



Kaupapa

Te Pūtake O Te Riri is the messenger whose task is to awaken the memory and conscience of a sleeping nation. Promoting critical awareness, personal introspection, intercultural exchange and social transformation. Te Pūtake O Te Riri is the national day set aside to commemorate the New Zealand Wars, a unique day dedicated to remembering a sacred legacy, a legacy left in trust to a nation, a legacy unfulfilled.

Explanation of the kaupapa

Te Pūtake O Te Riri is the working name for the national day set aside to commemorate the New Zealand Wars. Formally adopted by the NZ government in 2016, this special day the 28th October challenges us to reflect on our shared history, to remember and re-examine past events which continue to shape our present day lives, identities, beliefs and relationships. The national day is an opportunity for all New Zealanders to remember the wars and conflicts, the people, the events and consequences of our shared past, doing so in a more complete and informed way.

Through Te Pūtake o te Riri we restore the memory and dignity to all who fought and fell in the wars and peaceful resistance campaigns over the period 1843 to 1916. This period saw intense and bitter clashes between Pākehā and Māori resulting in significant intergenerational socio, economic and political deprivation and suffering for Māori. Whānau, hapū and iwi witnessed unlawful incarcerations, forced relocations and killings of loved ones; millions of acres of ancestral lands confiscated; natural resources appropriated; thriving regional economies destroyed and life opportunities permanently compromised.

The other casualties of this time included colonial settler families who were looking for new life opportunities away from the squalor of Victorian Britain and imperial and colonial troops who were protecting the interests of the Crown, successive Settler Governments and their business patrons. Historians estimate there were approximately three thousand casualties of these wars and conflicts. In a few short decades, the combination of imposed foreign legislative power, bloody wars and their aftermath, transformed forever the entire social, economic and political fabric and landscape of Aotearoa.



Māori suffered disproportionately during this era of turmoil, these were complex times and events which saw Māori fighting against and some alongside the Crown and Colonial Settler Governments. Loss of life and control and access to natural resources fell unevenly on whānau and hapū involved. In the present day, knowledge and understanding of these painful histories is also uneven. Among the general public many Pākehā and some Māori, know little about the Wars. Others, including kaumātua have had stories handed down to them from generation to generation in waiata, whakataukākī, pakimaero, and historians whose research demonstrates the significance of the Wars, continue to argue that these events need to be better understood, appreciated and publicly acknowledged.

Understanding this past is particularly important as the nation looks back through the lens of the Waitangi Tribunals and acknowledges the historical wrongs committed by the Crown and its Settler Governments. Te Pūtake O Te Riri provides an opportunity for deepening understanding of the history behind these events and how they contribute to the way things are in Aotearoa today. The origins of our agricultural wealth, the foundations of our modern economy, our parliamentary, judicial, legal, police and corrections systems have their beginnings in these times of unrest, upheaval and enforced change. Te Pūtake o te Riri is a fundamental part of our nation's constitutional history and memory. More importantly, it is a living expression of a nation's conscience.

It is intended this day should illuminate the reasons for the processes of restorative justice, by revealing a past forgotten or not comprehended by many. Even now the new national war memorial at Puke Ahu - in Wellington accords the wars in this country scant recognition, and they are not spoken of alongside the narrative of overseas wars. At the national level, the wars continue to be the focus of selective amnesia.

The kaupapa of the national day rejects any notion of glorifying or normalising war and conflict in any shape, form or context. It does incorporate particular recognition of the ongoing struggle by Māori using armed, peaceful resistance campaigns and litigation to protect and retain their legitimate and inalienable "mana motuhake" or "tino rangatiratanga" rights as enshrined in Te Whakaputanga O Niiu Tirini (Declaration of Independence 1835) and Te Tiriti O Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi 1840). Te Pūtake o te Riri seeks to uncover and shed the light on that part of our history which has been hidden for too long and to encourage informed conversations about our shared past.



The kaupapa of the national day acknowledges the detrimental effects on a modern society of retaining a divided national memory, where the groups who suffered most, remember most, but the "mainstream story" continues to forget. Divided memories create divided people. Justice is founded on shared understandings of the past. Te Pūtake o te Riri seeks to foster not uniformity, but critical awareness and mutual recognition.

It is also a herald, carrying a message to all New Zealanders of the need to be well informed of history, to accept and recognise it for what it was, and use that knowledge as a catalyst to transform personal, family and community perceptions, realities, prejudices and more importantly, to transform relationships. The national day invites the public to learn from history, fostering understandings and attitudes committed to building a genuine practice of bi-culturalism and intercultural understanding while applying new insights and wisdom to how we live our everyday lives. It is in the act of accepting our past that we create the conditions which can lead to liberating ourselves from the pain of that past.

Aotearoa is still very much an infant, a very young country on the international stage. Te Pūtake o te Riri provides an opportunity for the nation to move beyond its adolescence to adulthood and maturity. As part of this rite of passage we must accept our history in its entirety, with all of its gore and glory and do so with dignity and compassion for those who suffered. Although it is impossible to undo history, it is possible on one day of the year the 28th October, of every year, to acknowledge and honor the many forgotten heroes and heroines who fell on our own shores in the pursuit of freedom, justice, equality and the retention of their unique way of life. Their blood and bones, hopes, tears and lamentations were the human mortar upon which the foundations of this modern democracy and country was built. Te Pūtake o te Riri national day seeks to honor a sacred legacy. A legacy left in trust to a nation, a legacy unfulfilled. Te Pūtake o te Riri records a nation's long journey from war and conflict to atonement, peace, reconciliation and transformation.