

Rongowhakaata statement of association for HANGAROA RIVER

The traditions of Rongowhakaata confirm the cultural, historical and spiritual importance of the Hangaroa River to Rongowhakaata. These traditions represent the links between the worlds of the Atua to the present generations; reinforce Rongowhakaata tribal identity; and are continually expressed in whakapapa, waiata, and korero and mahi toi.

The Hangaroa River is of great cultural and historical importance to Rongowhakaata. The mauri of Hangaroa River represents the essence that binds the physical and spiritual elements of all things together, generating and upholding all life. All elements of the natural environment possess a life force and all forms of life are related. Mauri is a critical element of the spiritual relationship of Rongowhakaata whanui to the Hangaroa River.

The values of mana, whakapapa, tapu and mauri define the relationship of Rongowhakaata with the Hangaroa River. Mana defines the kaitiekitanga responsibilities of Rongowhakaata, within which Rongowhakaata is charged with protecting the Mauri or life force of the Hangaroa River. Whakapapa defines the genealogical relationship, while Tapu describes the sacredness of the relationship between Rongowhakaata and the Hangaroa River. These values remain important to the people of Rongowhakaata today.

The Hangaroa River is symbolic of the convergence of Rongowhakaata with their whanaunga Te Aitanga Mahaki, Whanau a Kai and Ngati Ruapani. From the Waikura stream at Pihere on the southern part of the Hangaroa Matawai lands to the Mangatotara at Waiahau lands, these lands verging the Hangaroa River have been occupied by the peoples of Toi, voyagers of Horouta and Takaitimu, the rangatira Ruapani to the descendants nga hapu o Rongowhakaata.

The whenua of Rongowhakaata connected to the Hangaroa River include Tauwharetoi, Hangaroa Matawai, Patutahi, Paharakeke, Manuoha, Tuaha, Waiahau and Tahora. These areas provided and continue to provide rich sources of resources

to sustain the hapu; Ngai Te Aweawe, Ngai Tawhiri, Ngai te Kete and Ruapani ki Rongowhakaata. These Rongowhakaata hapu are the uri of intermarriages, conquests and strategic alliances, it is they who had the mana and rangatiratanga over the waterways and whenua in and around the Hangaroa River.

The Hangaroa River and its tributaries were rich in kaimoana, ingana, koura, eels and kakahi (fresh water mussels) which were harvested by using the elaborate eel tuna/weirs, where hinaki ownership and responsibility was apportioned to whanau and then joined as one for the collective benefits of the hapu. Paihau swamp was frequented by the hapu for eels also.

The Hapu Ngai Te Aweawe is recognised as having mana whenua on the Hangaroa side of the maunga, Te Umotai, on the Patutahi Block. It was here at Te Umotai that Rongowhakaata Hapu upheld its (Te Umotai) position as a significant marker, and a place where substantial mahinga kai were maintained to sustain surrounding kaenga. This area was also known for the abundance of birds and the sitting of snares.

Close to the Pihere Stream, known as Waikura and Te Aroha, on the Waerenga a Kuri/Patutahi lands; Ngai Te Aweawe, Ngai Te Kete, Ngati Ruapani ki Rongowhakaata and Ngai Tawhiri hunted the ngahere – forests which were abundant in manu, birds and kiore. Recognition was given to those places of importance by the Hapu when naming and placing rahui. These being the bird hunting areas; Kaikoura, Ranga Korako, Whakakutatanga, Tarawatahanga, Te Aroha and Pihere.

Of significance to Rongowhakaata is the whenua, Waerenga a Kuri; Kuri was the son of Ngaherehere who cleared the area for kainga and cultivation then gave the name Waerenga a Kuri after his son, Kuri. Ngaherehere is a direct descendant of Ruapani on the male line and closely associated to Rongowhakaata through whakapapa. The hapu Ngaherehere are his direct descendants.

In the great forest of Parikanapa, grew the Totara, Rongowhakaata Hapu utilised the Kaikoura waters to transport the taonga on to the Hangaroa River. Rongowhakaata

applied the rites to Tane and through the Kaikoura accessed the Totara for the building of Pa and Waka. Ngai Tawhiri and Ngai te Kete in particular felled a Totara there to build the canoe, Kauae Wiri. The waka Kauae Wiri, went on to traverse the waterways of Rongowhakaata meeting the needs of the hapu, and is remembered for being sunk at Kopututea, the mouth of the Te Arai and Waipaoa Rivers junction when its use was no longer required.

Rongowhakaata Hapu Ngati Rua of Ruawairau, Ngati Hine and Ngati Maru have specific interests around the Tahora lands. The Hangaroa River and its banks have been occupied for many generations by the Rongowhakaata hapu; Ngai Tawhiri, Ngai Te Kete, Ngai Te Aweawe and Ruapani ki Rongowhakaata.

Te Waaka Puakaanga, of Ngai Te Aweawe during the 19th century had Pa at the mouth of the Waikura and Kaikoura Stream, both connecting into the Hangaroa River. Te Waaka was pivotal player in cultural, political and economic development of Rongowhakaata.

A number of Pa and kainga were located in close proximity to the Hangaroa River. Ruakaka the whare was of significance to Rongowhakaata hapu as was the Hamokorau House which was originally built at Hangaroa, then moved from there to Te Paraua and again moved to Manutuke to firstly Tapatahi Pa then finally to Orakaiapu on the banks of the Te Arai River.

The Hangaroa River is the repository of many koiwi Tangata; urupa are the resting places of Rongowhakaata tipuna and, as such are the focus of whanau traditions. Urupa and wahi tapu are places holding the memories, traditions, victories and defeats of Rongowhakaata tipuna and are frequently protected in secret locations.

There were a number of wahi tapu sites of significance to Rongowhakaata Hapu along the Hangaroa River including Te Ihootu-Hata, Te Wai o Tua Watea, Korohake, and Ngutuhouhou.

Rongowhakaata tipuna had considerable knowledge of whakapapa, traditional trails and Tauranga waka, places for gathering kai, rongoa maori and other taonga, ways in which to use the resources of the Hangaroa River, the relationship with the people with the area and their dependence on it, and Tikanga for the proper and sustainable utilisation of resources. All of these values remain important to the people of Rongowhakaata today.

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