**What is Matariki, what is Puanga/Puaka?**

Pleiades is another name for this group of stars, which Iwi call Matariki. For many Iwi, it marks the beginning of a new year as it rises in the middle of winter. Matariki is interpreted and celebrated differently and at different periods by Iwi throughout New Zealand.

Matariki is a time to honour the deceased and allow their souls to rise to the stars. In addition, it was a time for introspection, giving thanks to the gods for the harvest, feasting, and sharing the abundance with loved ones.

Puanga/Puaka is Reigel and it too rises the same time as Matariki. Reigel marks the beginning of a new year especially for Taihauauru Iwi.

\*Some Iwi recognise seven stars, some nine and some only Reigel.

**The Matariki stars**

**Waitī** - Waitī protects our watery habitats. To mention a few, we have awa (rivers), roto (lakes), kūkūwai (wetlands), and waipuna (springs). She observes how the waters uphold, sustain, link, and support us as they flow. Our waters have vital stories to tell, and Waitī has heard them. She urges us to pay attention and take notes from them.

**Waitā** - Waitā surveys the Pacific Ocean (Te Moana-nui-ao-Kiwa) and the Tasman Sea (Te Taio-Rehua). Even after all this time, he continues to uncover new kinds of marine plants, whāngote (mammals), manu (birds), and ika (fish) since the variety of life in these seas is so wide. The planet is not the same without biodiversity. We must operate in a way that promotes and, better yet, strengthens it. We should treat our oceans and coasts with the utmost respect and treat their inhabitants as the taonga (treasures) that they truly are, according to Waitā.

**Waipuna-ā-rangi** - The essence of rainwater is embodied by Waipunā-ā-rangi. This star emphasizes how crucial rain is to maintaining life, feeding the earth, and supplying clean water. It represents the rain's ability to sustain life and its role in promoting the general health of ecosystems and societies.

**Tupu-ā-nuku** - Our food plants are of particular interest to Tupu-ā-nuku. This includes the indigenous tī kōuka (cabbage tree), kawakawa (pepper tree), kōkihi (NZ spinach), and pūhā (sowthistle). She has learned the value of healthy soil by observing the preparations made for their growth and harvest. We are urged by Tupu-ā-nuku to think more carefully about what we are putting into Papatūānuku (the soil) and in what amounts.

**Tupu-ā-rangi** - As someone who has long protected the ngahere (forests), Tupu-ā-rangi is extremely alarmed by the devastation he is seeing. Introduced pests and predators are decimating our native species, which includes ngārara (bugs), mokomoko (lizards), and manu (birds and bats). So are our old rākau (trees), such as rātā, pūriri, pōhutukawa, and tōtara. Tupuā-rangi encourages us to take action to help to bring our forests back to life again.

**Ururangi** - Te whānau puhi (the wind family), which includes Hauraro (the north wind), Tonga (the south wind), Hauāuru (the west wind), and Marangai (the east wind), are close buddies of Ururangi. She encourages us to get to know this family well, embrace its strength and prepare for any challenges it creates.

**Matariki** - Matariki enjoys bringing people together and fostering a sense of connection with the natural world. She urges us to follow suit as frequently as we can. Matariki the star being the mother of the other stars in her cluster, who are all her daughters

**Puanga/Puaka** - Puanga is the star Rigel, the brightest star in the Orion constellation. In the late autumn and early winter night sky Matariki is seen below Puanga and to the left of Tautoru (the three stars of Orion's Belt). Traditional stories related to Puanga are shared across many iwi across Aotearoa but are prominent on the western side of Te Ika a Maui, including among the iwi of Taranaki, Whanganui and Rangitīkei.