Ahakoa he motu tū wehe, nā ngā uratanga ka honoa.

Although close islands stand separate, they are linked by necessity.

Two parties, two understandings

What does the Treaty mean?
For many reasons, what Māori and British actually agreed to in the Treaty has been unclear.

A recipe for debate
- There were two versions of the Treaty – one in English and one in Māori. They are not exact translations of each other.
- Those who signed the Treaty brought different experiences and understandings of certain words to the signing.
- When the British representatives took the Treaty to different Māori groups they possibly introduced it differently, and their explanations no doubt varied.

Signing over sovereignty?
In the English version of the Treaty, Māori give the British Crown 'absolutely and without reservation all the rights and powers of sovereignty' over their lands, but are guaranteed 'undisturbed possession' of their lands, forests, fisheries, and other properties.
In the Māori version of the Treaty, Māori give the Crown 'kawanatanga kia rā' – complete government. And they are guaranteed 'the rangatira rangatira' – the unqualified exercise of chieftainship over their lands, forests, fisheries, and other properties.
These different promises don’t sit alongside each other easily.

The benefits of signing
The reasons why chiefs signed the Treaty varied from region to region. They were influenced by the acts of war (tribes) and good (tribes) and the explanations given by negotiators.

In Auckland
Ngāti Whītia wanted to forge a relationship with the Crown that would benefit both the whānau (tribe) and nation. They wanted the chance to have the governor and the capital of New Zealand on their lands in future.

The Kohimarama Covenant
In 1840, twenty years after the original Treaty signing, Governor Gare Browne invited some two hundred Māori leaders from all around New Zealand to a conference at Mission Bay, Auckland.
The aim of the three-week conference was to secure Māori loyalty.
The Treaty was read again to the assembled leaders and its benefits explained. The hui (gatherings) ended with chiefs declaring they were ‘pledged to each other, to do nothing inconsistent with their declared recognition of the Queen’s sovereignty, and of the union of the two races’, Māori and Pākehā.

In Wellington
Te Ati Awa and other Wellington iwi wanted controlled settlement and the benefits it would bring.

In the South Island
Ngāi Tahu rangatira Hope Raukawa wanted the protection of the bay, as well as guarantees about land.

On the Kapiti Coast
Ngāti Toa wanted to maintain the position they had gained in the region, and to benefit from the skills and new technologies that Europeans would bring.

A legacy?
Māori, British and French have long debated the meaning of the Treaty. The missionaries argued that a British administration would be better than a French one.

More than a Treaty...
Some iwi, especially Ngā Puhā, saw the Treaty as a covenant, a spiritual bond with the British Crown. A number of missionaries encouraged this view.

The Kohimarama Covenant was signed on 9 December 1862 in Auckland.

The Treaty of Waitangi was signed on 27 February 1840 at Waitangi.

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