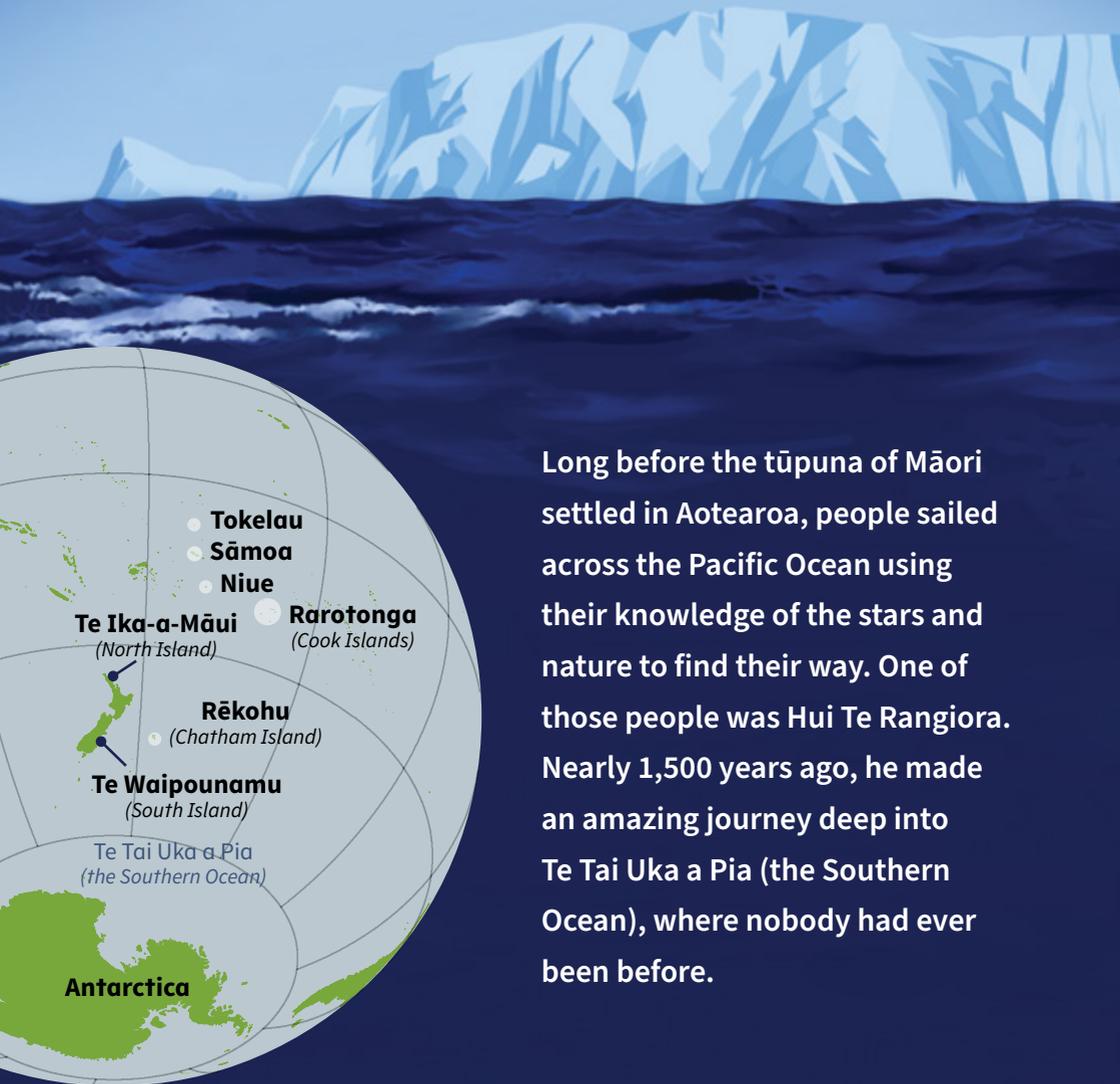


Hui Te Rangiora: The Navigator

BY SANDY MORRISON



Long before the tūpuna of Māori settled in Aotearoa, people sailed across the Pacific Ocean using their knowledge of the stars and nature to find their way. One of those people was Hui Te Rangiora. Nearly 1,500 years ago, he made an amazing journey deep into Te Tai Uka a Pia (the Southern Ocean), where nobody had ever been before.

Hui Te Rangiora was a high-born rangatira and a great explorer. Around the year 650 AD, he and his crew set sail from Rarotonga for Aotearoa. In those days, it was very natural for Polynesian navigators to sail across the ocean. They were at home in that environment and felt connected to the universe, the ocean, and the atua. They watched carefully so that they were prepared for any changes in the weather or the sea. They also followed the movement of the sun, stars, and moon and watched the ocean tides, sea creatures, and birds to work out where they were.



Hui Te Rangiora followed a route that went from Rarotonga to the tip of the East Coast of Aotearoa. Many others had made the voyage successfully before him. But on this particular journey, Hui Te Rangiora and his crew sailed past the tip of the East Coast and found themselves going down the coast of Aotearoa. After a while, Hui Te Rangiora couldn't see any land at all. It was getting colder and colder. Then he saw mountains of ice in the water. He didn't know where he was or how far south he'd gone.

Later, Hui Te Rangiora described what he had seen. He said he'd been to a foggy, misty, and dark place not seen by the sun. There were mountainous waves. He saw an animal with tusks that dived deep under the water and "rocks that grow out of the sea whose summits pierce the skies". He also described seeing a woman with hair that waved about in the water and on the surface of the sea. (He might have been describing bull kelp seaweed.)

He called this area he sailed through Te Tai Uka a Pia. (Tai means the tides or the sea, uka is ice, and pia is arrowroot.) Some people translate this as "the frozen sea of arrowroot". Other people think it means "the sea covered with foam, like arrowroot" or the "foaming ocean". (Arrowroot is a vegetable that looks white when it's scraped – just like snow or foam.)

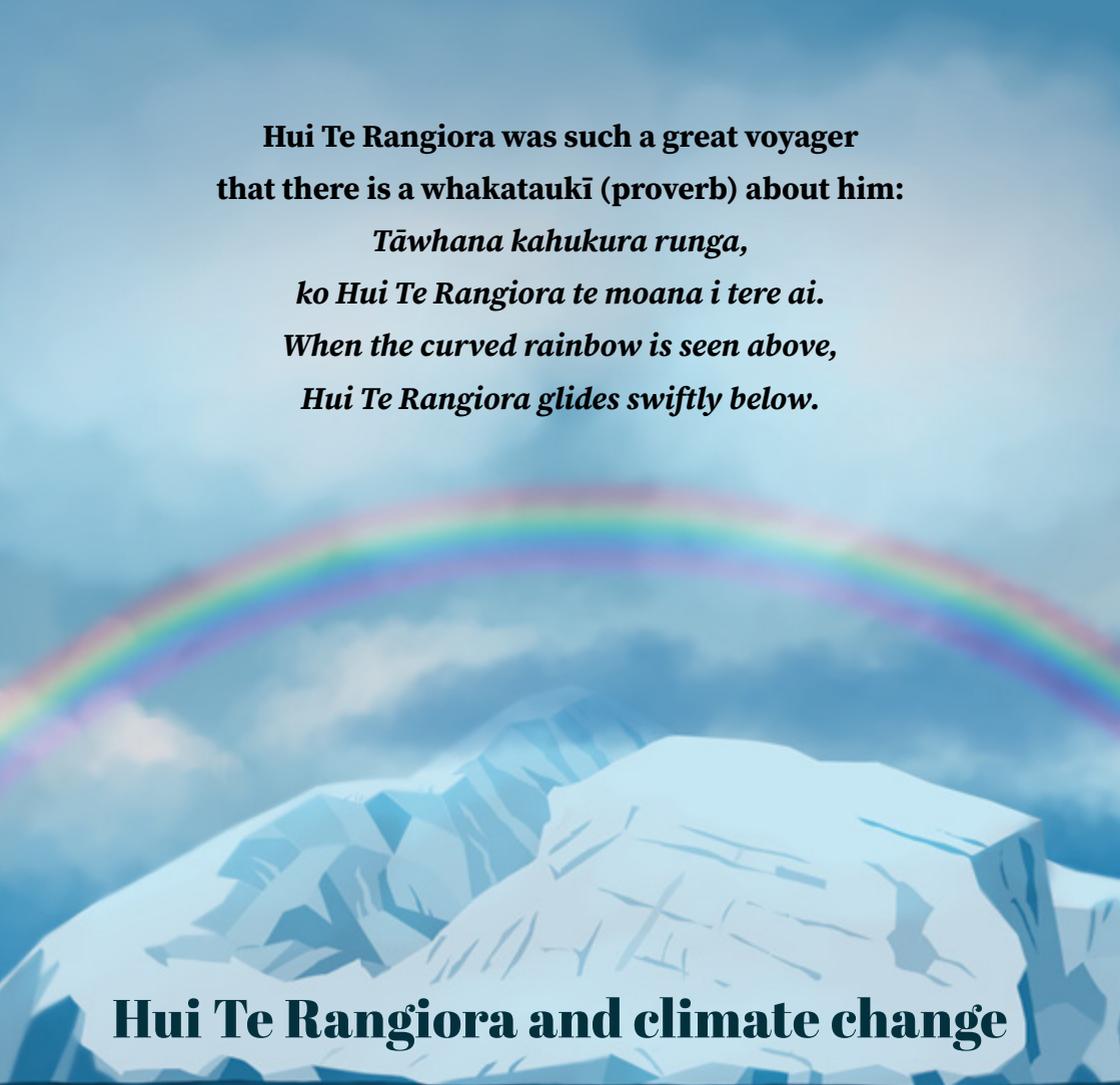


Then, the currents changed and Hui Te Rangiora started sailing north again, along the west coast of Te Waipounamu. When he reached Te Tau Ihu o te Waka-a-Māui (the top of the South Island), he stopped and rested because it had been a very tiring journey. He drank the water from Riuwaka awa to refresh himself. At the mouth of the river, there is an island named after him. At high tide, Motu Hui Te Rangiora is only connected to the mainland by a small strip of beach.

Today, Hui Te Rangiora is on the waharoa at Te Puna o Riuwaka, where the Riuwaka river emerges from underground. He rested and bathed in these ancient waters to restore his health. He is also on the tekoteko of Te Āwhina marae. He is shown looking out, always searching for new lands. These carvings remind us of Hui Te Rangiora, his journey, and where he stopped at Te Tau Ihu o te Waka-a-Māui.

Some of the people from Te Tau Ihu say that Hui Te Rangiora sailed to Antarctica. Others say that he only went some way into the Southern Ocean. We can't be sure, but what is important is that he is known and honoured as a great navigator who made a remarkable journey into Te Tai Uka a Pia.





**Hui Te Rangiora was such a great voyager
that there is a whakataukī (proverb) about him:**

*Tāwhana kahukura runga,
ko Hui Te Rangiora te moana i tere ai.
When the curved rainbow is seen above,
Hui Te Rangiora glides swiftly below.*

Hui Te Rangiora and climate change

Hui Te Rangiora needed to stay in tune with nature to sail safely across such wide and dangerous oceans. He watched for changes in the environment to help him know what actions to take. Some people say his story should inspire us to deal with the problem of climate change that we face today. By watching the signs in our environment, we can also be ready and take action to meet this challenge.

Hui Te Rangiora: The Navigator

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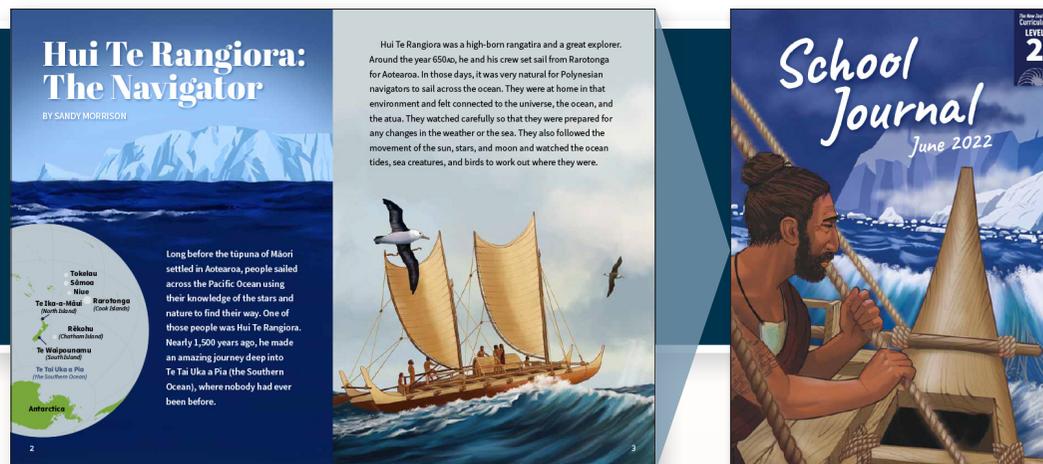
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