Aukaha
KIA KAHA, AU KAHA

Cultural Narrative
Te Whata o Kaituna / South Dunedin Community Library

Commissioned by Dunedin City Council (DCC)
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Reinstating our narrative into South Dunedin highlights the impact of colonisation and environmental losses in this area. It gives us the opportunity to share what this whenua was and what it looked like pre-European contact, including the mahika kai activity and occupation.

In developing this narrative, we drew on pēpehā that embed our place on the land and refer to our own sustainable practices and prophecies.

WHAKATAUKĪ

He puna hauaitu, he puna waimarie, he puna karikari.

The pools of frozen water, the pools of bounty, the pools dug by the hand of man.

This whakataukī refers to the springs dug by Rākaihautū.

The Waitaha explorers encountered glacier fed rivers and mountain tarns; lakes and streams brimming with tuna, mata, inaka and pātiki; and Rākaihautu scooped out the earth with his celebrated kō, Tūwhakaroria, to form the southern lakes through the centre of Te Wai Pounamu. The creation of lakes though did not cease with Rākaihautu. We have the more recent works of man with such inland lakes as Ruataniwha, Dunstan and Benmore. Perhaps Rākaihautu's prophecies are still being fulfilled.[1]

Ko te hao te kai a te aitaka a Tapuiti

The hao is the food of Tapuiti's descendants

This is a pertinent whakataukī related to food gathering.

Tapuiti was the wife of Te Rokohouia – he was associated with the capturing of eels, and she was linked to their preparation as a seasonal food supply. The hao is a type of eel found in the south. This pepeha identifies it as an important food source for the descendants of Tapuiti – Waitaha.[2]

Kei whea rā nāna kā tākata o tapuwae? [3]

Where are those who left these footprints?

This whakataukī is used to ask of someone who has left a mark. Essentially they have left their footprints behind. It also draws our attention to the importance of not leaving behind footprints that damage our environment.

[1] Pōtiki (1998), "Nā wai te kī?" Kā Pēpehā o kā tīpuna.
[2] Waimate District Plan, 3.
[3] Pōtiki, private papers, Ōtākou.

KAITUNA

Kāi Tahu were a dynamic and mobile people who travelled extensively on land and sea. They travelled from Ōtākou villages up the Otago Harbour and into bays and inlets in the Dunedin area. The site known as Ōtepoti was one of several tauraka waka (landing spots) around the head of the harbour. Ōtepoti was near Bell Hill, which once protruded into the harbour. Toitū was another tauraka waka, and there were others. These tauraka waka were points 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 Taiari (now known as Taieri), which was rich in food sources like birds and eels. Four species of moa roamed the Otago Peninsula, and there were moa hunter sites in Andersons Bay, St Kilda and St Clair.

Māori also followed tracks over the peninsula, around the Lawyers Head area and into the Taiari plain. According to traditions, the bush was so thick in the Dunedin area that when some Europeans ventured in, they never returned. The lakes and wetland area in the lower Taiari Plain were much larger in pre-contact times before drainage and flood control works were initiated, and teemed with kai, including whitebait, eels, lamprey, waterfowl and birdlife. The journey to and from the Peninsula settlements to the lakes and wetlands in the lower Taiari Plains was a well-worn path, and included communal waka at the top end of Ōwhiro Stream (near the Mosgiel turn-off). These waka were used to navigate down the Ōwhiro, into the Taiari River and on to the settlements near the wetlands. 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.[4] The whaling boat proved to be an improved mode of sea transport from the carved single or double-hulled Māori vessels that dominated sea transport until the arrival of the Europeans.

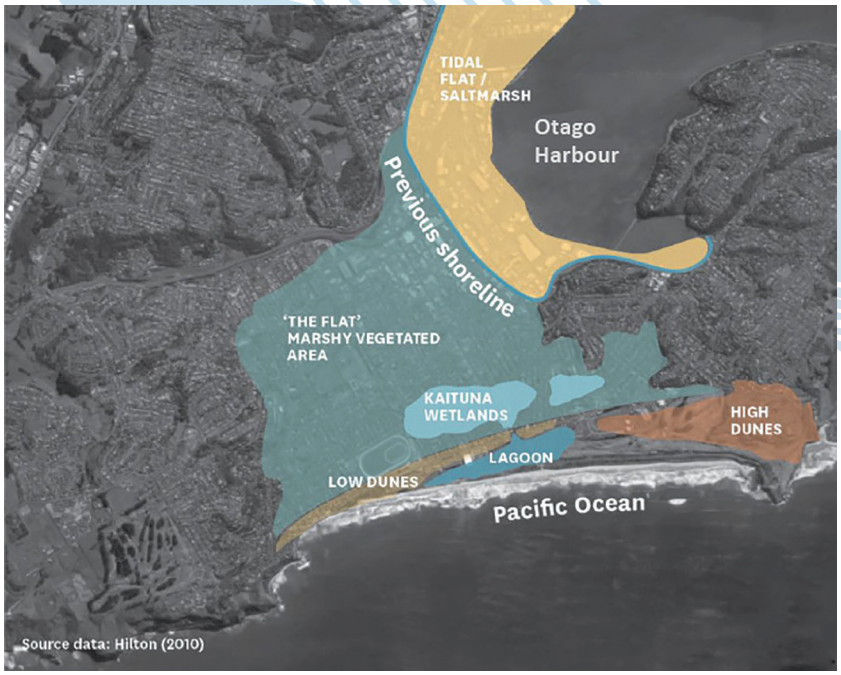


Image: Hilton (2010) The Geomorphology of the Ocean Beach Dune System – Implications for Future Management of Ocean Beach Domain - A Report to the DCC
https://ref.coastalrestorationtrust.org.nz/site/assets/files/5550/appendix-11_-dune-geomorphology.pdf

[4] Shortland, "The Southern Districts of New Zealand", 12.

Kaituna is a noted lagoon (now manipulated and drained) where tuna was harvested, near Dunedin gas works. An article published in the Otago Daily Times in 2010 describes the history of the area. [5]

Ocean Beach is a highly modified environment. The normal activity and movement of sand has been altered in favour of a more stable landscape. The former back-dune areas have been extensively mined and become recreation areas.

The coastline still stretches from the St Clair cliffs in the west to Lawyers Head in the east, but the sand dunes have become much thinner and steeper.

In 1848 in the west around St Clair, the sand hills were much smaller and lower, and the mouth of a lagoon ran through these dunes. They accumulated and grew as you moved east towards Lawyers Head.

High ground was in the west at the St Clair hills and in the east at the beginning of Otago Peninsula and beyond them, Otago Harbour and its extended tidal areas.

Between these features was a low-lying wetland named Kaituna. It was covered with silver tussock, rushes and flax and was an area of traditional food-gathering for Māori who sought tuna (eel), pukeko and weka.

There is also evidence that the Kaituna area was once thick with trees, probably kahikatea. They lay buried under the surface of the wetland and were often dug up and used as firewood by early settlers.

A significant feature was a track along the landward edge of the sand hills, which provided easy access to Kaituna.

By 1876 the urban growth of Dunedin had pushed housing to the edge of the sand hills at Ocean Beach. Sand was being removed constantly by householders to raise the level of their sections. Occasional floods are reported in the 1870s, but mostly from the harbour, into South Dunedin.

[5] Pope, "Dunedin's Battle of the Dunes."

MAHIKA KAI / FOOD GATHERING

Modern day South Dunedin is built on what was once a coastal wetland, similar to Hoopers and Papanui Inlets on Otago Peninsula. Like most wetland areas, it was full of birds and fish and, historically, provided Māori with abundant mahika kai (food gathering) resources and a place to moor their canoes while on eel fishing trips to the Taieri.[6]

The low-lying South Dunedin area now known as 'The Flat' was marshy and covered with silver tussock, rushes and flax. Along the harbour margin there was a wide, tidal mud-flat, and there were coastal lagoons and wide, low sand dunes, much flatter than those along the St Clair – St Kilda coast today.[7]

Image: John Turnbull Thomson (1821-1884), Dunedin, New Zealand, from Andersons Bay, 1856, watercolour on paper: 186x382mm, Hocken Collections - Uare Taoka o Hākena,University of Otago - Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka, 92/1298.
Given by the Hall Jones family, Invercargill, 1992.

The Otago Harbour was a major source of kaimoana. Tunuku Karetai, an elder interviewed by Beattie in 1920, provided a list of species that were gathered in the harbour. This included shellfish such as cockles (tuaki), pāua, yellow-foot pāua (koeo), pipi, periwinkles (pūpū), roroa (a type of clam), different species of mussels (kuku, pūkanikani and toretore), whakai-o-tama (the Otago Māori word for toheroa) and limpets (whētiko and kākihi). The importance of shellfish is demonstrated by the huge piles of shells in midden material found on coastal sites.[8] Karetai also cited many fish and marine species such as blue cod (rāwaru), red cod (hoka), rock cod (pātutuki), trumpeter (koekohe), tarakihi, greenbone (marare), crayfish (kōura) and seals (pakake), which provided a mainstay of sustenance for many generations of Kāi Tahu. He said the most abundant species were the barracouta (makā) and groper (hāpuku).

South Dunedin and Hillside/Carisbrook was an estuarine area, probably quite marshy as shown in the images, and would have been filled with birdlife and other fauna, providing mana whenua with a great source of kai, including tuna (eel), pūtakitaki (paradise duck), pārera (grey duck), pākura (swamp hen), whio (blue duck) and īnaka (whitebait).

The upper harbour was a 'kōhanga' of manu and kai.

[6] Pōtiki, "A Thematic Māori Heritage Study for Dunedin",42.
[7] Dunedin City Council, "Adapting South Dunedin"
[8] Ibid, Pōtiki, 50.

Image: Joesph Perry (1864 - 1865), Single View of Dunedin (No.3), Hocken Collections - Uare Taoka o Hākena,University of Otago - Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka, P1910-005/1-003.

TUNA

Tuna were an incredibly important food source for mana whenua. There were both freshwater and saltwater tuna, and their availability could be relied upon when travelling. [9]

Tuna were harvested at all times of year, and they could be relied on as a food source from awa (rivers) or repo (wetlands) when travelling. [10]

Tuna were also harvested systematically during the time of the tuna heke (eel migration). [11] Particular whānau would often travel to seasonal nohoaka to carry out systematic eeling activities. They were responsible for harvesting and preserving tuna to share with their hapū or for use in the traditional practice of kai hau kai.

Southern Māori also followed astronomical indicators: Beattie, a Pākehā ethnographer who collected the kōrero of many southern Māori kaumātua, was told by one of his informants that "the people used to go by stars, Puaka in particular, for eeling." [12] One recorded environmental indicator that signalled the start of systematic harvesting of tuna was the flowering of the pōpōhue (wire vine, *Muehlenbeckia complexa*). [13]

[9] Anderson, "The Welcome of Strangers", 138.
[10] Beattie & Anderson, "Traditional Lifeways of the Southern Māori",141-152; 316-326.
[11] Ibid.; Anderson, 138.
[12] Ibid; Beattie & Anderson, 323.
[13] Beattie, "The Maoris and Fiordland", 86.

Image: Joesph Weaver Allen (1820/2 - 1886), South Dunedin, Andersons Bay Rd. Hocken Collections - Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago - Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka, P1990-015/49-004).

ORIGIN OF TUNA

Stories of tuna's origin were told by Kāi Tahu kaumātua to both Beattie and Reverend Wohlers. [14] Both were told of the origin of tuna in the time of Māui, the Polynesian demi-god, as well as methods of catching tuna and some of the plant species associated with tuna.

In both versions, Tuna was a taniwha who took advantage of Māui's wife (or wives). Māui planned his revenge, eventually trapping Tuna and hacking his body to pieces with his toki (adze). The upper half of Tuna's body flew into the ocean where it became the kōiro, or conger eel, and the lower half of his body flew into the river, where it became the tuna, or freshwater eel. Pieces of Tuna's body were flung into the forest where they became plant species such as aka (vines), pukapuka (the rangiora tree) and kōareare (raupō root).

Versions of this story have been told by Māori throughout Aotearoa: some say that other plant species, such as kareao (supplejack) and akatorotoro (clinging rātā vine), originated from the hacked-off parts of Tuna's body, [15] while other versions cite Tuna's blood as the reason for the red plumage on many birds and the red colour of many forest berries, leaves and sap. [16]

[14] Beattie & Anderson, "Traditional Lifeways of the Southern Māori, 41, 404; Wohlers: in Tremewan (ed.) (2002), pp 78-79, 84-85.
[15] Riley, "Māori Healing and Herbal",13, 183.
[16] Ibid, Riley, 183.

Peti Hinewetea Taiaroa told of her understanding of the origin of tuna. [17] Tuna was a person from the heavens, and because of the heat there due to the sun and the lack of water he descended to the world. His body was black from the beating down of the sun and the heat, and he came down to the living world.

Upon his arrival here, he went straight into the water. The name of the pool was Muriwai o Whata, and he stayed in that pool for some time. Hine Tūrepo, also known as Hine-te-Kaere, set out to collect water from the pool Tuna was in. Tuna touched her inappropriately, and she became frightened of the taniwha and fled ashore. She returned home to tell her husband Māui that there was something in the water there. Hine-te-Kaere was taken back to the pool with her people so they could see what was in the water. Hine-te-Kaere swam to the place where she saw the object. The taniwha saw her and came towards her, and she headed for the shore – it was then that all her people saw what Tuna looked like. They said it was in the form of a human and lives in the water. They then devised a plan to destroy Tuna. The plan included preparing a vine (torotoro) that was growing on barren land known as Nuku Tawhatawhata. It was dried and woven into an eel basket named Te Papa-a-kura-a-Ta-karoa, to catch Tuna. When it was completed, it was taken to the pool where Tuna first appeared. They looked for the best spot where the water flowed fast. A deep drain was dug and was called Te Ahuhu. The eel basket was set in the middle of the drain and the water flowed into it. When the water was flowing and the current was strong because of the amount of seawater flowing into the drain, Tuna appeared. He came via the river where Te Ahuhu was located. Tuna entered the basket, and the people pulled it ashore. Tuna was caught and killed by them. He was cut up into portions.. The central portion was cast inland, hence the inland eels. Tuna's descendants are many and are found in various places. Conger eels are found in the rocky areas of the coast of the North Island, and blind eels are to be found on the coastal areas and near cliffs and saltwater rivers. Lampreys are found at sea and at the right time will come inland to freshwater rivers. Eels are found in dirty springs, in deep places in pools, and at times they visit their parent – Kukuru Tai Moana.

Here is a whakapapa of Tuna (descending from the sky) that was recorded from Peti.

TUNA-O-RUNGA-I-TE-RANGI

Koiro	Tuere	Kanakana	Tuna
			Tunakouka
			Horepara
			Horehorewai
			Tuna-ā-tai
			Hao
			Weko
			Matamoe
			Aroheke
			Tokotoko
			Tuna korari

[17] I am unsure of the date of this account. Peti Hinewetea Taiaroa was born on 1 February 1902 in Dunedin. Her father, Te One Wiwi or John 'Jack' Grey Taiaroa, was 39 and her mother, Rakapa Ramiha Potaka, was 29. She married Tata Winara Parata on 9 February 1949, in Lower Hutt, Wellington. They were the parents of at least one son and two daughters. She died on 7 August 1975, at the age of 73.

Peti goes on to say that she has seen with her own eyes the birth of Tuna and his children. His descendants are named Pua; these are his children. When they give birth to the children, they make their way to the springs. When they are born, they are taken by their mothers to hear the sound of their parent Kurukuru Tai.

Hori Kerei Taiaroa confirmed his thoughts of Peti's narrative by stating that he was convinced the stories told to him were true.

H.K. Taiaroa wrote about Tuna in his diaries – this is a fantastic example of our library of 1800 manuscripts that we have been able to use to reinstate, revitalise and relive our history and whakapapa. Within this narrative about Tuna is a karakia that was done in the slaying of Tuna:

> *Tuna i te pōuriuri i te pōtangotango, ka mate tuna ki te rangatuatahi, ā, koirii, koirii, ka mate tuna ki te rangi, tuatoru, koirii, koirii, ka mate tuna ki te rangi, tuatoru, koirii, koirii, ka mate tuna, ki te rangatuawhā, ā, koirii, koirii, ka mate, mate tuna ki te rangatuaono, ā, koirii, koirii koia i toro whai, ka mate tuna ki te rongo tuawhitu, koirii, koirii , koia i toro ai, ko ngā heke ēnei i patua ai a tuna e neke tahi, rua, toru, whā, rima, ono, nō te uhi o ngā heke.*
>
> *Ka mate a tuna i a Maui Pōtiki.* [18]

When we consider this narrative today and the tuna being hot in the heavens and coming to earth, we are confronted by global warming and the disastrous effect on our taoka species. The whenua and waterways are severely compromised, leaving the tuna in a very precarious position. Having this narrative in the South Dunedin library gives us the opportunity to leave these strong messages, mō kā uri ā muri ake nei.

CLASSIFICATION OF TUNA

The western classification of New Zealand eels accounts for just two species of tuna: the longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachia*) and the shortfin eel (*Anguilla australis*). Longfin eels are endemic to New Zealand. They are found at the headwaters of streams and can grow to a length of two metres. Shortfin eels are more commonly found in rivers and wetland.

[18] I have taken the liberty of editing some of the original text to make grammatical sense of the te reo Māori.

Māori categorised tuna differently, according to size, colour, habitat, behaviour and taste. Beattie recorded 24 names for eels used by Kāi Tahu whānui:

- Aroke
- Hao
- Horepara
- Horihori-wai
- Kirirua
- Kohekehe
- Korakiraki
- Kotokoto
- Kouka
- Mairehe
- Manawa
- Matamoi
- Papaaka
- Reko
- Riko
- Take-harakeke
- Tuna hau
- Tuna heke
- Tuna kai noke
- Tuna Pākehā
- Tuna raka
- Tuna tai
- Weko
- Winiwini hao [19]

The conger eel *(Leptocephalus verreauxi)* is more properly known in Māori as the kōiro. It is found in saltwater.

CATCHING TUNA

Southern Māori used many methods to catch tuna. Three methods for catching tuna are described below: bobbing, spearing and trapping in hīnaki (eel pots).

1) **Bobbing**: A bob was made of noke (worms) threaded on a 'wand' made from a string of frayed harakeke (flax), which was then dropped into the water. When the tuna had bitten down on the worms, it would be hauled out onto dry ground and killed. [20]

2) **Spearing**: Tuna were traditionally speared using a matarau (a mānuka spear with several wooden prongs at its end). Spearing could occur during the day, or at night using a rama (torch). [21]

3) **Using hīnaki:** A hīnaki was usually crafted out of vines (such as akatorotoro or pōpōhue), kareao (supplejack, also known as pirita) and kōrari (flax sticks). The hīnaki is made of concentric circles of vines held in place by harakeke and smaller vines. It would be placed in the water, and once tuna had swum into the mouth of the hīnaki they could not escape. [22]

[19] Beattie & Anderson, "Traditional Lifeways of the Southern Māori, 141-152; 316-326
[20] Tikao, "Tikao Talks",138; Beattie & Anderson, "Traditional Lifeways of the Southern Māori", 143.
[21] Ibid, Beattie & Anderson , 144, 316.
[22] Ibid, Beattie & Anderson, 145-146.

HĪNAKI (EEL POTS)

Beattie recorded the following description of the form and function of the hīnaki:

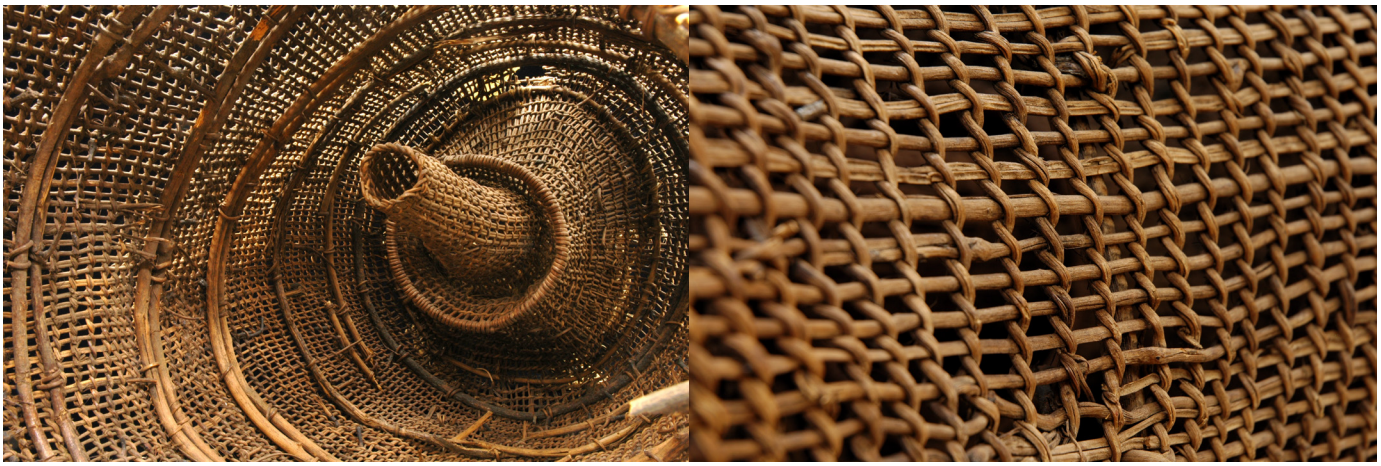
> *To make eelpots (hīnaki), pirita (supplejack) could be split and used; korari (flax sticks), aka vine, tororaro (a vine which grows on the flats) could be used also. The mouth of the pot was of flax and was called puraki and the flax part which led from the puraki into the pot was called te rohe. The hīnaki is long and round and good ones were made of aka vine… To keep the framework of aka in place, hoops (pōtaka) of pirita or big branches of aka are inserted at necessary intervals. The big opening at the front of the hīnaki is called te-rae-o-te-hīnaki or te-kutu-o-te-hīnaki while the small opening at the rear end is known as te-kumu-o-te-hīnaki. The puraki is the mouth through which the eel enters te rohe and from the latter it passes into the pot and cannot return. The loose flax strings which are its doom are called kā-mata-o-te-puraki, and without the hīnaki the rest of the trap is called kaitara.* [23]

Kareao and akatorotoro were two important materials used to make hīnaki and were readily available in this area.

Kareao (supplejack, *Ripogonum scandens*) was recorded as growing on the flat below Hanover and Frederick Streets, and the area there was named Mataukareao (supplejack fish-hook). [24] The strong, supple vines twist their way in tangled masses to the top of the canopy of the New Zealand forest. As well as their use for making hīnaki, young tender shoots of kareao were eaten and tasted like beans. Watery sap could be blown out of short sections of vine to quench thirst.

Image: Hīnaki. Taiari, Otago. Tūhura Otago Museum Collection. D67.2883

[23] Beattie & Anderson, "Traditional Lifeways of the Southern Māori", 145-146.
[24] Roberts, "Māori Nomenclature", 3.



Images: Hīnaki. Taiari, Otago. Tūhura Otago Museum Collection. D67.2883

Akatorotoro (clinging rātā, *Metrosideros perforata)* is a climbing plant with a thin, strong stem that was invaluable to Māori for lashing objects together. [25] Travelling parties sometimes carried akatoro-toro or harakeke with them to tie or bind temporary shelters together, in case these were not available at their stopover points.[26]

Tuna were not the only fish caught in hīnaki: other fish caught included panako, pipiki, upokororo, kanakana, kōkopu and īnaka. [27]

PRESERVING TUNA

Tuna were preserved for later consumption by being hung to dry on a rack called a whata (drying rack). [28]

After being caught, the tuna would be killed or stunned, and then strung onto a harakeke (flax) cord through their head. [29]

To prepare the flesh, each tuna would be split in half – this process was called pāwhera. [30] The flesh now exposed to the sun and wind, each half of the tuna would be draped over the whata, connected by the harakeke cord. [31]

The drying process could take anywhere from a few days to a week. A mat of pātītī (tussock) would sometimes be suspended over the whata to protect the drying tuna from the rain, snow and dew. [32]

[25] Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research.
[26] Beattie & Anderson, "Traditional Lifeways of the Southern Māori", 43.
[27] Ibid, Beattie & Anderson, 146.
[28] Anderson, "The Welcome of Strangers", 120.
[29] Ibid, Beattie & Anderson, 316, 144.
[30] Ibid, Beattie & Anderson, 316 -317.
[31] Ibid, Beattie & Anderson, 325.

Image: Bigwood, Kenneth Valentine, 1920-1992. Eel drying racks at Lake Forsyth, Canterbury - Photograph taken by K V Bigwood. Tourist and Publicity. Ref: 1/2-040042-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/23214823

COOKING TUNA

Tuna were traditionally prepared in various ways for eating:

- The **kōhiku** method: In this method, the tuna was toasted on a stick over a fire. This method was also commonly used for cooking manu (birds). [33]
- The **rara** method: This method involved laying two mānuka stages against each other to form a point, placed over hot embers. The tuna would be fixed to the mānuka wood stages to grill. [34]
- The **whena** method: In this method, tuna would be wrapped in harakeke and placed in an umu (earth oven) or by the fire to cook. [35]

[32] Beattie & Anderson, "Traditional Lifeways of the Southern Māori", 144, 325.
[33] Ibid, Beattie & Anderson, 112, 114, 291.
[34] Ibid, Beattie & Anderson, 112.
[35] Beattie, "The Māoris of Fiordland", 28.

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MEGAN PŌTIKI

Tēnei te rūrū te koukou mai nei

Kihai mahitihiti

Kihai marakaraka

Te ūpoko nui o te rūrū

Terekou!

Ko Pukekura te mauka, ko Ōtākou te awa moana, ko Ōtākou hoki te kāika. Ko Taiaroa rāua ko Karetai ōku tūpuna. I ahu mai au i te whānau Ellison. Ko Megan Pōtiki ahau.

I hail from Ōtākou and whakapapa to Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe Waitaha and Te Ātiawa iwi. My parents are Edward and Alison Ellison. I have a brother, Brett Ellison. My husband is Tahu Pōtiki who passed away in 2019. I am mother to three children (Ripeka, Timoti and Tūkitaharaki) and have a large family unit who provide constant support, as the saying goes "it takes a village to raise a family."

I am currently straddling two roles, the Co-Executive Director for Te Pukenga, Region 4 and I am also the Executive Director for the Otago Polytechnic. I have completed my PhD in 2024 and my 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 my tribal region of Kāi Tahu.

I have been pulled in a number of different directions in the last few years and have been contracted by Aukaha Ltd to provide cultural support, write narratives and guide tikanga and te reo while instilling our values into design, building and development.

I prioritise my children and my whānau, hapū and iwi. I was raised at the Kaik and live there and there is no question about my commitment to Ōtākou, and raising our tamariki to be the leaders of their future.

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