Aukaha
KIA KAHA, AU KAHA

Musselburgh
Cultural Narrative

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Two types of information are available here for your school – that which is of a celestial nature and that which is historical. It is important to be cognisant of this when using the information in classes.

This information is from the Kāi Tahu tribe, with a focus on Otago and the area your school is in. Furthermore, your school can use the bibliography to follow up on particular references for your students, classes and so forth.

This report uses our tribal dialect. The "ng" is replaced by the "k" – for example, "Ranginui" is "Rakinui" in our dialect. We also use any words or 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 Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, the Māori Language Commission.

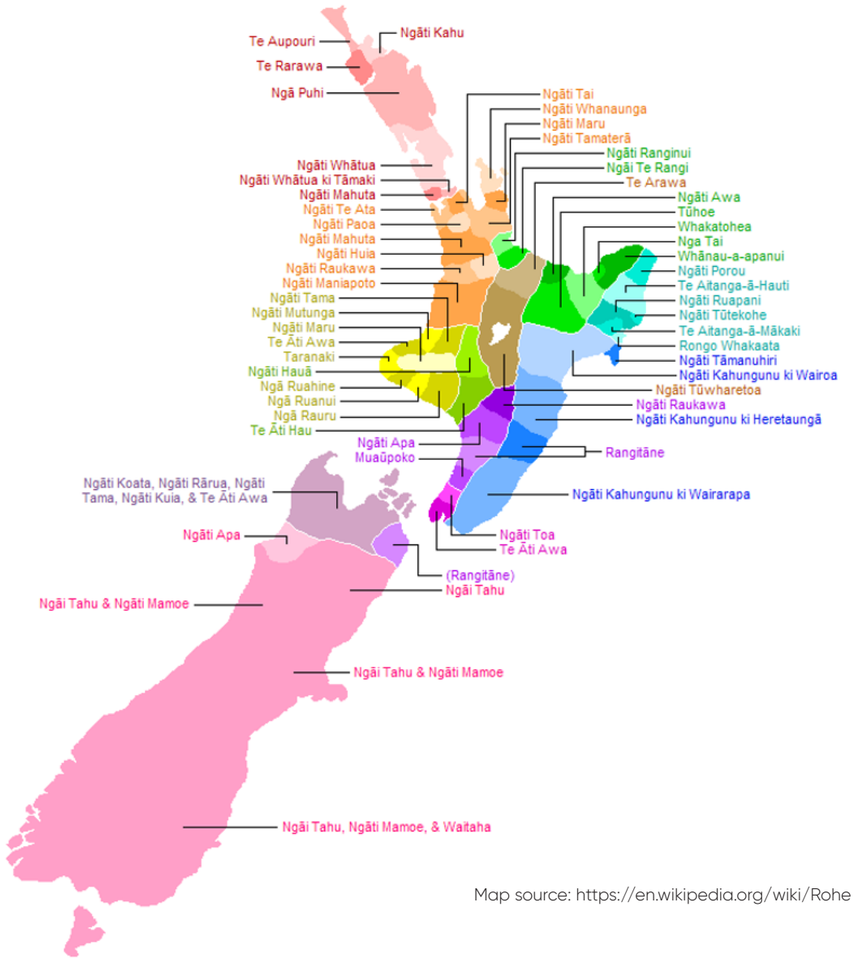
Finally, if you have any questions, please follow up with us at Aukaha Ltd.

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-Māui) 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.[1] The following onset of people were the Waitaha, whose legacy was left in the many places they named in the South Island. They are an early group of people known to have arrived on the waka (canoe), 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 of Kāti Māmoe and then Kāi Tahu from the east coast of the North Island to the South Island, and their intermarriage with 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

Introduction to the Kāi Tahu creation story

The creation story for Southern Māori is very detailed and somewhat different from the stories held in other parts of Aotearoa. The original story was recorded, edited and published in a book that is accessible in most libraries.[2] This is a good place to start if you are interested in the original creation beliefs, and it also focuses 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 first marriage to Pokohāruatepō. Raki's second marriage was to Papatūānuku. Aoraki and his brothers were interested in Raki's new wife and descended from the heavens in their waka 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 were turned to granite, becoming the highest peaks of the Southern Alps.

The nephew of Aoraki, Tūterakiwhanoa, was charged with the responsibility for determining 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 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.

To understand the Māori history of the Musselburgh area, we need to look at the wider Otago area with a particular focus on Ōtākou. That depth of identity previously shared only by the descendants of Ōtākou is now an identity that many locals experience and affiliate with. This illustrates the strength of Māori identity on the Otago Peninsula.

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 focused at the entrance of the harbour rather than near the mainland or across the peninsula. This focal area is still occupied by the descendants of the first people to the peninsula. Muaūpoko has recently been adopted by our people as the over-arching Māori name for the Otago Peninsula. However, with only one source for the name Muaūpoko – from Herries Beattie in 1915 – its attachment to the Otago Peninsula is spurious. Furthermore, Muaūpoko is not mentioned in the original Deed of Sale of Otago. The Otago Deed was signed by 23 Māori leaders and two 'proxies' on 31 July 1844 at Kōpūtai (Port Chalmers) across the harbour from the Otago Peninsula.

Ōtākou is the significant name of the area. Originally Ōtākou is the name of the waterway that spans the area from Taiaroa Head to 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. A modified version of Ōtākou eventually became the name for that entire southern region – Otago. 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 possibly describes the shape of the area of Ōtākou.

The earliest of activity on the Otago Peninsula was in the 1150-1300 AD period according to Anderson.[3] These were moa butchery sites, including one at Harwood on the peninsula and one at Andersons Bay on the mainland. The following waves 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.

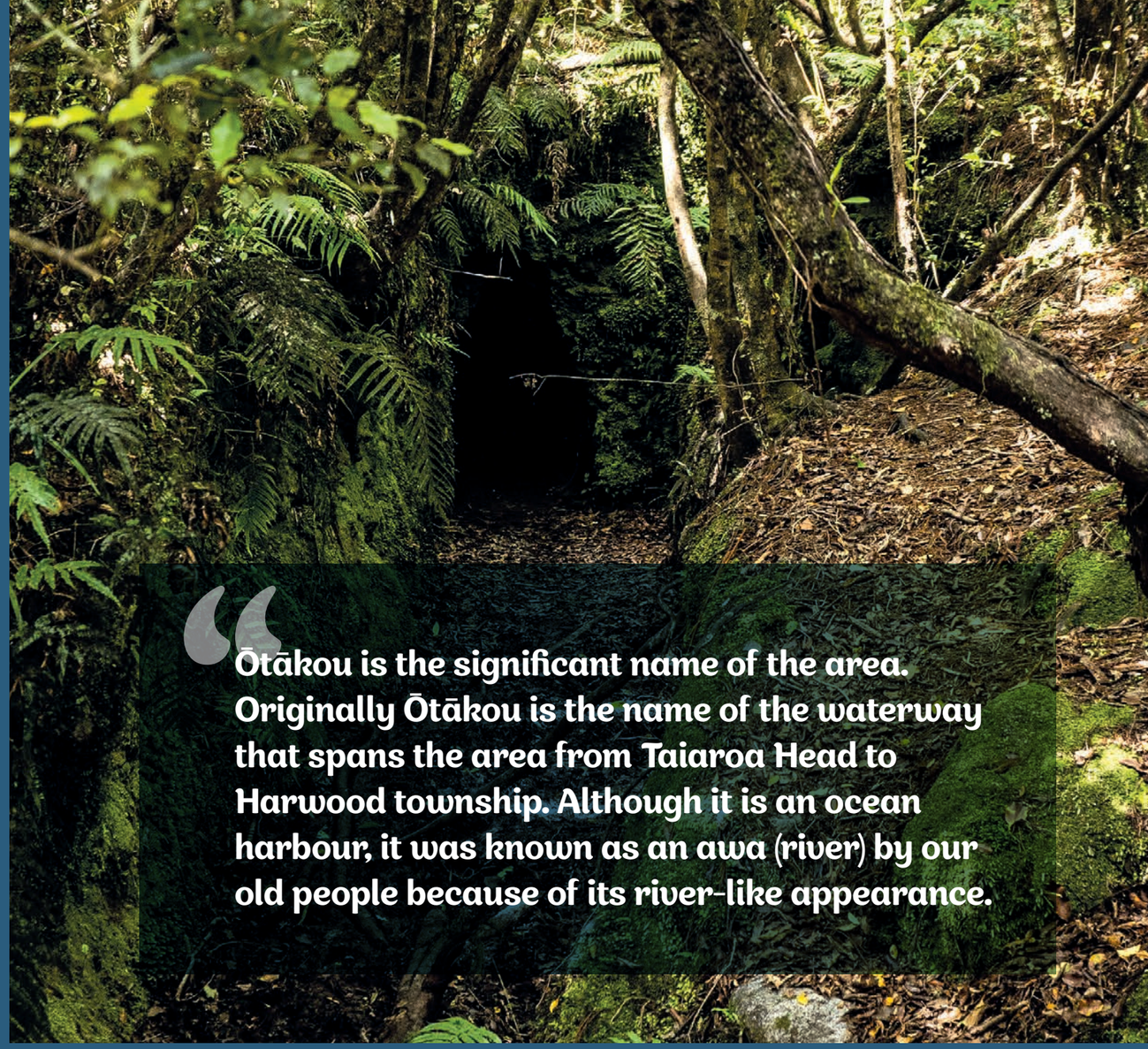
The migration that followed Kāti Māmoe were descendants of an ancestor from the east coast of the North Island known as Tahupōtiki. Taking their name from this eponymous ancestor, the Kāi Tahu tribe is a well-known Māori entity of the South Island today. Tahupōtiki lived around the area now known as Hawke's Bay.

A series of events over a relatively short timeframe explains Kāi Tahu's position at the harbour entrance of 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 Kāti Kurī siblings and relations. Kāti Kurī lived in the Wellington area and made their way to the South Island. Waitai had made his way south to the fortified village, Pukekura (Taiaroa Head), where he became resident. He married the sister of Te Rakitauneke, a local Kāti Māmoe chief, establishing an alliance. The pair embarked on a number of skirmishes throughout Otago, and Waitai moved south and was eventually killed by local Kāti Māmoe.

Another manoeuvre around the same time involved a well-known figure named Tarewai. There was tension between Tarewai and others at Pukekura. The Kāti Māmoe had invited Tarewai and some of his colleagues to a place known today as the Pyramids near Papanui Inlet on the Otago Peninsula on the premise that they would help them to build a house. After a day's work and kai (food), they started to play some wrestling 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, strong man and was able to throw off the attackers and make an escape.

However, he left behind his mere pounamu (greenstone weapon). 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 mere pounamu. Tarewai pretended to be another villager by feigning their speech impediment and was handed his mere pounamu and took off into the night. Tarewai eventually returned to Pukekura, where Kāti Māmoe had established a pā (village) opposite Pukekura named Rakipipikao. Tarewai successfully created a diversion so he could run along the beach and back into the safety of his pā. The spot where he leapt to his safety is named Te Rereka o Tarewai. Tarewai and his uncles then sought revenge on Kāti Mamoe 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, formalising peace-making arrangements with sub-tribes to the north.

Ultimately, there were a number of significant battles, but the Tarewai battle is significant and a useful one to retell for 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 people who travelled extensively on land and sea. They travelled from Ōtākou villages up the Otago Harbour and up into rivers in the Dunedin area, known as Ōtepoti. However, there is also archaeological evidence of extensive occupation around the entire harbour.

The Ōtepoti 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 Taiari. The Taiari was a rich food source with bird life, eels, and so forth. Four species of moa roamed the Otago Peninsula, and there were moa hunter sites in Andersons Bay, St Kilda and St Clair. Māori followed particular 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 areas now known as the Sinclair Wetlands (a fantastic place to visit with tamariki and the school) teemed 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, a ship, the Sydney Packet, arrived at Ōtākou with a few influenza cases on board. The disease immediately 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, which Major Bunbury took around the Kāi Tahu tribal region to obtain the Southern Māori signatures. The Treaty had been signed by many iwi (tribes) in the North Island, and Korako and Karetai signed the Treaty at Taiaroa Head on 13 June 1840 . They were among the seven signatures for Southern Māori. The premise in their hearts and minds was that under the Treaty they would retain their lands and have equal protection and rights with British citizens. The ongoing 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.

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 in 1844, which included Tuckett, surveyors and local Māori. They had come to survey the land for a "New Edinborough, the Dunedin of the future".[4]

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 areas outside that – 9,612 acres in total. On 31 July 1844 at Kōpūtai (opposite the Peninsula – Port Chalmers today), 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. Verbal agreements were also 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 on New Edinburgh on the mainland began 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." [5]

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Placenames around Musselburgh

We suggest that you refrain from attempting to translate names as the meanings are often complex or forgotten. Some possible meanings are recorded here from different resources; however, this doesn't mean they are correct.

Motu Korere	A reef at Tomahawk
Pounui-a-Hine	White Island, which is out from St Clair beach
Puketai	Andersons Bay
Te Ika a Paraheke	Lawyers Head
Te Koau	Waverley
Tomohaka	Known as Tomahawk today (its name is possibly connected to a ceremonial haka)
Tutaehinu	A mountain range on Highcliff Road – first ridge
Whakahekerau	St Clair – according to Taylor, it was related to presenting a gift of peace, but others suggest that it may have been a fish caught by a man much like Te-Ika-a-Māui

John Barnicoat (1867 lithograph) of Kai Tahu fishermen at Otago Harbour.
Collection of Toitū Otago Settlers Museum, Dunedin; 1932/122/4-1[10]

Mahika kai

Makā/barracouta

The Otago Harbour was a major source of kaimoana, and 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.

Karetai also cited many fish species such as blue cod (rāwaru), red cod (hoka), rock cod (pātutuki), trumpeter (koekohe), tarakihi, greenbone (marare) and crayfish (kōura), along with seals (kekeno, which provided a mainstay of sustenance for many generations of Kāi Tahu. He said that the most abundant species were the barracouta (makā) and groper (hāpuku).

The barracouta fishery was well documented and an obvious staple for Māori within the Otago Harbour. In 1827 a sealer, John Boultbee, observed Kāi Tahu fishermen catching barracouta on the southern coast: [6]

The fishers are provided with a rod of about 12 feet long, at the end of this a line of 3 feet length is fastened, to which is attached a narrow and flat piece of wood about 5 inches long; in this piece a seal's tooth, a nail or some other sharp thing, is fixed with the point upwards so as to form a hook. The end of the rod is plunged in the water, and kept moving round in a quick manner so as to cause a strong ripple; the fish seeing the agitation of the water and the brightness of the hook, mistake it for a shoal of small fish and voraciously snap at the hook, which never fails to penetrate through their jaws; as fast as the fisherman throws in his fish, he continues working his rod and line about, as long as a fish is to be caught; sometimes they will load a canoe in two hours with fish.[7]

Once the fish was caught, the roe was eaten immediately while the flesh was dried on racks, preserving it for the winter months. The barracouta season extended from September to April, with March being the best fishing month, making the timing perfect for storing winter supplies.[8] According to archaeological evidence from classic period[9] midden sites on the Otago coast, over 50% of fauna protein was derived from fish and the predominant species (over 50%) was barracouta. The dried form of barracouta was a key trade item during the 1830s and was the most prominent fish supplied to Dunedin's settlers during their lean, early years. This was also the species that underpinned the early establishment of the Māori fishing business, Ōtākou Fisheries, which flourished from the 1940s through to the 1990s.

One of the most significant foods for Ōtākou Māori was the barracouta (makā).

Makā or barracouta was an important staple and ran close to the shore from early summer. The local people were deft at capturing them on specially designed apparatus – a pole around six foot long with a short line and lure attached. The fisherman would vigorously jiggle and shake the pole, and the lure would move in a way that attracted the fish. When the fish had bitten the lure, the pole was flicked into the canoe and the fish was released from the hook. The fisherman then set his pole back into the water.

About two thirds of fish bones found in southern middens are from barracouta.

At the Otago Heads, makā (barracouta) were dried by this process: the bones were removed and the fish split into layers 50 mm thick, then plaited together, steamed and hung up in the sun to dry before being packed away. The dried product was not subject to fly-blow. Another process was the pāwhera of barracouta or eel, which is when the fish is split and hung on whata (racks) to dry in the sun and wind, a mat being suspended over them to keep rain and snow off, as well as the night dew. Drying takes about a week. Both examples last a long time.

Herries Beattie collected notes on food gathering and fishing, and his research suggests that it was the only fish to be caught with a rod in pre-European times.[11] The rod was called a matere and was often made of the wood of a kāī (a tree similar to a tōtara but with a finer leaf). The lure or jigger (pā) was made out of the tōwai tree, which grows in Otago. The hook (matau) was made of bone and was tied on. The string from the rod to the pā was called an aho. A rod was used because it threw the line further than by hand with a rotary motion to the pā. The makā might assume it was a smaller fish, snap at it and get hooked.

Beattie shares the statement from an elder that a good time to catch the makā is in March when they are in good condition and close to the shore.

When caught, cut off the heads and tails and leave the bodies in the umus for five to six hours and then let the flesh get cold and eat. When soaked in fresh water and dried the flesh is called moi. When cooked and taken out in sections and laced in flax and dried it is called paku.[12]

Native flora and fauna around Musselburgh

Here are some themes for teachers to look at.

1. Visualise what the peninsula and outlying areas might have looked like in the period of pre-contact and contact between Māori and Europeans.
2. Examine some of the types of plants that were once abundant around your school. Some plants have medicinal purposes, and investigating 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 to Dunedin, the vista from Musselburgh would have differed greatly to that of today.

In 1826 Thomas Shepard wrote 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].[13]

In 1844 Monro made his observations about the mouth of the harbour:

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.[14]

He followed on to state that there is an "absence of a good site for a town". He mentioned the inhospitality of the bush on the mainland and said that whalers had mentioned that they never ventured in.

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

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 nightengale. They commence at dawn of day their chime of four notes, which, repeated independantly by a thousand throats, creates the strangest melody. But they cease, as by one consent, the moment the suns first rays are visable; and there is a general silence. Again, at even, they commence, just as the suns last ray fades, and sing on till dark.[15]

Here are some of the traditional flora and fauna in the Musselburgh area:

Mānuka
Mānuka leaves were boiled and rubbed on skin itches.[16]

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

Māhoe
Māhoe 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.

Tī kōuka – 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 hāngi. The tī trunks collected by Māori were young plants that had germinated from seeds dropped by mature plants or from cuttings. Tī take only four years to grow one and half metres tall.[17] 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." [18]

Pōhuehue – bindweed
The skin of this creeper, scraped and formed into a poultice, is very efficacious in drawing boils and causing them to suppurate.[19]

Matipo
Matipo, also known as māpau, māpou, matipou and tīpou, was used for toothache and for cleaning the teeth. Beattie records that "you could pull the leaves of māpou as it had a sweet scent and could chew them a little, but they were hot like ramarama – peppertree." [20]

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 mosquitos, which assail humans at night, and sandflies, which attack by day. Kaio leaves were known to draw sores and as a remedy for skin troubles.[21]

Here are some of birds traditionally found in the area:

Kākā – parrot

Kererū – pigeon

Kōparapara – bellbird

Pūtakitaki – duck

Ruru – owl

Weka

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

Mokomoko (lizards and geckos) were also abundant in the area.

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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 Pūkenga, 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.

Aukaha
KIA KAHA, AU KAHA

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