

Proposal report considered by the Board on 15 September 2025 hui with the Board's decision for Wi Waka (locality) [altered from Waiwaka]



Summary

The proposal from a member of the public is to alter Waiwaka to Wi Waka, for a rural locality just south of Eketāhuna, north Wairarapa. The proposer contends that the locality was named for the Ngāti Hāmua¹ rangatira 'Wi Waka' (1802[?]-1892). The spellings 'Wi Waka', 'Wiwaka', and 'Waiwaka' were all used for the locality from the late 19th century. 'Waiwaka' was added to official maps in 1957, but the proposer states 'Wi Waka' remains in local use and there is evidence of this.

Research suggests the naming was indirect, with the locality named Wi Waka after the 'Wiwaka Section' of the railway, which was named for 'Wi Waka's Saddle'. The saddle was on an original Māori track and the railway line tunnelled through the saddle ~1887, reaching Eketāhuna in 1889.

Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust has confirmed Waiwaka is not an original name and consider 'Wi Waaka' to be the correct spelling for the person, a transliteration of 'Will Walker'. Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Treaty settlement documents give his name in full as Wiremu Waaka Kahukura or Wiremu Waaka Te Rangiwhakaea. Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust advise their preference is 'Wi Waaka' given that is how he spelled his own name but would not be offended by 'Wi Wāka'.

The Board's expert orthographic advisor has confirmed 'Wi' is correct and notes both 'Waaka' and 'Wāka' are acceptable for 'Walker', although Wāka may be preferable. The orthographic guidelines state 'it is recommended that the names of people from pre-1950 be written with macrons. Otherwise personal names should be written with macrons only where the writer is confident this won't cause offence to the person whose name it is.'

¹ The paramount hapū of Rangitāne o Wairarapa : see Joseph Potangaroa (2012), *Ngāti Hāmua*, Rangitāne o Wairarapa history series Vol.3, Te Puni Kōkiri: Masterton

Board's decision

At its 15 September 2025 hui the Board made this decision on the proposal:

Decline the proposal to alter Waiwaka to Wi Waka as the official place name of a rural locality south of Eketāhuna, based on the proposed orthography being incorrect,

and

Accept a new proposal from the Board to alter Waiwaka to **Wī Wāka** based on:

- confirmation from Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust that the tūpuna name is a transliteration of Will Walker, noting that their preference is for 'Wi Waaka', but would not be offended by Wī Wāka,
- confirmation of the standardised orthography by a Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori licenced translator, noting that macrons are recommended in the spelling of pre-1950 tupuna names,
- the Board's responsibility to examine cases of doubtful spelling,
- evidence confirming the locality name relates to Wi Waaka Kahukura,
- local use of Wi Waka,

and

Notify as a proposal to alter for one month

Secretariat assessment

The proposal

The proposer seeks to alter Waiwaka to Wi Waka, for a rural locality just south of Eketāhuna. The proposer advises that the area is still known to locals as Wi Waka and considers that the incorrect spelling is '*offensive to Chief Wi Waka's memory*'.

The proposer has provided:

- references to 'Wi Waka' (the person and the place) in newspapers and in local histories,
- his correspondence with Tararua District Council, noting that they acknowledged the evidence in his proposal but did not provide any particular views,
- letters he wrote to Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust and Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Tāmaki-a-Rua Settlement Trust, noting they had no response.

In initial correspondence with the proposer in October 2024, he stated that '*in 1871 locals named the area Wi Waka or Wiwaka to honour an assistant surveyor who worked on the railway*'. This appears to inaccurately summarise/conflate various details published about Wi Waka (the person and the place) in local histories. See Secretariat research section below.

Names shown on plans and maps

Railway plans name 'Wi Waka Saddle', for the saddle to the southeast of the locality, which the railway line tunnels under.²

SO 12787 (1888) surveyed a road (Smith's Line) parallel to the railway line, and names 'Wiwaka Creek' for a tributary of Kōpuaranga River, although it names the saddle, 'Smith's Saddle'.

The locality is consistently named Waikawa since first shown on NZMS maps in the 1950s.

Map/plan	Date	Name
Misc 95	1875	Eketahuna [clearing]
SO 12691 SO 12827	1888	Wi Waka Section Wi-Waka Section [railway line from Hastwell to Eketāhuna].
NZMS 15 Eketahuna	1922	unnamed
NZMS 13 WN63	1923-1946	unnamed
NZMS 1 N153 1 st -3 rd ed.	1957-1972	Waiwaka
NZMS 260 T25 1 st -2 nd ed.	1978, 1997	Waiwaka
NZTopo50-BN25 v1-02	2021	Waiwaka

Location of the feature, generic term, [geographic feature type](#)

Waiwaka is a rural locality on State Highway 2 centred approximately 2.5km south of Eketāhuna, Wairarapa. The existing name has no generic term, which is typical and appropriate for a locality name.

[New Zealand Gazetteer](#), associated names, and duplication

[Waiwaka](#) is the unofficial recorded name for the small rural locality. Southeast of the locality, old survey plans name Wiwaka Creek and 'Wi Waka Saddle' (see maps and plans above). These names are not recorded in the *Gazetteer*.

There are no associated names and no duplications of Waiwaka or Wi Waka in the *Gazetteer*, other than longer place names such as [Waiwakatere](#) in Napier.

There is a 0.3ha scenic reserve at the southwest of the locality that the Department of Conservation (DOC) records under a working name 'Scenic Reserve – Waiwaka'. No name has been notified in the *New Zealand Gazette*. DOC would be advised if Waiwaka is altered to Wi Waka, to consider making the reserve name official.

Research, history and references

The person

Wiremu Wāka Kahukura (1802[?]-1892)³ aka Wi Waka, Wi Waaka Te Rangiwhakaewa, was a Ngāti Hāmua rangatira with authority and interests across the Wairarapa, based at times at [Rangitūmau](#) and [Te Oreore](#) near Masterton. He was a signatory to several of the original Crown purchases in 1853-54 including the Rangitūmau, Kūhangawariwari and Opaki Blocks north and east of Masterton. A 'Wi Waka Native Reserve'⁴ of 1000 acres was also reserved from sale at [Opaki](#). He was a signatory to the later 1871 Seventy Mile Bush purchase

² <https://collections.archives.govt.nz/en/web/arena/search#/entity/aims-archive/R25272834> – last access 9 July 2025

³ [ACCIDENTS & FATALITIES](#), *Marlborough Express*, Volume XXVIII, Issue 130, 3 June 1892, Page 2

⁴ ML 80

which included the Manawatu Wairarapa No.1 (Eketahuna) Block, where Waiwaka (locality) is.

The signatures on the Crown purchase deeds are 'Wi Waka', 'Wiremu Waka', 'Wi Waka Kahu Kura' each with one [a] for 'Waka', although it is unclear if any were signed personally. The Seventy Mile Bush purchase includes his mark [an x].

There are letters to the Commissioners of Crown Lands and Governor signed Wi Waka or Wiremu Waka⁵. Most historic sources record his name as just 'Wi Waka'.

Other sources including Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā and Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Tāmaki nui-a-Rua Treaty documents^{6 7} show the name as Wī Waaka and Wiremu Waaka. This appears to be correct as a transliteration (see orthography below).

He signed his name with the double [aa] at least sometimes, eg a pānui against trespassing in 1878 is signed 'Wi Waaka' (in type).⁸ After his death, succession notices to Māori land published in Māori newspapers used 'Wi Waaka'.⁹

In the late 1860s Wī Wāka was part of a taua of Wairarapa Māori that joined the Taranaki Māori-settler conflicts. Wī Wāka claimed to have shot the bullet that killed Colonel Hasard at Otapawa¹⁰. Due to off-and-on support for Pai Mārire and the Kingitanga, Wī Wāka was treated with suspicion by early European settlers for years after his return to the Wairarapa.

In 1871 Wī Wāka guided rail surveyor John Rochfort north from Masterton on explorations for the route of the Napier line. Wī Wāka advised of a suitable pass on a Māori track through Forty Mile Bush, although during the survey it could not be found from either the north or south approach. Accordingly, Rochfort was disparaging of Wī Wāka's skills¹¹ and the route proposed by Rochfort in the 1871 rail survey, which was tabled at Parliament, instead went through 'Rochfort Pass'¹² at the south of [Mount Munro](#).

The final route surveyed in 1885 did follow the original Māori track via a 150m tunnel through 'Wi Waka Saddle'. Although higher than 'Rochfort Pass' this was a more direct route. This section of the railway line from Hastwell settlement to Eketāhuna was referred to as the 'Wi Waka Section' and opened on 8 April 1889.

The place

Waiwaka (locality) is named at the location of the 1000-acre Eketahuna Native Reserve, reserved from the 1871 Seventy Mile Bush Crown purchase. Surveys record 'Eketahuna' as the name of a clearing at the west of this block beside Mākākihi River, for which the nearby town was named.¹³ In 1895 Nireaha Tāmaki¹⁴ had restrictions removed from the reserve and sold it to settlers. There

⁵ Letters from Wiremu Waka to McLean. McLean, Donald (Sir), 1820-1877 : Papers. Ref: MS-Papers-0032-0684E-05. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/23123462](#)

⁶ [NGATI KAHUNGUNU KI WAIRARAPA TAMAKI NUI-A-RUA and THE TRUSTEES OF THE NGATI KAHUNGUNU KI WAIRARAPA TAMAKI NUI-A-RUA SETTLEMENT TRUST DEED OF SETTLEMENT OF HISTORICAL CLAIMS](#), 29 October 2021

⁷ [RANGITĀNE O WAIRARAPA AND RANGITĀNE O TAMAKI NUI-Ā-RUA DEED OF SETTLEMENT OF HISTORICAL CLAIMS](#), 6 August 2016

⁸ [Page 159 Advertisements Column 1](#), *Wananga*, Volume 5, Issue 14, 6 April 1878, Page 159

⁹ "[Te Ture Kooti Whenua Maori, 1886](#)" me nga Ture Whakatikatika. *Ko te Kahiti o Niu Tirenī*, Issue 37, 21 August 1890, Page 167

¹⁰ [Colonial Intelligence](#). *Hawke's Bay Times*, Volume 7, Issue 356, 8 March 1866, Page 3

¹¹ [PAPERS RELATING TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF RAILWAYS. \(NORTH ISLAND\). II.—REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE](#). *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1871 Session I, D-06a, pp.36-37

¹² [https://collections.archives.govt.nz/en/web/arena/search#/entity/aims-archive/R25219242](#) - last accessed 9 July 2025

¹³ Statutory Branch Registered Map W85 – Scandinavian Settlement EKETAHUNA (1875)

[https://collections.archives.govt.nz/en/web/arena/search#/entity/aims-archive/R22824280](#)

¹⁴ Angela Ballara and the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography team. 'Nireaha Tāmaki', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published in 1993. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, [https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2n16/nireaha-tamaki](#) (accessed 9 July 2025).

is no suggestion that the name Eketāhuna should be restored or moved back to this location at this time.

The proposer stated that the locality was named Wi Waka in 1871 by '*locals to honour Wi Waka's assistance on the railway survey*'. However, the Scandinavian settlement of 'Mellemskov' (Eketāhuna) wasn't founded until 1873, and no evidence has been found for use of the name in the 1870s.

The earliest identified use of Wi Waka specifically as a place name is 1886 in connection with construction of railway cottages for those working on the 'Wi Waka Section' of the railway. Reference to 'Cottages Contract, Wi Waka Section' appears to turn into 'Contract for Cottages at Wi Waka'.¹⁵

Subsequently there are numerous references to 'Wi Waka', 'Wiwaka', and 'Waiwaka' as a populated place. From 1886-1889 there were hundreds of men working on the railway and the locality was briefly the location of a railway works, boarding house, Wiwaka Post Office (Dec 1886¹⁶- Aug 1888¹⁷), and even a polling site for the 1887 election¹⁸. Wiwaka (and Wiwaka East) appear in New Zealand census population tables in the 1891 and 1896 census but turn into Waiwaka from the 1901 census onwards.¹⁹

In the rest of the 20th century, most references to the locality are for 'Waiwaka', although there are still 'Wiwaka' spellings. There is evidence that Wi Waka has continued in local use. Much of the area is in a single farm which was run for several decades by the Turnor family who branded their wool products, 'Wi Waka'. The Murray-Aynsley family later ran the farm. The 'Wiwaka Station Woolshed' is a listed Category 2 historic place²⁰. When the farm was sold in 2011, it was referred to as 'Wi Waka'²¹ (rather than Waiwaka).

Consultation
with iwi and
others

The proposer wrote to relevant iwi groups but received no response.

The Secretariat also wrote to Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust and Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Tāmaki-a-Rua Settlement Trust.

Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust provided some initial clarification on points, that:

- Waaka is correct, as it is a transliteration of Walker,
- 'Waiwaka' is not an original name – *'The name Waiwaka has no traditional significance, and it is simply a happy accident that the misspelling includes reference to water and canoe.'*

Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust later advised:

'Noting your orthographic advice, I think there are two options:

- *Wi Waaka (ie no macrons). As per my e-mail below, this is how Wi spelt his own name.*
OR
- *Wī Wāka (ie, macron on the 'i' and the first 'a'). This option reflects the orthographic advice and Te Taura Whiri conventions. I don't think this*

¹⁵ [GOVERNMENT LOANS TO LOCAL BODIES](#). Woodville Examiner, Volume 3, Issue 289, 5 October 1886, Page 2

¹⁶ New Zealand Gazette 1886 (63) p.1568

¹⁷ New Zealand Gazette 1888 (44) p.869

¹⁸ New Zealand Gazette 1887 (56) p.1135

¹⁹ StatsNZ Historical Census collection: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/census/previous-censuses/historical-census-collection/> - last accessed 11 July 2025

²⁰ <https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/3970/Wiwaka%20Station%20Woolshed> – last access 16 July 2025

²¹ <https://www.bayleys.co.nz/listings/rural/wairarapa/tararua/84579-state-highway-2-eketahuna-3060076> - last accessed 9 July 2025

would cause offence in our community, and I note that this would reflect a fairly minima[.] change to the current name.

Both would be fine. I have a slight preference for the first option on the basis that this is how Wi spelled his own name.'

The proposer also forwarded correspondence with kaumātua at Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust on 27 August 2025. They endorsed the proposal with a stronger view on correcting the name to 'Wi Waaka' and noted that proposed new artwork at the marae at Pukaha / Mount Bruce south of Eketāhuna will acknowledge the tupuna.

Advice on orthography²²

'Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust has confirmed Wi Waka' should be Wi Waaka or Wī Wāka as a transliteration of Will (William, Wiremu) Walker, a baptismal name. A Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori licensed translator has advised that Wī with the macron is correct for 'Will' and that Waaka or Wāka are acceptable for Walker. They advise Wāka may be preferable in terms of the orthographic guidelines for pre-1950s names, noting that *'personal names should be written with macrons only where we are confident this won't cause offence to the person (or descendants).'*

Relevant section from the [NZGB Act 2008](#)

Under Sections 11(1)(b), (e) and (f), functions of the Board are to:

- examine cases of doubtful spelling of names and determine the spelling to be adopted on official charts or maps
- encourage the use of original Māori names on official charts and maps
- seek advice from Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori on the correct orthography of any Māori name.

[Standard for New Zealand place names](#) criteria

1.1 Acceptable names

- (c) The surname or traditional ancestral Māori name of a person who has been deceased for at least two years, was a notable leader, of good character, and/or contributed to, or had a strong association with the feature, place or area.

Wī Wāka had authority over the area and was a signatory to the Eketahuna Crown purchase. According to the heritage listing for Wiwaka Station Woolshed, he had cultivations and kāinga 'in the area'. The locality name indirectly relates to when he guided John Rochfort through the area in 1871 and/or to the saddle on the traditional Māori trail referred to as 'Wi Waka's Saddle' which the railway line followed in the 1880s. The name includes both a shortened first name/baptismal name as well as 'Waka', a misspelled transliterated surname 'Walker'. His Māori surname or epithet was Kahukura, and he would later take on the ancestral name Te Rangiwhakaewa.

1.5 Orthographic standards

- (b) The correct use of macrons, hyphens, etc on Māori place names is dependent on expert advice from a licensed translator. The orthographic conventions of Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori should be followed. However, advice from relevant hapū or iwi associated with the name will be taken into account.

²² The conventions and rules of how to write a language

Waiwaka is clearly incorrect, with Wī Wāka or Wī Waaka being correct in terms of the orthographic standards. Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust which represent the relevant hapū prefer 'Wī Waaka'.

1.6 Altered names: a name may be altered when:

- it does not follow established long-term local or common use,
- it standardises the orthography

Any alteration should balance the cultural and historical significance of the name against long-term use and the practical need for location identification.

Wī Waka or Wīwaka appears to be the original spelling of the locality name and appears to remain in use locally. However, neither follows standardised orthographic conventions.

Addressing implications and concerns or issues for emergency services

The Suburbs and Localities dataset used for addressing and by emergency services includes Waiwaka as an additional name/alias against the main Eketāhuna 'addressable' locality. The Secretariat would make a recommendation to Toitū Te Whenua LINZ to update this alias if the name is officially altered. If 'Wī Waka' is in use locally rather than Waiwaka, altering the name could aid emergency service responses.

Media

Media attention is unlikely.

Supporting information

1. Proposal for Wī Waka – 1 July 2025
2. Earlier correspondence with proposer – October 2024
3. Correspondence with Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust – 18 July 2025
4. Correspondence with Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust – 25 August 2025
5. Emails from the proposer with further correspondence with Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust – 2025-08-27