

LIVING THROUGH HISTORY

**NATIONAL
ARMY
MUSEUM**
TE MATA TOA

NZ History
Hone Heke and the Flag



He waka eke noa

We are all in this together

History isn't something that happens to someone else. Right now, you are living through an extraordinary event that is changing the New Zealand way of life: the COVID-19 pandemic. Future students might look back on this moment and ask: how did they feel? How did they make it through?

We can ask the same questions about another generation of Kiwis who lived through extraordinary times: **The Ngā Puhi people and the settlers in Northland in 1840**. Then, like now, a major crisis forced everyday New Zealanders to reconsider the way that they were used to living.

With the changes and challenges, people faced uncertain and unpredictable futures. Ngā Puhi were determined to uphold their rangitiratanga as increasing numbers of Pākehā disrupted their way of life.

For each of the activities below:

- **Read** about what was happening in Northland.
- **Reflect** on how everyone was thinking and feeling.
- **Respond** to the questions or instructions at the end of each activity.

Share your answers with your classmates and teacher! We'll all have our own unique experiences, and we can all learn just as much from each other as we can from our nation's history.



Activity 1: What was going on?

Prior to 1840 Ngā Puhī (a Māori iwi, tribe) had control and sovereignty over the northern part of New Zealand. There were a growing number of Pākehā traders, settlers and missionaries moving into the same area – some, but not all, respected Ngā Puhī.

Ngā Puhī had developed excellent relationships with the British and when they asked the Māori chiefs of New Zealand to sign the treaty Hone Heke was the first rangatira to sign. However he signed Te Tiriti.

Te Tiriti was the Māori translated version of The Treaty of Waitangi. This translation had been written overnight by missionaries and did not have exactly the same meaning as the English version. Te Tiriti stated that Māori retained rangatiratanga (power) over their own affairs and people, and agreed to comply with kāwanatanga (governance). In The Treaty of Waitangi sovereignty was used to translate kāwanatanga, and so the English version Māori ceded sovereignty to the British.

Under International Law the 'contra preferentum' principle gives precedence to Treaties written in native languages to ensure clarity of meaning.

After the treaty was signed the British made new laws and enforced them. These laws took away the mana and economic prosperity of the northern Māori. For example, a law was put in place that Māori were only able to sell land to the British, they could not sell it privately.

The capital of New Zealand was on Ngā Puhī territory at Kororāreka (now called Russell). This settlement helped the people in this area to trade and make money. But in 1841 the capital was shifted to Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland).

This caused many problems for Ngā Puhī. Fewer ships and people came to Russell and demand for produce (like vegetables) and timber fell. There was a smaller customer base to buy these things now as they had moved to Auckland. The iwi's economy was also based on port collection fees however this was changed and the government took these fees. To top it off the government also banned the felling of kauri trees.

Ngā Puhī found it progressively difficult to obtain goods and they became worse off financially. The northern rangatira could see that with the new laws they were losing control of their own lives and tensions started to rise.

This all led to Hone Heke's symbolic action of chopping down the flagpole four times. The original flagpole was donated by Heke and was intended to fly the United Tribes Flag. After the fourth time, Governor Fitzroy ordered a full scale invasion of Ngā Puhī territory. This was the start of the New Zealand Wars. Many Ngā Puhī villages were destroyed, and many lives were lost on both sides.

1a The Treaty was translated and signed in a short time frame. Why do you think there was a rush to do it? The rush caused some bad outcomes – what?

1b The Treaty said that Māori rights would be protected. In Ngā Puhī's region were they?

1c How do you feel about new laws being brought in that helped some people and made life difficult for others? Can you think of a solution?

1d Would those laws be why Ngā Puhī were very unhappy? What were three different things going wrong for them?

Activity 2: Felling the Flagpole

After the flagpole was chopped down the first time, Hone Heke wrote to Governor Fitzroy:

"Friend Governor - This is my speech to you. My disobedience and rudeness is no new thing. I inherit it from my parents, from my ancestors, do not imagine that it is a new feature of my character, but i am thinking of leaving off my rude conduct towards the Europeans. Now I say that I will prepare another pole ... in order to put an end to our present quarrel The pole that was cut down belonged to me, I made it for the native flag, and it was never paid for by the Europeans"

His attempt at peace fell on deaf ears. Another flagpole was put up and the Flag of the Union flown. So Heke chopped it down again. And then again. His action was a symbolic one - he understood the Flag of the Union represented British sovereignty and he was protesting against what the British were doing by chopping down the pole that flew their flag.

When the flagpole was chopped down the third time, a blockhouse was built to guard it and the area was garrisoned (troops were stationed there to defend it). The lower section of the pole was also clad in iron.

This meant that chopping it down again needed more planning and tactics. In the early hours of March 11th 1845 Te Ruki Kawiti staged a diversion to draw the soldiers of the blockhouse away. Fighting broke out in the church yard and surrounding area between Kawiti and soldiers from the British ship the *Hazard*, and then a separate fight started with the guards from the blockhouse. Heke was able to successfully fell the flagpole again.

After the flagpole fell, Heke flew a white flag of truce, his mission had been accomplished.

The civilian Pākehā population was evacuated to the ships anchored in the bay. Soon after a powder magazine in the town exploded and set buildings on fire.

The settlers came back to collect their belongings and once they were back aboard, the *Hazard* began firing into the town.

The situation was recorded by the master of the whaling ship *Matilda*:

"It is in my opinion, that had those shots never been fired, the town would have been saved from plunder and destruction ... shortly after our arrival back on board, they commenced plundering in every direction and fired the town"

- Captain Andrew Bliss

2a Do you think Heke cutting down the flagpole was an effective way to protest? Give your reasons.

2b If Fitzroy had negotiated with Heke after the first time he cut the flagpole how could the outcome have been different?

2c Communication and goodwill are vital in times of stress and uncertainty. Was this evident when Hone Heke felled the flagpole?



Activity 3: War

At the end of the day, Kororāreka lay in ruins with around 30 men dead, each side suffering roughly the same number of casualties. Heke organised for the British dead to be handed over to the missionary Henry Williams for their proper burial.

The loss of the town was an incredible blow and the government attributed all the blame to Heke and Kawiti. The Pākehā settlers were evacuated to Auckland and a full scale offensive was ordered.

Fitzroy called for urgent reinforcements from Australia. On March 22nd the ship *HMS Northstar* (a 26 gun frigate) arrived along with officers and men of the 58th regiment, quickly followed by the *Velocity* and *Slains Castle*. By late April another 470 officers from the 58th and 96th regiments had arrived.

Colonel Hulme who commanded the 96th regiment, said:

"It is my sad duty to state my conviction that until the principal pah on the Kawakawa are destroyed and until the majority of their rebellious inhabitants are killed, there will be no peace in the Bay of Islands, no security for other settlements."

While the military might of the British was building up, more issues were developing for Māori. Not all Ngā Puhi agreed with Heke's actions.

One prominent rangatira who disapproved was Tamati Wake Nene:

"This man [Heke] had laughed at all of our persuasions and threats [we] who are older than himself ... I had told the government when the flagstaff was cut down that I would oppose Heke if he persisted in his folly and I am now come to do it"

The northern war was underway. Māori had quickly adapted their fighting to combat British weaponry and tactics. They built pā that were able to withstand assaults. Māori were armed with older style flintlock muskets and double barrelled shotguns (tupara). They also fought with traditional weapons. There were never more than 500 Māori fighters. Their pā were also home to the elders (kuia, koro), tamariki (children) and pākehā. One of the pā destroyed was at Otuihu, which had a pākehā population of about 200.

The British learned of the necessity for heavier artillery to invade these modern gunfighter pā. By the time the battle of Ruapekapeka came about, British were armed with modern percussion muskets, along with howitzers, cannon, mortars, and rockets. They had over 1300 soldiers and sailors fighting.

3a Do you think a full scale military offensive was the best way to deal with Heke? Give a reason for your answer.

3b Do you think this sounded like a fair fight considering the weapons and numbers each side was armed with?

3c War has been used as a metaphor for the COVID-19 Pandemic, for example, The War on Covid, Unite Against Covid. Do you feel this is helpful and encourages appropriate behaviour?



Activity 4: The Aftermath

The changes in the law followed by the war led to poverty for Northland. This poverty has continued to this day.

Although the two sides came to a shaky peace deal and no land was confiscated immediately, Ngā Puhī were no better off as they had lost access to many of their traditional resources.

Today, poverty, poor housing, unemployment, and poor health statistics are high in Northland. Ngā Puhī are yet to bring a claim to the Waitangi Tribunal.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has highlighted inequities for Māori, low paid workers, and the homeless so the Northland people will be more affected than most.

4a The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted significant issues of equity (the haves and the have nots), and the increased risk for poor, under-resourced communities. Māori in Northland face an increased risk of mortality (dying) during pandemics.

Iwi in Northland have been pro actively supporting their kaumatua (elders) including setting up road check points to monitor who is entering their communities. This has been done with the support of local police and council authorities. What kind of issues can arise from living in poor and under-resourced communities?

4b What links can be seen between Heke's protest and the war that followed and the problems in Northland today?

4c The new laws brought in by the British forced Māori to give up their communal way of life, the way of living they had known for hundreds and hundred of years. How do you think this has affected their mental health and well-being?



Beyond the Worksheet

These activities have shown you just a few examples of how past New Zealanders responded to a national crisis and came through it. But history doesn't stop happening, and there's more you can do to understand.

- **Documentary and model.** Follow this link to watch an informative documentary on the Northland Wars: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/nz-wars/story/2018623840/the-battle-of-ruapekapeka>. Using material you can find in your yard, create your own model of a Māori pā (fortified village).
- **Flag.** Flags are an important representation of people and their nation. Think about a flag that represents the diversity of our country. Draw this flag or use other materials in your home to create your idea of a flag for Aotearoa, New Zealand.
- **Letters.** Write a letter to the Prime Minister. Tell her what you think about what happened in Northland and how the people there continue to suffer.



Further information can be found following the links:

The Aotearoa History Show Episode 4: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/the-aotearoa-history-show/story/2018717296/4-te-tiriti-o-waitangi>

Radio New Zealand Documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jc39k2FdvFc>

Te Ara: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/new-zealand-wars/page-2>

Newspaper Articles:

<https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2018/03/hone-heke-s-flagpole-felling-remembered.html>

https://www.nzherald.co.nz/northern-advocate/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503450&objectid=11098470

History of Ngā Puhi: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/ngapuhi/print>