



Owarawara

Ngāhere Tiaki Taiao

Research paper on the name of the Warawara Forest

Warawara Komiti Kaitiaki
Tihema 2024

Warawara Komiti Kaitiaki – Overview

The Warawara Komiti Kaitiaki represents the ten marae of mana whenua hapū surrounding the Warawara Forest. It upholds the Warawara Whenua Ngāhere i te Taiao agreement, ensuring joint governance between Te Rarawa hapū and the Crown as part of the 2015 Te Rarawa Settlement. The Komiti promotes hapū-led kaitiakitanga while working in partnership with Crown conservation efforts.

Mana Whenua Hapū of Warawara

- Mātihetihe Marae (Mitimiti) – Represents Te Tao Māui and Te Hokoheha, with ties to Pororewarewa, Ngāti Kaha, Ngāti Hinerangi, Whānaumaii, and Ngāti Ruanui / Te Aupōuri.
- Morehu, Ōhaki & Taiao Marae (Pawarenga) – Represent Te Uri o Tai, historically part of Whāngāpe under Ngāti Haua. Connected to Kaingamata, Ngāti Tūmamao, Ngāti Kuri, Ngāti Ruanui / Te Aupōuri, and Ngāti Te Ao.
- Motutī Marae (Hokianga Harbour) – Represents Ngāti Te Maara, Te Kaitutae, Ngāi Tamatea, Te Waiariki, and Ngāti Muri Kāhara.
- Ngāti Manawa Marae (Panguru) – Represents Ngāti Manawa, Waiāriki, and Te Kaitutae.
- Te Kotahitanga Marae (Whāngāpe Harbour) – Represents Ngāti Haua, with links to Te Tāwhiu, Tahukai, and Ngāti Tūmamao.
- Waihou Marae (Lower Waihou, Hokianga Harbour) – Represents Ngāti Te Reinga, with connections to Parewhero, Te Waekoi, Te Uri o Te Aho, Whānau Moko, Te Waiāriki, and Ngāti Moroki.
- Waiparera Marae (Rangi Point, Hokianga Harbour) – Represents Patutoka, with ties to Tahāwai, Whānau Pani, Te Hokoheha, Te Tāwhiu, Ngāpuhi, Te Roroa, and Ngāti Whātua.
- Waipuna Marae (Panguru) – Represents Te Kaitutae and Waiāriki.

Warawara Forest – Key Facts

- Known as the ‘spirit forest’; its name means ‘whispering’.
- Home to one of New Zealand’s largest kauri stands.
- A 22km tramping track runs through the wilderness.
- Habitat for rare species like the titipounamu (rifleman), long-tailed bats, kiwi, and kaka.
- Located south-east of Kaitaia, north of the Hokianga Harbour, with access from Mitimiti and Pawarenga.
- Hunting (pigs and goats) allowed with a permit.
- Covers 7,730 hectares (19,325 acres) and ranks highly for biodiversity in Northland.
- Of deep cultural and historical significance to Te Rarawa, who have never ceded ownership of its resources.
- Jointly managed by Te Rarawa hapū and the Crown, with decision-making based on clear principles and consensus.

Warawara Ngahere Tiaki Taiao

Research paper on the name of the Warawara Forest

The Warawara Komiti Kaitiaki was set up after the 2015 Te Rarawa Settlement to represent the collective interests, aspirations, and responsibilities of the ten mana whenua marae and hapū connected to Warawara.

Over the past two years, the Komiti has been working on formalising itself as a charitable trust and setting a long-term direction for our marae. Becoming a trust would open doors to funding for critical projects that aren't covered under the current agreement with the Department of Conservation (DoC). More importantly, it would strengthen the Komiti's ability to protect our marae interests and create meaningful, lasting impact.

As part of this mahi, the Komiti commissioned research to explore different versions of the forest's name—**Te Warawara, Au Warawara, Owarawara, and Warawara**. The goal was to inform the naming of a new legal entity while strengthening our identity and presence.

Between August and November 2024, this research drew on oral histories, kaumātua knowledge, and written records from Te Rarawa scholars and historians. Warawara refers not just to the forest but also to the historic land known as Te Kauae-o-Ruru-Wahine, which included areas taken by the Crown from 1875—Te Takanga, Waihou Lower, Otangaroa, Ototope, Taikarawa, Whakarapa, Paihia, Rotokakahi, and Waireia—covering 18,270 acres.

The research looks at the cultural, historical, and linguistic significance of these name variations, reinforcing our collective identity and values. While it doesn't claim to be the full picture, it offers valuable insights into our deep ancestral connection to the land. It highlights the importance of the name Warawara in affirming mana whenua and supporting the legal recognition of the Komiti. It also makes clear that preserving Māori knowledge and language is key to the future care and governance of our ngahere.

This mahi reaffirms our commitment to kaitiakitanga—ensuring that our connection to the land is at the heart of everything we do. Warawara's significance to Te Rarawa runs deep, going back to our tūpuna Kupe, the great navigator, whose journeys laid the foundations for our identity today.

Written and compiled by



Whina Te Whiu
14 Tihema 2024



He Karakia

Nā Pā Henare Tate

E te Atua Matua,
ko koe te kaihangā o te rangi me te whenua,
te matapuna o te ora, o te tapu.
Ko tō mātou īnoi tēnei: hōutia tō rongo
ki runga i te whenua, ki waenganui i te tangata.
Tirohia, atawhaitia te kaupapa tātari
i ngā take pā ki te Tiriti o Waitangi.
Arohaina tonutia ngā tikanga kawē
i te kaupapa kia puta mārama ai
Te rangatiratanga o te tangata, o te whenua.
Werohia mātou ki te tao o te pono
kia tutuki rawatia ēnei take.
E te Atua, kia aroha nui nei ki a mātou.
Ko koe hoki te tīmatanga
me te whakatutukitanga
o ngā mea katoa.

O Eternal Creator
You are the maker of heaven and earth,
The source of life and sacredness.
This is our prayer: let your presence be renewed,
upon the earth, among all people.
Look upon and guide the work of inquiry,
into the matters tied to the Treaty of Waitangi.
Continue to cherish the pathways of action,
so the purpose may emerge clearly—
the sovereignty of the people and the land.
Pierce us with the spear of truth,
so these issues may come to completion.
O God, may your great love dwell with us.
For you are the beginning and the fulfillment of all things.



He Mihi

Ki te mano me te tini o ngā tūpuna i paiheretia te mauri o Warawara, tēnei ka mihia. Ko koutou ngā kaitiaki tuatahi, nā koutou i para te huarahi mō ngā whakatipuranga e whai ake nei.

E kore e mimiti te aroha me te maumahara ki a koutou, e mau ana ngā kōrero tuku iho me ngā tikanga i roto i ngā waiata, i ngā karakia, i ngā kōrero o te wā.

Ki ngā mana whenua o te ngahere tapu nei, e tū tonu ana hei pou whakairo mō te whenua, mō ngā uri whakaheke. E mihi ana ki tō koutou ū ki te kaitiakitanga, ki te tiaki i te mauri me ngā taonga tuku iho o Warawara.

Mō koutou e whakatō ana i te mātauranga Māori, e whakakaha ana i te rangatiratanga, tēnei te mihi kau atu ki a koutou katoa.

E ngā iwi, e ngā hapū o te rohe nei, tēnā koutou e whakatupu i ngā pūkenga, i ngā kaupapa hei tiaki i ngā uri o te ngahere me te whenua.

Kia mau, kia ū ki ngā mahi hei whakatinana i te wairua o te Tiriti o Waitangi, me te aroha nui ki te taiao.

He tohu aroha tēnei ki a Warawara, ki tōna mauri, ki tōna tapu. Kia mārama te ao ki te mana o te tangata whenua me ngā mahi kaitiaki e kore nei e mutu.

E tū, e ora, e kaha mō ake tonu atu.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

Nā te Warawara Komiti Kaitiaki

He Waiata

Te Wairua o Te Rarawa

Nā Makere Ngaropo Hati

tane x2

Anei rā mātou ngā uri
whakatupu
E noho tahi e hui tahi nei
He kaupapa whakahirahira
Tiakina te taiao tiakina te iwi e

katoa

Anei rā mātou ngā uri
whakatupu
E noho tahi e hui tahi nei
He kaupapa whakahirahira
Tiakina te taiao tiakina te iwi e

Tīrama mai rā tō ātaahua
Ko ngā maunga whakahī
Ko ngā rākau rarata o Te
Warawara
Tiakina te taiao tiakina te iwi e

Whakarongo kau ana ki ngā tai e
rua
Ko te taitama wāhine, i te rāwhiti
Ko te taitama tāne i te uru
Tiakina te taiao tiakina te iwi e

Kauae o Rūrū Wahine Te
Takanga
Waihou Waireia Ōtangoaroa
Ōtotope Taikarawa Whakarapa
Paihia ki Rotokākahi e

Te wairua o te iwi, o Te Rarawa
Te wairua o Te Rarawa hi

We are the next generation
We have gathered together
For a purpose that is of the
utmost importance
Respect our environment and in
turn it will nurture the people

Glimmering beauty
Are our proud mountains
And trees of Te Warawara
Respect our environment and in
turn it will nurture the people.

Listen to the tides
To the east and the west
Respect our environment and in
turn it will nurture the people

Kauae o Rūrū Wahine Te Takanga
Waihou Waireia Ōtangoaroa
Ōtotope
Taikarawa Whakarapa Paihia to
Rotokākahi


The living spiritual being of
Te Rarawa

This waiata-ā-ringa, written by Makere Ngaropo Hati (Ngāti Te Reinga, Te Uri-o-Te Aho, Ngāti Manawa) for the 2014 Te Rarawa Noho Taiao hosted at Waihou Marae, was arranged by Sherry Pomare (Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Te Reinga), Charlton Te Wake (Ngāti Te Reinga, Te Waiāriki), and Ngarangi Atama-Tamati (Ngāti Manawa, Te Waiāriki).

Actions were added later, and it was performed by Te Kura Taumata o Panguru at the Te Tai Tokerau Secondary Schools Cultural Festival in April 2014. A waiata whakangāhau, it is sung at all occasions.

The Significance of Warawara to Our Identity

Mana o te whenua



Mana o te whenua is a fundamental principle that defines the deep relationship between tangata, whenua, and Atua. It encompasses identity, responsibility, and kaitiakitanga, maintained through actions that honour this sacred connection. As Tate (2012) explains, Te mana o te tangata ki runga i te whenua reflects the authority people hold over the land, and their duty to exercise mana in all matters concerning it. This underscores the inseparable bond between people, whenua, and Atua.

At the heart of this relationship is kaitiakitanga—the guardianship of natural resources to preserve their mauri for future generations. Kaitiakitanga ensures balance, recognising that while whenua and its resources can be used, they must always be treated in a way that upholds mana and protects the environment.

Kupe, a great explorer and ancestor, reinforced his mana by naming significant locations, embedding whakapapa into the whenua. When Kupe first sighted Aotearoa, his junior wife, Kuramārōtini, exclaimed, "He ao! He ao! He aotea! He aotearoa!"—words that marked the land with spiritual and cultural meaning. This moment bestowed Aotearoa with its enduring name, reflecting awe and deep connection to the land. Kupe named the sunlit mountains of South Hokianga Te Ramaroa.

As he ventured deeper into the harbour, he saw a great beam of light or fire, which he named Te Pouahi. His waka, Matawhaorua, landed at Te Puna o te Ao Mārama (The Spring of the World of Light), now known as Hokianga.

Kupe's journey through Hokianga revealed that people had already inhabited the land. One such place is Panguru, named after his exclamation, "He ponguru te ahi!"—a fire is burning. Over time, this name evolved, marking the significance of the whenua.

According to Pineamine Ben Te Wake (1992), the iwi of Te Urua, Te Tamarere, and Waitaha had long lived in Hokianga, their presence predating the arrival of Kupe by many generations.

This legacy of naming and occupation reflects the enduring presence of tangata whenua, whose connection to the land is upheld through whakapapa, tikanga, and kaitiakitanga, ensuring that the mana of the whenua remains strong for future generations.



The Significance of Warawara to Our Identity

The naming of Owarawara

This deep-rooted connection to the land is further reflected in the oral traditions of Warawara.

Wiremu McMath, interviewed by Daniel Watkins (15 August 1992), described the owara—the voices of the Turehu, an ancient people whose echoes can still be heard within the ngahere:

"Ko tēnei mea te owara, ko ngā reo ngā Turehu e owara ana ki roto i te ngahere, e rongohia ana ēnā reo e owara ana. Ngā reo o ngā Turehu, ngā reo maha o ngā Turehu."

"This thing is the owara, the Turehu languages that are singing in the forest, and you can hear those voices. Ngā reo o ngā Turehu—many voices of the Turehu."

Pineamine Ben Te Wake, also interviewed by Daniel Watkins (2 September 1992), spoke of the origins of Warawara's name:

"E hara tērā i te ingoa tika o tēnei whenua. E nohinohi noa ake anō a Te Warawara tika, e toru e whā tekau eka anake. Ko te ingoa tika kē o tēnā whenua e mōhiotia ana ko Owarawara. E whakaaro ana ki te pārare ki ngā maunga kia whakaritea mai ko tōu whakaaro. Koia e kōrerotia nei ko Owarawara. Nō te Pākehā, nā ka rapa ko tēnei ingoa ki runga i ngā taenga mai o te whenua nei i ngā maunga nei, ā, ko Warawara."

"That is not the correct name for this land. The true Te Warawara refers to a much smaller area, spanning only about 30 to 40 acres. The original and proper name for this broader area is Owarawara. The name evokes the idea of a whispering resonance (echo, vibration, resonating sound), spreading across the mountains and aligning with a particular perspective. Hence, it was traditionally called Owarawara. When the Pākehā arrived, that name changed to Warawara for the wider area."

Owarawara was one of the earliest settled areas for Māori, with evidence of ancient occupation throughout. While the higher regions were not permanently occupied, they contained torere (sites for human remains) and burial caves (ana). The land was an essential source for hunting, food gathering, and collecting valuable resources such as timber, kiekie, nīkau, and rongoā.

From the voices of the Turehu in the ngahere to the ancestral fires that named Panguru, Warawara remains a living embodiment of Te Rarawa identity, carrying the echoes of our tūpuna and their enduring guardianship of this sacred land.

The Significance of Warawara to Our Identity

Te Warawara and the Warawara State Forest



Warawara Forest. c/n E6278/16. Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena. Date unknown.

From the 1820s onward, kauri timber stations developed along the northern coasts and rivers of Aotearoa New Zealand, driven by overseas demand—particularly for shipbuilding spars. By the 1910s, sawmills such as the Kauri Timber Company in Kohukohu on Hokianga Harbour were thriving. In 1875, the Crown purchased large tracts of land under vague terms, verbally assuring Te Rarawa of timber rights not stated in the deed, prompting enduring grievances.

From that same year onward, the Crown systematically acquired parcels around Owarawara—initially a small area historically identified as Te Warawara—and ultimately consolidated them into what is now called the Warawara State Forest.

Although “Te Warawara” originally referred to only 30 or 40 acres, colonial naming practices gradually extended it to thousands of hectares, overshadowing long-standing Māori place-based distinctions. In 1885, the forest was designated State Forest; while Te Rarawa continued using its resources until new restrictions in 1903, their efforts to uphold ancestral rights triggered petitions and court hearings spanning decades.

Timber milling in our ngahere persisted from 1967 to 1974, then gave way to conservation initiatives, culminating in a shift to protection by 1979 and transfer to the Department of Conservation in 1987.

This intense period of kauri exploitation stimulated economic growth but also dispossessed Te Rarawa of their traditional lands, underscoring the tension between colonial development and Warawara’s enduring cultural heritage.

The Significance of Warawara to Our Identity

Au Warawara



Tūpuna Whina Cooper outside her home in Panguru, 1980. Raiātea Collections, Motuti.

Dame Whina Cooper described our ngahere as Te Wairua o te iwi o Te Rarawa—the living spiritual essence of Te Rarawa people, a source of both physical and spiritual sustenance, and a sacred resting place for ancestors. Her words capture the profound relationship between the people and their ancestral whenua, where Warawara is not just a forest but a vital, living presence interwoven with identity, wellbeing, and whakapapa.

Building on this deep connection, her son Joseph Cooper coined the phrase Au Warawara—meaning "I am Warawara" or "Warawara is me," depending on the context. This expression embodies the intimate bond between tangata whenua and their sacred ngahere, signifying not only belonging but also the inherent responsibility of kaitiakitanga. It reflects the understanding that Warawara and its people are one, bound together through generations of care, guardianship, and reverence for the land.

The Significance of Warawara to Our Identity

Returning to it's original name



Participants at the Warawara Mana Whakahaere wananga at Waipuna Marae, 15 December 2024, Joanne Murray.

On 15 December 2024, representatives from the ten mana whenua marae gathered at Waipuna Marae in Panguru for the Warawara Mana Whakahaere Wānanga to explore the ancestral significance of Warawara.

Through discussions tracing our whakapapa from Kupe to Te Tiriti, we reflected on our deep connections to the ngahere and how these relationships have evolved over time.

The kōrero examined the impact of deforestation that led to Warawara being designated a state forest, as well as the historical context in which its name emerged.

A strong sentiment arose among participants to restore the original name of the area—**Owarawara**—reaffirming our identity and kaitiakitanga over this taonga.

Ngā Pūtohunga ki te Komiti

Recommendations to the Komiti

Introduction to the Recommendations

The research into the various names associated with Warawara—Te Warawara, Au Warawara, Owarawara, and Warawara—has provided valuable insights into the deep historical, cultural, and linguistic significance of the forest. Among these, the name Owarawara has emerged as a potential choice for the Komiti's legal identity, reflecting ancestral ties and the enduring connection of mana whenua to the land.

To ensure that any decision regarding the adoption of Owarawara is firmly rooted in collective agreement and tikanga, it is essential to engage with the ten mana whenua marae and their hapū. This approach will uphold the principles of **whakawhanaungatanga (relationships)**, **mana motuhake (self-determination)**, and **kaitiakitanga (guardianship)**, reinforcing the Komiti's role as the representative body for Warawara.

The following recommendations outline key steps to facilitate the endorsement process, strengthen cultural validation, and integrate Owarawara into governance, education, and official recognition.

Here are five recommendations for adopting the name Owarawara, ensuring community endorsement and alignment with mana whenua aspirations:

- 1. Seek Endorsement from the Ten Mana Whenua Marae** – Present the research findings to each marae through hui, allowing whānau to discuss, reflect, and formally endorse the adoption of Owarawara. Their collective agreement will ensure the name is upheld with the full support of the hapū.
- 2. Embed Owarawara into the Komiti's Legal and Governance Structures** – If endorsed, the Komiti should update its trust deed, strategic documents, and communications to reflect Owarawara, reinforcing the name's cultural and historical significance in governance and legal recognition.
- 3. Engage Kaumātua and Reo Experts for Cultural Validation** – Work with kaumātua and Māori language experts to confirm the historical and linguistic integrity of Owarawara and ensure its meaning aligns with whakapapa, traditions, and tikanga.
- 4. Launch an Education and Awareness Campaign** – Develop resources—such as booklets, videos, and wānanga—to share the history and significance of Owarawara with whānau, kura, and wider communities, ensuring the name is understood and embraced.
- 5. Formally Recognise Owarawara in Local and Government Frameworks** – Advocate for the official recognition of Owarawara in conservation, land management, and government records, ensuring the name is acknowledged in legislation, environmental plans, and mapping systems.

TE MATAPUNA KORERO

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