

A large, intricate Maori wood carving (Whakairo) featuring a central face with prominent eyes and a wide mouth, surrounded by complex, swirling patterns and smaller figures. The carving is set against a dark, circular background.

# Whakairo Tuturu Maori



***EDUCATION KIT***  
Auckland Museum



**Background Information**



# Whakairo Tuturu Maori

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## Teachers Background Information

This education kit looks at whakairo or Maori carving, an art which was traditionally carried out by men. This kit has been produced to support the New Zealand Maori Language and Art Syllabuses and achievement objectives outlined in the present Science, Social Studies and Technology curriculum areas.

The most effective use of this education kit is in conjunction with a visit to Auckland Museum's Maori galleries.

Maori traditionally carved designs into wood, bone and many types of rock, including pounamu (greenstone). Some of the ancient tools Maori used for carving included whao and kuru (which are on display at Auckland Museum in Nga Mahi Gallery). The Museum also houses extensive collections' of whakairo representing most iwi in Aotearoa, including Wharekauri (Chatham Islands).

While visiting the Museum teachers and students will be able to look at Whakairo and gather information on:

- *whakairo styles from particular regions*
- *whakairo style and design changes over time*
- *why particular iwi and hapu became experts in whakairo (looking at resource availability, tohunga whakairo in the area etc.)*
- *iwi and hapu who became experts in carving certain things, ie: Ngati Pikiao specialists in carving pataka*
- *European influences on traditional design*
- *how metal tools influenced whakairo*
- *how the museum cares for, displays and stores its whakairo*
- *restoration work of carved poupou from the wharenuī Hotunui*



## Maori Myths Associated with Whakairo

### Rua-te-pupuke and the Origin of Whakairo

This Ngati Porou story tells of Rua-te-pupuke, and how he acquires the knowledge of whakairo from Tangaroa the god of the sea. This happened when Tangaroa took Rua-te-pupuke's son Manuruhi.

Manuruhi was kidnapped and pulled down to the depths of the sea by Tangaroa while he fished with a magic fish hook made for him by Rua-te-pupuke. Tangaroa took Manuruhi, firstly because he caught fish without doing a karakia and did not ask Tangaroa's permission, and secondly because he did not offer the first fish he had caught to Tangaroa.

Rua-te-pupuke was devastated at the loss of his son. Determined to find Manuruhi he began his search in the seas. Eventually Rua-te-pupuke found Manuruhi as a tekoteko on top of Tangaroa's whareniui. Tangaroa's whareniui was made up of a number of carvings. The carvings located inside the house could speak but the carvings located outside on the porch could not.

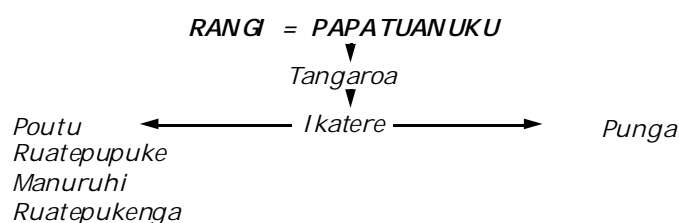
Rua-te-pupuke was furious with Tangaroa and he decided to avenge his son's death. He sought advice from a kuia who told him he must block the window and door in Tangaroa's whareniui so that daylight could not enter. Taking this advice, Rua-te-pupuke waited for evening when Tangaroa returned home with his children, the fish.

The next day Tangaroa and his children were unaware that the sun had risen because Rua-te-pupuke had covered the window and door of the whareniui. Rua-te-pupuke then uncovered the doorway, fighting and killing Tangaroa's children. He destroyed Tangaroa's whareniui, taking the non-speaking carved posts from the porch of Tangaroa's home and the tekoteko in the image of his son

These non-speaking posts, known as *poupou* and Manuruhi the *tekoteko*, became the models for carvers. That is how Maori acquired the knowledge of whakairo.

### Rata and the Totara Tree

The myth of Rata felling a great totara tree to make a waka includes birds and ngaarara. These creatures are the guardians, or haakuturi of the forest, who continually resurrect the totara tree when Rata cuts it down. The haakuturi do this because Rata has not shown respect and asked Tane Mahuta's permission to take the totara tree. Finally when Rata does a karakia to Tane, the haakuturi allow the tree to be felled and they help Rata build his waka. In carving the waka, Rata was assisted by spiders. They initiated the spiral designs of the carving which were similar to the patterns in their webs. This carving design is now known as *pungawerewere* or *puwerewere*. Some say that Rua-te-pupuke (the first man to learn and teach woodcarving) was taught the art of carving by *pungawerewere*.





### **Background Information**

## **Early Carving of Aotearoa**

It is known that the first settlers to Aotearoa brought with them the carving skills of their homeland. However Maori carving has developed greatly since the first Polynesians came to New Zealand. These developments in carving were probably due to three reasons:

1. The availability of straight-grained easily worked timbers unlike the cross-grained timbers of tropical Polynesia.
2. The availability of argillite, which was fashioned into kuru and whao. These tools were superior to the basalt shell and limestone tools of the Pacific Islands.
3. The population of New Zealand was far greater than that of most individual islands of Polynesia leading to faster developments than small insular communities.

### **Kaitaia Carving**

One of the earliest pieces of Maori carving on display is known as the Kaitaia carving, estimated at 600-800 years old. This carving has been very well preserved. Originally it was thought to be a pare (door lintel), but as it has been carved front and back, it was obviously intended to be viewed from both sides.

The design of this carving is quite different from other traditional Maori works on display, particularly the central figure, which is similar to Eastern Polynesian carvings.

However the concept of the central figure flanked by two outward facing manaia can be

compared with later pare of Aotearoa.



### **Doubtless Bay Canoe Prow, Stern Post and the Awanui Panel**

Auckland Museum houses three other early Maori carvings - the Doubtless Bay canoe prow, the Doubtless Bay stern post and the Awanui panel. The prow and stern were found on Tokerau beach and like the Awanui Panel are estimated to have been carved between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The canoe prow features two manaia-like figures similar to those found on later Maori carvings, however the larger head is spiked, as is the manaia-like figure on the Awanui panel. This spike feature has occurred on other eastern Polynesian carvings.

*Traditional Eastern Polynesian carvings can be viewed in the Pacific Gallery*



## Tribal Differences in Carving Style By D Simmons

The tiki, which represented a human figure, is the most important part of the whakairo and is linked with stories from the past. The style of the tiki was different in each tribal area of Aotearoa.

The **Ngapuhi, Te Roroa, Ngati Whatua** style of Hokianga and Kaipara with domed heads and sinuous bodies is closely related to the Hauraki and Taranaki styles. This was a stone tool style of the 18th century.

The **Waikato** style, with a large head similar to Ngati Maru style, had a small vase shape body and short legs. This style was current from the 18th century until the mid 19th century

The **Arawa** style of the Bay of Plenty with a long triangular face, chevron on top of the head and usually rectangular bodies. It is one of the main meeting house styles of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The **Tuwharetoa** style of Taupo has a squarish head with the upper lip projecting down, small body and legs. It is a 19th century meeting house style.

The **Whanau-a-Apanui** style of Te Kaha and the East Cape area has rectangular heads and long bodies. A stone tool style which spread throughout the Bay of Plenty.

The **Te Ati Haunui a Paparangi** style of Whanganui with rounded head has a large mouth, short body, thin arms and short legs. It is related to the Waikato style and was used on meeting houses until the beginning of the 20th century.

The **Rongowhakaata** style of Gisborne has a triangular head and small round body. In the early 19th century, carvers from this area built the first meeting house which developed from the earlier chief's dwelling house.

**Te Ati Awa** style of Taranaki, has a triangular head and peak on the forehead. The bodies are tubular, ridged and sinuous. The figures are not considered solid so arms and legs pass through mouths or eyes. This is a stone tool style of the 18th and early 19th century.



**Background Information**

**Identifying Whakairo Design**

Here are a selection of designs that are significant to traditional Maori whakairo. All of these designs can be found in Auckland Museum's Maori galleries.

*Spirals*



*Tuara kuri (the diamond notch)*



*Taratara-a-kai (the zigzag notch)*



*Niho taniwha (the dragon tooth notch)*



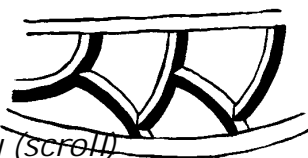
*Puwerewere (spider web)*



*Unaunahi (fish scale)*



*Mata kupenga (fishnet mesh)*



*Koru (scroll)*



**Figures in Whakairo**

**Tiki:** Human-like form. Tiki may represent ancestors, gods, or other spirits.



**Manaia:** Profile of creatures that have bird-like heads on bodies that have arms and legs. Manaia can be represented by the beaks alone and can be distorted to fit into various spaces.



**Moko:** Lizards represented in a recognisable naturalistic form.



**Marakihau:** Sea monsters of several varieties some of whom later developed to look like mermaids.



**Pakake:** Whale forms which seem to represent taniwha rather than ordinary whales.



## Materials Used In Whakairo

### Indigenous Timbers

The most useful indigenous carving timbers were and still are *Totara, Kahikatea and Kauri*.

### The advantages of Totara are:

- like kauri it grows to a very large size
- it grows tall and straight
- it grows quickly compared to other indigenous trees
- it grows throughout Aotearoa
- it is a soft wood and cuts cleanly
- the wood has few knots and blemishes and shows very little grain
- it is a durable timber, even when in contact with the ground
- it takes polish well and has an attractive reddish sheen
- a single hulled dugout war canoe of up to 25m could be shaped from one tree.

Both Kauri and Kahikatea are slower growing trees containing harder wood with Kauri growing only in the northern regions of Aotearoa. Thus its availability was and still is limited to carvers.

### Exotic Timbers

Timbers such as cedar, fir and pine, willow, teak, walnut, apple wood and pear wood are also suitable for carving.

### Maori also carved:

**Bone** - albatross, cow, human, moa and whale

**Teeth** - whale

**Stone** - argillite, greenstone, greywacke and serpentine.

### Traditional Carving Tools

Traditionally high relief carving was done with a greenstone adze (toki) while the carver stood over the timber. Low relief work and

the finishing of high relief was done with smaller short-handled adze. The surface decoration was done with a chisel (whao) and mallet (kuru). Fine chisels were made of greenstone, fine-grained stone and sometimes bone.

It is interesting to note that greenstone and metal tools both produce similar cuts making it difficult to differentiate exactly what tools were used on particular whakairo.

### The Physical Act of Carving

Carving was hard work which demanded physical fitness and strength. This was relieved to some extent with the development of rhythm and technique - however it was the introduction of metal tools that made carving easier.

### Here is a list of the tools you might need if you want to take up whakairo rakau:

- straight edge flat chisels
- half-round gouges
- fluter or veiner
- a slip stone suited to the sharpening of gouges and veiners
- a coping saw complete with replacement blades
- a medium weight carpenter's mallet (kuru, ta)
- a chainsaw
- a small axe or hatchet
- a small hand drill complete with set of drills.
- fine sandpaper.

### Sharpening Tools

It is necessary to have tools to keep the chisels sharp. You may need:

a honer, a grinder, oil stone.

Blades of whao were traditionally sharpened on sandstone grindstones near running water.



### **Background Information**

## **Maori Traditions Associated with Whakairo**

According to Roger Neich in *Maori Arts and Culture*:

*Carving was regarded as a tapu activity which had to be carried out under certain ritual restrictions to protect the artists, the intended users or owners, and the community at large from supernatural harm. Anything associated with common (noa) objects or activities had to be kept away from the work to avoid contaminating the carvings.*

Listed below are a selection of traditions and customs associated with the felling of trees and carving. It is important to note that with increasing European influence some of these prohibitions lapsed, but others were maintained. This often depended on the attitude of the lead carver.

- **Karakia before felling:** Before a tree could be felled to be carved, a karakia to Tane Mahuta asking permission for the tree was necessary.
- **Food:** Food was not allowed where carving was in progress.
- **Smoking:** Smoking was prohibited while carving was in progress.
- **Chips and Shavings:** Chips and shavings could not be blown off the work by the carver, however they could be brushed or tipped away.
- **Burning Chips:** Chips from carving could not be used to fuel a cooking fire.

- **Carved Work at Night Time:** Carvings were turned over at night when work for the day had finished.
- **Carving Mistakes:** Mistakes in carving composition such as a figure facing the wrong way, was also regarded as an infringement on tapu.
- **Training of Carvers:** Traditionally carving was passed on through family members often with young males of a family being taught by an uncle. However the passing on of carving knowledge changed considerably after 1928 with the introduction of a government funded School of Maori Art.
- **Time Allowed For a Carving:** A carver devoted as much time as was necessary to a carving for its successful completion.



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## Glossary

**Aotearoa**

*New Zealand*  
**haakuturi**

*guardians or creatures of the forest*  
**kaiwhakairo**

*carver*

**karakia**

*prayer*

**kohatu**

*stone*

**kuru**

*mallet*

**ngarara**

*all insects and lizards*

**Ngati Porou**

*Maori tribe of the East Coast*

**noa**

*common*

**pataka**

*storehouse*

**poupou**

*carved column supporting a house*

**pounamu**

*greenstone*

**pukoro**

*entrance to a pa*

**pungawerewere**

*spider*

**puwerewere**

*spider web*

**ta**

*mallet*

**Tane Mahuta**

*God of the forest*

**Tangaroa**

*God of the sea*

**taniwha**

*water creatures or monsters*

**taonga**

*treasure*

**tapu**

*sacred*

**taputapu**

*tools*

**tekoteko**

*carved gable figure on a house*

**tohunga whakairo**

*carving expert*

**waka**

*canoe*

**waka tupapaku**

*burial chest*

**whakairo**

*design*

**whakairo rakau**

*wood carving*

**whakairotia**

*to carve*

**whao**

*chisel*

**whareniui**

*large house*



## Curriculum Links

### Curriculum Links

#### Maori Language Syllabus: Aims of this Kit

##### Aims

- To enable children to understand and acknowledge tikanga Maori (Maori values, attitudes, and behaviour).
- To enable children to grow in their ability to understand and speak Maori.
- To provide opportunities for children to read and write in Maori where appropriate.

##### Objectives

If these aims are to be achieved, young New Zealanders need to:

##### Apply the Maori language in their everyday language environment by:

- understanding spoken Maori
- pronouncing people's names and place names correctly
- expressing simple greetings and farewells, and useful phrases
- reading and understanding written Maori
- expressing themselves creatively in speech, writing, or performance.

Feel comfortable with tikanga Maori as they participate in a variety of Maori functions and cultural activities.

Understand and appreciate Maori values and attitudes.

Understand and respect cultural differences in New Zealand

Understand Maori when it is used in bilingual schools as a medium of learning and instruction.

#### Technology in the New Zealand Curriculum

##### Contexts

- *Personal contexts might include clothing; jewellery.*
- *Home contexts might include preparation of food; furnishings.*

##### Strand A: Technological Knowledge and Understanding

Within a range of technological areas and contexts, students should develop an understanding of:

1. the use and operation of technologies;
2. technological principles and systems;
3. the nature of technological practice.

##### Strand B: Technological Capability

Within a range of technological areas and contexts, students should produce technological solutions. They will:

6. with reference to identified needs and opportunities, (d) evaluate designs, strategies, and outcomes throughout technological practice in relation to their own activities and those of others.

##### Strand C: Technology and Society

Within a range of technological areas and contexts, students should:

7. develop awareness and understanding of the ways the beliefs, values, and ethics of individuals and groups:
  - promote or constrain technological development;
  - influence attitudes towards technological development;
8. develop awareness and understanding of the impacts of technology on environment:
  - in the past, present, and possible future;
  - in local, national, and

## **Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum Revised Draft**

### **Level 1**

#### **Culture and Heritage**

*Students can*

- describe a special family occasion and compare it with a traditional celebration of a group distant in time or place.

#### **Place and Environment**

*Students can*

- identify, and represent visually, significant natural and built features of their local environment.

#### **Time, Continuity and Change**

*Students can*

- identify, and place in sequence, changes that were significant to a family in another time, suggest reasons for these changes.

### **Level 2**

#### **Culture and Heritage**

*Students can*

- research and describe pastimes and recreations enjoyed by women, men, and children from different cultures, past and present, within and beyond New Zealand.

#### **Time, Continuity and Change**

*Students can*

- identify and explain the purposes of some technologies and buildings used by people distant in time and place;
- investigate some people distant in time and place and describe how they made an impact or helped change aspects of community life.

## **Resources and Economic Activities**

*Students can*

- find out, and show visually, how a product has been produced using natural, human and material resources.

### **Level 3**

#### **Place and Environment**

*Students can*

- investigate and compare the ways different groups of people interacted with and adapted to the environment in their own area, and in other parts of New Zealand and in the past.

## **Resources and Economic Activities**

*Students can*

- investigate and compare different means of exchange by people in other times or places.

### **Level 4**

#### **Culture and Heritage**

*Students can*

- investigate ways different cultures in the past and present have communicated information, ideas, and feelings, and debate the current and possible future impacts of developments in the media on the cultural identity of individuals

#### **Place and Environment**

*Students can*

- analyse and demonstrate how people's interactions with particular environments have changed over time, and identify trends that indicate how these might continue to change in the future present and justify generalisations about the ways that people's perceptions of place and environment change over time.



### Curriculum Links

## Science in the New Zealand Curriculum

### Level 1 Making Sense of the Material World

*Students can*

- clarify and communicate their own ideas on appropriate choices of materials for familiar activities based on simple, easily observable properties, e. g clothing for wet weather; shoes for walking, running and working; toys for bath-time.

### Making Sense of the Nature of Science and its Relationship to Technology

*Students can*

- explore and suggest what simple items of technology do.

### Level 2 Making Sense of the Material World

*Students can*

- use simple technology to demonstrate and explain methods which prevent or promote change in materials, e. g, food preservation, painting, cooking.

### Making Sense of the Nature of Science and its Relationship to Technology

*Students can*

- investigate and describe how simple items of technology work;
- investigate how simple items of technology have developed.

### Level 3 Making Sense of the Material World

*Students can*

- investigate and describe how the physical properties of materials are related to their use, e.g, fabrics, metals and plastics;
- investigate and report on temporary and more permanent changes that familiar materials undergo, eg, making butter, baking cakes.

### Level 4 Making Sense of the Material World

*Students can*

- investigate and describe ways of producing permanent or temporary changes in some familiar materials, e.g ,heating, mixing two or more substances.

### Level 5 Making Sense of the Nature of Science and its Relationship to Technology

*Students can*

- explain how different cultures have developed understanding of the living, physical, material, and technological components of the environment, e.g, Polynesian navigation systems, Maori medicinal plants, Chinese astronomy.

**Art Syllabus: Aims of this Kit**  
 This kit supports The Arts Overview in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework document.

It relates to the Art Education Junior Classes to Form 7 Syllabus for Schools particularly:

### 1. Sources of Motivation

- represent or symbolise beliefs, cultural values, rituals, or mythologies
- comment upon themselves, their families, societies, institutions, manners, or customs
- communicate through graphic media such as symbols, motifs, signs, displays
- explore and describe events, places, and objects real or imagined, natural or built
- design or make objects used in daily life.

### 2. Making Art Works

- understanding of the properties and characteristics of fibre
- knowledge of the use of tools and equipment
- understanding of the effects produced by tools
- conservation and care of materials
- safe procedures, care and maintenance of equipment.

### Knowing about Art

- **Carving** the altering, by cutting away, of the solid mass of such materials as wood, stone, plaster, plastics, or bone.
- **Whare Whakairo** the use of taonga whakairo, tukutuku, and kowhaiwhai as wairua of the marae.
- **Architectural** approaches and processes for the design and /

or making of building or environments, interior or exterior.

- **Processes** involved with design using such materials as metal, stone, wood, bone, or found objects for making, clasps, necklaces, earrings, pendants, and other ornaments and decorations.

### Before Visiting the Museum

**Students should:**

- be familiar with the appearance of whakairo
- name places where whakairo might be found in New Zealand
- name objects that Maori traditionally carved
- identify traditional designs and patterns used in whakairo
- find out how some whakairo designs have evolved and consider what the designs represented
- consider why Maori used particular trees, bone and rock with whakairo, give examples and reasons for each
- find out about materials and tools associated with traditional Maori whakairo
- find out what other materials and tools Maori adapted to whakairo, with the arrival of Europeans
- see demonstrations of whakairo (contact your local Marae)
- draw carving designs
- try basic whakairo using inexpensive bars of soap which can be carved into using sharpened pencils
- try lino carving (this can be dangerous and is not appropriate for level 1-2 students)
- try carving wood, bone, rock or Plaster of Paris

## Pre Visit Activity

The taonga pictured below can be found in Auckland Museum's Maori Galleries. What carving designs and symbols can you identify?



**Activity  
Sheets**



# Junior Whakairo Activity Sheet

Y1-5

*This activity sheet should be used in the Maori galleries*

1. Give the names of taonga carved in

rakau or wood \_\_\_\_\_

pounamu or greenstone \_\_\_\_\_

paraoa or whalebone \_\_\_\_\_

kohatu or stone \_\_\_\_\_

2a. Go inside the whareniui Hotunui.

Find the marakihau (sea monster) whakairo pictured below. Its ancestral name is Ureia.



2b How many carved poupou are there in the whareniui Hotunui?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Find two tools in Nga Mahi Gallery that our Maori tupuna would have used to carve with. What are they called?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

4. List four taonga that have Manaia or Tiki carved on them.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Draw a picture of your favourite carved taonga.

# Senior Whakairo Activity Sheet

## Y6-Upwards

*This sheet should be used in the Maori galleries*

**1. Listed are some of the taonga Maori decorated with whakairo. Find these taonga in the Museums Maori Galleries. What might they have been traditionally used for?**

Kotiate \_\_\_\_\_

Pataka \_\_\_\_\_

Tauihu \_\_\_\_\_

Wakahuia \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Find these whakairo symbols on taonga located in the Museum's Maori galleries. Give details of where you found them.**

Tiki \_\_\_\_\_

Manaia \_\_\_\_\_

Moko \_\_\_\_\_

Pakake \_\_\_\_\_

Marakihau \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Find the Kaitaia carving.**

What is different about this whakairo design?

\_\_\_\_\_

What might have influenced this design style?

\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Sketch your favourite whakairo design.**

