next European contact came in 1769 when Captain Cook came ashore, claiming the land for Britain. Despite Cook's suggestions that New Zealand should be colonised, the country would not see mass settlement for another 75 years.

European traders, whalers and missionaries were the main people to settle in New Zealand. A trade and whaling outpost was set up in the Bay of Islands, in a town called Kororareka, which soon grew with brothels and 'grog shops'.

Gradually, however, conflict flared up between Maori people and the settlers. The introduction of muskets had a significant impact on relations between Maori tribes. This included a series of inter-tribal wars, known as the Musket Wars. In response to this conflict and threats of French settlement, the British sent James Busby to New Zealand in 1833. As the 'Official British Resident', he attempted to establish stability and negotiate with Maori chiefs. He supported Maori independence and tried to unite the chiefs in a central government.

The chiefs were unwilling to do this, as it went against the traditional independence of Maori communities. Instead, a Declaration of Independence was signed in 1835 by some North Island chiefs. The Declaration implied recognition of Maori ownership of land and requested British protection.

Treaty of Waitangi

Around this time, Edward Wakefield formed the 'New Zealand Company'. This private company bought land in New Zealand independently of the British Government and sold it on to new settlers at a profit. Wakefield settlements were established in several parts of New Zealand. Increasingly, the sale of land and population growth led to conflict between Maori and settlers.

Obviously, the Declaration did little to protect Maori land and solve the conflict. As more settlers arrived in the colony, Britain decided to annex New Zealand formally by making a treaty with the Maori people.

The Treaty of Waitangi, first signed on 6 February 1840, recognised Maori sovereignty while making them British subjects. There were three important aspects of the Treaty:

- the Maori people would have greater control over their lands and resources
- Maori land could only be sold to the Crown, who would then either keep it as Crown land or sell it to settlers
- The Queen would promise to maintain law and peace in New Zealand.

The Treaty was taken to Maori Chiefs around New Zealand, and some 500 Chiefs signed it. However, many Maori community leaders voiced their opposition, refused to sign and continued protests against land sales. There also remained a great deal of uncertainty and difference of opinion about what Maori sovereignty meant.

Conflict and removal from land

In spite of the government's good intentions, the Treaty's promises to the Maori were only partially fulfilled. One effect of the Treaty was to give the government much more control over the sale, transfer and ownership of land.

Under the Treaty, the Maori could not sell land directly to settlers and could only go through the government. So, one of the major effects of the Treaty was to give the Colonial Government a virtual monopoly over land purchase.

This control over land purchase was certainly used by the Colonial Government. By 1851, the European population reached close to 27 000. With the increase in population came an increase in the demand for land — Maori land was sought after. The government used the Treaty to purchase land for sale to the settlers. In doing so, they would often make a sizeable profit.

This led to the New Zealand Wars – a series of land wars between the Maori and the settlers/Colonial government, and sometimes other Maori tribes.

One of the major land wars was in Taranaki, a region in the North Island where tension lasted for nearly 40 years. From the 1840s, there was conflict between different Maori hapu (tribes) and with the settlers. In response to Maori opposition, the government intervened from 1860, sending troops and confiscating Maori land. In 1881, government forces invaded and destroyed the Parihaka, a Taranaki settlement. Tensions remained after the fighting ended.

The government also made laws that allowed some Maori people to be imprisoned without a trial. After the wars, more than 1.7 million acres of Maori land were unlawfully confiscated. By 1920, the Maori tribes held only 4.8 million acres of land in New Zealand.

Assimilation

Unlike Australia, there were no laws or policies for removing Indigenous children from their families. Even so, a formal policy of assimilation was in place towards the end of the nineteenth century. The government argued that education was the most effective way of integrating Maori people into white culture.

In 1867, the government introduced the *Native Schools Act*. Under this law, English later became compulsory for Maori students in primary schools. The Department of Education was responsible for Maori assimilation through education.

From the mid-twentieth century, Maori people began moving to the cities and away from traditional lands. By 1945, Maori ownership of land decreased further to just over three million acres. As their land gradually decreased, many Maori people relocated to the cities to live and work. In 1960, the Government introduced an 'urban relocation program' that encouraged Maori people to move off traditional lands and into cities. Under this program, 400 families were relocated in five years.

Links

- New Zealand Human Rights Commission: <http://www.hrc.co.nz/>
- The New Zealand Wars: <http://www.newzealandwars.co.nz>
- Waitangi Tribunal — Schools Section: <http://www.knowledge-basket.co.nz/waitangi/school/school.html>
- For information on the Treaty of Waitangi <http://www.ots.govt.nz/>