



CARVING A BOND BETWEEN NATIONS

News Release

Rotorua, New Zealand – 14 January 2010. Te Puia, New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute has been charged with what is arguably the most significant traditional carving of its time. The iconic institution which is New Zealand's oldest and leading cultural tourism attraction incorporates Te Wānanga Whakairo Rākau (National Carving School). It is here that the 'Te Kākano' project is being undertaken; - a 10 metre high (32.8 ft) Kauri waka maumahara (ceremonial canoe) which is being crafted as a national gift to China. The gift will be presented by the New Zealand Prime Minister, Hon. John Key at Expo 2010 in Shanghai, China. The Expo will run from 01 May to 31 October 2010 which expects to attract 70 million visitors from around the world.

Te Puia chief executive Te Taru White explains that Te Puia was charged with the esteemed task of creating the 10 metre high monument in a collaborative effort with Tourism New Zealand and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage which will culminate in the presentation of the piece to Chinese Officials at the Expo in July. "The engagement of this extraordinary piece encapsulates the spirit of Manaakitanga (hospitality) and koha (gifting), both of which combine to create a lasting bond between the two nations of China and New Zealand" says Te Taru. The project name 'Te Kakano' translates in meaning as 'the original seed' which is significant in the growing of relations and bonds between nations.

Internationally renowned canoe builder and navigator, Hekenukumai Busby first shaped the 3500 year old Kauri (*Agathis australis*) prior to Te Puia taking over its custodianship. The tree, sourced from Kaihu in Northland is 3 metres in diameter and

an older relative of Tāne Mahuta which stands in the Waipoua as New Zealand's most well-known Kauri.

The creation of this gift will be overseen by master carver, James Rickard, who has a legacy spanning four decades at Te Puia and who started his own carving career in the first intake of students at Te Wānanga Whakairo Rākau in 1967. Since then, hundreds of young men have fulfilled their apprenticeships to preserve and protect this ancient and culturally significant art form and held what James describes as the 'unbroken line' of this ancient art form from ancestor Ruatepupuke to today. Over a four month period Te Kākano will be worked on by five fulltime carvers culminating in almost 500 hours of work. The completed carving will be gifted - on behalf of the Nation – by Prime Minister of New Zealand John Key to Chinese officials on 09 July 2010 as part of New Zealand's dedicated National Day at the World Expo in Shanghai.

Note to Editors:

***The Prime Minister John Key and other senior government officials will visit
Te Puia on 18th February to view the 'Te Kakano' project.***

Visitors to Te Puia can view the 'Te Kākano' project
between January and February 2010.

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