



Pakiwaitara

The legend of Māui and Mahuika

Māui loved playing with fire. One day he put out all the fires in the village. This made his iwi so angry that they went to complain to Taranga, his mother.

Taranga told Māui to go to the underworld and ask the old kuia Mahuika for some fire. “Be careful,” she warned Māui, “She doesn’t like people.”



Māui visited Mahuika and helped her eat and drink, which was hard for her because everything she touched burst into flames. As a reward, Mahuika gave Māui a burning fingernail to take home to his iwi.

“That was too easy,” Māui thought, and dropped the fingernail into a river on the way home. Then he went back for another fingernail, which she gave him. This was repeated again and again until Mahuika lost her temper and threw fire at Māui, who escaped by turning into a kāhu (hawk).

