

Cultural heritage

Maaori culture is at the heart of our venue

The 15m-tall carved Whatanoa Gateway, which you can see on the concourse above you, commemorates the ancient traditions and landmarks of Waikato Tainui.

It is named Whatanoa in honour of an ancient paa and burial ground that once existed nearby, on the corner of Willoughby Street overlooking Waitawhiriwhiri Gully.

In pre-European times a waharoa (carved entrance) guarded the entry to the upper, tapu (sacred) terraces of a fortified paa. All those entering via the waharoa stepped onto sacred ground, committing themselves in spirit to the ceremonies being performed there.

By passing under the Whatanoa Gateway when you enter our venue, you are showing your support and commitment to your team, sport and province.

Produced by Nga Mana Toopu O Kirikiriroa and unveiled in 2004, the Whatanoa Gateway was the first structure of its kind to be erected at any New Zealand sporting stadium and symbolises the passion, determination and dedication of ancient Maaori warriors and modern-day sports players.

The carving Nga Tapuwae Ki Te Ao Marama (Sacred Footsteps into the World of Light) is located in the player's tunnel which leads onto the field.

This carved entrance represents ancient Maaori deities symbolising the four main winds and the essence of man and woman. The carved figures and patterns denote the journeys and qualities of participants who represent the Waikato province and the nation.



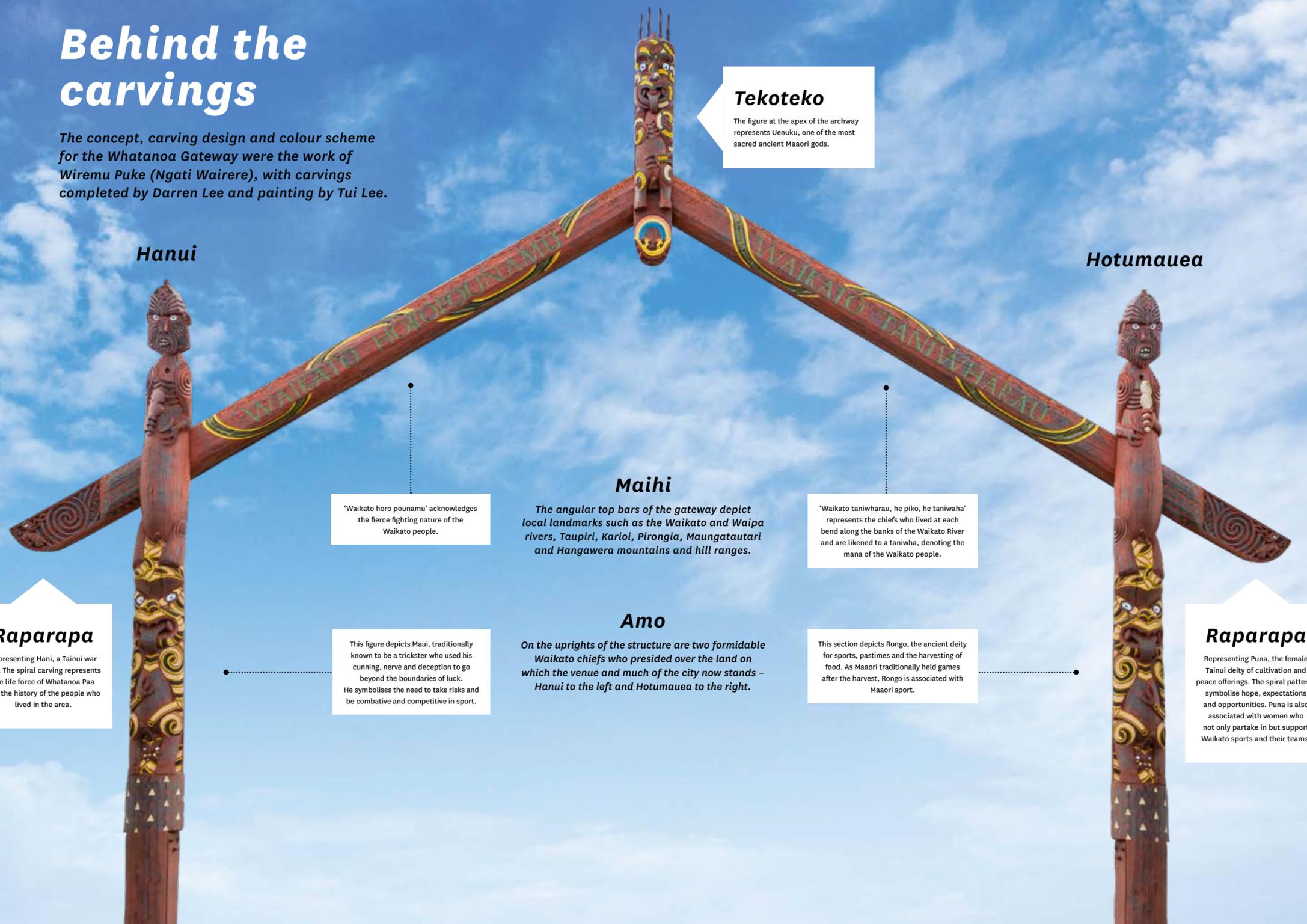
The Whatanoa Gate at the sold-out HSBC New Zealand Sevens 2018



Nga Tapuwae Ki Te Ao Marama (Sacred Footsteps into the World of Light)

Behind the carvings

The concept, carving design and colour scheme for the Whatanoa Gateway were the work of Wiremu Puke (Ngati Wairere), with carvings completed by Darren Lee and painting by Tui Lee.



Tekoteko

The figure at the apex of the archway represents Uenuku, one of the most sacred ancient Maaori gods.

Hanui

'Waikato horo pounamu' acknowledges the fierce fighting nature of the Waikato people.

Maihi

The angular top bars of the gateway depict local landmarks such as the Waikato and Waipa rivers, Taupiri, Karioi, Pirongia, Maungatautari and Hangawera mountains and hill ranges.

'Waikato taniwharau, he piko, he taniwaha' represents the chiefs who lived at each bend along the banks of the Waikato River and are likened to a taniwha, denoting the mana of the Waikato people.

Amo

On the uprights of the structure are two formidable Waikato chiefs who presided over the land on which the venue and much of the city now stands – Hanui to the left and Hotumauea to the right.

This section depicts Rongo, the ancient deity for sports, pastimes and the harvesting of food. As Maaori traditionally held games after the harvest, Rongo is associated with Maaori sport.

Raparapa

Representing Hani, a Tainui war god. The spiral carving represents the life force of Whatanoa Paa and the history of the people who lived in the area.

Raparapa

Representing Puna, the female Tainui deity of cultivation and peace offerings. The spiral patterns symbolise hope, expectations and opportunities. Puna is also associated with women who not only partake in but support Waikato sports and their teams.