

Declaration Honoring Waitangi Treaty Grounds as a Ngāti Ruawāhia Heritage Site

With our shared Polynesian heritage of over two thousand years and more than forty years of renewed voyaging and traditional wayfinding, Ngāti Ruawāhia, the Sixth Tribe of Te Tai Tokerau, and its cultural-educational network, the 'Aha Moananuiākea Pacific Consortium (Kamehameha Schools, Polynesian Voyaging Society, Bishop Museum, University of Hawai'i) seek to recognize and honor the Waitangi Trust Board and the elders, leaders, and communities it serves by designating the Waitangi Treaty Grounds as a Ngāti Ruawāhia Heritage Site.

Whereas:

- In December 1985, on the Voyage of Rediscovery, the Hawaiian voyaging canoe Hōkūle'a was escorted by Ngātokitatawhaorua as it made historic landfall at Waitangi. The extended family of the Polynesian Voyaging Society and Kamehameha Schools was warmly received with unprecedented ceremony, celebration, and hospitality at Tii Marae.
- In front of the whare nui, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Sir James Henare declared that Hōkūle'a was living proof of the maritime ingenuity of our tīpuna, and that the historical arrival by voyaging canoe represented "te iwi tuaono o Te Tai Tokerau." He charged Māori to build their own waka hourua and sail with pride and promise across Moananuiakīwā. This task was courageously accepted and fulfilled by Sir Hekenukumai Ngaiwi Busby, thus changing the course of Pacific history forever.
- In the whare kai, Ngā Ngakau Aroha, then-president of the Polynesian Voyaging Society and Kamehameha Schools trustee Myron "Pinky" Thompson had the vision to create a cultural center in Hawai'i after witnessing the rich cultural expressions of Māori youth. Some 27 years later in 2012, the Ka'iwakīloumoku Hawaiian Cultural Center opened its doors at Kamehameha Schools Kapālama.
- In February 1990, under the name Ngāti Ruawāhia (meaning "tribe of Hōkūle'a, or the star Arcturus"), the Hawaiian tribe returned as special guests at the 150th Anniversary of the Signing of the Waitangi Treaty. A stone that was brought on the 1985 voyage was enshrined with bronze plaques in the rock wall at Te Tii Marae.
- In March 1992, Ngāti Ruawāhia erected its poupou Māui-pāmamao alongside Te Tai Tokerau tribal ancestors as the first physical manifestation of the Hawaiian tribe. Over the two succeeding decades, Kamehameha Schools would maintain the rich Ngāti Ruawāhia heritage through periodic pilgrimages to Waitangi and Aurere.
- In November of 2014, after almost 30 years, Hōkūle'a returned to Waitangi, along with its companion canoe Hikianalia, as part of the Mālama Honua Worldwide Voyage. Ngāti Ruawāhia was warmly received by a new generation of the Waitangi community.
- In May 2018, Sir Hector led a special visit to Te Tii Marae to recount our shared past and affirm our kinship for a vibrant future. Marae leaders presented Ngāti Ruawāhia with the United Tribes Flag, and Hawaiian 'awa was served to consecrate our renewed relationship as an extended family.
- In February 2019, Ngāti Ruawāhia was humbled to sit in a place of honor at the Knighthood Investiture of Sir Hekenukumai Ngaiwi Busby at Te Whare Runanga, Waitangi Treaty Grounds.

Committed to the vibrancy of our respective Polynesian cultures and languages, and with a keen sense of responsibility for the care of our Pacific global environment, it is with honor that we, Ngāti Ruawāhia, and our cultural educational network, 'Aha Moananuiākea, lift up with honor and distinction the Waitangi Treaty Grounds as a Ngāti Ruawāhia Heritage Site. December 9, 2019, Paihia, Aotearoa.