



# Kāi Tahu Cultural Narrative *for* Grants Braes School



Prepared by Megan Potiki  
for Aukaha (1997) Limited

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# Ko Kāi Tahu te iwi!

## Introduction

There are two types of historical information here that is available for your school. It is important to understand that there are different sections of information, that which is of a celestial nature and that which is of a historical nature. When using this information within classes it is important to be cognisant of that. This information is from the Kāi Tahu tribe with a focus on Otago and the area your school is situated. Furthermore, the bibliography supplied is important for your school as you can follow up on particular references for your students, classes and so forth.

It is important to note that our own tribal dialect is used in this report. The *ng* is replaced by the *k* eg: Ranginui is Rakinui in our dialect. We also use any words or idiom particular to our tribe.

Macrons are also a crucial part of the Māori language. They indicate whether the vowel is a long or short vowel. If there is a macron on a particular vowel of a word, it must go on any names you use for classrooms or other spaces. This is the official orthographic convention from our Māori language commission.

Finally, please ensure that if you have any questions to follow up with Aukaha.

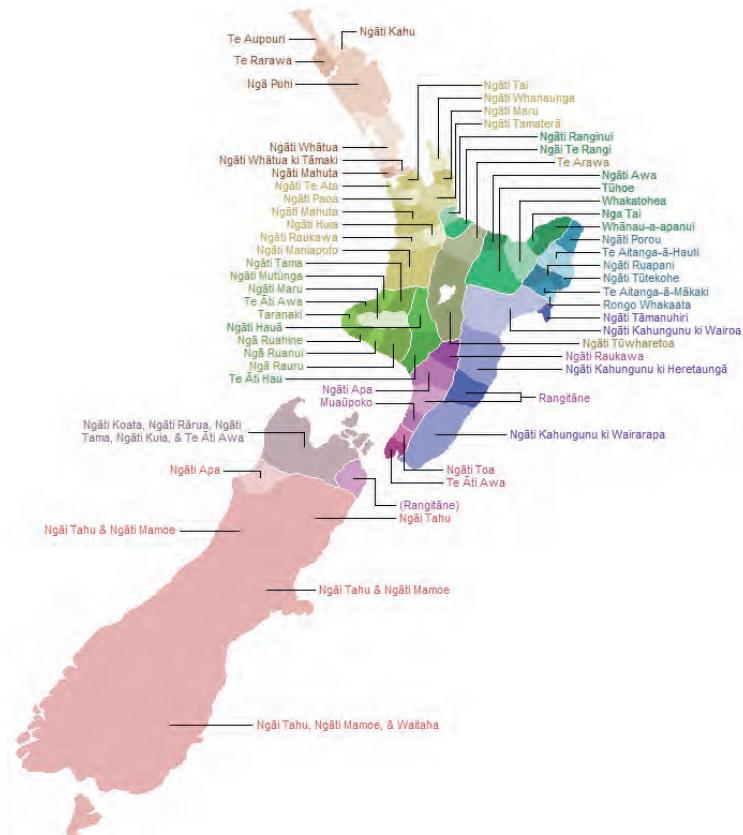
**This report is sectioned in to these areas:**

## ORIGINAL POLYNESIAN INHABITANTS OF THE DUNEDIN AREA

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.

The original inhabitants of the area were known as Kāti Hāwea and Te Rapuwai. Anderson claims that these people were certainly Polynesians and among the ancestors of Southern Māori.<sup>1</sup> The following onset of people were the Waitaha and their legacy was left in the many places they named the South Island. They are an early group of people who are known to have arrived on the canoe, the Uruao. 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 supernatural digging implement.

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 in to Waitaha procured a stronghold for Māori in Te Waipounamu. Map 1 illustrates the large tribal area now associated with Waitaha, Kāti Mamoe and Kāi Tahu in the South Island.



Map Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohe>

*“Aoraki and his crew scrambled to the high ground but were caught by the sun’s rays and were turned to granite becoming the highest peaks of the Southern Alps. ”*

## 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.<sup>2</sup> This is a good place to start if you are interested in the original creation beliefs. However this also has a focus on the tribal narrative of Kāi Tahu. Te Waka o Aoraki and Tūterakiwhanoa 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 canoe (waka) to greet Papatūānuku. The meeting appears to have been amicable but when Aoraki attempted to once again ascend to their celestial home a mistake was made in the requisite prayers and the canoe began to list. Aoraki and his crew scrambled to the high ground but were caught by the sun’s rays and were turned to granite becoming the highest peaks of the Southern Alps.

It was the nephew of Aoraki, Tūterakiwhanoa, who was charged with the responsibility to determine the whereabouts of his uncles and 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 also formed the peninsulas along the eastern seaboard including Otago Peninsula, Huriawa Peninsula and the Moeraki Peninsula. He left guardians in place namely Kahukura and Rokonuiatau. These atua kaitiaki (guardians) remained in place right up until the time the old religion was abandoned and Christianity was adopted.

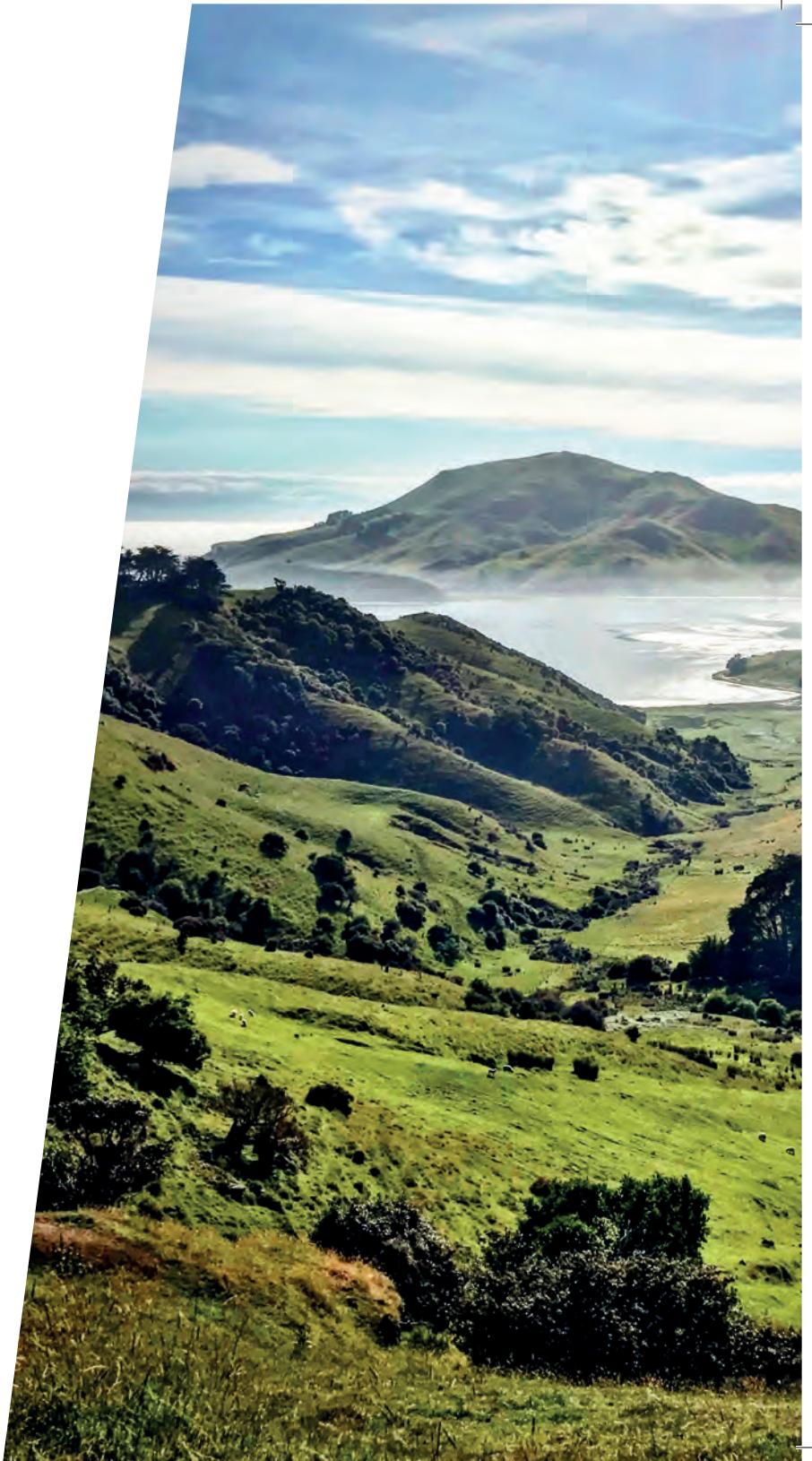
After the entire South Island had been shaped fit for habitation Tūterakiwhanoa returned to Piopiotahi or Milford Sound. It was brought to his attention that the Sound was so beautiful that those who saw it would never move on. His relation, the goddess Hinenuitepō left behind the small namunamu, or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

“  
Regarding their legends,  
the Māori people of Ōtākou  
used to speak about  
taniwhas and fabulous  
monsters which performed  
extraordinary deeds...”

## Matamata

This is a very localised tradition and it relates to a guardian taniwha of Rakitauneke known as Matamata. Matamata himself appears in many traditions in the South Island from as far north as Marlborough to the Hokonui Hills. Rakitauneke is an important ancestor of the Kāti Māmoe tribe and the local chief Karetai was a descendant. Below is an account recorded by the Rev. Thomas Pybus (1954a) for his book *The South Island Māoris*.

*Regarding their legends, the Māori people of Ōtākou used to speak about taniwhas and fabulous monsters which performed extraordinary deeds. Hoani Karetai, the paramount chief of Ōtākou, used to speak about a taniwha which was the guardian of the spirit of a famous Kāti Māmoe chief. This taniwha lost its master and set out in search of him. From Silverstream near the base of Whare Flat, it journeyed as far as the present Mosgiel. Then it took its course down the Taieri River and wriggling, caused all the sharp bends and twists in the river. The same taniwha scooped out the Otago Harbour. The monster now lies solidified in the Saddle Hill. The humps of the hill are named Pukemakamaka and Turimakamaka.*





## History

The Māori history around the Grants Braes area is not specific to that area but the wider Otago area with a particular focus on the Ōtākou area.

The Otago Peninsula has a long history of occupation beginning with that of Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand. The origins of how the peninsula was formed has been cemented in Southern Māori narratives as discussed previously. The early occupation of the Peninsula was immediately focused at the entrance of the harbour rather than populating near the mainland or in-fact across the Peninsula. This focal area remains occupied today by the descendants of the first people to the peninsula. Muaupoko, has recently been adopted by our own people as the overarching Māori name for the Otago Peninsula. However with merely one source to the name Muaupoko from Herries Beattie in 1915 it has a spurious attachment to the Otago Peninsula. Furthermore, Muaupoko is not mentioned in the original Deed of Sale of Otago. The Otago Deed was signed by 23 Māori leaders and two 'proxies' on the 31st July 1844 at Kōpūtai (Port Chalmers) across the harbour from the Otago Peninsula.

Ōtākou is the significant name of the area. Originally Ōtākou was the name of the eastern channel in the lower harbour that run waterway that spans the area from Taiaroa Heads to Akapatiki near Harwood township. Although, it is an ocean harbour it was known as an awa (river) by our old

people because of its river like appearance. Today however, Ōtākou is more widely recognised in the Otago area as the name for the entire harbour and the settlement at the lower end of the Otago Peninsula. Otago eventually became the name for that entire southern region that is a modified version of Ōtākou. The origins of the meaning are still somewhat dubious although as Beattie has recorded the word "kou" in Ōtākou means a jutting point or an end point. This is quite possibly a description of the shape of the end point of Ōtākou the channel.

The earliest of activity on the Otago Peninsula was in the AD 1150-1300 period according to Anderson.<sup>3</sup> These were moa butchery sites including one at Harwood on the Peninsula and one at Andersons Bay on the mainland. The following wave of people migrated in different phases from the North Island and married into these existing groups of people. Kāti Mamoe were the first in the series of migrations south.

The migration that followed Kāti Māmoe were descendants of an ancestor from the East Coast of the North Island known as Tahupōtiki. The Kāi Tahu tribe is a well-known Māori entity of the South Island today and take their name from the eponymous ancestor, Tahupōtiki. Tahupōtiki lived his life in the North Island on the East Coast around the area now known as Hawkes Bay.



**“**  
*That depth of identity that was previously shared by only the descendants of Ōtākou is now an identity that many local experience and affiliate with.* **”**

There are a series of events that occur in a relatively short timeframe that explain Kāi Tahu's position at the harbour entrance of the Otago Peninsula.

That depth of identity that was previously shared by only the descendants of Ōtākou is now an identity that many local experience and affiliate with. This illustrates the strength of Māori identity on the Otago Peninsula. The first known arrival of Kāi Tahu to Otago started with the ancestor Waitai who made his way south leaving behind his siblings and relations who were known as Kāti Kurī. Kāti Kurī were resident in the Wellington area and made their way to the South Island. Waitai had made his way south to the fortified village, Pukekura (Taiaroa Heads) where he became resident. He married Te Rakitauneke's sister, a local Kāti Māmoe chief and an alliance was established. The pair embarked on a number of skirmishes throughout Otago and Waitai moved south to Mokomoko where he was eventually killed by local Kāti Māmoe.

Another manoeuvre that occurred at a similar time involved a well-known figure named Tarewai. He was based at Pukekura. While Waitai was gone he had left the pā (village) in the hands of his two brothers (Maru and Te Aparangi) and their nephew, Tarewai. There was tension between the more recent inhabitants like Tarewai and others. The Kāti Māmoe had invited Tarewai and some of his colleagues to a place known as the Pyramids today near Papanui Inlet on the Otago Peninsula on the premise that they would help them to build a house. After a days work and kai (food) they started to play some wrestling type games and Tarewai was

taken by surprise as men held him down and started to cut his stomach open with their weapons. According to accounts he was a large and strong man and was able to throw off the attackers and make an escape. However he left behind his mere pounamu. He hid at Hereweka where he healed his wounds with the fat of a weka and planned a return to retrieve his mere pounamu. He eventually returned one night to the village of Kāti Māmoe who were sitting around a fire admiring his patu. Tarewai pretended to be another villager by feigning their speech impediment and was handed his patu and took off into the night. Tarewai eventually returned to Pukekura and Kāti Māmoe had established a pā (village) opposite Pukekura named Rakipipikao. Tarewai created a diversion so that he could run along the beach and back into the safety of his pā, which was successful. The spot where he leapt to his safety is named 'Te Rereka o Tarewai'. Tarewai and his uncles then sought revenge on Kāti Māmoe over a period of time pursuing them into Southland. Tarewai met his demise in Fiordland.

Following the skirmishes at Pukekura and a brief period of asserting dominance the Ōtākou people enjoyed a relatively settled period with no external threats and formalized peace-making arrangements with sub-tribes to the north.

Ultimately there were a number of significant battles but the Tarewai battle is a significant one and a useful one to retell tamariki. The places where he battled or recuperated can be visited and the imagery of the mere can be illustrated in art work and so forth.

## 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 up in to bays and inlets within the Dunedin area, known as Otepoti. This area was a landing spot and a point from which the Ōtākou based Māori would hunt in the surrounding bush. Māori would drag their waka into estuaries and walk by foot to food gathering places such as the Taieri. The Taieri was rich in food source with bird life, eels, and so forth. There were four species of moa that roamed the Otago Peninsula. There were moa hunter sites in Andersons Bay, St Kilda and St Clair. Māori were able to follow particular tracks over the peninsula and around the Lawyers Head area and in to the Taieri plain. According to traditions the bush was very thick in the Dunedin area that when some European ventured in they never returned. The lakes and the wetland areas that are now known as Sinclair Wetlands (a fantastic place to visit with tamariki and the school) 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 was exploring the Otago area because of the superior marine technology that had been employed by Māori over the previous forty years. The whaling boat proved to be a vastly improved mode of transport from 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. Immediately the disease attacked the 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 that was led by Major Bunbury in the Kāi Tahu tribal region in order to obtain the Southern Māori signatures. The Treaty had been signed by many iwi (tribes) in the North Island and on the 13th June 1840 Korako and Karetai signed the Treaty at Taiaroa Heads (Pukekura). They were amongst seven signatures for Southern Māori. The premise in their hearts and minds was that they accepted that under the Treaty they would retain their lands and have equal protection and rights as British citizens. The ongoing political struggle over the total disregard to the promises agreed to in the Treaty of Waitangi would continue for one hundred and fifty years. After the signing of the Treaty came the most significant contractual breach for Māori on the Otago Peninsula.

The British Crown eventually came under pressure from the New Zealand Company. It 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 at the head of the harbour, on the mainland 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. George Clarke wrote an account of the proceedings in Otago that included Tuckett, surveyors and local Māori in 1844. They had come to survey the land for a 'New Edinborough, the Dunedin of the future'.

Kāi Tahu wanted to keep 21,250 acres of Otago Peninsula 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 including, 9,612 acres total. On July 31, 1844 at Koputai (opposite the Peninsula – Port Chalmers today) 25 chiefs signed the Otago deed (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 the work on New Edinburgh on the mainland began in 1846. The organized settlement of the suburban and rural areas of the peninsula began in 1848 and focused

on Anderson's 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'.<sup>4</sup>

## Placenames around Grants Braes

It is suggested to refrain from attempting to translate names as the meanings are often complex or forgotten. There are some possible meaning recorded here from different resources, however this doesn't make them right.

**Puketai**              Andersons Bay

**Tutaehinu**              A mountain range on Highcliff Road – first ridge.

**Te Ika o Pariheka**      Lawyers Head

**Whakaherekau**              St Clair (according to Taylor, it was related to presenting a gift of peace) However others suggest that it may have been a fish caught by a man much like Te Ika a Maui.

**Pounui-a-Hine**              White Island which is out from St Clair beach.

**Te Koau**                      Waverley

**Motu Korere**                A reef at Tomahawk

**Tomohaka**                      Known as Tomahawk today

## Food Gathering

One of the most significant foods gathered was that of the Tī Kouka in the Grants Braes area. The other major food sources was that of birdlife like pūtakitaki (ducks) and fish in the Otago Harbour, particularly makā (barracouta).

Kauru was a particular part of the Cabbage tree that was eaten. The kauru as well as fern root (aruhe) was staple food for Māori in the Otago area, it would have provided sustenance like that of the potato. Some say the Kauru ti was the young shoot at the side of the tree.

Beattie has recorded three ways of getting kauru;

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 ti, 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.<sup>5</sup>

“  
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. ”

Elsdon Best (1986) recorded details about the gathering and processing of ti-kouka.

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 which was tied into bundles with several other trunks. These bundles were either prepared, 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 also rectangular but 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. At dawn the fire was lit and by midday the rocks should have been hot enough. Large leaves were then placed on the rocks and then the bundles were placed on the foliage. More leaves and grasses were put on top of the bundles of trunks and then the whole thing was covered in soil.<sup>6</sup>



## Native Flora and Fauna around Grants Braes

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*At the point of European contact to Dunedin the vista that looked out from Grants Braes would have differed greatly to that of today.*

”

There are some themes for teachers to look at here.

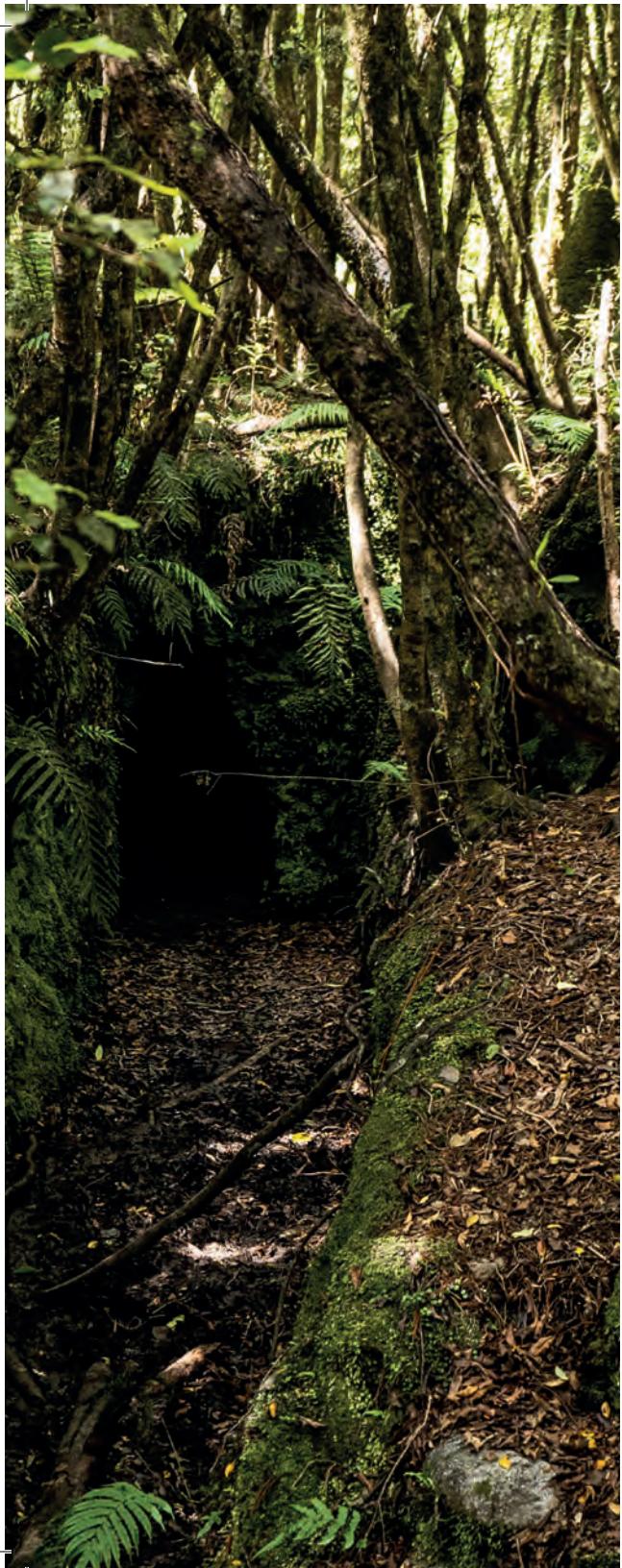
1. Visualising what the peninsula and outlying areas might have looked like in period of pre contact and contact between Māori and European.
2. Examining some of the types of plants that were in abundance once around your school area. Some plants have medicinal purposes, therefore investigation into these would be valuable.
3. Looking at a cross section of land near your school to assess if any of those plants are still standing in your area.

*At the point of European contact to Dunedin the vista that looked out from Grants Braes would have differed greatly to that of today.*

In 1826 Thomas Shepard writes his observations of the upper Ōtākou harbour (Dunedin),

*When we reached the utmost extent of the harbour we were agreeably surprised – instead of woods on each side as we had all the way up we saw a fine open country chiefly covered with flax plants, fern grass and a few small shrubs which might easily be burnt down and made ready for the plough [the site for future Dunedin]<sup>7</sup>*





In 1844 Monro makes his observations about the mouth of the harbour of the Peninsula,

*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. (Monro, 1844)*

He follows on to state that there is 'absence of a good site for a town'. He mentions how inhospitable the bushland is on the mainland and whalers have mentioned how they never venture in.

Edward Shortland wrote in his diary between 1843-1844 on his stay at Ōtākou (the Otago Harbour and village at the end of the peninsula) that

*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 have 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 Queens 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 suns first rays are visible; and there is a general silence. Again, at even, they commence, just as the suns last ray fades, and sing on till dark.<sup>8</sup>*

**Here are some of the traditional Flora and Fauna in the area of Grants Braes:**

**Manuka**

Manuka leaves were boiled and rubbed on skin itches.<sup>9</sup>

**Kiwakiwa**

This was a creek fern sometimes planted to set up a rāhui – restriction on a place.

**Mahoe**

Mahoe is a soft wood that burns slowly and is started using a rubbing stick. Generally it is a tougher wood like that of kaikōmako which burns well. Dry moss was sometimes put at the end of the stick to hasten the ignition.

**Mikimiki**

The leaves of the Mikimiki (Mingimingi in the North Island) were boiled and the juice taken for headaches or colds.

**Ti Kouka – Cabbage tree.**

The interior part of the tree stem and the roots, called kāuru, was a staple food of the Māori at one time, being steam cooked in a type of hangi. The tī trunks collected by Māori were young plants that had germinated from seed dropped by mature plants or from cuttings taken. Tī take only four

years to grow one and half metres tall.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

**Pohuehue – Bindweed**

The skin of this creeper, scraped and formed into a poultice, is very efficacious in drawing boils and causing them to suppurate.<sup>12</sup>

**Matipo**

Matipo which is also known as Māpau, Māpou, Matipou and Tipou was used for toothache and for cleaning the teeth. Beattie records that "you could pull the leaves of māpou as if it had a sweet scent and could chew them a little, but they were hot like ramarama – peppertree.<sup>13</sup>

**Kaio (Ngaio)**

Juice from the bark or leaves of the ngaio has long supplied the Māori with a repellent and an antidote to the bites of two of the most irritating and voracious insect pests around, namely mosquitoes...that assail humans at night, and sandflies...that attack by day. Kaio leaves were known to draw sores and for skin troubles.<sup>14</sup>



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

**Kākā**

Parrot

**Weka**

Woodhen

**Rūrū**

Owl

**Koparapara**

Bellbird

**Pūtakitaki**

Duck

**Kereru**

Pigeon

This birdlife was mainly relegated to the forest areas and the birdlife near the ocean and in about Ōtākou was abundant.

Further to this Mokomoko (lizards and gecko) were also abundant in the area

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## Endnotes

- 1 Anderson, Atholl, 1983, p. 4
- 2 Harlow, (1987) *Te Waiatatanga Mai o nga Atua*
- 3 Anderson, A (1983) p 7.
- 4 West, J (2009) p 265.
- 5 Anderson (Ed) (2013) *Traditional Lifeways of the Southern Maori*, pp124-125
- 6 Best, E (1986)
- 7 Gaining a Foothold, *Historical Records of Otago's Eastern Coast 1770-1839*, p 126
- 8 Shortland, Edward, (1851) *The Southern Districts of New Zealand*, pp 121-122.
- 9 Murdoch, p 280.
- 10 Murdoch, p 455.
- 11 Ibid, p 457
- 12 Ibid, p 353
- 13 Murdoch, pp 284, 285
- 14 Ibid, pp 307, 309.



## Megan .K. Pōtiki

Megan hails from Ōtākou and is of Kāi Tahu and Te Ātiawa descent. Megan currently lectures at the University of Otago in the school of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous studies and is 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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