



Cultural Narrative *for* George Street Normal School



George Street Normal School Cultural Narrative

This cultural narrative provides two types of information for George Street Normal School – that which is of a celestial nature and that which is of a historical nature – and it is important to be cognisant of this when using the information with classes and students. This information is from the Kāi Tahu tribe, with a focus on Otago and the area your school is in. The bibliography supplied will allow you to follow up on particular references for your students, classes and so forth.

It is important to note that our tribal dialect is used in this report. The ng is replaced by the k; for example, “Ranginui” is “Rakinui” in our dialect. We also use words and idioms particular to our tribe.

Macrons are another crucial part of the Māori language. They indicate whether the vowel is long or short. If a word has a macron on a particular vowel, it must be used when naming classrooms or other spaces. This is the official orthographic convention from the Māori Language Commission.

We hope this cultural narrative will be a source of learning and development for your school. Please get in touch with Aukaha Ltd if you have any questions.

The Kāi Tahu tribal area of the South Island

The South Island (Te Waipounamu) of New Zealand not only has an entirely different landscape to that of the North Island (Te Ika-a-Maui) but also a different Indigenous demographic.

The South Island was originally inhabited by early Polynesian settlers known as Kāti Hāwea and Te Rapuawai. Anderson claims that these people were certainly Polynesians and among the ancestors of southern Māori.¹ The following onset of people were the Waitaha. This early group of people who arrived on the canoe, the Uruao, left their legacy in the many places they named in the South Island. The well-known southern tribal ancestor Rākaihautū of the Waitaha people was described as a giant. He carved out the lakes and rivers of the South Island with his digging stick named Tūwhakarōria. The consequent migration and intermarriage of Kāti Māmoe and then Kāi Tahu from the east coast of the North Island to the South Island and into Waitaha procured a stronghold for Māori in Te Waipounamu. Map 1 illustrates the large tribal area now associated with Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe and Kāi Tahu in the South Island.



Introduction to the Kāi Tahu creation story

In our southern Māori history, the creation story is very detailed and somewhat different. The original story itself has been recorded, edited and published in a book that is accessible in most libraries, *Te Waiatanga Mai o te Atua: South Island Traditions* recorded by Matiaha Tiramōrehu.² The narrative was told by Matiaha Tiramōrehu (Kāi Tahu), who died in 1881. This book, which focuses on the tribal narrative of Kāi Tahu, is a good place to start if you are interested in the original creation beliefs and would like to use them in the classroom.

Te Waka o Aoraki and Tūterakiwhānoa feature as the oldest stories that connect to Otago. Aoraki was one of the senior progeny from Rakinui's (male) first marriage to Pokohāruatepō (female). Raki's (Rakinui) second marriage was to Papatūānuku. Aoraki and his brothers were interested in Raki's new wife and descended from the heavens in their waka (canoe) to greet Papatūānuku. The meeting appears to have been amicable, but a mistake was made in the requisite prayers when Aoraki attempted to once again ascend to their celestial home, and the

canoe began to list. Aoraki and his crew scrambled to the high ground but were caught by the sun's rays and turned to granite, becoming the highest peaks of the Southern Alps.

The nephew of Aoraki, Tūterakiwhānoa, was charged with the responsibility of determining the whereabouts of his uncles – he discovered that they and their waka had become an island in the vast ocean. After a period of grieving, he grasped his great adze, Te Hamo, and set about shaping the canoe and its inhabitants so that it could be an inhabitable land mass.

He carved out the sounds in Fiordland and Marlborough and formed the peninsulas along the eastern seaboard, including Otago Peninsula, Huriawa Peninsula and the Moeraki Peninsula. He left the atua kaitiaki (guardians) Kahukura and Rokonui-ā-tau in place, and they remained until the time the old religion was abandoned and Christianity was adopted.

After the entire South Island had been shaped fit for habitation, Tūterakiwhānoa returned to Piopiotahi/Milford Sound. It was brought to his attention that the sound was so beautiful that those who saw it would never move on. His relation, the goddess Hinenuitepō, left behind the small namunamu, or sandfly, to ensure that nobody would stay in the area for too long.

Takaroa

Papatūānuku fell in love with Takaroa and together they had children. After the birth of each child, Takaroa would go on a long journey and find the right place to bury the popoki (placenta) in the ground. On the birth of one of his children, he took the placenta/the dry umbilical cord to bury and was away for a very long time, leaving Papatūānuku on her own. Papatūānuku waited for Takaroa to return, but while he was gone she fell in love with another man, Rakinui. Together they had many children.

Eventually Takaroa returned and discovered that Papatūānuku had fallen in love with Rakinui and that they had had many children together. Angered by this, Takaroa invited Rakinui onto the beach and they fought. In the fight, Takaroa threw his spear at Rakinui and it pierced him through his buttocks. He was badly wounded and became ill. After the fight, Takaroa was satisfied that he had sought retribution and dealt with Rakinui, and he left. Rakinui went back to Papatūānuku.

In our Ōtākou harbour is Takaroa's abode. It is the island, Rakiriri. This is known as Goat Island today but the actual name is Rakiriri – the home of Takaroa.

Araiteuru

The story of the Araiteuru canoe is well known and most often associated with Te Kai Hinaki beach below Hampden village, where the Moeraki boulders are to be found. The story, though, is much more comprehensive than the simple tale of a wrecked canoe that is most often recounted.

Araiteuru was one of two canoes built from a log discovered on the beach by an ancestor called Roko-i-tua. He had just introduced a local tribe to the pleasures of dried kūmara, and they sailed two canoes to Hawaiki to collect some of the seed kūmara to bring back to Aotearoa. Unfortunately, the crew of the sister canoe, Mānuka, did not perform the appropriate rituals and their precious cargo rotted. Meanwhile, the Araiteuru made landfall on the North Island's east coast and they planted the seed kūmara, introducing it to Aotearoa.

The Araiteuru continued sailing south until it struck a storm somewhere around the Kaikoura coast. The first of the crew to fall overboard was Te Tapuaenuku, who became the famous mountain of the same name that overlooks eastern Marlborough.



A plethora of placenames was bestowed on the landscape in remembrance of each crew member or passenger who fell overboard. There are several names on Banks Peninsula and up the Waitaki Valley, including Kohurau (Kurow) and Aoraki. Araiteuru finally capsized at Matakaea (Shag Point). It seems that parties of survivors then travelled inland; as a result, a number of Dunedin landscape placenames are associated with Araiteuru as each of the survivors was turned to stone and became mountains, hills or coastal rocks.

One story tells of Pakihiwitahi, a senior crew member who sent his servant girl, Puketapu, to collect firewood following the wreck. She travelled as far as Southland to gather the wood and was carrying it back, tied Māori-style to her back, when some of the firewood fell off at the Ōwhao (Leith River). A clump of forest immediately sprang up at the point where the wood fell to the ground, becoming the bush around Ōtepōti. Other firewood fell at Waitete (Waitati), Puketeraki, Kā Iwi-O-Te-Weka (Mount Baldie) and Ōwhata (Goodwood). The sun caught Puketapu just before she returned to her master. Puketapu is now known as the conical hill that oversees Palmerston, while Pakihiwitahi is the one-shouldered hill that State Highway 1 cuts through at the southernmost point of the Katiki straight.

If you stand at Matakaea (Shag Point) and look to the rocky reefs next to the shore, you can see stone remnants of the wreck, including a large pillar known as Hipo (the canoe's captain), a large flat rock representing the sails, and a sea-battered reef that is Araiteuru itself.

Ōwheo

The Ōwheo (Leith) is the original name of the awa (river) that flows out to the harbour. It has been significantly altered from its natural form through the use of concrete structures, deforestation and land reclamation. Ōwheo channels water from the river catchments of Leith Valley and North East Valley to Te Awa o Ōtākou (the Otago Harbour).

It was named after a local Māori ancestor, and Ōwheo was also the name of a small village situated where Howe and Leith Streets now meet. The site of present-day Dunedin was not a permanent settlement for Kāi Tahu, but several seasonal nohoaka (settlements) were located there for the purpose of mahika kai. These nohoaka included:

- Ōwheo, a small nohoaka on the edge of the awa Ōwheo, where Howe and Leith Streets now meet ³
- Te Tūtai o Te Matauira (also recorded as Tūtai a Te Matauira), on the beach near the mouth of the Ōwheo ⁴
- Ngā Moana e Rua, a nohoaka at Ōtepōti where tuna were gathered, and the site of a hāpua (lagoon) ⁵
- Mataukareao, a nohoaka and tauraka waka (landing place for canoes) at the bottom of present-day Hanover Street. ⁶

According to Tahu Pōtiki (2019):
These, and other Upper Harbour settlements, were occupied seasonally for the purpose of mahika kai – food

cultivation and gathering. Prior to the establishment of Dunedin City this area was an abundant hunting ground with a plentiful fresh-water fishery, prodigious birdlife, forest plants and seafood. The small bays made ideal landing places for waka (canoes) carrying those from the more permanent villages at the harbour mouth on their way to gather food or to access trails to other parts of the South Island.⁷

Types of food gathered at the mouth of the Ōwheo would have included riverine and estuarine fish such as waharoa, pipīki, patete, paraki (all names for smelt, *Retropinna retropinna*), panako, upokororo (grayling, *Prototroctes oxyrhynchus*, now extinct), īnaka, mata (minnows and whitebait, *Galaxias spp*), kōkopu and koukoupara (native trout and bullies, *Galaxias fasciatus* and *Gobiomorphus gobiooides*).⁸

Harakeke (flax) would have been prevalent, as was raupō (bulrush), aruhe (fern root), tī kōuka (cabbage tree) and tutu, all important plant foods. Ducks, weka, tūī (also called kōkō) and other birds would have been caught, as well as the kiore (the Polynesian rat, *Ratus exulans*) and wild kurī (the Polynesian dog, *Canis lupus familiaris*, now extinct).⁹

Most important, however, was the abundance of tuna (eels), which could be harvested at the mouth of Dunedin's various awa (including Ōwheo, Toitū and Ōpoho).¹⁰



Puketeraki (Karitāne)

Puketeraki is the village of Kāti Huirapa. The area of Kāti Huirapa here focuses on Karitāne. There are strong whānau (familial) relationships and connections between Ōtākou and Puketeraki. As an example, one branch of the Ellison whānau and H.K. Taiaroa's son married into the Parata whānau from Puketeraki.

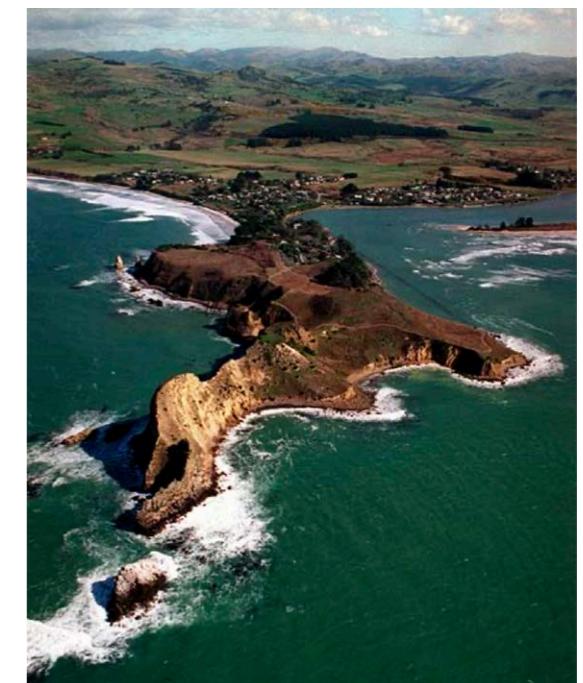
One of the important landmarks of Karitāne is the Huriawa Peninsula. This is a beautiful spot that was historically a guarded pā site. It is an ideal place to take a class of children as they will get a very real sense of the pā site and the conflict that occurred there.

James Cowan¹¹ wrote and published this important story about Huriawa, titled "The Stealing of an Atua. A Tradition of the Otago Coast." This has been adapted for school use.

Huriawa Peninsula

On a very beautiful part of the east coast of the South Island, in a district of curving bays, rocky headlands and warm blue seas, is a green hilly peninsula crowned with a fortification well-known in the history of Kāi Tahu. This is a projection of the Otago coastline just to the south of the Waikouaiti – it is a peninsula at Karitāne. The original name is Huriawa. The local Māori villages here are Karitāne and Puketeraki, home to the sub-tribe known as Kāti Huirapa. Here on the slopes of Huriawa once stood the fortified village of the ancestor, Te Wera, a chief whose exploits in war are the theme of many a southern New Zealand tradition. The events described here probably occurred before the arrival of Europeans to our shores.

Te Wera, the warrior head of the Kāi Te Ruahikihiki and other affiliated hapū, had a nephew named Taoka, who resided at Pukekura (Taiaroa Head). Taoka, according to some, was ambitious and strong. Following a number of fights between Te Wera and the hapū of Ōtākou (Pukekura), there was serious tension between these factions. Taoka then caused a feud against his uncle with the original cause being a simple grievance. Taoka organised a large war-faring group, sailed up the coast and attacked Huriawa Pā.



Picture of Huriawa Source: Malcolm McKinnon, "Otago Places – North of Dunedin," Te Ara – the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand.

When Taoka's army arrived in the canoes (some came from Timaru and elsewhere northward as well as from Ōtākou), they found the battalion fully prepared for them. In anticipation of attack, Te Wera had prepared a great stock of food, sufficient to last his followers for nearly a year. Preserved birds (kererū, kākā, weka), fern-root and dried fish were the main foods. The place was rich in seafood, including mussels, cockles and seaweeds, moki, hāpuku, rāwaru and other fish that teemed in the surrounding waters. Even during the siege, the people could go out on fishing expeditions under the shelter of the southern and south-eastern shores. The battalion must have been large to have held the pā so successfully.

The main entrance to the pā, the inland gateway, was called "Te Kuta a Toretore". Taoka's army pitched their camps on the long island/sand spit called Ōhinepouweru, just to the north of the pā. Here they lived for many months, also occupying portions of the mainland at times. One camp was the cultivation ground at the Taumata-o-Puaka terrace, above the beach at the head of the harbour; another was Tauraka-a-waka, near the Merton Railway Station. Sometimes assaults were led against the pā; these were always repulsed. Sometimes the attacking force cut off stragglers from the pā.

“

**Mā te matua, mate kai, mā te matua,
mate wai, whakatakoto ki te ngutu a Toretore
Kāore ia, kāore ia!”**



A weak point of many Māori pā was their deficient water supply. Huriawa, however, was well provided in this respect, as there was a small but always flowing spring in the hillside on the northern side of the peninsula. Long after Te Wera's time, it was the water supply for Tame Parata's nearby whaling station. The spring to this day is called Te Puna-wai a Te Wera. A trench led to it from the village above, so that the water-carriers might not be observed by the enemy. A short distance eastwards, further along the northern side of the peninsula, is a little horseshoe-shaped, rocky bay called Te Awamo-kihi. This bay faces the opposite head of Waikouaiti Bay and commands the entrance to the harbour. Here Te Wera kept his canoes, the larger ones housed in reed-thatched sheds. Close by is a cliff face called Maukoroa, where the Huriwai people obtained a red ochre, which was mixed with the oil expressed from the shark's liver and used as a paint to decorate their canoes and their carved posts and houses, and themselves.

The siege continued for six months. One particular part of the siege is remembered and retold.

On the hill about halfway along the pā peninsula, and not far from Te Puna Wai a Te Wera, was the sacred tuahu (altar) where the carved and tattooed wooden image of the god Kahukura was kept. This spot was called Te Irika o Kahukura, meaning the place where Kahukura was suspended or raised up to view. Kahukura, was the great deity or tribal guardian of Kāi Tahu, and was always invoked in time of war. The image of Kahukura in Te Wera's pā was under the charge of the priest Hatu. One dark night, two daring young warriors in Taoka's army made their way round the coast in a small canoe and landed on the beach on the south-east side of the peninsula. Here, there are two large blowholes into which the sea rushes with great force in times of storm, spouting high up the sides of the crater-like pits. Waiting until low tide, the men crept up the arched passage into one of these blowholes. Clambering up the steep rocks, they wormed their way to the hilltop altar of Kahukura. They found the carved image – which they had often seen from afar – and returning the way they had come, they had carried it off in triumph to their camp.

Next morning, Hatu the Tohuka went to his sacred place to consult the atua. Kahukura, it was said, would twitch or move to one side or the other when the atua was invoked by the tohuka. He was angered when he realised his god had disappeared. Shouts of jubilation and the chant of the war dance were heard from the sand spit where the besiegers were camped, and Te Wera's people saw to their anger and dismay the stolen image held up and dangled about by the enemy. Taoka's warriors yelled taunts at the defenders of Huriawa.

However these jeers were shortlived. Te Wera's tohunga, Hatu placed a makutu (spell) on the tuahu of their missing god. They kindled a sacred fire and set about the task of casting a spell on their enemies in order to regain their guardian. They besought Kahukura to return to them and aid them. “E hoki mai, Kahukura!” called Hatu, as he stood by the tall flax bushes that sheltered the altar of Huriawa. The atua was torn from the hands of the tohunga who held it, and was borne through the air back to Huriawa. It came flying through the air, straight back to the tuahu on the hill, and came to rest at its accustomed place and fell at Hatu's feet. The siege went for some time, but Taoka was not able to enter the pā. They had running water and supplies and were able to sustain themselves. A proverb that came from this encounter was said by Te Wera from inside the pā to Taoka and his battalion. It tells of the time they had to wait inside their pā and that they would never surrender:

*“Mā te matua, mate kai, mā te matua, mate wai,
whakatakoto ki te ngutu a Toretore
Kāore ia, kāore ia!”*

Will it be by hunger, will it be by thirst, will it be by the gates of Toretore, never!

Taoka and his men became discouraged by their want of success and convinced that Huriawa was impregnable. They broke up camp, launched their long canoes, plied paddle and set sail for their homes. The long siege was over.

“

Kāi Tahu wanted to keep 21,250 acres of Otago Peninsula land with ancestral sites for themselves. However, the Europeans did not agree and would not proceed with the sale unless the peninsula was included. The Māori conceded to accept only the land at the northern end of the peninsula and a few other areas outside of that, totalling 9,612 acres.”

Trails and movement

Kāi Tahu were a nomadic people who travelled extensively on land and sea. They travelled from Ōtākou villages up the Otago Harbour and into bays and inlets within the Dunedin area, known as Ōtepoti. This area was a landing spot and a point from which the Ōtākou-based Māori would hunt in the surrounding bush. Four species of moa roamed the Otago Peninsula, and there were moa hunter sites in Andersons Bay, St Kilda and St Clair. Māori would drag their waka into estuaries and walk by foot to food-gathering places such as the Taiari (now known as Taieri), which was rich in food sources like birds and eels.

Māori also followed tracks over the peninsula, around the Lawyers Head area and into the Taiari plain. The lakes and wetland area now known as Te Nohoaka o Tukiāau/Sinclair Wetlands (a fantastic place to visit with students) was teeming with kai, including whitebait, eels, lamprey and birdlife. Shortland suggests that the ancient walking tracks were falling into disuse by the time he explored the Otago area because of the superior marine technology that Māori had employed over the previous 40 years.¹² The whaling boat proved to be a better mode of transport than the carved single or double-hulled Māori vessels that dominated sea transport until the arrival of the European.

Treaty of Waitangi and the consequent land sales in Dunedin

In 1836, the ship, The Sydney Packet, arrived at Ōtākou with a few influenza cases on board. The disease immediately attacked Māori and the people died in hundreds, reducing the population to an alarming degree. Following the demise of the Ōtākou Māori population came the loss of land. This began with the Treaty of Waitangi, which was taken by Major Bunbury throughout the Kāi Tahu tribal region to obtain southern Māori signatures. The Treaty had been signed by many iwi (tribes) in the North Island, and Korako and Karetai signed it at Taiaroa Head on 13 June 1840. They were among seven signatures for southern Māori. The premise they accepted in their hearts and minds was that under the Treaty they would retain their lands and have equal protection and rights with British citizens. Political struggle over the total disregard of the promises agreed to in the Treaty of Waitangi would continue for 150 years.

After the signing of the Treaty came the most significant contractual breach for Māori on the Otago Peninsula. Under pressure from the New Zealand Company, the British Crown waived its right of pre-emption as stated in the Treaty of Waitangi, allowing the New Zealand Company to negotiate with the local chiefs for the purchase of land in the south. The New Zealand Company and the Free Church of Scotland selected the area on the mainland at the head of the harbour for a permanent site, to be called New Edinburgh. Frederick Tuckett, a surveyor for the New Zealand Company, was assigned to oversee the purchase of the site. In 1844, George Clarke wrote an account of the proceedings in Otago, which included Tuckett, surveyors and local Māori. They had come to survey the land for a “New Edinborough, the Dunedin of the future”.¹³

Kāi Tahu wanted to keep 21,250 acres of Otago Peninsula land with ancestral sites for themselves. However, the Europeans did not agree and would not proceed with the sale unless the peninsula was included. The Māori conceded to accept only the land at the northern end of the peninsula and a few other areas outside of that, totalling 9,612 acres. On 31 July 1844 at Kōpūtai, 25 chiefs signed the Otago Deed, selling around 400,000 acres for £2,400. Of the 400,000 acres, 150,000 acres would be chosen for the New Edinburgh site. In addition to this land, verbal agreements were made to reserve 10% of all land sold, known as “the tenths”, in trust for the benefit of Kāi Tahu. The agreement was not honoured, and work began on New Edinburgh on the mainland in 1846.

The organised settlement of the suburban and rural areas of the peninsula began in 1848, focusing on Andersons Bay and Portobello. The peninsula was divided into farms of about 50 acres, which were gradually occupied and supplied a growing Dunedin with food. West states that “the sale of the Otago Block to the New Zealand Company in 1844 was by far the most significant event that shifted control over the Peninsula... the Ōtākou Māori were stranded on the northern tip of the Otago Peninsula, confined to meagre portions of their once vast property. The way was thereby opened to the European settlement, and the making of a new environment on the Otago Peninsula.”¹⁴



Placenames around George Street Normal School

It is best to refrain from attempting to translate names from Māori to English as the meanings are often complex or forgotten. Some definitions and descriptions from different resources are recorded here.

Mataukareao

Kareao is supplejack and matau is a hook. Kareao was recorded as growing on the flat below Hanover and Frederick Streets, and the area there was named Mataukareao (supplejack fish-hook).¹⁵

Ōtepoti

The corner shape of a food-gathering kete made from flax is called a "poti". This could be seen in the corner shape of the harbour coming up to George Street, which does not visually exist now.

Kapuketaumahaka/Mihiwaka

These are possible names for Mount Cargill. Kapuketaumahaka has been misspelled and misinterpreted for many years. In recent times, mana whenua have come to a fuller understanding of the name, which is one of an ancestor. Mihiwaka is also the possible name for Mount Cargill, as confirmed by our tūpuna. H.K. Taiaroa commented that this mountain was a place they caught weka.

Kā Moana e Rua

H.K. Taiaroa wrote "E hapua tuna, e nohoanga, E kainga." This was a lagoon with eels in it, a camp site and a village. It literally translates as two waterways. The area has been built over and is the site of the old Dunedin gaol.

Ōwheo

This is the name for the Leith River (discussed earlier).

Ōpoho

Ōpoho was the name for the former inlet at Otago Harbour known as Pelichet Bay, which was reclaimed in 1913 to construct the sports ground at Logan Park. Ōpoho Creek flows through this today. The name is possibly related to the tūpuna, Waitai's brother, Poho.

Whānau-paki (Flagstaff)

The prominent hill that overlooks the north-west of Dunedin.

Whāwhā-raupō

This is Swampy Summit mountain, a ridge located north of Dunedin.



Mahika kai (food gathering)

Weka

There were weka hunting grounds all over the South Island, and weka were definitely found in the Dunedin area. Weka were a great food source for some iwi. They were also caught and eaten by European settlers, who called them woodhen.

Buff weka were once common on the eastern South Island. The decline of weka populations in New Zealand has resulted in legal protection and this has inhibited mahika kai collection of weka in modern times. The only place where weka can be harvested legally is on the Chatham Islands and some islands around Stewart Island. In 2001 a Ngāi Tahu initiative, which was supported by DOC, introduced 30 buff weka from the Chatham Islands to Te Peka Karara (Stevensons Island, Lake Wānaka). Ngāi Tahu are now investigating the introduction of buff weka to a mainland site.



Weka

Hinu-weka (fat of the weka/woodhen)

The juice or gum of the taramea was collected and combined with weka fat, and this was used to dress hair and to rub on the body. Taramea was the common perfume for southern Māori.

The hinu of the weka was also combined with mapara (gum) from the rimu tree, which was burnt. The soot was mixed with the hinu-weka or other suitable animal oil to make tattooing ink.

Weka oil was considered to be good for taking the inflammation out of wounds and for rapid healing.

Hopu weka (catching weka)

Weka were a succulent meal and relatively easy to catch. Catching birds was known as tahere manu – it involved bringing birds low and snaring them with a noose on a stick (known as a pihere). The birds were called with a particular sound made with grass. Calling a weka was known as whakakeokeo, and the leaf used was a doubled blade of kakaha – a coarse flax-like grass that bore berries. A caller could bring many birds around, and they were easily snared with a noose looped on a stick that was five or six feet long. A shorter stick sometimes

carried a wing of a bird or a bright object to entice the inquisitive weka – the weka would put its head through the noose and be caught. Weka were also rounded up with the use of dogs – they would be lured with an imitation cry and the dog would be trusted to secure the bird.

Southern Māori would journey to places like Manuwāhia (Wānaka) and other areas in Central Otago in June and July when weka were at their prime. In the 1860s, there were reports of weka on the West Coast, stating that "the bird despises nothing; from mutton chops to yellow soap, empty tins and the camp dish clout, all is fish that comes to the wood-hen's net."¹⁶ This is indeed why the weka would get caught in a noose: it would run forward to attack the food, disregarding the noose. Apparently they are very aggressive and will fly at a bunch of feathers or a piece of red cloth. Māori could lure the weka with a bunch of feathers or leaves tied to a rod a bit over a metre long. The person would shake the lure as they made chirping noises.

In the Ngāi Tahu rohe, groups of people would go into plains, ranges and valleys where weka were plentiful. The weka that were caught would be carried back to their camp sites where they were plucked and afterwards cooked in preserved fat. When the cooked birds cooled, they were put in pōhā, which are kelp seaweed bags. These vessels containing the preserved birds would be placed in an elevated storehouse known as a whata (see image below).



Source: teara.govt.nz/en/artwork/22607/ships-in-otago-harbour-1840

Weka skins were also used for clothing. Korowai (capes) were made by sewing weka skins together. A "cloak" was found in the Otago district that has the body of the garment covered with bird-skin, while the upper and lower edges were furnished with a kind of fringe formed by attaching strips of dog's skin.¹⁷

Native flora and fauna around George Street Normal School

This section describes native flora and fauna found locally. Some projects teachers could consider are outlined below.

1. Visualise what the area around George Street Normal School and further afield might have looked like in the period of pre-contact and contact between Māori and European.

2. Examine some of the types of plants that were once abundant around your school. Some plants have medicinal purposes, so investigation into these would be valuable.

3. Look at a cross-section of land near your school to assess whether any of those plants are still growing in your area.

At the point of European contact with Dunedin, the vista that looked out from George Street Normal School would have differed greatly to that of today. According to our people, the bush was so thick in the Dunedin area that when some Europeans ventured in they never returned. Māori had trails and tracks and understood the area. In the wider area, Monro made his observations about the mouth of the harbour of the peninsula in 1844, following on to note the “absence of a good site for a town”: *The sky, a great part of the time, was without a cloud, and not a breeze ruffled the surface of the water, which reflected the surrounding wooded slopes, and every sea-bird that floated upon it, with mirror-like accuracy. For some hours after sunrise, the woods resounded with the rich and infinitely varied notes of thousands of tuis and other songsters. I never heard anything like it before in any part of New Zealand.*¹⁸

On his stay at Ōtākou (the Otago Harbour and village at the end of the peninsula) between 1843 and 1844, Edward Shortland wrote in his diary: *In the morning I woke early; and, as the dawn first peeped forth, was deafened by the sound of bell birds. The woods which were close by seemed to be thronged with them. Never before had I heard so loud a chorus. I called to mind Captain Cook's description of the impression made on him by the singing of these birds, when at anchor near the shore in Queen Charlotte's Sound. He is wrong, however, in saying that they sing at night, like the nightingale. They commence at dawn of day their chime of four notes, which, repeated independently by a thousand throats, creates the*

*strangest melody. But they cease, as by one consent, the moment the sun's first rays are visible; and there is a general silence. Again, at even, they commence, just as the sun's last ray fades, and sing on till dark.*¹⁹

Flora

Tarata

This is a small tree with yellow, sweet-scented flowers and leaves that give off a lemon fragrance when bruised. The tarata leaves were used for many purposes. They were mixed with karetū grass, squeezed, and the juice used as a remedy for “whitemouth” in Māori babies. Tarata was also mixed with bird or rat fat to make scent.

Mānuka

Mānuka wood was once fashioned into canoe deckings, canoe poles, fish hooks, fishing rods, eel pots and other fish traps. It was made into gardening implements and weapons such as spears and clubs. Beattie recorded that the mānuka leaves were boiled and rubbed on a leg itch.²⁰ An infusion of kōwhai and mānuka barks was rubbed on externally for pains in the back and side. Edward Shortland commented that the whalers drank so much mānuka tea that it was called the whalers’ tea. Beattie recorded that constipation could be cured by steeping mānuka leaves in water and drinking the infusion.²¹

Tūpākihi/Tutu (also known as toot)

In 1851, Edward Shortland recorded his travels into the Dunedin area: *having crossed the valley, we struck into a path which brought us to the south end of Ōtakou, across an undulating country, where the soil was generally good, producing tall fern, and vigorous “tupākihi”, besides wood at intervals*²²

Tutu is highly poisonous to humans and animals. The poison affects the body's nervous and muscular systems. In his 1865 list of useful trees of Otago, Buchanan wrote that the tutu was poisonous apart from the succulent petals surrounding the seeds and that it was used to treat epilepsy with supposed success.²³

In 1940, Bell recorded detailed recipes for using tutu/tūpākihi: *Tūpākihi. Nearly fill a billy with leaves. Cover with water. Boil till the water is coloured. Bathe the broken leg or bruise*

*with the warm water in which the leaves were boiled. Apply the “kaikai” plaster. Tie with a “bandage” – raupō or flax or bark (hammered with a stone to make it soft) or fibres (muka). In summer, rub the injured part with pig's fat (or some kind of oil) before applying the plaster, because it gets very hot. Tūpākihi plaster: Cut a young stalk of tūpākihi about 2 feet long. Scrape out the green pith and sap with a knife or a shell. Apply the plaster to the injured part, every four hours for a week. The plaster keeps the injured part cool and prevents inflammation. If it is a broken leg, obtain a piece of bark for a splint as nearly as possible the same size as the leg.*²⁴

Kōwhai

Beattie also wrote about kōwhai’s medicinal use in the South Island. *The bark was soaked in water and was an excellent remedy for cuts. Swellings of any sort were swiftly cured with wai kōwhai (kōwhai water). Another internal remedy was for colds and sore throats. The bark was steeped in boiling water, and the infusion had to be drunk fresh as it does not keep.*

Beattie was told of an incident where kōwhai juice was used successfully:

One aged man narrated the case of a Māori who had been with him on a sealing hunt. This man suffered very nasty injuries when his face unfortunately came between the teeth of a kekeno (fur seal). As soon as possible waikōhai (kōwhai juice) was poured into the wounds and in two or three days the man was right again.

Tī kōuka – Cabbage tree

Along with fern root (aruhe), the interior part of the tī kōuka tree stem and the roots, called kāuru, were a staple food for Māori at one time, being steam-cooked in a type of hangi. Kāuru would have provided sustenance like that of the potato. Some say the kāuru was the young shoot at the side of the tree.

The tī trunks collected by Māori were young plants that had germinated from seed dropped by mature plants or from cuttings. Tī kōuka take only four years to grow one and half metres tall.²⁵ Beattie recorded that: *A good section of tī – cabbage trees – was called para kāuru. While the soft part of the tī leaves could be cooked at anytime and chewed and eaten to ensure regularity of the bowels.*²⁶





Beattie has recorded three ways getting kāru:

1. When travelling, cut down the young trees, strip the bark off and eat the remainder.
2. When travelling, cut down old trees and eat the roots and a part away up at the top of the tree.
3. Select a suitable place and make an "orchard" of the tī by cutting down all of the young trees to a suitable height. Leave them two years and then harvest the result. The growth from these pruned trees was so suitable for food, you merely scraped it and ate the lot.²⁸

Elsdon Best recorded details about the gathering and processing of tī kōuka. Around September or October of each year, the cabbage tree was ready for harvesting. The juvenile plants up to two metres tall were cropped, leaving some of the tap root still in the ground to regrow. The crown of leaves at the top was also cut off, leaving a section of trunk that was tied into bundles with several other trunks. These bundles were either prepared at, or transported to, a place abundant in firewood. Large ovens (umu-tī) several feet in diameter were then dug by the hapū members. Also known as puna, these ovens were generally circular, although some were rectangular. All were very deep, and many were dug to the same depth as a grown man. The oven was filled with several rocks and covered by firewood. The fire was lit at dawn, and by midday the rocks should have been hot enough. Large leaves were placed on the rocks, and the bundles were placed on the foliage. More leaves and grasses were put on top of the bundles of trunks, and the whole thing was covered in soil.

Kānuka

The common name for this plant is white tea tree or white mānuka. Kānuka was used medicinally by boiling 12 even-sized pieces of bark until the water was dark – it was drunk for diarrhoea and dysentery. Long poles of sharpened kānuka were used to make eel weirs, and spinning tops were also made of kānuka. Māori used the hard wood of the plant for paddles and weapons, blades and spears. The bark was used to make water containers and the inner bark as a waterproof layer for roofing. Fragrant kānuka leaves were used as scent oil. Captain Cook and early settlers called mānuka "tea tree" because they used the green leaves to make a substitute for tea.



Harakeke/Kōrari

This plant was a hugely important resource to Māori, but also to Pākehā when they arrived on our shores. The flax is a strong, useful plant that was used to make clothing and ropes and for medicinal purposes. The flax leaves, rhizome and roots were used. Edward Pohau Ellison of Ōtākou, who became a medical doctor, gave advice in the newspaper to those with dysentery:

Dysentry cure and care. Do not take any food on the first day. Take boiled liquids only. To clean out the bowels, take Epsom salts every two hours. There is no problem using flax water but it may be too severe for children.²⁹

Beattie collected information on using the flax root for toothache:

Toothache is said to have been a very rare affliction in olden days. It was called nihotuka. Juice from the flax root, so the collector was told, if poured in to the ear would make the recipient give a cold shiver, but in about 20 minutes time it would cause the toothache to depart.³⁰

Beattie also wrote:

Cuts... scratches and wounds were treated with various healing agencies according to which was most convenient at the time and place. Flax gum (pia-harakeke) was extensively used. A European who came to Otago in 1857 told me that following the maori example he used flax gum for cuts, binding it round with whitau (dressed flax) and that he found it very efficacious.³¹

The kōrari part of the flax (flower stem) was also useful. In our southern traditions, the kōrari was used to make a musical instrument. The porotu was a flute made from wood or kōrari that had four to six holes in it. A great project to do with the students in your class would be to make these and see if you can get a sound from them.



The beautiful Ruru

Birds

Some of the traditional birdlife in the area would have been:

Kāhu – hawk
Kākāpō – owl parrot
Kererū – wood pigeon
Kōparapara – bellbird
Pārera – grey duck
Pūtakitaki – paradise duck
Rūrū – morepork/owl
Tauhou – silver-eye
Tīrairaka – fantail
Weka – woodhen

This birdlife was mainly relegated to the forest areas. Birdlife was abundant near the ocean and into Ōtākou.

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End notes

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Megan Potiki



Megan hails from Ōtākou and is of Kāi Tahu and Te Ātiawa descent. Megan has spent the last several years at the University of Otago as a Lecturer for Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies, now in the Office of Māori Development and working towards completing her PhD. Her research interests are focused on the loss of te reo Māori at Ōtākou and the written Māori archives of the past that have a particular geographical focus on her tribal region of Kāi Tahu in the South Island of New Zealand.



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