

Native Land Act 1931

Citation: 22 Geo. V, No 31

Date of Assent: 11 November, 1931

Commencement: 1 January, 1932

Repeal:

Repealed 1954, No 60

Amendments:

1932, **No 25**: See separate record.

s4 amends all sections of the principal Act which refers to

"the Board" and replaces with "the Court". s4 repeals ss270, 283, 272(1), 284(2), 79(2)

s6: Consequential amendments of the principal Act relating to replacement of the words "the Board" with "the Court".

s7 repeals *ss440* and *441*

s8 amends s492(2)

s14: Consequential amendments relating to the abolition of

the Native Land Settlement Account. s14 repeals ss516 - 520, 522(3) and (6)

s19 amends s101.

1933, No 50: See separate record.

First schedule contains amendments to...

ss94, 96, 99, 100, 101, 103 - 107, 162 - 164, 303, 327, 340, 343, 358, 407, 408, 522, 523, 537.

1936, No 53: See separate record.

repeals s522.

1937, No 34: See separate record.

s3 repeals and replaces s262

s5 repeals and replaces s298

s8 repeals and replaces s479.

1938, No 23: *s4* amends *s11*.

1939, **No 28**: *s*3 repeals and replaces *s*27(3).

1940, No 25: See separate record.

s4 repeals and replaces s462

*s*5 amends *s*488.

1940, No 30: See *s26* – amends Act regarding execution of

instruments by Natives.

1942, No 15: See separate record.

s4 amends s94.

1943, No 24: See separate record.

s4(5) repeals and replaces ss294 and 437

s6 amends s533.

Amendments to Relevant Sections continued over page



1946, No 37: *s9* amends *ss158* and *163*.

1947, **No 59**: *s*19 amends *s*540.

1949, **No 46**: *s*18 amends *s*548.

1950, No 98: See separate record.

s5 amends s146

s6 amends s223

ss14 - 30 compensation to lessees for improvement.

s30 repeals s286 and amends s287

s54 repeals ss355 and 540.

1951, No 75: See separate record.

s3 amends s8

*s*5 amends *s*116.

1952, No 70: See separate record.

s3 repeals Part XII relating to limitation of amount of land

to be held by individuals.

1953, No 94: See separate record.

repeals all except ss299 - 380.

Type of Legislation:

Public

Subject:

Maori Land Court: Structures & Jurisdiction

Maori Land Boards

Alienation of Maori Land

Maori Land Development Schemes

Incorporations Reserved Land

Consolidation/Exchange Schemes

Survey Issues

Relevant Sections:

s2: Customary Land defined as land vested in the Crown and held by Natives under the customs and usages of the Maori people. Native freehold land defined as land owned by a Native for a beneficial estate in fee simple (whether legal or equitable). Proviso that a) European land shall not be deemed to become Native land upon being vested in a Native for an estate in fee simple, b) Native land acquired by a Maori Land Board deemed to remain Native freehold land, c) Crown land purchased from the Crown by Natives for pecuniary consideration to remain European land and d) Native land which is subject to a contract of sale shall remain Native land until the contract has been completed by a transfer of the legal fee simple.

Native land defined as either customary land or Native freehold land.

Landless Natives defined as a Native whose total beneficial interests in freehold land are insufficient for his maintenance.

Native includes a half caste and a person intermediate in blood between half castes and persons of pure descent of the Native race.

ss3 - 54: PART I Native Land Court

s3: NLCt continued.

s4: NLCT to consist of Judges, Native Assessors and Commissioners.

s12: New Zealand to be divided into Native Land Court Districts.

s19: One or more Judges may exercise the powers of the Court. In certain cases the Native Assessors may advise and assist the Court although their concurrence is not necessary for any decision.

s27: NLCt shall have jurisdiction...

- to hear and determine claims between Natives for the ownership or possession of or any right of title in Native freehold land,
- to determine the relative interests of the owners in common of Native freehold land,
- to hear claims for trespass/injury between Natives over Native freehold land,
- to grant injunctions for actual or threatened trespass,
- to enforce obligations of trust for eg disabled Maori and deceased
 Maori or to administer trust or to determine a breach of trust (proviso that no jurisdiction over Native Trustee or Maori Land Board),
- to grant injunction prohibiting person from dealing with any property which is the subject of an application before the NLCt,
- to exercise any powers vested in the Supreme Court by the Settled Land Act 1908 in respect of Native freehold land,
- to create easements over Native freehold land.

NLCt shall have jurisdiction over any land held by Natives or by Natives and Europeans jointly in the same way as it has power over Native freehold land. NLCt shall have exclusive jurisdiction to determine claims between Natives under the Fencing Act 1908. s32: NLCt may vest any Native land in a Maori Land Board as a site

s32: NLCt may vest any Native land in a Maori Land Board as a site for a dairy or other factory.

s33: NLCt may set apart any area as a site for a church if satisfied that it is in accordance with a majority of the owners.



s38: Provision for amendments to be made when mistakes have occurred in ascertainment of title.

s40: NLCt may order payment to persons entitled to money held by the Native Trustee, Maori Land Board or other public servant.

s42: Appointment of receiver in respect of charges on Native land.

s51: Orders made with respect to Native land to be conclusive after 10 years.

*s*54: Judge may prohibit the supply of liquor to Natives during sittings of the NLCt.

ss55 - 72: PART II Native Appellate Court

s55: Native Appellate Court continued.

s61: Appellate Court to hear appeals from the NLCt.

ss73 - 111: PART III Maori Land Boards

s73: Every Native Land Court District constituted under this Act shall be a Maori Land District.

s75: Maori Land Boards to be corporate bodies.

s77: Maori Land Boards to consist of two members – one the Judge of the NLCt and the other the Registrar of the NLCt.

s98: If any Native indebted to a Maori Land Board has a credit balance in the Board's account, the Board may appropriate such money in order to repay the debt.

s100: Board may make advances...

- for the purpose of any agricultural or pastoral business
- for the payment of debts and liabilities
- for the discharge of any charge, encumbrance, rates and taxes affecting any Native freehold land
- for the farming, improvement and settlement of any Native freehold land

All money so advanced shall become a charge upon the land.

s106: Boards may acquire land for Natives.

s107: Boards may undertake industry on behalf of Natives.

ss112 - 129: PART IV Customary Land

s112: Native customary title shall not be enforceable against the Crown save as to the rights of Natives to have their claims to any customary lands investigated by the NLCt.

s113: Proclamation that Crown land is free from Native customary title is to be conclusive.

s114: No alienation of land by the Crown shall be invalid by reason of the fact that the Native customary title has not been extinguished.



s115: Native customary title deemed to be extinguished for all land which has been continuously in the possession of the Crown for 10 years prior to 31 March, 1910.

s117: Customary land inalienable.

s119: Title and interests in customary land shall be determined according to the ancient custom and usage of the Maori people.

s121: Freehold orders made by the NLCt on ascertainment of title to have the effect of a Crown Grant and the land itself shall cease to be customary land and become Native freehold land.

ss130 - 135: PART V Ascertainment of Equitable Owners

s130: NLCt shall not proceed to ascertain equitable owners unless authorised by Order in Council.

s131: NLCt to have jurisdiction to determine whether land granted to Natives by the Crown prior to 23 October, 1894 was intended to be held by the nominal owners in trust for persons not named in the title to the land; and to determine who are the persons entitled beneficially to any land held by the trust and their relevant interests; and if necessary to partition the land.

s134: Native Reserves not subject to this part of the Act.

s135: The NLCt shall not exercise such jurisdiction in respect of confiscated lands which have been granted to Natives by the Crown under special statutory provision, unless such a grant of trust is insufficiently defined.

ss136 - 154: PART VI Partition

s136: NLCt to have exclusive jurisdiction to partition Native Freehold land.

s139: Partition Orders may be made in respect of land owned beneficially or held in trust.

s142: Upon partition the NLCt may apportion the rights and obligations to which the partitioned land is subject.

s143: NLCt may partition land into parcels for single owners or into parcels for groups of owners.

s117: Upon partition NLCt to lay out road lines on the partitioned land. Governor may proclaim these road lines to be public roads at which time they vest in the Crown. Prior to such proclamation the lands to remain Native lands. In lieu of laying out road lines the NLCt may create private rights.



s144: NLCt to avoid subdivision of any land into areas which because of their smallness or configuration are unsuitable for separate ownership.

s146: NLCt may combine areas for purposes of partition.

s148: Where any owner of a block of Native land has paid survey charges out of his own money, the NLCt may award additional area as recompense.

s149: In certain cases the NLCt may allot on partition a smaller or larger area than that to which the owner is actually entitled, deficiency in value to be charge on land.

ss155 - 168: PART VII Exchange and Consolidation Exchange

s155: Native freehold land may be alienated by way of exchange. The NLCt may make "orders of exchange". NLCt shall have power to make an order of exchange vesting European land or an interest therein in any Native.

s156: Other methods of exchange not affected.

s157: Any interest in Native freehold land may be exchanged for any other interest in any other Native freehold or European land.

s127: Prior to making exchange NLCt to be satisfied that...

- the exchange is for the benefit of the Native owners
- that no Native will become landless because of the exchange
- that the interests to be exchanged are approximately equal in value
- where the interests are unequal, a sufficient sum of money has been paid
- that all Natives in whom the land is vested consent to the exchange. *s*160: Money payable in order to equalise an exchange shall constitute a charge on the land.

Consolidation

s161: Native Minister may apply to NLCt to prepare a scheme of consolidation with respect to a specific area. If the Governor is satisfied with the scheme he may confirm it.

s162: Carrying out of scheme of consolidation. Orders of exchange carried out under this scheme are not subject to the restrictions mentioned in this Part of this Act.

s163: Further powers of the NLCt on consolidation.

*s***167**: Governor may prohibit alienation for up to 12 months pending execution of a consolidation scheme.

ss169 - 201: PART VIII Succession

ss169 - 175: Wills. To be executed in same manner as wills by Europeans. Not to be made in favor of European. Interpretation of Native wills.

*ss***176** - **178**: Intestacy. Succession to estates of Natives to be determined according to Native custom.

ss179 - 180: Debts of deceased Natives.

ss181 - 186: Probate and letters of administration.

ss187 - 194: Succession Orders.

s195: No interest possessed by any person in customary land and no beneficial freehold interest possessed by Native in Native freehold land shall be computed as part of duty. Otherwise subject to Native succession duty under 1909 Death Duties Act.

s198: Timber, Flax etc. deemed to be part of a freehold interest in Native Land.

ss202 - 211: PART IX Adoption of Children by Natives

*s***202**: No future adoption according to Native custom.

s205: Only Natives may be adopted by Natives.

ss212 - 230: PART X Persons Under Disability

s213: NLCt may appoint Native Trustee or other person as trustee of Native under disability.

*s***220:** Trust property to remain vested in beneficiary and not in Trustee.

*s*221: Trustee to represent beneficiary in disposition of the property.

ss231 - 233: PART XI Marriages by Natives

s231: Marriage Act to apply to marriages between Natives and Europeans.

s232: Marriages between Natives.

ss234 - 255: PART XII Limitation of Area

s234: Not lawful for any person to acquire any Native freehold land as the beneficial owner or lessee if the land so acquired together with all other land held by him exceeds a total area of 5,000 acres calculated in manner provided in this Part.

*s*236: Two or more persons not entitled to acquire undivided shares in Native land if any one of them is disqualified from so aspiring.

s242: Nothing to prevent the acquisition of land which is of so poor quality that it can not profitably be worked.

s246: Gov-Gen may authorise acquisition notwithstanding limitation.



s247: Computation of total area.

*s*254: Alienation in breach of this Act not invalid, but an offence.

*s*255: Forfeiture of land acquired in violation of this Part of the Act.

ss256 - 298: PART XIII Alienation

s256: All restrictions on alienation of land by a Native or on the alienation of Native Land which were imposed prior to 31 March, 1910 shall have no force or effect. Maori may dispose of their interests in any land in the same manner as Europeans (subject to the provisions of this Act).

*s*257: On application of the Native owner, Native land held by a single owner may be declared European land.

*s*258: Native land owned by more than 10 owners shall be inalienable except with consent of the Gov-Gen or in accordance with Part XVIII of this Act (relating to the powers of the assembled owners).

ss259 - 260: Alienation of equitable interests.

s261: Natives to be incapable of disposing of any rent, purchase money or other anticipated revenues or proceeds from his interest in Native lands.

s262: Sale of timber, flax, minerals etc. deemed to be an alienation of Native land unless the thing was severed from the land prior to making the contract.

s263: Disposition of a life estate deemed to be inalienable.

s268: Formalities of execution of instruments of alienation by Natives.

*s*270: No alienation by a Native to have any effect unless confirmed by a Maori Land Board.

*s***273:** For an alienation to be confirmed it must satisfy the Board that...

- the instrument satisfies this Act,
- the alienation is not contrary to equity or good faith,
- no Native will become landless because of the alienation,
- the consideration is adequate,
- the person obtaining an interest does not surpass limitation of area prohibitions,
- that in the case of sale the purchase money has been paid or sufficiently secured,
- that the alienation is not in any breach of trust,
- that the alienation is not otherwise in breach of law.

s274: Duty of Maori Land Boards to protect Native burial places when confirming any alienation.

s285: Leases of Native land not to exceed 50 years.

s286: Method to provide for compensation for improvements made by the lessee of Native land. Portion of rent to be set aside and accumulated as a sinking fund. Sum payable to lessee for improvements to constitute a charge on the land.

s287: Limitation of time for enforcement of charges in respect of compensation for improvements.

s290: Execution by Maori Land Board of renewed leases.

*s***229**: Extended meaning of term lease to include any license, grant etc. which confers any right of use or occupation – including for removal of timber, flax etc.

ss296 - 297: Mortgages of Native land.

s298: Native reservations. Where any Native freehold is owned by more than 10 owners, the Governor may reserve any part of that land as a burial ground, fishing ground, village, landing place, place of historical interest, watersupply, meeting place, timber reserve, church site etc. for the common use by the owners. These areas to be called Native reservations. Land included in Native reservations to be inalienable. Option for the Governor to allow management of reservation by Native owners.

ss299 - 353: PART XIV Native Land for European Settlement s299: All Native land subject to Part XIV of the Native Land Act 1909 shall be subject to this Part of the Act.

s300: All land subject to this part of the Act shall vest in a Maori Land Board.

s301: Land so vested to be held in trust for the Native owners.

s303: Every Board shall cause all land vested in it to be surveyed and subdivided into allotments for the purposes of settlement. Road lines to be laid off.

ss306 - 320: Sales

s309: Purchase money payable by instalments.

s312: Compulsory residence by purchaser.

s313: Compulsory improvements to be effected by purchaser.

ss321 - 333: Leases

s326: Land may be leased for any term with or without renewal as long as terminates by 50 years after 25 November, 1907 (Date of commencement of Native Land Settlement Act 1907).

s327: Right of compensation for improvements by lessee.

s331: Board may lease to landless Natives by private contract.



s334: Restrictions on power of purchaser or lessee to dispose of interest until continuous residence for 1 year.

ss338 - 339: Title of Board (as proprietor) and purchaser may be registered.

s343: All revenues received by the Board to be applied to...

- a) administration costs of the Board
- b) paying rates and taxes
- c) repaying advances
- d) payments into sinking funds for compensation for improvements
- e) to discharge mortgages/charges over the land
- f) other purposes for improvement and settlement of the land
- g) residue to Native owners.

Board may invest the residue for the benefit of the owners rather than paying the remainder out.

s345: Board may acquire land (by purchase or exchange) for the purpose of a road.

s346: Board may grant licenses of up to 25 years for the removal of timber, flax, kauri gum or minerals.

*s*352: Land subject to this part of the Act and unsold to be revested in the Native owners after 50 years.

ss354 - 359: PART XV Other Land Vested in Maori Land Boards

*s*354: Lands vested in a Maori Land Board under Part XV Native Land Act 1909 shall become subject to this part of the Act.

s355: Any area of Native freehold land not kept clear of noxious weeds may be vested in the Board by the Governor to be held in trust for owners.

s357: No land subject to this part of the Act shall be sold (although it may be leased).

s358: Land subject to this part of the Act may be managed as a farm.

s359: Any land vested in a Board under this Part of the Act may be leased to Natives in accordance with Part XVI.

ss360 - 380: PART XVI Native Land for Native settlement

*s*360: All land subject to Part XVI Native Land Act 1909 to be subject to this Part of the Act.

s363: NLCt may order that any Native land is exempt from the operation of this Part of the Act.

s364: Native land subject to this part of the Act shall be inalienable except

by way of lease through the Maori Land Board



- with consent of Minister (subject to other alienation constraints contained in the Act)
- in pursuance of a resolution of assembled owners.
 s367: No lease to be granted to a Native who is not one of the beneficial owners unless there is no owner wanting to lease who is a fit and proper person. No lease to be granted to a European.

s369: Lease not to exceed 50 years.

s371: Compensation for improvements to the land by the lessee.

*s*376: No lease or sublease of land leased by the Board under this part of the Act shall be capable of being assigned to any other person.

ss381 - 412: PART XVII Incorporation of Owners of Native Lands s382: NLCt may incorporate the owners in common of Native land. Where any area of Native freehold land is owned by more than three persons as tenants in common the NLCt may make an order of incorporation. Must have either a resolution of owners or the consent

s383: When any area of Native freehold land forms a continuous area with any other Native freehold land for which an order of incorporation can be made, the first mentioned area may be included in the incorporation.

s384: Incorporation of several areas.

of the owners of half the land.

s390: The body corporate shall hold the land on trust for the beneficial owners.

*s***394**: Committee of management to be elected from the incorporated owners.

s399: Incorporated owners shall have the same power of alienating the land vested in it as does a Native owning Native land in severalty. Proviso that no power of selling land (except to the Crown) without the consent of the Governor. Every such alienation shall require consent of the Board.

s400: Beneficial owners may accept leases of incorporated land.

s403: Proceeds from the alienation of land shall not be paid to the committee of management but to the Maori Land Board.

s404: Committee of management may manage the land as a farm.

s407: The body corporate may borrow money on security of the land.

s408: The body corporate may acquire land.

ss413 - 437: PART XVIII Powers of Assembled Native Owners s413: Owners defined as those beneficially entitled to land as tenants in common whether legal or equitable.



s418: Every resolution passed by the assembled owners shall be carried by the voters with the larger share of land who favour the resolution.

s422: Resolutions which may be passed by the assembled owners include...

- that the land shall be leased
- that the owners become incorporated
- that a proposed alienation be agreed to.

s423: No resolution may affect any Crown interest.

s425: On any resolution being passed the Board shall consider it in regard to both the public interest and the interest of the owners and confirm or disallow the resolution.

s426: No resolution to be confirmed if the Natives are rendered landless thereby except where the Natives alienating are qualified to pursue a trade or profession.

s429: Duty of Boards to protect Native burial grounds.

s434: No resolution to sell land to the Crown to be passed until after an offer to purchase has been made by the Crown.

ss438 - 458: PART XIX Purchases of Native Land by the Crown s439: Restrictions on alienation of Native land not to apply in the case of the Crown.

s440: Native Land Purchase Board established to purchase Native land.

s442: Pending purchase by the Crown, the Governor may prohibit all alienations of that land other than in favour of the Crown.

s443: All alienations made in breach of such Order in Council shall be void.

s445: The Crown may purchase, lease or acquire any land from the owners. Every owner may alienate the same land to the Crown whether such land is held under a trust with the power of alienation or with a prohibition against alienation and notwithstanding any restrictions on any power of alienation.

s451: Leases of Native land to the Crown.

s452: Crown not to purchase at less than assessed value.

s453: Crown not to purchase so as to render any Native landless.

s456: Purchase money payable to Natives may be paid either to the Natives entitled, the Native Trustee, Maori Land Board or the NLCt.

s459: Crown may exchange Crown land for Native land.

s460: In such an exchange if the capital value of the Native land

exceeds the capital value of the Crown land, the difference in value shall be paid by the Crown by way of equality of exchange.

s463: Crown land exchanged for Native land to become Native land.

s467: Land acquired by Crown may be disposed of to Natives.

s469: Rights of tenants from the Crown.

*s***470**: Native owners may purchase leasehold interests from the Crown.

s471: Whenever the Crown shall acquire the beneficial interest of any Native owner, the tenant holding under the lease shall have the right to acquire the reversion from the Crown.

*s***472**: Authorising the revesting of burial grounds in Natives.

s473: This Part of the Act not to apply to certain lands affected by...

- East Coast Native Trust Lands Act 1902
- Mangatu No 1 Empowering Act 1893
- s47 Maori Land Claims Adjustment and Laws Amendment Act 1907.

The Crown shall not acquire or purchase any of the following lands...

- lands leased to Natives under the Thermal Springs Districts
 Act 1910, reserved under s22 Maori Land Settlement Act 1905 or
 leased under s4 Maori Land Settlement Act Amendment Act 1906.
- lands incorporated prior to 15 December, 1913
- Native reservations
- Poukawa Native reserve
- Opape Native reserve.

s474: On application from beneficial owners certain lands may be exempted from operation of this Part of the Act.

*s***475:** Native land purchased by the Crown may be reserved for use of the Natives.

ss476 - 490: PART XX Roads

s477: Upon any partition the NLCt may lay out road lines as it thinks necessary.

*s***479:** In order to give better access to any Native freehold land, the NLCt may lay off road lines over any adjoining land.

s481: No such road line shall be laid off over any land comprised in any existing valid lease executed prior to 15 December, 1913.

ss491 - 506: PART XXI Surveys

s491: Every survey of Native land shall be made by the Crown.



s494: Where roads have been surveyed by the Crown to give access to Native land, the costs of survey to constitute a charge on the land. s497: Any charge so constituted may be enforced by the NLCt either by the appointment of a receiver over the land or by making an order vesting in the Crown the part of the land so charged.

s498: NLCt may award share of customary land to the Crown in satisfaction of cost of survey.

*s*500: Survey charges to bear interest.

*s*501: Obstruction of survey an offence.

s502: Enables NLCt to discharge land from survey charges.

s505: Existing survey charges preserved and may be taken over by the Crown.

ss507 - 515: PART XXII Interpreters

ss516 - 523: PART XXIII Native Land Settlement Account

s516: Native Land Settlement Account continued.

s518: Money in the Native Land Settlement account to be used for the following purposes

- the purchase of Native land
- the survey of Native land
- advances to Maori Land Boards for roads, bridges etc.
- payment to Maori Land Board for advances upon mortgages for freehold
- for constructing roads and bridges
- for improving or protecting any land or interest in land.
- *s*520: Debentures may issue on acquisition of land.
- s522: Native Minister to have a variety of powers conferred upon him for the purpose of the better settlement and more effective utilisation of Native land and the encouragement of Natives in the promotion of agricultural pursuits.

*s*523: Enables Maori Land Board to encourage Maori industry and development of Native land.

ss524 - 546: PART XXIV Special Powers and Authorities

s524: Gives Maori Land Boards the power to manage and operate several areas as one or more farms and carry on an agricultural business for the benefit of the beneficial owners of such areas. s525: Defines the status of a Native declared to be a European. s526: Land held in severalty by a Europeanised Native to cease to be subject to provisions of any statute under which it is administered.

Relevant Sections, Commentary and Cross Reference continued next page



s529: Enables NLCt to readjust boundaries between Native lands, and with consent, between Native land and Crown or European land. s530: In cases of dispute as to the persons entitled to receive money, money payable to Natives may be paid to the Native Trustee. s533: Every person who commits waste on Native land (cuts or removes timber or any flax, Kauri gum or minerals) liable to fine or imprisonment. Fact that person has a partial interest in the property shall not prevent the act being an offence.

*s*536: Enabling settlement of claims for rates on Native land.

*s*537: Authorising Native Minister to compound rates and acquire land in satisfaction thereof.

*s*538: Maori Land Board empowered to administer land when rates in default.

s539: Native burial grounds and meeting house sites may be declared to be Native freehold land by the Gov-Gen.

ss547 - 568: Part XXV Miscellaneous

*s*549: Interests of Native in Native land protected against bankruptcy and execution.

s550: Trust funds, being the proceeds of Native land, to be deemed Native land for certain purposes.

s554: The Statute of Limitations shall not run against a co-owner of Native land who neglects to exercise his right to enter and use common property.

*s*555: Governor may exempt any Native from the protections of the Act relating to the alienation of land causing Natives to become landless.

s438: Parts XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII shall not apply to...

- Any Native reserve
- Land subject to East Coast Native Trust Lands Act 1903.
 s568: Except where expressly provided by this Act, existing trusts of Native land are not to be affected by this Act.

Commentary:

Consolidation of Native Land Act since 1909. During the Debates Ngata gives an extensive review of the Maori Land Development Schemes.

Cross Reference:

NZPD vol 230 (1931) 559 - 578

AJHR (1931) G - 10

(Native Land Development).