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English

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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names****2025 session**

New York, 28 April – 2 May 2025

Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda \*

**Culture, heritage and language recognition: geographical names  
as culture, heritage and identity****Tangata Whenua Place Names maps of New Zealand –  
challenges and lessons learned**

Submitted by New Zealand \*\*

**Summary:**

At the 2023 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, New Zealand reported on two new map publications, *Tangata Whenua Place Names – Te Ika-a-Māui* and *Tangata Whenua Place Names – Te Waipounamu*.<sup>1</sup> Each map shows original/traditional/ancestral Māori geographical names. In the report, the project, design and consultation undertaken were explained.

The maps were launched in July 2023 and distributed to every iwi<sup>1</sup> and marae<sup>2</sup>, school, government agency, and council. Responses were generally positive and congratulatory. However, consultation fell short for a handful of Māori geographical names, with feedback revealing errors. These have been resolved in the digital maps. Remediation for the printed maps involved distributing a "revision sheet" to the distribution list, and including the revision sheet with every map subsequently purchased from the distribution warehouse, which will continue until the next print run of the maps fixes the errors.

Cartographic mapping that requires amendments sometimes use a revision sheet as a practical and cost-effective solution. Sometimes stickers are used. While best efforts are made to ensure that content is correct, as soon as a map is printed it becomes obsolete and out of date because of the ever-changing nature of spatial information in the real world.

The report provides a brief recap of the background in producing the maps and the consultation undertaken. It then focuses on the feedback, impact and resolution for incorrectly depicted Māori geographical names. The report addresses a deep concern for the potential loss of other traditional and historical names and narratives. The challenges and lessons learned from the project will offer understanding and insights.

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\* GEGN.2/2025/1

\*\* The full report was prepared by Wendy Shaw, Secretary for the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa

<sup>1</sup> Tangata whenua means "people of the place". See GEGN.2/2023/34/CRP.34, available at [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/3rd\\_session\\_2023/documents/GEGN.2\\_2023\\_34\\_CRP34.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/3rd_session_2023/documents/GEGN.2_2023_34_CRP34.pdf)

<sup>1</sup> Iwi refers to a large tribal group

<sup>2</sup> Marae are places where Māori tribal groups communally gather for formal events and to learn and observe traditional protocols and practices.



### Printing, launch and distribution

In late June 2023, 7,000 each of the two Tangata Whenua Place Names maps were printed, and an additional 1,000 of the Te Waipounamu maps for Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (the tribe covering most of the South Island).

These second edition maps of original Māori (and Moriori) geographical names ‘prior to European Settlement’ set out to build on the maps published by the Board in 1995 with updated orthography, new artwork, corrections, and adding a further ~600 names, resulting in 1,750 geographical names in total.

On 3 July 2023 the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa (the Board), launched the maps at an event in the Grand Hall of Parliament. The Minister for Land Information, Board members, contributors to the maps, and other dignitaries attended:

Since the launch ~4,000 pairs of maps were distributed. Also, Māori versions of the indexes on the back of the maps were compiled and published digitally. The original Māori geographical names and their kōrero (story) have been published in the [New Zealand Gazetteer](#).

Due to demand, the Ministry of Education requested an additional print run of 3,000 sets for schools (kura). Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu also requested another print run of 2,000 of the Te Waipounamu maps.

A video on the maps project was presented to the Australian naming jurisdictions in October 2023<sup>3</sup>. Some Australian jurisdictions advised they may consider a similar initiative for mapping original First Nations geographical names.

### Media and outreach

There was significant media attention on the maps with numerous articles and interviews:

- [Māori and Moriori place names maps launched](#), RNZ
- [NZ Geographic Board launches Māori and Moriori place names maps](#), NZ Herald
- [Hundreds of original tangata whenua place names added to new Aotearoa maps](#)

<sup>3</sup> [https://apc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2F\\_Ny2SiN\\_-Jw&data=05%7C01%7Cwshaw%40linz.govt.nz%7Cebfefdf4245e46a4286e08dbc91c526e%7C2134e9617c384c34a22b10da5466b725%7C0%7C0%7C638324895715502653%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjojV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ikl1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=0QmRVQCahU33poE68KNh%2BeNOFmAyPXXKpDGpFd2Xrr%2Fw%3D&reserved=0](https://apc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2F_Ny2SiN_-Jw&data=05%7C01%7Cwshaw%40linz.govt.nz%7Cebfefdf4245e46a4286e08dbc91c526e%7C2134e9617c384c34a22b10da5466b725%7C0%7C0%7C638324895715502653%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjojV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ikl1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=0QmRVQCahU33poE68KNh%2BeNOFmAyPXXKpDGpFd2Xrr%2Fw%3D&reserved=0)

- [NZ Geographic Board releases new 'indigenised' maps of Aotearoa](#)
- [Secretary for Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa New Zealand Geographic Board](#)
- Secretary was also interviewed by Radio NZ and Radio Waatea on 7 July 2023
- The Ministry of Education helped promote the maps through its channels
- Likewise, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (the Māori Language Commission) has helped promote the maps linking back to the Radio NZ article on its website and through its social media
- On 17 July 2023 the Secretary gave a presentation on the maps at the Chief Executive's 'Kōrerorero' session for all Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand staff.
- TVNZ Breakfast interviewed the Chairperson of the Board on 6 July 2023:



### Positive feedback

Following the widespread distribution, congratulations have been received from friends of the Board and the cartographic community. Overall, the launch of the maps has been a great success giving effect to Board's statutory functions to collect and encourage the use of original Māori names on official maps.

More than a dozen schools have written directly to the Board stating they are a great resource, and to express their thanks, for example, from Central School in New Plymouth:

*'Kia ora koutou e te whānau kaiwhakamahere!  
Central School New Plymouth has just received the re-release of the amazing place names maps and were after more please, or at least another 4 copies, for our senior school.  
The QR code with the place names is a brilliant addition, are there any digital copies of the maps, that we can put on our smartboards/screens with the ability to zoom in?  
Thanks heaps for all your mahi, this resource is he taonga tuku iho and has sparked so much interest for our tauira Māori,  
Ngā tauwhirotanga o te wā'*

### Digital access

Prior to launching the maps, the Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand website went live with a heading page, digital indexes (in English and Māori), and digital copies of the maps.

These webpages below refer, noting the QR codes on the physical printed maps go to the online index pages:

- [Tangata whenua place names](#)
- [Te Ika-a-Māui tangata whenua place names map](#)
- [Te Ika-a-Māui tangata whenua place names map index](#)
- [Te Waipounamu tangata whenua place names map](#)
- [Te Waipounamu tangata whenua place names map index](#)

## **New Zealand Gazetteer**

816 new entries for original Māori geographical names from the maps were published in the *Gazetteer* as unofficial collected names by mid-August 2023. Half of the entries were against an existing name, and the other half are new entries (mostly cultural features such as pā (fortified village), kāinga (home), historic sites).

In August 2024 Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand's Data Services team published the map names as a point layer for reuse: <https://data.linz.govt.nz/layer/117263-tangata-whenua-place-names/>.

## **Errors and updates**

Surprisingly, there has been little feedback on potential errors, omissions, or disagreements on the geographical names. But some have been identified post-publication. These have been fully documented for a future limited revision when physical print stocks are exhausted. They have been recorded on a separate revision sheet which is published on the website and has been sent out with all printed maps requested from May 2024.

Errors have been corrected in the digital versions on the website with a notice listing and headed 'Corrections'.

The Board is maintaining a running spreadsheet of all issues for future editions of each of the printed maps and potential immediate updates to the digital products (*Gazetteer*, back-of-map indexes, downloadable maps). Digital products will be updated about every two years (this cycle is cost-effective). It is unknown when the printed maps will be sold out, but new/limited print runs (if any) will not occur until then.

## **Official information requests**

Two official information requests have been received to date, one asking for the total cost to produce the maps which was \$95,576.19 excluding GST, and excluding Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand staff costs, and excluding distribution costs to schools.

The other was a more substantial request for all information relating to consultation on the project. The requestors were deeply upset at not having been consulted directly about the geographical names from their area. The main offending name was removed from the digital products.

## **Lessons**

The printed maps are a highly desirable product. A small number of errors were made on the maps. Despite best efforts and in good faith to get the geographical names right, it is a cartographic reality that map products do get published with errors and anomalies. Digital updates are very quick, efficient and cost effective, so it's possible that the future of printed maps may not

be pursued. For now, New Zealand is sharing with Member States a few printed sets of the maps, with the revision sheet.

For any Member States wanting to undertake a similar project themselves, New Zealand can share project details and processes, focusing on efficiencies and how to ensure comprehensive consultation/engagement.

### **Points for discussion**

The Group of Experts is invited to:

- (1) Take note of the completion of New Zealand's second editions of its Tangata Whenua Place Names maps.
- (2) Take note that the maps were well received overall but that one inaccurate geographical name, in particular, highlights how sensitive and passionate Māori are about place names.
- (3) Take note of the remedial steps taken by New Zealand to deal with the errors.
- (4) Seek advice on the project and process from New Zealand if other Member States are planning to produce similar maps.