

TIROHANGA WHĀNUI FOOTBRIDGE, AUCKLAND, NZ

INCORPORATION OF MĀORI ‘KŌRERO’ CULTURAL NARRATIVES

Authors: Geoff THOMPSON¹, John McNEIL² Jeff WELLS³

Affiliation: ¹ Senior Bridge, Engineer Aurecon, Auckland, NZ

geoff.thompson@aurecongroup.com

² Technical Director, Aurecon, Auckland, NZ

john.mcneil@aurecongroup.com

³ Architect, Wells Architects Planners Auckland, NZ

Jeff@wapl.co.nz

Summary

Māori, the tangata whenua (people of the land) in Aoteroa (New Zealand), have very rich, deep-seated cultural connections with wahi (place) and nature. Clients, designers and constructors alike, have begun to understand that ‘story telling’ and ‘place making’ are mutually inclusive strengths. This has seen a steadily growing trend in the New Zealand bridge landscape, where kōrero (cultural narrative) is incorporated in design and delivery of projects large and small.

Of particular interest is the Tirohanga Whānui Footbridge (panoramic views) which opened in February 2019 across SH1 on the North Shore of Auckland. The Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency and Watercare Services Limited jointly funded this project, supporting engagement and the relationship with local iwi Ngati Whatua (local people) along with several successful outcomes starting as early in the project as the bridge’s alignment, into bridge features like the raranga (local flax weave pattern) handrail and eventually to the bridge’s dawn blessing and name.

The 104m long three span truss hybrid bridge is a great example of architectural design through kōrero, parametric design and structural features. Erection methodology and construction challenges are also introduced, displaying how designers and constructors worked together to make the project a success.

This paper also highlights the unique features of a few bridge projects from Aotearoa (New Zealand), showing the smart and sometimes subtle connections these bridges have with nature and iwi.



Fig. 1. Tirohanga Whānui Footbridge ‘ties the landscape back together’ in Auckland, New Zealand

Keywords: history; cultural narratives, aesthetics; structural concepts; construction, collaboration, parametric design, steel detailing