

# Māui and the Giant Ika

A long, long time ago, before there was the place we call Aotearoa, there lived a clever demigod named Māui. Māui dreamed of going fishing with his four older brothers, but whenever he asked they always replied, “No”. They made many excuses:

“You’re much too young to come fishing with us.”

“We need all the space in our waka for all the fish we will catch.”

“You’re too skinny, we might think you are a piece of bait and throw you to the fish!”

Māui got so angry with his brothers, he started making a plan.

“I’ll show them how good I am,” he thought. “I’ll show them I’m the best fisherman in the land.”

That night, while his brothers were sleeping, Māui began carrying out his plan. He sat down and started weaving a strong fishing line out of harakeke. As Māui wove, he remembered a magical karakia his grandmother, Muri-ranga-whenua, taught him. He repeated the karakia, knowing it would give his fishing line the strength of a thousand men.

Nights later, when Māui had finished weaving his fishing line, he took the jawbone of his grandmother and bound it to the end of his line. Finally he was ready to prove his brothers wrong.

Māui woke early before the sun had risen from its slumber. He snuck quietly onto the waka and hid among the nets where his brothers would not see him.

Māui’s brothers pulled the canoe into the moana, and they noticed how heavy it seemed. They teased each other:

“Are you sure you are pulling?”

“Did you have too much kai last night?”

The oldest brother shouted, “Kāti, stop, turituri, be quiet, get on with the fishing.”

When the brothers reached their favourite fishing spot, they stopped and dropped down their anchor. Māui decided this was the right time to surprise his brothers.

“I’m here!” he shouted.

“Aue!” cried his brothers, “What are you doing here? You trickster!”

Māui spoke with pride and authority, telling his brothers to lower their fishing lines while he said his karakia. As the words floated in the air, the brothers felt the fish jump onto their lines. They pulled up fish, after fish, after fish. In no time at all the brothers had a waka full of kai for their whanau.

Māui pulled out his harakeke line with the jaw one of his ancestor, Muri-ranga-whenua.

“Now it is my turn,” he announced.

The brothers again laughed at Māui, “Are you tricking us again, Māui?”

“You can’t catch fish with that!”

“Maybe a piece of seaweed if you’re lucky.” They couldn’t hold back their laughter.

Māui ignored his brothers and cast his line far, far out into the moana. As it flew through the air he again called out his karakia, making sure Tangaroa heard his call. The line dropped deep down to the ocean floor. Māui felt a mighty tug, and immediately his line stretched tight. Māui’s brothers called out in fear as their waka was dragged across the ocean.

“Aue Māui! Cut the line!”

“You’ll never pull it in, we’ll all be drowned!” The brothers were shaking with fear but Māui stood strong and held the line.

Slowly the giant ika rose to the surface, and Māui’s face beamed as he looked at his brothers. But before he even had time to skite about his catch; his brothers had jumped on the giant fish with their pātia and patu. They began cutting away at it, claiming pieces for themselves. Māui called out in shame, “No, no my brothers.” He knew the fish was a gift from their grandmother, Muri-ranga-whenua. But his brothers continued chopping and arguing over the great fish.

That fish continues to lie here as land. It is still inhabited by Māui, his elder brothers and their children. Over thousands and thousands of years, the cuts became gullies and mountains, and became part of the landscape of Aotearoa. The giant fish became known as Te Ika-a-Māui (the fish of Māui), the North Island of New Zealand; his canoe became known as Te waka-a-Māui (the canoe of Māui), the South Island.



<b>Māori Translations</b>		
<b>ika</b> fish	<b>Aotearoa</b> New Zealand	<b>whanau</b> family
<b>harakeke</b> flax	<b>karakia</b> prayer	