

The Story of Ngatoroirangi Toa Matarau



The waharoa - Ngatoroirangi Toa Matarau was designed and carved by local master carver Delani Brown, who is of Ngati Tuwharetoa/ Raukawa descent. He worked closely with Ngati Tuwharetoa Kaumatua to receive the stories, wisdom and historical knowledge that underpin the stories depicted in the carving.

The Story...

The Ngati Tuwharetoa people of the Lake Taupo area are descendants of early explorers Ngatoroirangi and Tia, who both arrived on the Te Arawa Canoe. From Te Awa o Te Atua (The River of the God) in the eastern Bay of Plenty Ngatoroirangi, the high priest and navigator commenced his journey to Te Puku o Te Ika a Maui (The belly of the great fish of Maui) in the Central North Island.

When arriving in the Taupo District, Ngatoroirangi sought land for his descendants and ascended Mt Tauhara which this gateway now faces. Upon reaching its summit he thrust his staff into the earth and from the furrow flowed a freshwater spring, 'Te Karetu a Ngatoroirangi', which still flows from atop of Tauhara to this day. Ngatoroirangi then seized a Totara tree and threw it far into the distance to Wharewaka where it eventually landed with branches piercing the earth and its roots high in the air. He descended from Tauhara and headed toward the newly formed lake and as he reached the shore he proclaimed "this will be drinking water for my grandchildren". He then tore a feather from his cloak and cast it into the water. Upon touching the water the feather transformed into an eel, however it did not survive. He turned to his cloak and once again tore a feather and cast it to the water. As it touched the water, the Koaro, a breed of whitebait appeared and remains as the traditional fishery of this lake.

While on top of Tauhara, Ngatoroirangi had seen a majestic mountain to the south. He thought to himself that he must venture there and climb that mountain as well. He travelled south and arrived at a place called Hamaria, when the setting sun disappeared. He turned to his followers and said, "the night has settled, let us stop here", hence the name, Taupo , (Tau, settle and pō, night). When dawn broke the rested travellers continued on their journey and after many stops arrived at the base of Tongariro. The group began their ascent to the summit of Tongariro and along the way encountered challenges. The final challenge saw a blizzard of snow and ice carried by Tawhirimatea

the God of winds descend upon the party. Seized by the bone chilling cold, Ngatoroirangi was in danger of perishing so he called to his sisters Kuiwai and Haungaroa in Hawaiki for assistance.

“Kuiwai e!, Haungaroa e!, ka riro au i te Tonga. Tukuna mai te ahi!”

“Oh Kui, Oh Hau, I have been captured by the southern winds. Send me fire!”

His sisters heard his urgent plea and quickly filled six baskets with glowing embers, the off-spring of Ruauumoko, the God of volcanic energy. The sisters then dispatched the demigod siblings Te Hoata and Te Pupu to deliver the heat to Ngatoroirangi. Te Hoata and Te Pupu plunged deep into the earth and travelled swiftly toward Ngatoroirangi in Aotearoa / New Zealand. The journey of Te Hoata and Te Pupu to Tongariro saw them surface at many places including; Whakaari (White Island), Moutohora (Whale Island), Rotoiti, Tarawera, Rotorua, Orakei Korako, Wairakei, Tokaanu and finally Ketetahi at Tongariro. Embers were left behind at these places and only one basket of fire managed to reach Ngatoroirangi. With this he became angry and thought, how am I to be warmed by this one basket of fire? Ketetahi, (Kete, basket and tahi, one). In his rage he stomped his feet twice violently shaking the earth. Ruapehu (Rua, two and pehu, vent). He then slammed his paddle deep into the earth. Ngauruhoe (Ko te Ngaurutanga, the shaft of his paddle and hoe, paddle). Through the ferocity of his actions the one remaining basket containing embers exploded into life bringing forth the raw power of Ruauumoko, God of volcanic energy. With this Ngatoroirangi began to regain warmth and was revived.

The pathway of Te Hoata and Te Pupu is in a direct line from White Island to Tongariro. This is evident in the many geothermal features that now exist. The embers of Ruauumoko and his energy are still active to this day and continue to provide for people. 'Ngatoro-i-rangi Toa Matarau is the name of this Waharoa'