

# Cultural expression

Ngāti Tama were traditionally the northern 'gatekeepers' of the wider Taranaki region. Cultural elements in the bypass design convey stories of Ngāti Tama tūpuna, events and places.

For example, near the tunnel's northern entrance three pou will depict the defence line that reflects the wero (challenge) that Ngāti Tama presented to others entering Taranaki from the north.

The design on the tunnel's northern portal features Te Kauae o Ngāti Tama (the jaws of Ngāti Tama) and includes:

- a waterfall (Te Rerepahupahu) and a Kōkako signifying the area's native bird life
- a circular element representing the mauri (life force) and continued protection of the area
- purapura whetu (stars) in the upper jaw, symbolising ancestors
- markings in the lower jaw to reflect the three iwi that descend from voyagers on the Tokomaru waka.

