

# What they didn't teach me at school

Richard Lewer – The Waikato Wars



Kingi Tāwhiao  
(the second king), 2023



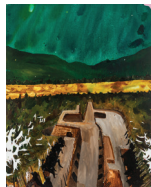
The war begins by the  
introduction of gunboats  
down the Waikato River  
and skirmishes start, 2023



The atrocities of  
Rangiaowhia, 2023



Governor George Grey,  
2023



The battle of Rangiriri,  
2023



Rewi's last stand. Battle of  
Ōrākau, 2023



Mighty Waikato, 2023



Lake Kopuera, 2023



Māori fleeing were hunted  
down and butchered upon  
escaping, 2023



The Crossing of the  
Mangatāwhiri, 2023



An agreement between the  
Crown and Māori, 2023



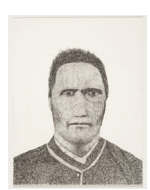
Kingi Tāwhiao lays his  
patu down and is forced  
to surrender to the King  
Country, 2023



Kingi Tāwhiao, 2023



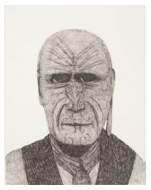
Rewi Maniapoto, 2023



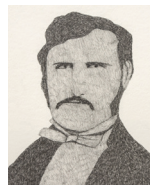
Wiremu Tāmihana,  
2023



General Duncan Cameron,  
2023



Te Aho o Te Rangī  
Wharepu, 2023



Governor George Gray,  
2023



Queen Victoria, 2023



Bishop George Selwyn,  
2023



What they didn't teach me  
at school, 2023



To have a future I must reconcile  
with my past 2023



Chalkboards (see list of works on the right),  
2023

How's the weather  
Rugby  
Tūi  
Family portrait  
Jesus on the cross  
Pouranga  
Yes  
State highway 1  
Thinking of  
Gordon Walters

Lewer continually falls  
off his chair in class  
Captain Cook,  
Freckles  
Stop the tour  
Games we play  
Pay back bad with  
good  
White stale male  
Kiwi  
Raglan

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### **Kīngi Tāwhiao (The second king) 2023**

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

I was interested to learn about the founding of the Kīngitanga movement. I understand many Māori agreed on a single representative so they could have an equal and direct dialogue with Queen Victoria, their Treaty partner.

The first king, Pōtatau Te Wherowhero, had great mana and was a direct descendant of leaders of many important iwi. However, in the late 1850s when he was chosen, he was an elderly man and died only two years after becoming king.

His son, Kīngi Tāwhiao, was crowned king after him. Though his father had previously formed strong relationships with the European settlers, the next years would test these relationships given they were about to face a full-blown military crisis.



### **Governor George Grey 2023**

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

I think Governor George Grey is a very interesting character.

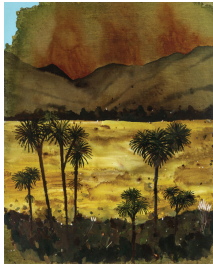
Early on he was seen as sympathetic to Māori, but I doubt we would consider him an ally by any means today. During his first time as Governor (1845–1853) Grey learnt te reo Māori and published books on Māori knowledge and traditions, helped build hospitals and organised loans. He thought Māori could be assimilated into European society and become brown Europeans. At the time Grey's ideas were seen as a progressive way of colonising a country. Now, I think we'd see this as a way to gain control.

The second time Grey was Governor (1861–1868) he was a different man. He had recently separated from his wife and was an opium addict. He was not prepared to engage with the Kīngitanga in a Treaty partnership; he saw their resistance to selling land in the fertile Waikato as a huge problem for the new colony.

It seems to me that Grey had learnt about Māori in order to destroy them. I think he brought on war because he wanted to get rid of the Kīngitanga movement, eradicate Māori and take their land.

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### ***Mighty Waikato*** 2023

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

From what I have learnt, it seems to me that this war was always about a British land grab. The Waikato is such fertile land that it was always going to be sought after.

I reckon Grey weaselled this war to happen: it didn't actually need to happen. He spread misinformation, fabricating evidence that the Tainui people intended to attack Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and massacre its residents (the settlers). Really, it was probably just that Grey and his colonial ministers wanted the land. The lands were owned by Māori who were profiting by feeding and supplying the settlers - all the land, money and power sat with Māori, who were not willing to sell.

In 1863 Grey sent a letter to Māori in South Auckland demanding they give up their allegiance to the Kingitanga and swear allegiance to the Crown or they would be forced to leave. Many Māori packed up their belongings and trekked down the Waikato River. They left behind their homes, cattle and waka, most of which were looted by settlers.



### ***The Crossing of the Mangatāwhiri*** 2023

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

It's pretty clear to me that the colonists started the Waikato War when they crossed the Mangatāwhiri stream that acted as a boundary line. This painting depicts the colonists' tents poised on a foreboding landscape above a river. I wanted to show what seemed to me to be their looming, premeditated and predatory position.

Grey told Waikato Māori that if they resisted the establishment of Government posts along the Waikato River, they would forfeit the right to their lands guaranteed to them in the Treaty of Waitangi. However, Waikato Māori did not receive this notice until after Grey's troops, led by Lieutenant-General Duncan Cameron, had crossed the Mangatāwhiri stream. This was trickery and from what I have read it looks to me like it was done deliberately.

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## ***The war begins by the introduction of gunboats down the Waikato River and skirmishes start*** 2023

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

It's staggering to me to think that the use of armour-plated paddle steamers in the Battle of Rangiriri was the first time Māori had experienced this type of full-on armoured war machinery.

From what I understand, Kīngitanga forces responded by conducting ambushes and raids on the British supply lines, so British made very slow progress south. This gave Kīngitanga forces time to set up their first line of defence at Rangiriri



## ***The battle of Rangiriri*** 2023

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

The colonialists were unprepared for the pā design at Rangiriri. Cameron had made reconnaissance missions from the river and was unimpressed by what he saw.

To me, part of the brilliance of the design of Rangiriri was that the British didn't realise the intricacy and skill that had gone into that pā. The defences stopped Cameron's troops dead in their tracks. They didn't have ladders long enough to get into the trenches and got caught at the parapets, making them easy prey for Māori. The British made many attempts to storm the pā and both sides suffered heavy casualties.

Māori raised a white flag, but I think it wasn't a surrender but a call for a temporary truce. I believe Cameron intentionally misinterpreted the white flag as surrender. Realising he couldn't take the pā by force, he took it by trickery instead.



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## ***Lake Kopuera*** 2023

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

At the conclusion of the Battle of Rangiriri 180 Māori men were arrested and imprisoned without charge or trial. However, I think what happened to those not captured was more tragic...

There were women and children in the pā helping to reload the weapons and deliver supplies. When the defenders of Rangiriri realised they were going to be captured they yelled at them to run. But some of the colonial troops had already reached the crest of the hill and started shooting them in the water, some with children on their backs. Kopuera means those who were shot.

After the battle, British officers claimed that they hadn't expected to find women and children in the pā. I don't believe that, because from what I understand at the time, it was a totally normal part of Māori warfare.



## ***An agreement between the Crown and Māori*** 2023

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

There was unease on both sides about the deaths of women and children at Rangiriri. It seems to me that both sides agreed that non-combatants should be kept safe. I understand an agreement was made with Bishop Selwyn's assistance and knowledge. He was a chaplain to the British troops and well known by Māori.

Kīngitanga leaders pleaded with the Crown to come and make peace. Grey demanded they cede the Kīngitanga capital at Ngāruawāhia. But, even after Ngāruawāhia is given over Grey never comes to make peace. Instead, he signs into law the New Zealand Settlements Act 1863, which provided legislative cover for land confiscations. It's pretty clear to me where his intentions lay

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### ***The atrocities of Rangiaowhia*** 2023

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

Rangiaowhia was the economic hub of the Waikato, with the largest settlement. It was critical to supply the Kīngitanga war effort. It was also the place they'd told the British, through Bishop Selwyn, that they'd sent their women, children, elderly and disabled. In March 1864 Cameron ordered his troops to march around defences at the stronghold of Pāterangi and on to Rangiaowhia. Their arrival caused panic and terror amongst the residents.

There are contradictory accounts of what happened, but from what I can gather, there was an attack on some people who had sheltered, defending themselves, in a whare. It caught alight, either deliberately or by accident, and any Māori who emerged to surrender or escape the flames were shot dead. Several people burnt to death inside, including two children



### ***Rewi's last stand. Battle of Ōrākau*** 2023

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

From what I've read, Rewi Maniapoto, leader of the Kīngitanga forces, never wanted to take a stand at Ōrākau. He didn't want to fight, especially not in this location. He was eventually persuaded to do so by other leaders, and they started digging trenches. General Cameron's troops arrived on the scene before the pā was finished.

The siege lasted three days. Rewi and his people ran out of ammunition, food and water and the terrain around Ōrākau made it easy for the British to surround the pā.

Eventually General Cameron called for a cease fire and demanded surrender. The reply came 'E hoa, ka whawhai tonu mātou, Āke! Āke! Āke!' Friend, we will fight on forever, forever, forever!

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## ***Māori fleeing were hunted down and butchered upon escaping*** 2023

Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

On the last day of the siege at Ōrākau, the defenders made a breakthrough of the defensive lines to the south, on a five-kilometre dash through scrub and swamp to the Puniu River.

I was shocked to learn that many Māori were killed as they fled. It wasn't just men who were shot – some of the women were hacked down, shot multiple times and slain.



## ***Kingi Tāwhiao lays his patu down and is forced to surrender to the King Country*** 2023

Acrylic on canvas

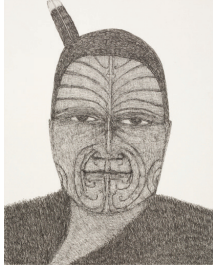
Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

How did the Waikato War finish? I wondered. Kingi Tāwhiao and the survivors of the war retreated south into what became known as King Country. It looks to me that they effectively became refugees existing in an uneasy standoff with the Crown. Cameron and his troops moved on to fight in Tauranga.

Tāwhiao swore to never take up arms again saying “The killing of men must stop; the destruction of land must stop. I shall bury my patu in the earth and it shall not rise again ...”

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## Richard Lewer – The Waikato Wars



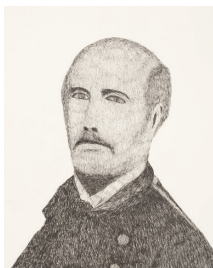
### ***King Tāwhiao*** 2023

Framed ink on museum rag board

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

Tūkāroto Matutaera Pōtatau Te Wherowhero Tāwhiao (about 1825–1894) became the second Māori King upon the death of his father in 1860, around the same time that war erupted in Taranaki. Tāwhiao and the Kīngitanga forces were drawn into battle when the British invaded Waikato in 1863. The capture of Tāwhiao's capital at Ngaruawahia and defeat at Ōrākau in April 1864 saw Kīngitanga leaders withdraw from Waikato into Ngāti Maniapoto territory.

Tāwhiao and his people lost about 1.2 million acres to government raupatu and from what I can see, they effectively became refugees in their own country. He eventually accepted a return of some Waikato lands for his people in 1888. All the stories I have read speak about Tāwhiao as a religious and principled leader. The Kīngitanga movement continues to this day.



### ***General Duncan Cameron*** 2023

Framed ink on museum rag board

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

Duncan Alexander Cameron (1808–1888) was a distinguished veteran of the Crimean War when he took up his post as Commander of the British forces in New Zealand in 1861.

His tactics during the New Zealand Wars were seen as slow and cautious by critics from both sides. Although, it seems to me, that his approach may have been astute in the face of Māori ability and innovation. Cameron offered his resignation twice, first in 1862 and again in 1865, which was accepted and he left New Zealand for good.

Despite being in Aotearoa for only three years Cameron had altered the course of New Zealand history, as historian Belich wrote “it was Duncan Cameron at Pāterangi, not William Hobson at Waitangi, who sounded the death-knell of Māori independence. ...With Grey, he tipped the balance of power between Māori and Pākehā in favour of the latter.”



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### **Queen Victoria** 2023

Framed ink on museum rag board

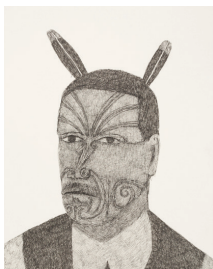
Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

Queen Victoria (1819–1901) ruled the British Empire from 1837 until her death. The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in her name in 1840.

I wonder what was her understanding of the wars that were being fought in her name?

I do know that in 1884 Kīngi Tāwhiao led a group to England to deliver a petition to the Queen seeking a Māori parliament and a commission of inquiry into land confiscations.

But, while other Māori were granted an audience with the Queen, gatekeepers referred Tāwhiao and his group back to the New Zealand Government, who dismissed their claim.



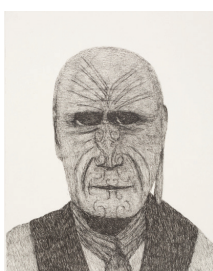
### **Rewi Maniapoto** 2023

Framed ink on museum rag board

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

Rewi Manga Maniapoto (about 1807–1894) led Ngāti Maniapoto forces into battle in support of the Kīngitanga after the government invaded Waikato territory in 1863, most notably at Ōrākau.

I found it interesting that after the Wars Rewi Maniapoto negotiated a deal with the government to begin building the main trunk railway across Ngāti Maniapoto territory in 1885. This provided work for his people, but it also opened the King Country to Pākehā.



### **Te Aho o te Rangi Wharepu** 2023

Framed ink on museum rag board

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

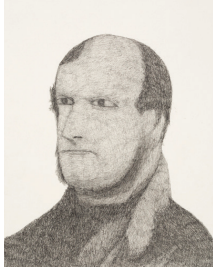
Te Aho o te Rangi Wharepu (1811–1910) was a chief of the Ngāti Mahuta iwi of Waikato and a veteran of the Battle of Rangiriri (1863).

He was a ta moko specialist and a tuakana of Tāwhiao, the second Māori King.

I can see why he was of one of the painter Frederick Goldie's favourite sitters.

# What they didn't teach me at school

## Richard Lewer – The Waikato Wars



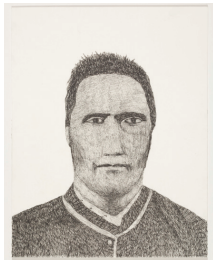
**Bishop George Selwyn** 2023

Framed ink on museum rag board

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

George Augustus Selwyn (1809–1878) was the first Anglican Bishop of New Zealand from 1841 to 1869. I think initially Selwyn saw himself as a friend to Māori. He was certainly a man of principle and criticised the bad land acquisition practices that led to the New Zealand Wars.

However, his support of the Waikato Invasion, where, as chaplain, he was frequently seen riding on horseback on the frontlines; and his involvement in the murders at Rangiaowhia in 1864, damaged his and the church's relationship with Māori, irreparably.



**Wiremu Tāmihana** 2023

Framed ink on museum rag board

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

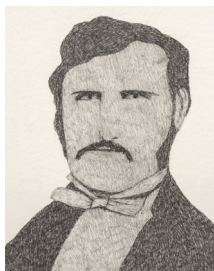
Wiremu Tāmihana Tarapipipi Te Waharoa (about 1805–1866) was a leader of the Ngāti Hauā iwi and was known as 'the Kingmaker' by Pākehā for his role in anointing Pōtatau Te Wherowhero, the first Māori King, in 1858.

Tāmihana was a leader who wielded the pen and the bible. He only picked up the musket once, in the fighting that occurred in Hairini, which followed the murders at Rangiaowhia.

I am impressed by his stamina and his commitment to peace and to the rule of law. Throughout the wars he attempted to negotiate with government forces but was ignored or dismissed. Even after the wars Tāmihana campaigned tirelessly against the confiscation of land until his death.

# What they didn't teach me at school

## Richard Lewer – The Waikato Wars



### **Governor George Grey** 2023

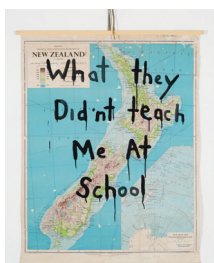
Framed ink on museum rag board

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

George Grey (1812–1898) was first appointed Governor of New Zealand in 1845 at the age of 33, after a term in South Australia. He governed until 1853, when he was transferred to South Africa which did not go well.

To me, his story starts its real dramatic decline when he returns to govern New Zealand in 1861, after fighting breaks out in Taranaki. Instead of establishing peace, as was hoped, Grey sets out to repress Māori 'rebels' using the promise of confiscated land to fund his campaign. In 1863 he orders the Invasion of Waikato. He never gets the decisive victory he hopes for.

When the British government finally wants to withdraw its troops from the colonies, Grey resists until he is dismissed in 1868. Meanwhile, the New Zealand Wars carry on.



### **What they didn't teach me at school** 2023

Acrylic on found map

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

Your classic classroom geography teaching tool contains an awful lot of colonial baggage, to which I add my own (likely shared by others too).

I've done a similar thing with Australian maps adding to the national landscape sentiments such as *No matter how hard I try I can't escape my past* (2019) and *I'm afraid if you really saw me you wouldn't like me* (2021)



### **To have a future I must reconcile with my past** 2023

Acrylic on sewn flag

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

I use flags to carry my words because their powerful symbolism catapults, what are personal statements for me, into full-blown nationalistic idioms with all the complexity that entails.

Other works I have done like this include *I must learn to like myself* (2019) and *I can't run away all my life sometimes I just have to stand and fight* (2021), both painted on the Australian flag.

# What they didn't teach me at school

Richard Lewer – The Waikato Wars



***How's the weather*** 2023

***Rugby*** 2023

***Tui*** 2023

***Family portrait*** 2023

***Jesus on the cross*** 2023

***Pouranga*** 2023

***Yes*** 2023

***State Highway 1*** 2023

***Thinking of Gordon Walters*** 2023

***Lewer continually falls off his chair in class*** 2023

***Captain Cook*** 2023

***Freckles*** 2023

***Stop the tour*** 2023

***Games we play*** 2023

***Pay back bad with good*** 2023

***White stale male*** 2023

***Kiwi*** 2023

***Raglan*** 2023

All framed acrylic on blackboard

Courtesy of the artist and {Suite} Gallery

These chalkboards contain a jumble of school-age lessons on the types of things that swirled around and stuck with me from my time at school. Notably absent is any mention of the New Zealand Wars, although many contributing components are there—the land, Captain Cook and Christianity—as well as more modern residue of the Wars that appear in debates about race relations.