

Fast Facts

TE ARAWA

Myths and Legends

(suitable for pre/post visit)



ROTORUA
museum

Te Whare Taonga o Te Arawa
ART | CULTURE | HERITAGE

Hatupatu rāua ko Kurungaituku

Hatupatu and the Birdwoman



This matapihi (window) carved from totara depicts Te Arawa's cultural hero Hatupatu fleeing from Kurungaituku (an evil bird-woman).

Many years ago it was custom for some tribes to go into the forests and hunt for birds. A young warrior by the name of Hatu Patu loved to hunt birds too. However, one of his hunting trips turned into an adventure he would never forget. One day while hunting for Kereru deep in the forest Hatu Patu came across the feared bird woman,

“Kurungaituku.” Hearing Hatu Patu trying to sneak away Kurungaituku began her chase. Hatu Patu feared for his life and ran as fast as he could. As he ran through the bush Kurungaituku got closer and closer.

He dashed into a clearing but found his path blocked by a huge rock with no where to run Hatu Patu beat on the rock, “Open up, open up.” The rock split open and he fell inside. As it shut behind him he heard Kurungaituku's screech. He could hear her thumping and clawing at the rock. He lay still and waited. Hours passed.

There was silence around the rock when Hatu Patu decided to make a dash for home. "Open rock," he called then stepped outside. There was no sign of Kurungaituku. He began to run towards home. Suddenly he heard the beating wings and screech of the bird woman.

Hatu Patu raced towards the hot pools of Whakarewarewa. He ran between scorching hot pools of mud and water, trying to lose Kurungaituku.

Hatu Patu leapt over a geyser just as it began to rise. Kurungaituku leapt too.

The geyser caught Kurungaituku and she fell into a scorching pool of boiling water.

Kurungaituku the feared Bird Woman had been destroyed. Hatu Patu returned to his village and became an honoured warrior.

Fortunately Hatupatu escapes the wrath of Kurungaituku.

This story has been carefully maintained by oratory and in this instance recorded through carving.

The Tohunga Whakairo (mastercarver) who created the carvings of Hatupatu and Kurungaituku in the museum was Tene Waitere of Ngāti Tarāwhai.

Unable to read or write, Tene was trained by the great carver Wero Taroi, and in 1906, he helped with the completion of Nuku-te-Apiapi at Whakarewarewa.



Tara Te Awatapu and Wero Taroi originally started the building of Nuku-te-APIAPI in 1873 at Matatā, home of Ngāti Rangitihi. Unfortunately the Chief of Ngāti Rangitihi, Aramakaraka, died and misfortune was associated with the incomplete carvings.



But in 1900 the carvings were resurrected and finished by a new generation of Te Arawa's Ngāti Tarāwhai carvers including Tene, Neke Kapua and Anaha Te Rāhui.

Nuku-te-APIAPI has been dismantled and rests here in Te Whare Taonga o Te Arawa. The maihi (bargeboards) have been re-utilised on the ancestral house at Mourea called Te Tākinga.

Though these great carvers have passed on they still speak to us today through works such as this carving of Kurungaituku.



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