

New Zealand Waitangi Day Special

Indigenous relations continue to grow and improve

On Feb. 6, New Zealanders celebrate their national day. Waitangi Day commemorates the signing of an important treaty in 1840 between dozens of Maori *rangatira* (chiefs) and representatives of the British crown.

Known in the Maori language as Aotearoa, New Zealand's modern history is defined by the relationship between the indigenous population and colonizing forces. In sharp contrast to the situation in the nearby colonies of Australia, the signing of such treaties in New Zealand has provided a social and legal framework for the nation's foundation. While this process has been far



An endangered brown kiwi is hand-fed at the Pukaha National Wildlife Centre in Mount Bruce. 100% PURE NEW ZEALAND

from smooth, it remains a constant factor in New Zealand's race-relations landscape.

The Treaty of Waitangi, which bears the signatures of Maori leaders and the then-governor of New Zealand, can be seen today in Waitangi at Treaty House, where it was signed. It represents an early landmark in relations, which have since evolved to provide for Maori electorates who represent the indigenous people in Parliament.

The path to this point has not always been smooth, as the meaning of the English and Maori versions differs in key points. Resolving these differences is a challenge the nation has faced many times. 1860 saw the first flashpoint when a land dispute made the differences in language abundantly clear. Subsequent talks ended in a resolution akin to formal ratification. This was soon followed by Native Land Courts in 1865, and Maori parliamentary representation in 1868. However, exemplifying the difficulties faced in these years, many grievances from this time would not be resolved until the 1940s.

In 1932 Governor-General Lord Bledisloe gifted Treaty House to the nation. The

centenary of the treaty in 1940 was marked by the building of a *whare runanga* (meeting house) close to Treaty House. After that, social justice movements through the 20th century culminated in statutory recognition: To improve relations between the British crown and the Maori, the government passed the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975. This established the Waitangi Tribunal and began a radical shift in the role played by the treaty in New Zealand's public life.

Treaty House, also called Busby House after the original owner James Busby, features several rooms kept in the style of the 1800s, while the *whare runanga* invites visitors to view Maori cultural performances. The carving styles used to decorate the building come from the many different tribes in New Zealand, showcasing the unity of the Maori people.

This content references excerpts from the official New Zealand government tourism website and Waitangi Treaty Grounds website. For more information, please visit <https://www.newzealand.com/int> and <https://www.waitangi.org.nz>.



Far left: A Maori carving watches over Mount Hikurangi. Left: Wellington boasts a cosmopolitan shopping area. 100% PURE NEW ZEALAND

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on Waitangi Day



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