

Launch of Historic Maori Place Names Maps  
Speech by the Minister of Survey and Land Information

**DRAFT**

Tena Koutou

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen

It seems very appropriate for me to be launching these historic Maori maps here in the meeting house Te Hau Ki Turanga in the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongawera.

The Museum has already started its journey to being a bicultural institution. Its care for the cultures of the Treaty of Waitangi partners is underpinned by scholarship and matauranga Maori. I look forward to seeing the Museum's future programmes which will feature the special relationship between the Treaty Partners, as well as the contributions of other races and cultures that are part of New Zealand's identity.

The New Zealand Geographic Board can be proud of these maps, Te Ika a Maui and Te Wai Pounamu. Since 1946 the Board has had a statutory duty to record original Maori place names and to correct their spelling. This work can be seen in their important 1990 books, 'A Maori Oral History Atlas' and 'Understanding Maori Place Names'. The Board's publications are an essential part of helping restore the meaning and the origin of Maori place names.

Here, in Wellington for example, the place we fondly refer to as Ngauranga Gorge is really Nga Uranga which means a Landing Place for Canoes. Nga Uranga was also one of the many pa sites which once covered the area of Wellington city.

With these 1840 maps the Board has made a pre European view of our country accessible to all New Zealanders. There are place names which speak of journeys and

of significant events and people in Maori history. Te Whanganui a Tara, the Great Harbour of Tara, was named for the chief Tara in the 14th Century. The name reminds us that Wellington harbour has a history stretching back well before this port with its container ships and cranes.

The maps show the different types of settlement in 1840, the many pa and kainga, or villages. I was very interested to see the cluster of place names in remote areas like the bottom of Fiordland and the southern most part of Stewart Island.

As Minister of Conservation, I took a special note of what the maps told me about the vegetation cover. In 1840 we had a North Island which was almost two thirds forest. The South was nearly half forest, and half lowland tussock. Large areas of swamp featured in places such as the Waikato, Southern Wairarapa, Kaitaia and Canterbury. Today these sites are farmland or areas of urban settlement.

The water features show how our rivers and lakes looked before hydro dams and before events like the Napier earthquake and the Tarawera eruption.

To study these maps is to remind ourselves that New Zealand has a cultural history stretching back around 1000 years to the early explorer Kupe.

Many people and organisations must be thanked for their work in putting together the maps. Many of the place names started from work done by Sir Apirana Ngata and other scholars, for a 1941 Centennial Atlas that was never published.

Present day Geographic Board staff like secretary Penelope Lawrence and researcher Te Aue Davis have worked tirelessly to check these original names and to uncover new ones.

Of course, one of the major sources of information about place names and their meanings are the kaumatua throughout New Zealand. We can be grateful that they remember the stories and place names connected with their areas and have contributed their oral history to the maps.

From the Geographic Board, Sir Tipene O'Regan of Canterbury University and Professor Wharehuia Milroy and Dr Evelyn Stokes of Waikato University, made major contributions to ensuring the accuracy of the names.

In Maori Language Year it is pleasing to see a publication which takes such care with macrons and with the division of Maori words. Organisations like the Maori Language Commission and staff from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography helped with the quality of the language represented.

Cliff Whiting, Director of Maori and Bicultural Development at the Museum was responsible for the wonderful illustrations of taniwha around the maps.

Of course, this project would not have been possible without generous sponsorship. The Department of Survey and Land Information contributed the time and expertise of its cartographic team led by Phil Dickson. The Historic Places Trust, Te Puni Kokiri, GP Print and the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board also helped make the maps possible.

The maps link both the 1993 Year for Indigenous People and Maori Language Year. I am delighted to hear that the Ministry of Education through Learning Media will be distributing a set of the maps free to every school in New Zealand. These maps are a treasure that will help our young people truly understand the country in which they live.