

Museum of New Zealand
Te Papa Tongarewa

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Tēnā koe Lissant,

MĀORI KŌIWI TANGATA (ANCESTRAL HUMAN REMAINS)

The purpose of this letter is to initiate discussions with you regarding the Māori kōiwi tangata (ancestral human remains) held in the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas collections at the British Museum. To date correspondence has been with Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum.

In November 2004, Ms Catherine Nesus (the previous Manager of Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Team) and I met with Mr MacGregor as well as Brian Durrans, Keeper, Dept. of the Americas, Oceania & Asia, Andrew Burnett, Deputy-Director and Justin Morris, Policy Officer, Department of Communications. At this meeting the repatriation work of Karanga Aotearoa and the British Museum's positioning regarding the repatriation of human remains was discussed.

As summarised by Justin Morris in his notes from this meeting, Mr MacGregor made it clear that the British Museum's criterion for repatriating human remains was at this stage not yet formalised and that each claim would be assessed on an individual basis. Further, he noted that the process of making such decisions would be carried out in a consistent, fair and transparent framework and that the British Museum would be working with the DCMS and other UK museums to establish this process. I would be grateful if you could give me an update on the development of the British Museum's criterion for human remains repatriation claims and how this repatriation process currently stands in your opinion.

I understand from Natasha Barrett, Repatriation Researcher, Karanga Aotearoa that you provided her with a current inventory listing the remaining holdings of kōiwi tangata at the British Museum (excluding those that were transferred to the Natural History Museum in 1968) during your meeting with her on 30th January of this year. Thank you for providing this information about the 7 Toi moko (preserved, Māori tattooed heads) and 7 kōiwi tangata (skeletal remains) in the collections of your institution.

I have one query on this matter. A previous inventory provided to Te Papa listed two further Māori remains – both pieces of cranium (Oc1895,-.630 and Oc1895,-.631), which are not present in the newer inventory provided to Natasha Barrett. I would be grateful if you could comment on this discrepancy and let me know if these kōiwi tangata are still held at the British Museum.

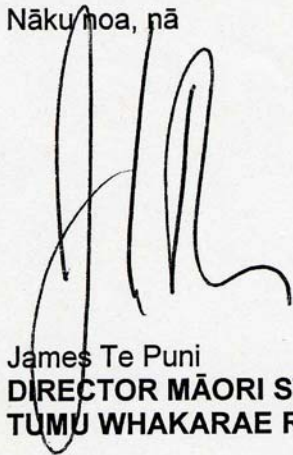
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Our mandate from the New Zealand Government currently covers 'any part of the human body (skeletal or soft tissue) of Māori or Moriori (Chatham Islands) origins which is in an unmodified state since death'. This includes all Toi moko. I would appreciate clarification regarding those 5 skeletal remains which are simultaneously described as 'unmodified remains' and 'possible implements'. This will enable us to determine whether these kōiwi tangata fall within our remit.

I look forward to discussing the future care and management of these tūpuna at your earliest possible convenience. If there is any further information that you require, please don't hesitate to contact either Natasha Barrett, natashab@tepapa.govt.nz or myself, jamest@tepapa.govt.nz. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Nāku noa, nā



James Te Puni
DIRECTOR MĀORI STRATEGY
TUMU WHAKARAE RAUTAKI MĀORI

cc Mr Neil MacGregor, Director

