

NEW ZEALAND SUBMISSION PREPARED BY MANATŪ TONGA – MINISTRY FOR CULTURE AND HERITAGE TO THE UNITED NATIONS EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES REGARDING THE REPATRIATION OF CEREMONIAL OBJECTS AND HUMAN REMAINS - 15 APRIL 2020

Background

The New Zealand Government supports the return of Māori and Moriori ancestral human remains to their source communities. Māori (mainland New Zealand) and Moriori (the Chatham Islands/Rekohu) are the indigenous peoples of New Zealand.

The return of ancestral remains including kōiwi tangata (Māori skeletal remains), kōimi tangata (Moriori skeletal remains) and toi moko (tattooed mummified heads of Māori and Moriori origin) from overseas institutions is a significant issue for Māori and Moriori. From 1769 to the 1970s Māori and Moriori ancestral remains were treated as tradable commodities, curiosities, and objects of scientific interest.

For Māori and Moriori communities the connection between the past and present is at the forefront of their collective memory and the ancestors are honoured by bringing them home and offering them a resting place where their wairua (spirit) may rest.

The New Zealand Government's Repatriation Policy

In May 2003, the New Zealand Government approved a repatriation policy which is governed by six key principles:

- the New Zealand Government role is mainly one of facilitation: it does not claim ownership of kōiwi/kōimi;
- repatriation from overseas institutions and individuals is by mutual agreement only;
- the repatriation policy does not cover Māori or Moriori remains in war graves maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, or other similar institutions;
- no payment for kōiwi/kōimi will be made to overseas institutions;
- kōiwi/kōimi must be identified as originating from New Zealand; and
- Māori and Moriori are to be involved in the repatriation of kōiwi/kōimi, and to determine the final resting place, where possible.

At the same time, the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) was authorised to be the Crown's agent to undertake repatriation work. Te Papa is funded by the New Zealand Government to carry out this work on its behalf at NZ\$500,000 per annum.

Te Papa's Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme - Te Kaupapa Whakahokinga mai a Karanga Aotearoa

As part of the Karanga Aotearoa Programme (Karanga Aotearoa), Te Papa has established a Kōiwi/Kōimi policy to ensure that repatriations are undertaken in a culturally appropriate manner. The policy provides a comprehensive framework for the management and care of kōiwi/kōimi in Te Papa's guardianship, and provides guidance for Te Papa.

The Karanga Aotearoa team administers the policy on behalf of the New Zealand Government and liaises closely with Māori and Moriori both during and after the international negotiation process. Karanga Aotearoa works with the support and expert advice of the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Advisory Panel (the Panel) to locate, identify, negotiate and physically return ancestral remains to New Zealand.

The Panel provides guidance on overcoming barriers to repatriation, as well as Māori protocols and traditional practices, tribal history, and te reo Māori (Māori language). It is made up of respected Māori and Moriori representatives with expert knowledge in international issues of significance to indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge.

Te Papa enters into repatriation agreements on a regular basis and is increasingly approached by international institutions offering to return kōiwi/kōimi tangata and, on occasion, ceremonial objects associated with them.

Toi moko and kōiwi/kōimi are returned from overseas institutions to Te Papa on an interim basis only. Neither toi moko nor kōiwi/kōimi tangata are accessioned as part of Te Papa's collections and Te Papa has a policy prohibiting their exhibition. Rather, kōiwi/kōimi tangata remain in Te Papa's custody pending return to their attributed place of origin. Māori and Moriori believe that through this ultimate return to their domestic homelands the dead and their living descendants will retrieve their dignity through resting with their whānau (family) and community of origin.

Since 1 July 2003, Te Papa has repatriated 612 Māori and Moriori ancestral remains from over 70 international institutions in Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Te Papa estimates that there are over 500 ancestral human remains still awaiting their homecoming.

Further work is underway to return more Māori and Moriori ancestors to their places of origin as more ancestors return from overseas. All arrangements for domestic repatriations are led by iwi (tribe). Iwi determine the place, time and details for the repatriation and burial or funerary rites involved.

In January 2018 Karanga Aotearoa, in partnership with both Canterbury Museum and Otago Museum, returned two ancestral skulls to the care of the Rapa Nui people. In the same year Karanga Aotearoa returned an ancestral skull to the Lummi Nation in Washington State, USA. All these international indigenous ancestral remains came into their respective museums' collections from the 1930s.

Working in partnership with UNESCO and the FBI, Karanga Aotearoa facilitated the return of two toki (adze) recovered by the FBI in 2014. These taonga (treasures) returned from the USA to New Zealand in 2019.

Ngākahu National Repatriation Project – Te Korowai o te Aroha mō ngā Kōiwi Tūpuna

Ngākahu is a two-year New Zealand Government funded project, established in 2019, to provide support for New Zealand Museums, as well as iwi and hapū (sub-tribes), involved in the return of ancestral human remains held by New Zealand Museums.

Te Papa is managing this project which includes the following elements:

- the development of best practice guidelines and other resources for museums
- museum workshops and wānanga (intensive subject-based workshops)
- other support to enable the physical return of ancestral remains to their communities of origin and assisting museums to build strong relations with Māori and Moriori.