



Message from the Moderator

 Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

Waitangi Day

6 February 2019

On this day in the life of our country, we each have a perspective, views and thoughts about the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi). Historically, it is well documented. The creation of the Treaty, between the Tāngata whenua (Māori/people of the land) and the British Crown, was an event that defined the journey of this land and her people. The Treaty governs the relationship between Tāngata whenua and everyone who has migrated to New Zealand.

The Treaty was signed on 6 February 1840 by 40 rangatira (Māori chiefs) and Captain William Hobson, on behalf of the British Crown. By September of the same year, 500 more chiefs from around the country had signed. It is said that all but 39 chiefs signed a Māori language copy of the Treaty.

Why was a treaty necessary? New Zealand in the early 1800s was changing. Many Europeans ventured here, acquiring land, dealing, settling in a new frontier. Sadly, lawlessness, chaos, corruption was rife. Migrants arrived in droves. The British Government stepped in, or, was asked to intervene. Talks for negotiating New Zealand to be regarded as a colony of Britain commenced, with the sovereignty of New Zealand hopefully secured under Britain. France was also showing interest in New Zealand.¹

The ongoing problem at the heart of the Treaty Waitangi, then and now, is that of sovereignty. The British Crown believed the Treaty of Waitangi would give it sovereignty. The chiefs believed the Treaty of Waitangi would protect the sovereignty of Tāngata whenua - rangatiratanga (chiefly authority). This issue, at the core of the Treaty of Waitangi persists today. The blunt reality...“When the Treaty of Waitangi was signed Māori owned more than 66 million acres. By 1975, when the Waitangi Tribunal began, almost 97 per cent had been sold or taken”.²

The Treaty of Waitangi is noted as the founding document of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Many regard the date of the Treaty as our national day, to be observed, respected and remembered. And, like such national days in many countries, there are speculations, doubts of authenticity and relevancy. Some say it is the past...so what...what does it mean now? Still, each person in New Zealand today has a view and perspective on the Treaty of Waitangi document.

I humbly and respectfully share my view and understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi. My journey in this land began in 1968. I am a migrant from Tokelau and Samoa in the Pacific. The status of people like me is manuhiri (visitor/guest). It is 50 years since arriving here. This land has embraced me, nurtured me and moulded me into the person I am today.

Pacific Islanders view New Zealand as the land of opportunity, land of milk and honey. New Zealand is the destination, the epitome, the land of promises - Australia/USA rank after New Zealand.

My ministry parents sent all their children to New Zealand. As a 10-year-old, it was a cultural shock. But the blessing of the land and of the people, Tāngata whenua and manuhiri, have been tremendous.

The Treaty of Waitangi is an incredible document in my eyes. It speaks of the history of New Zealand, the land, the people, the journey. There is a sense of awe, honour, respect, appreciation. There is also grief and pain, injustice and loss for the Tāngata whenua. There is hope, deliberation, intentional genuineness about building a home and moving forward as one nation.

The Waitangi Tribunal is an avenue to acknowledge and accept responsibility, for moving forward. We will always be people of the Treaty of Waitangi, on a bicultural covenant with a multicultural perspective. We must honour this founding document for all New Zealanders.

I understand myself as a manuhiri with a lifelong visa. This land is not the land of my birth, but it is the land where I will be buried. This is home for me now. I will give my best, my all for this land and for all her people. I respect and honour the intention of the Treaty of Waitangi. All my lifetime, all my days I stand in support of Tāngata whenua and the Crown. I will live with you both for better or for worse.

We will build a future for the next generation. Let us be united, be at peace with one another. May the Spirit lead us in building relationships on Jesus Christ as Lord.



Fakaofu

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1. *Polynesia & Contemporary Pacific Challenges (Treaty of Waitangi)*. Facebook: *New Zealand: History & Natural History*

<https://www.facebook.com/New-Zealand-History-Natural-History-267744546741095/>

2. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/104100739/treaty-of-waitangi-what-was-lost>

