

Ihenga the Name Giver



Ihenga was a famous chief. His grandfather was Tamatekapua the captain of the Te Arawa waka. He was an explorer who loved discovering new places.

Ihenga lived at Maketu on the coast with his uncle Kahumatamoemoe. Maketu is where the Arawa waka landed.

Ihenga had two dogs called Ōhau and Potakatawhiti. One warm sunny morning Ihenga wanted to hunt kiwi which were plentiful in the bush. He packed his kete and took his dogs with him together they made their way to a river. The river was full of fat eels, Ihenga caught many eels and feasted. Ihenga named this river Kaituna, the chiefly river treasured by the people of Maketu.

The next day they crossed swamps and hills until they came to a place where kiwis were found. Many birds were caught. Potakatawhiti went on alone chasing one of the kiwi through the dense forest. The kiwi was scared and ran downhill until it came to the shore of a lake where it tried to escape by running into the water. The dog pounced on it and killed it then began to drink the fresh water at the same time gulping mouthfuls of inanga (whitebait) that were also swimming in the shallow water. When Potakatawhiti had finished drinking he picked up the dead kiwi to take back to his master.

Ihenga watched his dog return and saw him roll on the ground his puku (stomach) not agreeing with him. He vomited the fish up and Ihenga could clearly see that he must have found a lake.

He climbed to the top of the nearest hill. He could see the lake shining in the rays of the setting sun.

It looked rather small. Ihenga could only see a small part of the lake. He named it Te Rotoiti (the small lake). Arriving at the lake edge Ihenga saw shoals of Inanga jumping close to shore. He wove a basic net from ferns and was able to catch many. Some he ate and others he took back. He journeyed on with his dogs and came across a small river.

Ōhau was in such a hurry to swim in the river he was caught and drowned in a swift dangerous whirlpool. Ihenga named this small river Ōhau in remembrance of his kuri (dog). Ōhau the river of Ngati Pikiao.

When he eventually arrived back in a Maketu Ihenga said to his Uncle Kahumatamoemoe. "These are the fish caught in a lake far over the hills. It belongs to me and my children forever and I have named it Te roto iti kite a Ihenga (The little lake seen by Ihenga)



Optional Extra Information:

Some time later Ihenga had a son of his own and his uncle said to him you have found one little lake The time has come for you to go out far over the land and claim land for your own children. Taking four men with him Ihenga set off to claim land for his children and all of Te Arawa.

He journeyed to a steep cliff and saw smoke in the distance. He thought that others had found the area before him. Little did he know that the 'smoke' was actually steam from the ngāwhā (hot pools). They came to a waterfall and then another lake.

This lake he named Rotorua nui a kahu matamoemoe (second and big lake of kahu) after his uncle. The island in the lake he called Te Motutapu a Tinirau (the sacred island of Tinirau). Later this was known as Mokoia Island. Which it is still called today.

Tinirau translates to the guardian of fish.

The lake and area is sometimes referred to as Te Roto-whaiti-i-kite-ai-a-Ihenga-i-Ariki-ai-a-Kahumatamomoe

