

AOTEAROA

Our Whakapapa,
Our Stories



Assimilation

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In this booklet we explore the process and outcomes of assimilation in NZ - from the first contact between tangata whenua Māori and Pākehā to the present day.

Assimilation is defined as a process of one culture absorbing another with a view that all parties would become similar, with benefits for the minorities being assimilated.

The practice of assimilation followed key principles imposed by the colonial government.

In 1839 the future Premier of NZ, Sir George Grey, prepared a document regarding assimilation, called the Port Louis Paper. He wrote it while in Australia, to improve the way in which indigenous cultures were treated in Australia and other British colonies.

Whether this paper was immediately adopted in NZ is not clear but the five principles within the document were all eventually followed by the government here; some during the time Grey was in power.

The key points for Māori were:

- **Conversion to Christianity:** the Anglican church sent early missionaries to NZ and they subsequently developed strong ties to the government (see religion booklet).
- **Being placed under British law:** this was a crucial element of the Treaty of Waitangi, recognition that British Law for all citizens would protect Māori and provide opportunities. In fact, many went on to see it as a threat to tikanga Māori and a barrier to customary rights.
- **Attendance at British run schools and the use of the English language:** this policy was enacted towards the end of the NZ Wars with the Native Schools Act (1867). The potential of these schools to provide equal opportunities for Māori was offset by key policies that included educating Māori for manual work only, and excluding the use of te reo Māori in these schools.
- **Employment under British managers,** as recommended by Grey, wasn't necessary during 1800-1860. While Māori incurred tragic loss of life at this time due to epidemics and the Musket Wars, it was also during these early colonial years that Māori and Pākehā shared languages and traded on a commercial scale, including projects funded by Sir George Grey.

However, as the number of settlers grew, and they formed their own government, the small Māori population entered a long period of persistent assimilation. This included the banning of traditional practices by government, and significant urban drift after WWII.

There was a significant cultural shift in many Western counties during the 1970-90s that would challenge the policy of assimilation. In NZ this resulted in many of the principals of assimilation that had been installed by the government, being revisited and, in several key instances, being overturned. The formation of the Waitangi Tribunal, and the confirmation of Te Reo Māori as a national language, being two significant examples.

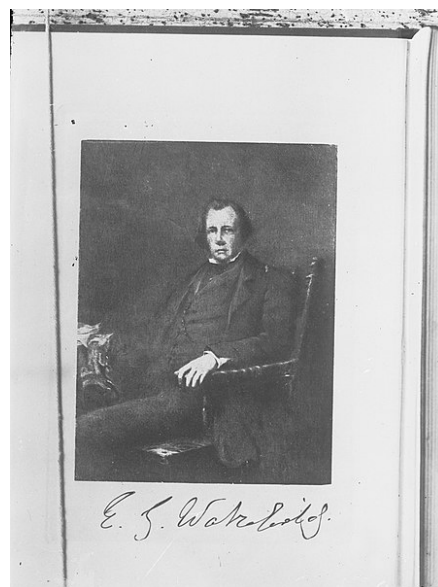
In 2004 the leader of the National Party, Don Brash, made a polarising speech he called 'nationhood'. He made strongly worded statements that assimilation was beneficial to Māori and that returning the unique status of Māori as tangata whenua, and adhering to the Treaty of Waitangi, created unnecessary racial separation in NZ.

However the growing support for normalising Te Reo Māori, Tikanga Māori and Te Ao Māori by NZ society, are strong indicators that the process of assimilation has been reversed in NZ, and that we celebrate diversity and the unique status of tangata whenua Māori.

1838 The New Zealand Company

The New Zealand Company was a business started by Edward Gibbon Wakefield for the purpose of making NZ a "successful colony" and create a place where Mr. Wakefield could advance his interests in politics.

Wakefield proposed doing more than buying land from Māori and selling it to settlers. He wanted to create a 'new-model English society' centred around businesses and their staff. He wanted to do this by selling land to people who wanted to run businesses that would require staff and build communities like those in England.



Sketch portrait of Edward Gibbon Wakefield.
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South Australian Government GN00300

This plan included a way for Māori to be part of the proposed successful colony. The company promised that ten percent of all land purchased from Māori would be for the benefit of Māori. Wakefield believed that Māori would be part of these businesses and that, as Pākehā became successful, Māori would also benefit.

The company bought a large amount of land from Māori and 15,000 settlers came to NZ to be part of the project. These sales happened close to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.

Māori had a different understanding to Pākehā of what it meant to sell land. They thought that they were agreeing to allow use of the land for a certain amount of time, in the way we would see leasing land today.

The NZ Company completed transactions, the settlers came, and Wakefield did achieve his position in politics. However the company project resulted in conflicts between Māori and Pākehā, including armed conflict where people were killed.

Question

*What was the Māori view of land ownership compared to the Pākehā view?
How do you think Māori would have felt after being told they could have to work for Pākehā on the land that was sold?*

Additional Links

Stephens, J. 2007 *New Zealand Company*, retrieved from Dec 2019 from <http://www.theprow.org.nz/society/new-zealand-company/#.X3PGUxTivIU>
<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/keyword/new-zealand-company>

1840 The Port Louis Paper

Sir George Grey was involved in discussions regarding the way the British government developed relationships with tangata whenua in NZ and indigenous cultures throughout the British Empire.

In 1840 he created a document about Australia called the *Port Louis Paper*. It was seen as a better way of working with indigenous cultures and was accepted by the office that was responsible for the British colonies. A copy was sent to the Governor, William Hobson, of NZ in 1840.

The five important ideas in the paper were that indigenous people should be: protected under British law, converted to Christianity, educated in English schools, use the English language, and be given the opportunity to have jobs in British settlements.

Question

Why do you think the British government believed their culture and customs were superior to Māori?



Statue of George Grey in Albert Park, Auckland.
 russellstreet, CC BY-SA 2.0 creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0,
 via Wikimedia Commons

Additional Links

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/george-grey-painting>

Lester, A. (2016) Settler colonialism, George Grey and the politics of ethnography, Retrieved Dec 2019 from: <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/57226/>

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/stout-centre/research-units/towru/publications/A-Terrible-and-Fatal-Man-Sir-George-Grey.pdf>

1840 Te Tiriti o Waitangi

By 1840 a variety of groups had purchased land from Māori. This included private transactions as well as church purchases. Combined with competing French interests in the country, and the lawlessness of many of the settlers, there had been tension in NZ for some time.

The British decided to confirm NZ as a colony and 'take possession of the country with consent from Māori Chiefs'. The crown and Māori were seeking an understanding and partnership and the Treaty was intended to be part of that process.

Te Tiriti (the treaty) was signed by 540 Māori rangatira (chiefs) around the country, beginning at Waitangi in February 1840. The treaty was prepared quickly and written in both Māori and English. Unfortunately, some words, and concepts, were translated in a way that created two meanings.

Four important sections were covered in three parts, called articles, in the Treaty.

- **In the first article** the British asked for the Queen to have all rights and powers of sovereignty. Māori believed they had given the Queen te Kawanatanga katoa or governorship over the land.

- **In the second article** the British gave Māori tino rangatiratanga or unconditional sovereignty (complete chieftainship) over land, property and taonga. Māori gave the British the right to have total control over land sales in the country.
- **In the third article** there was the assurance that Māori would have the Queen's protection and all rights (tikanga) given to all British subjects.

The key outcomes for the British were proclaiming sovereignty soon after the signing of the treaty and complete control of land sales in New Zealand.

For Māori the original request for protection resulted in a treaty giving the crown, what would have been better understood in the English text as, tino rangatiratanga or unconditional sovereignty (complete chieftainship) over all of NZ. What Māori had been happy to give the Queen in the first article was te Kawanatanga katoa, understood as governorship, not unconditional sovereignty.

Question

What were the risks of creating a contract that could change the authority over the whole country and give permission to change the way all people, and their land, are allowed to be treated?

Additional Links

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/treaty-of-waitangi>

https://nzhistory.govt.nz/files/documents/The_Story_Part_1.pdf

https://nzhistory.govt.nz/files/documents/The_Story_Part_2.pdf

1852 New Zealand Constitution Act

Governor Sir George Grey insisted that the colony needed a system of representative government. This would mean eligible British subjects from New Zealand could form a parliament.

The New Zealand Constitution Act was passed in 1852 and was put into action the next year, with the first parliament being held in 1854.

The Act contained the rules about who could vote and who could be elected in NZ. You must have land that you had paid for to be able to vote or be elected. Although Governor Grey realised that you must have land that you have paid for would be hard for both the Māori and the Pākehā poor to achieve, he said they would soon prosper and be able to vote.

The Act stated there would be six provinces in the country. Each of them would have a leader, called a superintendent.

The Act also contained instructions for the creation of Māori districts where Māori could keep most of their own beliefs and rules. The Kingitanga movement, which started to give Māori a voice, said that these Māori districts should be used, so they could have a place to use tikanga Māori. Some Māori felt this would achieve the tino

rangatiratanga (absolute sovereignty) they agreed to in the Treaty of Waitangi. This never happened.

As the NZ Government and its laws began to dominate some Māori felt they were unable to maintain the relationship with the British government that had been agreed to by the rangatira (chiefs) who signed the treaty.

Question

If you had formed a partnership, about the rules regarding the way you lived and behaved on your ancestral land, how would you feel if you suddenly had no mana or control over these rules on these lands?

Additional Links

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/self-government-and-independence/page-2>

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/proclamation-of-1852-constitution-act>

1858 Population: The Francis Fenton census.

Without any formal method of measuring population, the best estimate of the population of Māori, before the arrival of Pākehā, was 100,000.

The whalers, missionaries and first settlers to Aotearoa brought their European diseases, such as the measles and influenza which had a dramatic impact on the Māori population.

As did the Musket Wars.

Over the three decades from 1810 to 1840, it is estimated 120,000 Māori died in NZ. This is around 4000 per year with 700 of these believed to have been due to warfare, including the Musket Wars.

At the time of the signing of the Treaty in 1840 there were still 40 Māori for every Pākehā in the country, but when Frances Fenton carried out a population survey in 1858 the populations were close to being the same with nearly 60,000 people.

By the end of the NZ Wars the situation had worsened to the point where tangata whenua Māori had become a minority, being only 10% of the population. This would be the case for nearly 100 years.

Question

If you suddenly become a minority group in a community, what do you think happens to your customs, mana and your voice in the community?

Additional Link

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/population-change/page-6>

1859 The end of the Trading Era.

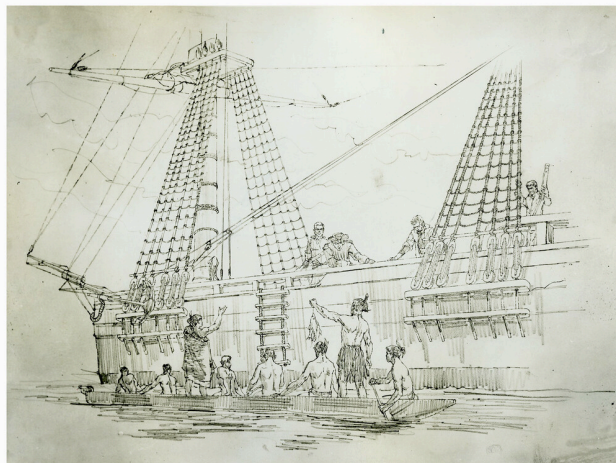
When the first contact with Pākehā occurred in NZ, the missionaries and whalers, sought protection and knowledge from Māori and there were many marriages to Māori women. Many of the first settlers to arrive were happy to learn te reo and trade with Māori.

Māori saw the advantages of European technology and some not only learnt the English language but found they could be very efficient in trading with the Europeans, using money as well as producing European goods.

In the 1840s tribal groups grew large quantities of produce to be sold to the Pākehā communities. Māori understood cultivation in Aotearoa and were able to adapt the new crops.

During the next decade the growing of a new, and more complex, crop of wheat was followed by the building and use of commercial flours mills by Māori. These mills were supported financially by Sir George Grey. He also supported other agricultural products and businesses for Māori, such as commercial shipping.

This era of exchange, from 1800-1860, came to be called the “golden age”. It demonstrated that reciprocal relationships between Māori and Pākehā were possible.



Maori trading alongside a vessel in Aotearoa waters.
Vern King archivesnz CC-BY 2.0

[Drawing by Vern King of ship side trading with Māori | Flickr](#)

Additional Link

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/te-maori-i-te-ohanga-maori-in-the-economy/page-3>

Question

What barriers do you think inhibited Māori and Pākehā from continuing to grow as trading partners, and working together on an equal footing?

1867 Native Schools Act

The New Zealand Wars causing great turmoil in NZ so during the 1860s the government sought ways to improve relations between Māori and Pākehā.

The government formalised a new system for educating Māori through the Native Schools Act in 1867.

The original Act stated that Māori would be required to request the school and also supply the land and resources. Once the school was established the Māori community that created the school would have no control over what would be taught in the school.

Some Māori believed native schools would create opportunities to share the scientific knowledge of Pākehā and that learning English as a second language would create better relations with Pākehā.

Some of these schools did become an important place of communication between Māori communities and the Pākehā world. However, while Te Reo Māori was originally allowed to be spoken, especially for first classes held in a school, the Māori language was actively discouraged in the years that followed.

The Native School curriculum went on to limit Māori students to trade and agricultural career paths only. The government saw the schools as a place where Māori could be assimilated into Pākehā society.

Some of these schools were closed when the students and the community were seen, by school inspectors, as being ready to be part of the Pākehā world. The remaining schools were eventually taken over by the Education Board in 1969.

Question

How important do you think language and customs are in keeping a culture alive?

Additional Links

Ross Calman, 'Māori education – mātauranga - The native schools system, 1867 to 1969', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/maori-education-matauranga/page-3> (accessed 3 January 2020)

Hutchings, J., Lee-Morgan, J. (2016), Decolonisation in Aotearoa: Education, research and practice. Ch1 Walker, Ranginui, Reclaiming Māori education, New Zealand, NZCER Press

<https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/Chapter%201%20Ranginui%20Walker.pdf>

1907 The Tohunga Suppression Act.

The early 20th century was a time of great change and there was concern about the potential of an international war. The government and the public were concerned by any evidence that Māori were seeking a strong voice of their own.

The minority status of Māori, as 10% of the population, and growing social issues, such as poor health and education standards for Māori, were seen as a problem the government should be involved in.

Types of healing not approved by the government, including traditional Māori healing, were seen as a barrier to promoting modern medicine and the standards of health in Māori communities. This resulted in the creation of the Tohunga Suppression Act in 1907.

While the Act promoted modern medicine, and the protection of Māori from acts of fraud, it also undermined the knowledge and traditions that Māori had developed and nurtured during the previous one thousand years of living in Aotearoa.

Newspapers printed content that depicted traditional Māori customs in a way that made them seem not only a threat, but something to be ridiculed.

Question

*How do you think this law could have been written as one for all New Zealanders, that prevented the crime of fraud, without including cultural customs?
Was there another way of preparing laws without labelling people's beliefs as superstition?*

Additional Links

Stephens, M, (2000) A RETURN TO THE TOHUNGA SUPPRESSION ACT 1907 , retrieved Dec 2010 from

<https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/vuwlr/article/view/5888/5381>

Law Commission , New Zealand Study Paper/, NZLC SP9 (2001) MĀORI CUSTOM AND VALUES IN NEW ZEALAND LAW , Wellington, retrieved Dec 2010 from

www.lawcom.govt.nz

<https://www.lawcom.govt.nz/sites/default/files/projectAvailableFormats/NZLC%20SP9.pdf>

1944 Urban Māori

During WWII only 10-20% of Māori were living in urban areas. The Manpower Act 1944 was a national strategy. Māori who were not going to war were directed to take up work in essential wartime industries in towns and cities.

As the number of factories in cities grew the government changed its view on the assimilation of Māori. The Hunn report in 1960 recommended a new strategy of 'integration' - the coming together of Māori and Pākehā.

By 2006, 84% of Māori were living in urban areas. Māori were particularly vulnerable to unemployment and poverty depending on changes in the amount of work available in the city. They were also contending with a loss of connection with their cultural heritage due to being separated from their ancestral marae in the rural areas.

Ranginui Walker stated in 1979 that Māori born in the city '... know they are stuck with minority status as Māoris, but they know little or nothing about Māori values and pride in their cultural heritage'.

In the decades that followed, urban Māori became empowered through political changes and the resurgence of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori.



Photographer: Mr. Reithmaier, [Riethmaier], CC BY 2.0
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A clothing factory at Te Puke owned and managed by Māori staff. The Manager is Mr. P. Bird and the supervisor is Mrs. M. Pere, both of Rotorua. (1966)

Question

If you move from your ancestral land to the city and were surrounded by other cultures, how would this affect your way of life?

Additional Links

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/urban-maori>

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/classroom/nz-race-relations/effects-of-second-world-war>

2004 The Don Brash Orewa speech

In 2004 Don Brash, the leader of the National party, made a speech called 'nationhood' to the Orewa Rotary Club. While Brash covered many topics about the country, the speech focused heavily on race relations in New Zealand.

Brash did not say anything bad about Māori people, but he spoke about the level of support from the Government for the status of the Treaty of Waitangi, Māori projects and the resurgence in tikanga Māori and asserted that these changes were unfair to Pākehā. Treating Māori and Pākehā differently resulted in what Mr Brash called 'racial separatism'.

From 1970 to 2004 the Treaty of Waitangi had regained its legal status as a living document. Changes included crucial government action, such as te reo Māori being acknowledged as an official language, formation of the Waitangi Tribunal and many equity-based programmes for Māori as tangata whenua.

A significant outcome of this was that the unique status of Māori as tangata whenua became valued again.

Members of the public who were concerned about these changes supported Mr. Brash as the leader of his party. Other politicians found talking about subjects, like the Treaty of Waitangi, had become harder as the public was divided by the speech.



Don Brash, who presented his 'nationhood' speech in 2004.
Mori, CC BY-SA 3.0 creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/,
via Wikimedia Commons



Waitangi Day protest 2006.

Charlie Brewer, CC BY-SA 2.0 creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0,
via Wikimedia Commons

Question

What do you think are some of the benefits of celebrating diversity in our communities.

What value does the unique role of tangata whenua Māori have in Aotearoa?

Additional Links

Brash, D. (2004) NATIONHOOD - Don Brash Speech Orewa Rotary Club (2004),
retrieved Dec 2019 from

<https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0401/S00220/nationhood-don-brash-speech-orewa-rotary-club.htm>

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/105849114/how-don-brashes-orewa-speech-changed-the-way-governments-talk-about-the-treaty-of-waitangi>