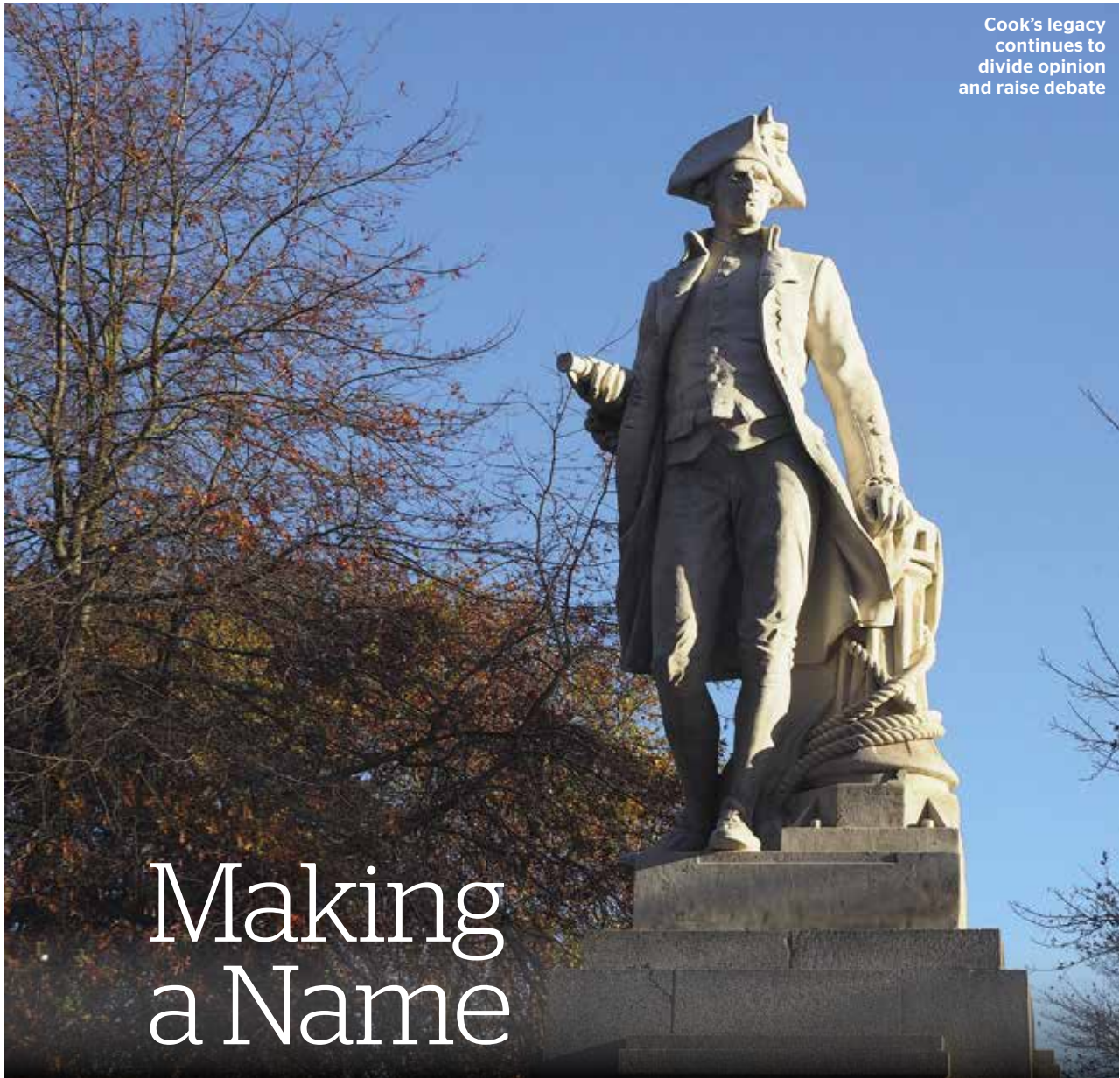


SPOTLIGHT ON...

New Zealand

Cook's legacy continues to divide opinion and raise debate

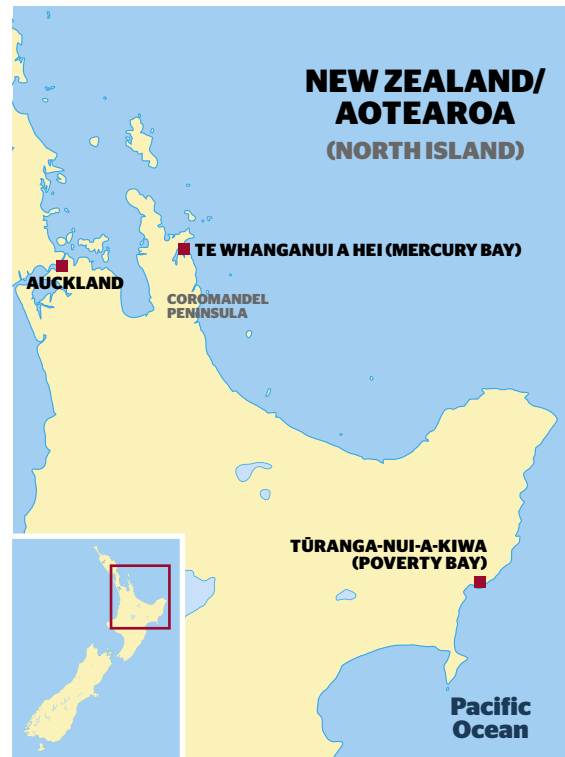


Making a Name

This October marked 250 years since Captain James Cook first set foot in New Zealand, kickstarting a wave of British colonisation on the archipelago. The anniversary has been seen as an opportunity to re-evaluate the country's relationship with a man who, with a strike of his pen, defined the way many New Zealanders see themselves today

by Chris Fitch

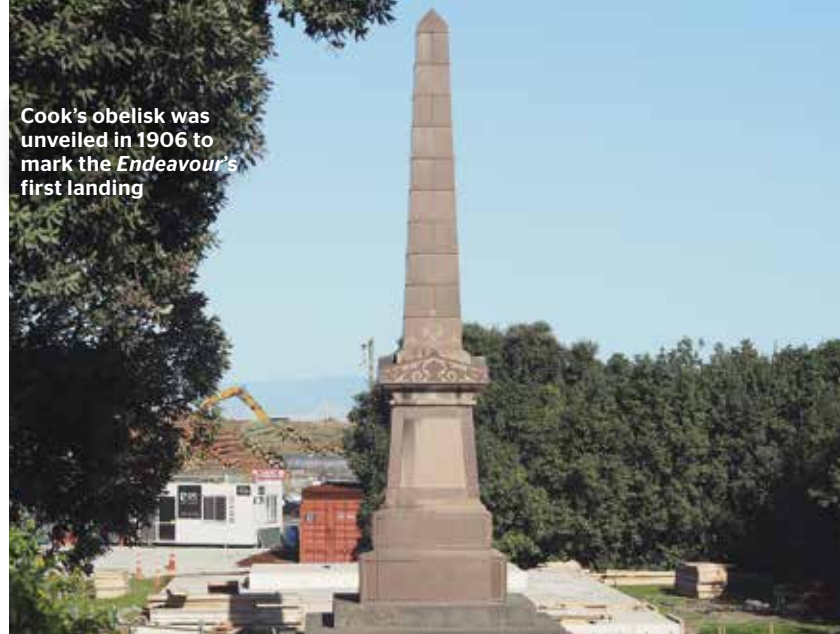
SPOTLIGHT ON...
NEW ZEALAND



- **Population:** 4,545,627 (2018)
- **Latitude/Longitude:** 36°47'0"S, 175°48'0"E
- **Languages:** English, Te reo Māori, New Zealand Sign Language
- **Land area:** 264,537 sq km
- **Ethnicity:** European (Pākehā) 71 per cent, Māori 14 per cent, Asian 11 per cent
- **Religion:** Christianity 44 per cent, Hindu 2 per cent, Buddhist 1 per cent, Muslim 1 per cent, None 39 per cent
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 81 years
- **Urban population:** 87 per cent
- **Land use:** Agriculture 43 per cent, Forest 31 per cent, Other 25 per cent
- **GDP per capita:** \$39,000 (US)

W

ith a coastal breeze fluttering through dark hair flecked with grey, Nick Tupara stares out across a nondescript dark sand beach, enclosed within a large semi-circular bay, at the distant horizon. My attention is taken by a large granite obelisk standing just a few hundred metres away, at the foot of a looming headland – a tiny piece of Edwardian Westminster seemingly dropped into provincial New Zealand. It symbolises a noteworthy but highly divisive moment in the topsy-turvy history of these islands.



Cook's obelisk was unveiled in 1906 to mark the *Endeavour's* first landing

Tupara catches my gaze. 'That had been a landing site for 500 years before Cook arrived,' he points out, in reference to the gentle slope running from the obelisk to the water's edge. 'That landing site was created by ancestors centuries before him. We want to talk about those people. We want to tell some of their stories, because his story is already there, with the monument.'

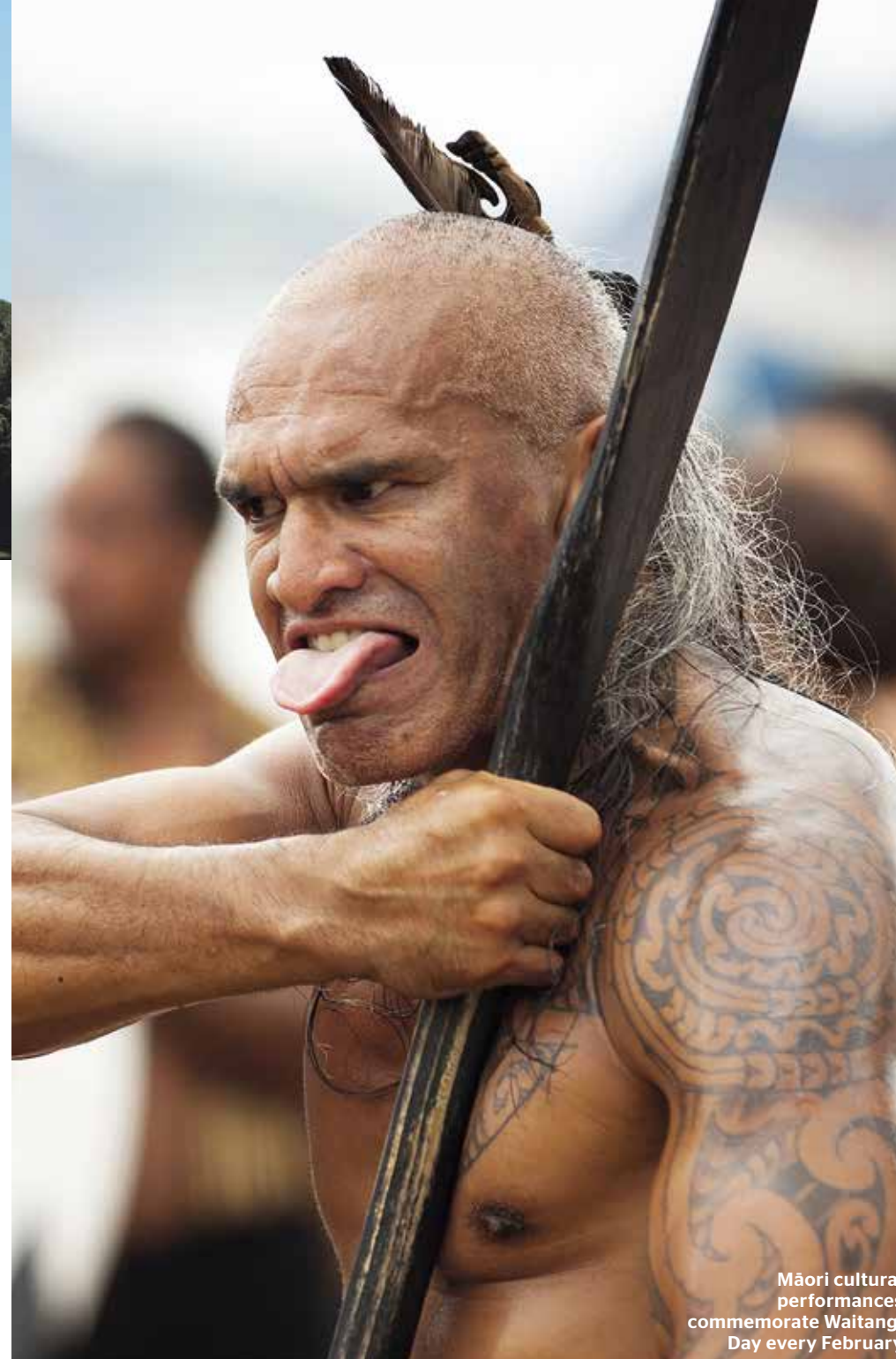
It's almost 250 years to the day since Captain James Cook and the crew of the *Endeavour* navigated their way into this exact bay, the first time they set eyes on this land. The obelisk marks their initial landing place, at the mouth of the river Tūranganui that flows through the modern city of Gisborne (the first city in the world to see the sun, according to local signage).

Between October and December this year, a nationwide event called Tuia 250 is acknowledging and commemorating the two and a half centuries that have elapsed since Cook first arrived in the country now known as New Zealand (or Aotearoa, 'the land of the long white cloud') in the midst of his 1768 to 1771 circumnavigation of the world. Many large-scale events are taking place, including a 'flotilla of Pacific, Māori and European sailing vessels' navigating the coastline, one of which is the *HM Bark Endeavour*, an Australian replica of Cook's ship. Most than that, it shines a spotlight on a man who embodies a complicated history and sense of identity for the country.

FIRST CONTACT

The *Endeavour* spent nearly four months in French Polynesia in the middle of 1769, but finally departed Tahiti in mid-August. On 6 October 1769, 'Young Nick', the 12-year-old cabin boy, cried out from atop the ship's rigging: he had spotted land! Two days later, the ship weighed anchor in the large bay, and Cook assembled a party to go ashore, landing at the foot of the headland.

The first encounter with local Māori (the Ngāti Oneone tribe) was not good. While Cook himself was not present, his men were so intimidated by the challenge the Māori greeted them with that they fired shots, killing leader Te Maro. The next day, accompanied by Tupaia, a Tahitian navigator and translator who had agreed to accompany the journey, Cook and his party faced off against more Ngāti Oneone warriors performing a *haka* across the Tūranganui river. This time, with Tupaia's help, they managed to establish some communication, with Cook being greeted with a *hongi* (the touching of noses) by an elder. But amid



Māori cultural performances commemorate Waitangi Day every February

TIMELINE

- **1000** Estimated first arrival of legendary explorer Kupe
- **1250** Following Kupe's path, the first Polynesian migrants arrive in Aotearoa
- **1642** Dutch explorer Abel Tasman becomes the first European to observe what he called 'Staten Landt' (later renamed Nova Zeelandia)
- **1769** Captain Cook, Tupaia, and the crew of the *Endeavour* make a first landing at Turanganui-a-Kiwa
- **1840** Signing of the controversial Treaty of Waitangi, establishing British sovereignty over New Zealand
- **1865** The territory's capital is moved from Auckland to Wellington, to better enable representatives from the South Island to participate in parliamentary proceedings
- **1893** New Zealand becomes the world's first democracy where women have the right to vote in parliamentary elections
- **1907** Country becomes an independent dominion of the British Empire
- **1915** Britain's First World War Gallipoli campaign ends with the deaths of nearly 2,800 New Zealand soldiers, the basis for the annual NZ-Australian Anzac Day commemorations on 25 April
- **1947** Full sovereignty is obtained by the passing of the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act
- **2016** A nationwide referendum sees the rejection of a new national flag, one without the imperial-era Union Flag

POPULATION

■ Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Māori population of Aotearoa is estimated to have reached around 100,000. As thousands of European settlers began following Cook in the late 18th and early 19th century, the Treaty of Waitangi was signed by over 500 Māori chiefs, in theory formalising the transfer of New Zealand sovereignty to the British Crown. However, mistranslations in the text meant that the Māori believed they were simply granting permission for these new arrivals

to use their land, not to own it. This culminated in a series of wars throughout the 19th century over subsequent land confiscation. The 20th century saw the country gradually gaining independence and breaking away from the formal ties binding it to the UK. Official citizenship became available in the aftermath of World War II, further distinguishing New Zealand as a sovereign nation separate from the UK (or Australia, with whom a union was rejected in 1901).

confusing trade exchanges, Cook's men responded by again opening fire, shooting chief Te Rakau dead. As the two sides parted ways, Te Rakau's body was left on the river bank, right where he fell.

A few days later, having failed to obtain any supplies or amicable relationships with local Māori, Cook ordered the ship to depart. The *Endeavour* went on to travel all the way around both of New Zealand's major islands, making multiple stops en route, engaging with various local tribes (known as *iwi*). Maps were drawn, stars charted, flora and fauna studied, and landforms named. Eventually, the ship turned west, and continued their journey onwards towards Australia, ultimately arriving back in England in July 1771. So ended the first of Cook's three global voyages, each of which brought him back to New Zealand, a country where he would go on to become a hugely divisive figure.

SHIFTING VIEWPOINTS

In Christchurch, on the east coast of the South Island, Rowan Light, lecturer in the department of history at the University of Canterbury, shows me an enormous stained glass window in the Great Hall of the city's landmark Art Centre. First installed in 1938, it depicts Cook standing proudly among a long, escalating procession of iconic British figures, everyone from Scott and Shakespeare to Henry VIII and Florence Nightingale. At the back of the line, tucked away in the far corner of the window, stands a solitary Māori man. The symbolism of New Zealand's 'progression' to becoming a solidly British territory (if not yet a completely independent nation) is painfully clear.

'It sits at the heart of quite an intense period of memorialisation, and a heightened imperial identity for New Zealand,' explains Light. 'It tells a story of national progress, with that very heavy British emphasis.' This inter-war period was a time when New Zealand found itself searching for a unifying identity, something to give the country a sense of direction. They found it in the form of the British voyager who had put the country on the map a century-and-a-half earlier.

'Cook almost takes on an ancestral-like presence in New Zealand in the mid-20th century,' continues Light. 'Everything revolves around him, as the one who sets it all off. New Zealanders go all in for World War I, for example, and we see this story emerging of New Zealand as "the best of the Empire". The best Britons, better than the Aussies, better than the Canadians, better than everyone else.' This attitude led to a wave of new memorials, statues – and, yes, stained glass windows – to confirm the importance of Cook, and other British 'heroes', in the making of the New Zealand origin narrative.

Such enthusiasm perhaps peaked in 1969 when New Zealand celebrated the Cook bicentenary, 200 years since his well-known arrival. Enormous crowds filled the streets of Gisborne for a symbolic parade featuring a model of the *Endeavour*, as well as a float with a huge representation of Cook's head. Ships from the navies of the UK, Australia, Canada and the US all paid a visit, jets flew dramatically overhead, and a bronze status of Cook was installed atop Kaiti Hill, the headland looking down on the bay where captain and crew had first landed two centuries earlier. Large

WILDLIFE

■ A thousand years ago, before the arrival of humans, the islands now known as New Zealand were abundant with bird and marine life. The only endemic land mammals were small bats that inhabited the thick, native forests. The arrival of early Polynesian settlers was the first of many waves of invasive species – especially the Polynesian rat (*kiore*) and Polynesian dog (*kuri*) – that would severely degrade the unique biodiversity of the islands. Humans quickly hunted the legendary flightless moa to extinction, and the loss of this primary prey soon also saw the demise of the Haast's eagle (the largest raptor ever known to have lived).

Popular contemporary birds include the famously elusive kiwi, as well as the attractive fantail (*pīwakawaka*) and highly vocal tui, distinguishable by the bright white tuft under the throat. The country is also home to the tuatara, a genetically unique species of reptile that is often known as a 'living fossil' due to the death of all common ancestors millions of years ago. These animals now share the landscape with a wide variety of intentionally-or-accidentally released foreign species, everything from predatory rodents such as rats and possums, to early hunting targets such as wild pigs or deer.



firework displays left the crowds in no doubt about the celebratory nature of the occasion.

But behind the scenes, times were already changing. 'What you see in 1969 is interesting,' muses Light. 'Māori, politically and socially, are in a very different place in the 1970s. There's a new generation of Māori voices who are less and less accommodating to that kind of history. That reflects a shift in demographics; Māori are younger, more educated, increasingly politically active. So what you have in 1969 is in some ways a reproduction of tropes of quite an imperial story, but which are quickly looking very sketchy.'

Just as in 1969, Gisborne is again central to the commemorations for Tuia 250. But that central, unchallenged Cook-centric narrative, with dissenting voices kicked out of sight, little changed from a 1930s stained glass window, is quite radically different 50 years later. 'In 1969, there were massive public parades celebrating Cook as the central figure,' says Light. 'It's unimaginable now. It would ring very strange for New Zealanders. It reflects the tide of those cultural narratives draining away. These cultural foundations that once made sense about Cook, no longer make sense in 2019.'



NAME CHANGES

There has certainly been significant memorialisation occurring throughout the year in Gisborne, but promoting very different voices than memorials from the past. Cook's obelisk has recently been joined by a new structure: a large circle of *tukatuka* panels. Utilising a distinctive Māori method of building homes – as well as the canoes that first carried Polynesian migrants to Aotearoa – the structure was designed by Nick Tupara, a Ngāti Oneone artist. It requires two people to weave the panels together, passing the threads back-and-forth. It's one of many ways he and other artists are using Tuia 250 to embrace Māori heritage, and wrestle back the narrative surrounding this place.

Possibly the most significant recent memorialisation event in Gisborne occurred back at the start of the year. In 1769, upon abandoning this first bay, Cook recorded in his diary: 'I have named [it] Poverty Bay, because it afforded us no one thing we wanted.' As easily as that, Cook had bestowed upon the coastline a new name: Poverty Bay. And so it would remain, recorded and reproduced in official documents for nearly 250 years. But the bay already had a name: Turanganui-

a-Kiwa, after the great Polynesian voyager Kiwa. And so a few years ago, with the anniversary looming, schoolchildren from the local Kaiti school began a campaign, lobbying Gisborne council to change the bay's name back to this pre-Cook identification.

'They presented me with a petition,' explains Meng Foon, until recently Gisborne's mayor. 'We said, fair enough, this is the children's future. Why don't we actually start the process of changing the name?' Unsure what the most appropriate step would be, a long consultation with the community followed, with hundreds of letters and petitions being delivered, arguing their case towards one of the options. 'There was no compelling reason why we should go with one or the other,' concluded Foon, 'so we stuck with Turanganui-a-Kiwa first, acknowledging the indigenous people, the *tangata whenua* [people of the land] of our place, but also continued with Poverty Bay as a dual name.'

After requesting approval for a name change with the New Zealand Geographic Board (NZGB), which conducted its own consultations, at the start of the year Minister for Land Information Eugenie Sage officially confirmed that Poverty Bay would henceforth be known as Turanganui-a-Kiwa/Poverty Bay. While not universally accepted, especially among some *Pākehā* (New Zealanders of European ethnicity), the change has been broadly well received, according to Foon. 'I dare say that in a few years time, "Poverty Bay" won't even exist,' he muses.

A subtle change of name may appear to be merely symbolic, but Tupara believes this has been vital for truly processing the events of (and after) 1769.

SPOTLIGHT ON... NEW ZEALAND

'Probably after 250 years I think, maybe it's time for a bit of discussion,' he says with a laugh. 'We've decided as a community to change the name, and that gives me some hope that people are prepared to engage in the discussion of what occurred back then, so that we can put in place things to help us go forward from here.'

DUE CONSIDERATION

Given its unique cultural heritage and symbolic geography, the implementation of Turanganui-a-Kiwa/Poverty Bay has been a particularly high-profile example of Māori names being officially reintroduced into New Zealand. But it's certainly not alone. Every year, the NZGB meets to discuss proposed changes to settlements and geological features across the country (including small islands and undersea features).

In a typical year, the NZGB will review and rule on around 500 cases, explains Wendy Shaw, secretary of NZGB. 'For any sort of proposal, either to assign a new name, or change an existing name, the board will always consider whether there is an existing Māori name that was in place for that particular feature or place,' she outlines. 'If there is, it's got a very strong requirement to restore that name.'

The board then has the freedom to decide on the appropriateness of both existing and traditional names, and therefore whether existing names should be replaced, if they should stay the same, or – as with Turanganui-a-Kiwa/Poverty Bay – if there should be a dual name. Ultimately, the NZGB has a duty to give names dating prior to the arrival of Captain Cook the opportunity to become part of the country's official cartographic landscape. 'Our legislation is quite specific about encouraging the use of original Māori place names,' says Shaw. 'And you can only do that by having them on the official maps and charts, otherwise people won't know about them.'

The 250th anniversary also got the NZGB thinking about the legacy of Cook. To mark the occasion, it conducted the first full count of places and features in New Zealand named by Cook on his various voyages, coming to a final tally of 235. Now, instead of simply responding to individual proposals for name changes as submitted by organisations, councils, or the general public, it is able to go through the list, deciding upon the best course of action for each name. 'What can we do with Cook names?' asks Shaw. 'We can make them official if they're not, or alter them to dual names where original Māori names exist, or change the name outright to the original Māori name, if there is enough support for that.'

The intention is to broaden knowledge about these 235 names, to tell the full stories behind them, so that the reasons behind the names become common knowledge. 'Many people don't know that Wet Jacket Arm [in Fiordland, in the southwest of the South Island] was because as they rowed up there, it started to rain and they got all wet,' explains Shaw by way of example. The story behind each Cook-named place has also been uploaded to Google Earth, allowing anyone to learn the reasoning and stories behind each of the names he allocated to features around the country.

Not all Cook-Māori encounters were as antagonistic as those that took place in Turanganui-a-Kiwa. On

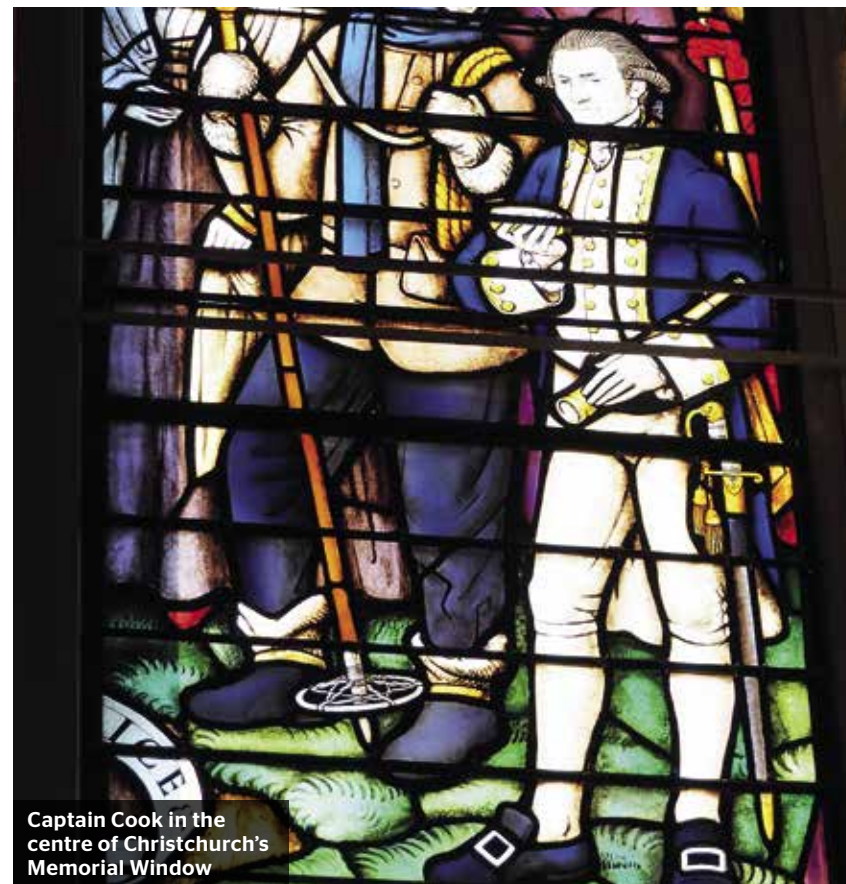


Mount Cook, New Zealand's highest peak, is now commonly known as Aoraki

► GEOLOGY

■ The geological precariousness of New Zealand was evident in February 2011 in Christchurch, when a series of violent earthquakes killed 185 people. The tragedy was caused by the movement of hidden active faults on the city's southern edge, some of many smaller but potentially deadly faults surrounding the islands' plate boundary. The major faults in the country are the Alpine which curves for 650km along the length of the South Island, and, on the North Island, the Wellington-Mōhaka that runs through the capital (right underneath the prime minister's back garden) before continuing to the northern Bay of Plenty.

The Southern Alps are some of the fastest-rising mountains in the world, moving by an average one centimetre a year for the past five million years. While some of the country's most iconic peaks can be found on the North Island, from Tongariro to Taranaki, all the highest can be found in near proximity to Aoraki/Mount Cook in the centre of the South Island. What the North does have, however, is Lake Taupo, the caldera of an active supervolcano, site of the largest known eruption in the last 70,000 years.



Captain Cook in the centre of Christchurch's Memorial Window

3 November 1769, on the northwest Coromandel peninsular, east of contemporary Auckland, Cook pulled into another large bay. Here he intended to undertake an important task he had been set prior to his departure from England, to chart the course of Mercury across the sun. The observation was a success, and the harbour where it had taken place

was duly named in the event's honour: Mercury Bay. However, to local *iwi* (Ngāti Hei), 'Mercury Bay' had always been known as Te Whanganui A Hei ('The Great Bay of Hei', after another ancestral voyager, Hei, who journeyed from Rarotonga in the modern-day Cook Islands in the 1300s). But here there is no clamour for a name change. Locals use both names interchangeably, without any of the baggage in Gisborne, according to Rebecca Cox, director of Mercury Bay Museum. Admittedly 'mercury' doesn't have the same negative associations as the word 'poverty', but for Cox, it all comes down to the way history has remembered the Cook encounters in this part of the country.

'I think it is quite a positive thing here in Mercury Bay,' she says. 'From my point of view it is, and from the Māori point of view as well, it's still quite a positive thing. He was well revered when he was here, the *iwi* realised that he had that *mana* (authority).' This more positive relationship is perhaps why, despite originally giving the name 'Oyster river' to the place where the *Endeavour* first weighed anchor, Cook later amended his notes and recorded the name as Purangi, the Māori name for it.

Mercury Bay illustrates the importance of local histories in the larger narrative of a complex national story such as the arrival of Captain Cook (and the many Europeans who followed). As Cox tells it, instead of the sombre way most of the Tuia 250 events are simply acknowledging the Cook landings, in Mercury Bay it is almost a celebration. Indeed, the 12 days that the *Endeavour* spent moored in the bay are being amplified through a special exhibit in the museum named 'Twelve Days 1769', celebrating the events of those famous dozen sunrises and sunsets when Cook and his crew were present.

In this way, for the residents of Mercury Bay, the arrival of Cook was less a particular moment in history when colonialism arrived on the shores of

Aotearoa, but instead one of many times over the past thousand years or so when ocean voyagers have stopped in this place and left their mark in one way or another. From Kupe, whose wife Kuramarotini came up with the name Aotearoa, to Hei, to Tupaia on board the *Endeavour*, this has repeatedly become an important stopping point for voyagers exploring the South Pacific. 'Those three, Kupe, Hei and Tupaia – along with Cook – has made Mercury Bay quite a navigator's point,' enthuses Cox.

TALKING POINTS

Back in Gisborne, Nick Tupara wonders aloud whether Tuia 250, instead of replicating the one-sided party atmosphere of 50 years ago, celebrating historical events which for so many are still a source of great pain, can now be an opportunity for discussion, for reflection, and for telling the other side of a famous story.

'I look forward to celebrating those that haven't been celebrated before, the other characters that stood on this beach on the day these historical events occurred,' he says as we watch one of the huge tankers that frequent modern Gisborne slowly pulling in to dock. 'Ones that you can't Google and find out information about. Who were they? What were they thinking? Where did they fit into their own communities? I think it's an opportunity for some celebration for our people, particularly the descendants of those who have not had a celebration in 250 years.' ●

► LINKS

- **Tuia 250** www.tuia250kituranga.nz
- **Ministry for Culture & Heritage** mch.govt.nz/tuia250
- **The Arts Centre of Christchurch** www.artscentre.org.nz
- **New Zealand Geographic Board** www.linz.govt.nz
- **Tairāwhiti Gisborne** tairawhitigisborne.co.nz