

# Treaty of Waitangi

The Treaty of Waitangi is a treaty first signed on 6 February 1840 by representatives of the British Crown and various Māori chiefs from the North Island of New Zealand.

The Treaty established a British Governor of New Zealand, recognised Māori ownership of their lands and other properties, and gave the Māori the rights of British subjects. The English and Māori versions of the Treaty differed significantly, so there is no consensus as to exactly what was agreed to. From the British point of view, the Treaty gave Britain sovereignty over New Zealand, and gave the Governor the right to govern the country. Māori believed they ceded to the Crown a right of governance in return for protection, without giving up their authority to manage their own affairs. After the initial signing at Waitangi, copies of the Treaty were taken around New Zealand and over the following months many other chiefs signed. In total there are nine copies of the Treaty of Waitangi including the original signed on 6 February 1840. Around 500 chiefs, including at least 13 females, signed the Treaty of Waitangi.

Until the 1970s, the Treaty was generally ignored by both the courts and parliament, although it was usually depicted in New Zealand history as a generous act on the part of the Crown. From at least the 1860s, Māori have looked to the Treaty for rights and remedies for land loss and unequal treatment by the state, with little success. From the late 1960s Māori began drawing attention to breaches of the Treaty, and subsequent histories have emphasised problems with its translation. In 1975 the Waitangi Tribunal was established as a permanent commission of inquiry tasked with researching breaches of the Treaty by the Crown or its agents, and suggesting means of redress.

Today it is generally considered the founding document of New Zealand as a nation. Despite this, the Treaty is often the subject of heated debate. The date of the signing has been celebrated as a national holiday, now called Waitangi Day, since 1974.

More details can be found at <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/category/tid/133>