**Okains Bay Māori and Colonial Museum**

**Media Statement**

**Waitangi Day 2018**

**High tide dictates early start at Okains this Waitangi Day**

The Okains Bay Museum is preparing for an early start to its annual Waitangi Day commemorations this year. High tide dictates the timing of the popular waka paddling on the Ōpara River so the Ngāi Tahu waka Kōtuku Mairangi, will take to the water earlier than usual, at 9:30am. “It is fitting that the day’s events will commence on the river this year given the passion that the museum’s founder, the late Murray Thacker had for waka. This year will be the first Waitangi Day since Murray passed away in 2017” said Nigel Hampton, Chair of the Museum Board. Thacker collected, restored and made waka for the museum that he founded at Okains Bay in 1977.

In addition to Kōtuku Mairangi, many other waka will be on display at the museum including several collected by Thacker from the Whanganui area in the 1950s and 60s. A small waka made by Thacker was recently installed at the entrance to the museum as part of a revamp of the museum frontage which will be officially blessed on Waitangi Day. A plaque alongside the waka acknowledges Thacker’s generosity as the museum’s founder. In addition to waka, the museum has an impressive collection of European boats and other nautical themed materials and the museum’s new shipping and whaling displays will be unveiled during the Waitangi Day festivities.

The annual family focussed remembrance at Okains will also be a big day for Te Rūnanga o Koukourārata/Ngāti Huikai who will host the pōwhiri and put down a hāngī that will feed up to 900 people. The Museum grounds, the Ngāi Tahu Reserve opposite the museum and the entire Okains Bay heritage precinct will be given over to the commemorations.

Gates open at 9am with the paddling of the waka at 9:30am and the pōwhiri commencing at 10:30am. Other highlights include a hāngī lunch, children’s races, and sand volcanoes. The day provides an opportunity to view the Museum’s significant collections of taonga Māori and colonial items. Visitors will also enjoy continuous demonstrations and working displays all day including weaving demonstrations, stationary engines, print shop, working blacksmith, sand volcanoes, face painting, bread baking in a traditional clay oven, crafts and stalls.

**Nigel Hampton (Chair of the Museum Board) and Ian Day (Museum Manager) are available for interview. For further information please contact:**

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