



# **Mahaanui**

**Kurataiao Ltd**

## **COASTAL NARRATIVE**

HISTORICAL OCCUPATION AND USE OF THE  
COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

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**DISCLAIMER**

This narrative has been prepared by Mahaanui Kurataiao for the Christchurch City Council Coastal Hazards Adaptation Programme.

It provides an overview of Ngāi Tahu's historical occupation and use of the coastal environment and has been prepared specifically to assist the Council's engagement and education in relation to the Coastal Hazards Adaptation Programme. No part of this narrative may be copied, edited or used for any other purpose without the express permission of Mahaanui Kurataiao.



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## COASTAL NARRATIVE

### INTRODUCTION

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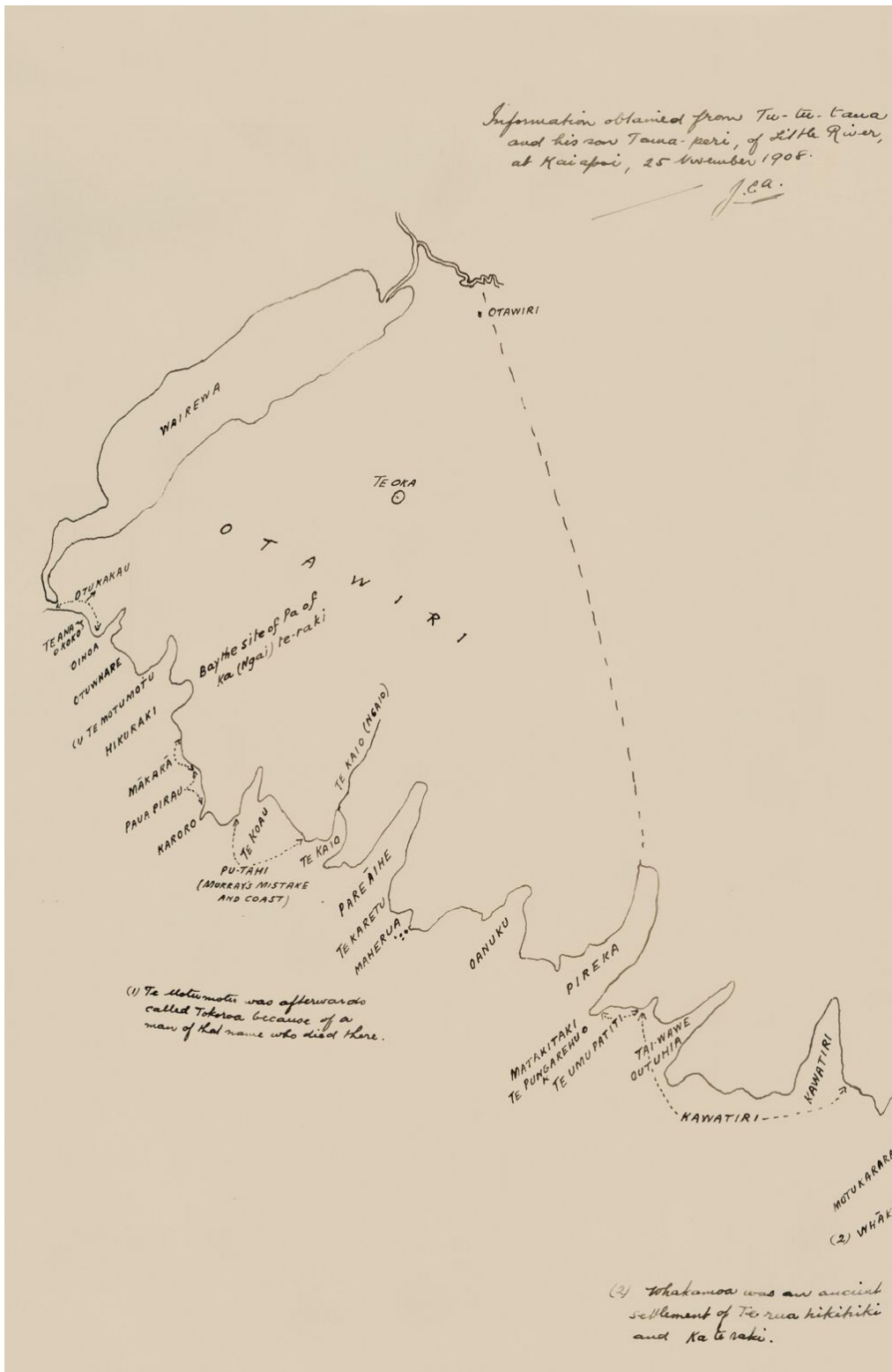
The lands and waters that now comprise the Christchurch district have been occupied and accessed variously by southern Māori of the three main tribal phases. The earliest peoples are regarded as comprising the Waitaha phase, who were succeeded by Ngāti Mamoe. They were followed soon after by those hapū who came to be known as Ngāi Tahu. As a result of cycles of conflict and intermarriage, Ngāi Tahu is an ascription that includes all three tribes.

The main thrust of Ngāi Tahu migration into central Canterbury was led by the hapū, Ngāi Tuhaitara headed by the three sons of Tū-āhu-riri; Taane-Tiki, Moki and Tūrakautahi. Chiefs of Ngāti Kurī also complimented the migration. The waka (canoe) that brought them to the region was the Makawhiua, whose captain was the rangatira (chief), Maka. Once Ngāi Tuhaitara had established Kaiapoi Pā as their principal fort, the assembled leading chiefs such as Maka, Huikai, Turakipō, Te Ake, Hika-tutae, Te Rakiwhakaputa, Whakuku, Makō and Te Ruahikihiki established their mana (authority) to the whenua (land) around Canterbury through occupation and intermarriage.

The coastline of Te tai o Mahaanui acted as a major route for trade and travel, connecting the six Papatipu Runanga of Canterbury. The significance of the coast and cultural, spiritual, historic, and traditional associations for Ngāi Tahu was recognised in coastal Statutory Acknowledgements which accept the mana of Ngāi Tahu. Landscape features often bore the names of tūpuna (ancestors), further illustrating the importance of these places to Māori.

The life supporting capacity of the environs is reflected in the density of known archaeological sites, which demonstrate the extent of habitation and utilisation of a wide variety of resources. Archaeological sites primarily relate to the permanently occupied settlements or kāinga; along with sites of short term or temporary occupation. Some sites and areas of historical occupation are only known about through whakapapa or oral traditions. The main areas of Ngāi Tahu occupation in the Greater Christchurch region were concentrated in coastal areas at Kaiapoi, Akaroa, Wairewa (Little River), Rāpaki, Taumutu and Koukourarata (Port Levy). Today these areas are recognised as distinct takiwā and the relevant Ngāi Tahu Papatipu Rūnanga are acknowledged as the traditional authority.

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Map of Māori place names between Akaroa and Wairewa  
MS7 : Hoani Te Hau Pere Collection : Ngāi Tahu Archive

## ŌTAUTAHI

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While Ōtautahi was formerly the name of a specific site in central Christchurch, it was adopted by Mr. Te Ari Taua Pitama of Ngāi Tūāhuriri as the general name for Christchurch in the 1930s. Before this, Ngāi Tahu generally referred to the Christchurch area by suburb, thus: Pūtaringamotu (Riccarton), Ōpawa, Puāri (Central Christchurch West), Ōtautahi (Central Christchurch East) and Te Kai-a-Te-Karoro (New Brighton). Karaitiana, a Māori transliteration of the English word Christian or Christianity was also a name used by Ngāi Tahu to refer to the whole of Christchurch City.

The attraction of the area now encompassing Christchurch City to Ngāi Tahu whānui was the interconnected network of wetlands, streams, and tributaries. Wetlands, waipuna and hāpua are considered taonga. These were highly treasured as an invaluable source of mahinga kai (food and resource gathering).

During the warmer months of spring to autumn the chiefs including Maka, his brother Huikai, Tu-raki-pō, and Urihia arranged themselves and their people on the outer suburbs of what we now know as the Christchurch CBD. From here, they harvested food from the swamp lands before eventually returning to their principal pā at Kaiapoi for the winter. The two main kāinga nohoanga (village settlements) situated within the CBD area were Tautahi and Puāri Pā, located on the banks of the Ōtākaro (Avon River).

Along with Puāri and Tautahi, the primary settlement areas in the area now covered by Christchurch city were Ihutai, the Ōtākaro and Ōpāwaho corridors, Te Riu o Te Aika Kawa/Brooklands lagoon and Pū-taringa-motu/Riccarton Bush. These were accessed and used by Ngāi Tahu for food gathering and travelling. This is evidenced by the discovery of a significant number of burials and taonga at various locations across the city and its outer reaches.

Archaeological sites are concentrated beside the various river and stream corridors including along former pathways of the Waimakariri River. Significant site recordings are also located in and near lagoons and estuaries. Te Riu o Te Aika Kawa/Brooklands lagoon, Pūharakekenui/The Styx river and Kā Putahi/Kaputone Creek are home to many recorded middens and umu (firepits) indicating a series of nohoanga (encampments) evidencing the seasonal harvesting of resources. Other kāinga taupua (temporary village) sites have no physical evidence remaining and their former locations are only known through whakapapa and stories.

An abundance of kai (food) was available to Māori along the Canterbury coastline and from estuarine environments. Sites around Te Ihutai also contain evidence of significant settlement and the accessing of resources. When Māori arrived, Te Ihutai would have been an open bay and the coastal dunes we are familiar with today were only just forming. Te Karoro Karoro/New Brighton Spit was formed following a change in position of the Waimakariri River between 1250-1500AD.

Te Kai a te Karoro Pā and various other sites containing evidence of utilisation of Te Karoro are known through historical record, but no physical indication of this pā remains today. Radiocarbon dating has shown that the area was occupied between the 14th and 16th centuries. Remains of this pā were reportedly still visible into the 20th century, but subsequent development has removed all remaining physical evidence. Te Ihutai remained an important mahinga kai for mana whenua, with large scale eel weirs along the shoreline of Te Karoro still being evident today.



The kāinga at Menzies Bay (at left) in an 1889 painting  
 Photograph of painting by J. Gibb. Image from Brailsford, 1981.

Te Karoro, Sumner and the neighbouring valleys would have likely abounded with plant and animal resources. This area was once rich in shellfish, flatfish and birdlife and was a famous source of eels, waterfowl, and various types of harakeke. Fish species taken in the area would have included tuna, kanakana, patiki, tuere (blind eel), and inanga. Kēkēwai (freshwater crayfish) and birds such as putangitangi (paradise shelduck) and parera (grey duck) were taken from the surrounding swamps. Plant species taken included aruhe (fern root).

Evidence of occupation is concentrated along the southern shoreline of Te Ihutai/Avon Heathcote Estuary and is associated with the caves and rock shelters of the Port Hills. Raekura/Redcliffs and Moa Bone Cave were occupied mid-late 14th century into the 15th century. Moncks Cave has also yielded significant archaeological material denoting occupation in the 11th and 12th centuries with frequent further occupation into the late 14th and 15th centuries. Geological, pollen and micro-fossil analysis has also suggested that Sumner was an area of cultivation.

The Canterbury Museum holds many important taonga Māori that have been recovered from streams, rivers and coastlines in these locations.

## THE CANTERBURY PURCHASE

Traditional Ngāi Tahu tribal authority in Christchurch was altered forever in 1848 when the Canterbury Purchase was signed. The purchase agreement had devastating consequences for Ngāi Tahu. Importantly, the rangatira who signed the agreement believed that their mahinga kai would be set apart for them as stated in the Māori text of the Deed. However, the meaning of the term 'mahinga kai' was interpreted differently in the English and Māori versions: Ngāi Tahu interpreted mahinga kai to mean all places from which food and resources were gathered whereas the English translation narrowly defined mahinga kai as "cultivations."

In 1868 the Native Land Court met in Canterbury and specific claims made by Ngāi Tahu regarding key locations within Christchurch City were heard. On 28 April 1868, multiple claims were dismissed by the Court on account of the lands having been previously sold by the Crown. Over 100 years later, these claims were again brought as part of the wider Ngāi Tahu Claim (Wai 27).



## TE PĀTAKA O RĀKAIHAUTŪ

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The Māori Settlement, Purau Bay, Port Cooper  
Richard Aldworth Oliver

*Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū; purchased with assistance from the Olive Stirrat Bequest, 1983*

Whanau, hapū, and the Rūnanga have deep ancestral roots to the area, encompassing the three main tribal phases of history and movements. These roots reach back into deep ancestral times where southern Māori worldviews posit that Te Waipounamu was formed when Aoraki and his waka fell from the sky and were unable to return. Rakinui the Sky Father sent several atua, headed by Tūterakiwhanoa, to undertake formational tasks to prepare the newly created whenua for humans, animals and vegetation. In the case of Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū/Banks Peninsula, Tūterakiwhanoa is figuratively thought to have swept the plains and piled material to form the Peninsula. He remains the Atua Tiaki (supreme guardian) for Te Waihora.

Another version sees Maui facing off against a giant, and having overcome him, put him in the sea and piled the rocks on top of him which forms the peninsula. The giant attempting to move from under the pile caused the radial splits that form Akaroa harbour, Wakaroi/Pigeon Bay and the Wairewa catchment. Whichever the method of landscape formation, the wealth of natural resources found within the densely forest environment and sheltered rocky harbours of Te Pātaka a Rākaihautū set the scene for a sustained way of life for southern Māori that revolved around the concept of mahinga kai, trade and kinship.



Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū offered the rich fishing grounds of the many bays and large harbours, straddled by an immense Totara-dominated podocarp forest abundant with birdlife and a multitude of plant resources. These were utilised for building, weaving and rongoā (Māori medicine). Key kai moana such as pāua, kūtai, pipi, tuaki, tio, kina, shark, pātiki, hāpuka, makā, pākirikiri, hoka, kōura and many other fish species abounded. While the plentiful streams provided īnaka, tuna, freshwater mussels and other resources.

As to the tribal history ascribed to the harbour regarding the populating of the area, the earliest phase within cultural memory describes the travels and arrival of the Waitaha people led by Rākaihautū. Rākaihautū is famed for carving the biggest lakes of the South Island using his enchanted kō named Tūwhakaroria. After exploring the whole of Te Waipounamu, Rākaihautū and his son Rokohuia had a reunion in south Canterbury, eventually arriving at Banks Peninsula. Here, Rākaihautū sculpted two more lakes, Te Kete Ika a Rākaihautū, and Te Roto o Wairewa. After Rākaihautū finished carving the island, he planted his kō into Tuhiraki, the mountain known by the Pākehā as Mt Bossu, which stands directly across the harbour from Ōnuku Marae and is the prominent peak in Akaroa Harbour. Rākaihautū thus named Banks Peninsula 'Te Pātaka a Rākaihautū', (the storehouse of Rākaihautū), in recognition of the abundance of food sources in the area.

The migration story of Ngāi Tahu from the east coast of the North Island to Canterbury is often told through the oral tradition of the accounts of Moki and his elder brother Tūrākautahi. Moki was the war chief of the expedition that would see the northern and eastern bays of Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū conquered, along with the hill ranges that comprise the Port Levy and Kaituna catchments and Waikakahi near Birdlings Flat. The principal chiefs of the expedition Moki, Te Ake, Te Rakitaurewa, Mako, Te Ruahikihiki and others would each claim portions of Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū.

The Pā at Rāpaki was established by Te Rakiwhakaputa, who settled his people here to catch pioke (sand shark). Patiki (flounder), pipi, papaka (mud crabs), hoka (red cod), koiro (Conger eel), mussels and tuangi (cockles) were just some of the kai harvested. Rāpaki became a central mahinga kai due to the abundance of resources within the harbour. The harvest of pioke was restricted to two days of the year and this was strictly enforced. A violation of these controls would lead to confiscation of property.

Several generations later, hapū from a number of the settlements on Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū would be engaged in a civil war of sorts, known to Ngāi Tahu historians as the Kaihuanga feud. This would be followed by the principal Māori settlements being subject to tragic events at the hands of northern iwi on punitive expeditions. The presence of Ngāi Tahu whanau of various hapū persists at Rapaki, Koukourarata, Ōnuku and Wairewa.

In terms of the archaeological recording of ancestral Māori occupation, the distribution of Pā is generally limited to the edge of bays and at regular distances along the coastline. This reflects the limitations of the steep topography and the need to access resources. There are numerous recorded fortified Pā on the Peninsula the complexity of Pā fortification varying between sites. Rīpapa Pā was constructed in 1830 by Taununu and was the first Ngāi Tahu Pā designed for musket warfare.

Ōnawe and Rīpapa Pā were large and heavily fortified with extensive earthworks. Ōkaruru Pa contained both ditch and bank fortifications as well as evidence of kumara cultivation. Some sites of permanent occupation have not left evidence of built fortifications. Other sites that were occupied seasonally are represented by midden and oven sites, but no evidence of fortifications or structures have been found. Midden analysis at Panau showed that the economy was largely based on marine resources. Barracouta lure points indicates targeting of that species, while a scarcity of moa remains show the species was already rare or extinct in Banks Peninsula around the 14th century. Whangakai was also used as a whaling station as were Puari and Te Kaio/Tumbledown Bay.

Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū was generally suitable for kumara production due to the sea providing warmer temperatures and reducing frosts. Gravel and sand were added to trap heat in linear patterns which are still visible. Very few sites have been investigated through archaeological measures. Surface features of pits and gravel inclusions are generally indicative of kumara production. Kiri Wairea/Menzies Bay was one such kāinga with a kumara garden, canoe landing and karaka grove.

## **THE BANKS PENINSULA PURCHASE**

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The Banks Peninsula claims consisted of three ‘purchases’ by the Crown (Port Cooper 1849, Port Levy 1849, and Akaroa 1856). The background against which these three Deeds were signed is complicated. The French claimed to have purchased the land from Ngāi Tahu by way of two deeds of sale in 1838 and 1840. At the same time the Crown was asserting that not only were the French Deeds invalid, but that the land Ngāi Tahu claimed to own had already been sold to the Crown under Kemp’s Deed.

When it became apparent that Ngāi Tahu did not accept that either the French or the Crown had secured the title to Banks Peninsula, Governor Grey sent Walter Mantell to settle the matter. In short, Mantell was to secure the Crown title to the land and to dispose of any Ngāi Tahu interest in the land as expediently as possible.

The discussions between Mantell and Ngāi Tahu were difficult and protracted but eventually Ngāi Tahu were persuaded to sign the Port Levy and Port Cooper Deeds in 1849 (the Waitangi Tribunal upheld the Ngāi Tahu claim that both of those Deeds represented forced sales).

Mantell’s unsatisfactory 1849 offer to extinguish Ngāi Tahu title to Akaroa was firmly rejected due to his refusal to set aside about 30,000 acres on the southern end of Banks Peninsula. It wasn’t until 1856, after a further round of negotiations, Ngāi Tahu signed the Akaroa Deed.

Under these three purchase deeds, Ngāi Tahu was forced to concede title to 251,500 acres in return for £700, were left with 3,426 acres of reserves, resulting in alienation and displacement from most of their land.

## KAITŌRETE

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According to Southern Māori pūrākau (legends), tradition and history, the geomorphology, hydrology and associated environs and habitats were all brought into being by atua, as per the Tūterakiwhanoa, Aoraki and Maui lore. Many other whakapapa and pūrākau come into play when understanding the mana whenua regard for Kaitōrete. One such pūrākau is the story of Tuna.

Tuna was originally a deity who descended from the heavens to escape the heat from the sun. On arrival he went into a pool of water at Muriwai Ōwhata/Coopers lagoon and stayed there. Hine-te-Kaere went to the pool and was touched by the tail of Tuna. She returned home and told her husband Maui what had happened. Her people came to the place where she had seen tuna and they devised a strategy to destroy him. Using tororaro vine they wove a basket to catch tuna. A deep drain was dug, and the basket set where the water flowed fastest. When the current was strong, Tuna entered the eel basket and was pulled ashore. Maui slay Tuna and cut his body into portions. His head and tail were cast out to sea becoming the conger eel, blind eel and lamprey. The central portion was cast inland becoming freshwater eels.

Prior to the hapū of Ngāi Tahu, whanau and hapū of the Waitaha and Ngāti Mamoe tribal phases are known to have been present on and through Kaitōrete. Kaitōrete is a known kainga nohoanga (settlement), ara tawhito (ancestral trailway) and mahinga kai. There are also various wāhi tapu identified. Radio-carbon dates indicating timeframes within the 15th and 16th centuries for archaeological sites pertaining to mahinga kai. Many of these identified sites are situated along the coastal edge of the spit.

One interesting interpretation of the name draws attention to inclusion of alternative Māori word for Kakariki (*Cyanoraphus sp.* – Yellow or Orange-fronted Parakeets) via *torete*. Kaitōrete (spit including the “... district between the two lakes...” is in the vicinity of Kaituna, denoting an area and trailway that leads to, waters of abundant tuna (*Anguilla sp.* – Long and Short-finned eels). Kaitorete is also home to raranga and rongoa resources. Along with access points to Te Waihora and coastal fisheries, Kaitōrete was part of an immense trailway linking the settlements of south Canterbury to Te Waihora and Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū.

Evison's (2003) report goes on to conclude that Kaitorete was a major kainga nohoanga and mahinga kai for Ngāti Mako at Wairewa, Ngāti Irakehu of Wainui and Ngāi Te Ruahikihiki of Taumutu. Burrows (1969) acknowledges the immense dune system that would have been present for the last couple of millennia and known to Māori. The spit would have been dominantly vegetated with Silver Tussock, *Notodanthonia unarede*, *Muehlenbeckia complexa*, bracken and Matagouri along with dominant stands of Pingao being the main plant on the sand dunes.

The explorer/scout brothers Kaiapu and Te Makino, who traversed the entire length of Te Waipounamu and returned to Te Whanganui a Tara/Wellington harbour to give information to Ngāi Tahu rangatira Te Ruahikihiki reported; "We saw Kaitōrete, a plain, and Te Waihora, a lake...". This is thought to have occurred during the late 17th century or early in the 18th century.

In the early 19th century hapū of Ngāi Tahu were enveloped in internal conflict, known as the Kaihuanga feud. Several episodes concern Kaitōrete, where forces traversed and combated. Along with the travels of the people of the pā and emissaries. The people of Taumutu maintain that, after this phase of tribal history, a Ngāti Toa force came down Kaitōrete and attempted to force passage past the pā.

Most importantly it should be noted that Kaitōrete, by Ngāi Tahu reckoning, was never sold to the Crown. Historical accounts provide firm evidence of this assertion. Kaitōrete was defended and claimed for within various legal settings by kaumatua from Wairewa and Taumutu Rūnanga.

## **KAITŌRETE CLAIM**

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In 1868 Ngāi Tahu claimed ownership of Kaitōrete during the 1868 Native Land Court hearings in Christchurch, on the basis that it was a place of occupation for their ancestors and that it had never been sold. Judge Francis Dart Fenton dismissed the claim, stating that Kemp's Deed included Kaitōrete, although he acknowledged the importance of Kaitōrete to Ngāi Tahu.

## MAHINGA KAI

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Mahinga kai can be interpreted as mahi (work) nga (the) kai (food). It refers to the food itself as well as the area from which it is sourced. Mahinga kai was central to the economic and cultural wealth of the rūnanga. Every bay in the Peninsula had a particular kai, which meant each rūnanga had a 'mana kai'. This was food that they were famous for. Takiwā were recognised for these distinct local specialities. This included pioke from Rāpaki, hua kāki anau (black swan eggs) from Taumutu, and mussels (kutai) from Koukourarata.

The provision of this mana kai for manuhiri (guests) was important for maintaining mana (prestige) through the expressions of manaakitanga (hospitality). Providing the best foods available showed respect for the visitors while upholding the mana of the group itself. This is still relevant today in the provision of mahinga kai for hui and tangihanga. Being unable to manaaki manuhiri through the provision of food is a serious reflection on the mana of the people and their marae.

With mana whenua rights to a resource come the responsibility for sustainable management. This responsibility is encompassed through kaitiakitanga. Kaitiakitanga refers to the stewardship of taonga species and places. This extends to caring for the spiritual as well as physical well-being of a site or species. The ultimate aim of kaitiakitanga is protection of mauri (essence/life force). All elements of the environment possess this life force, and all forms of life are related. Mauri is a critical element of the spiritual relationship of Ngāi Tahu whānui with the coast and its resources.

Ngāi Tahu see all resources as having an intricate relationship. An activity may not impact directly on a resource but may negatively affect other factors important to Ngāi Tahu. The principle of Ki Uta Ki Tai, 'from the mountains to the sea', encompasses the holistic nature of traditional resource management and recognises the relationship of all elements within a catchment through whakapapa.

Now, as in the past, the ability to have access and control over mahinga kai is an expression of Māori customary rights. Māori can participate in the practices of their tupuna (ancestors) while reinforcing traditional values. The act of managing and caring for taonga species and their living environment further emphasizes rights to the resource. Continued access strengthens rights and controls through ahi kā (continued occupation and resource use).

A variety of marine mammal bones have been found in middens along the coastline. These include remnants of kekeno (fur seal), upokohue (Hector's dolphin), aihe (common dolphin) and whales. Tuatara was also once widespread across Waitaha, and bones have been found in middens at Te Kaio/Tumbledown bay, and Raekura/Redcliffs.

Kai-hau-kai was a system of food exchange that allowed for hapū to have variety of foods while maintaining social cohesions. It served as a time to strengthen whanaungatanga (kinship relationships) and political alliances. Kaiapoi Pā served as a central trading base for kai-hau-kai. To not reciprocate was a matter of shame and loss of tikanga. The seasonal cultivation, gathering and exchanging of food established and reinforced whanau links in the present and with the past.

Mahinga kai of the coastline is still of enormous importance to Ngāi Tahu whānui, as it often encompasses specific sites and taonga species that are often the last places mana whenua can exercise their customary rights and authority. Heavy modification from human development such as discharge of waste to waterways, has led to increased vulnerability for species and habitats and lack of access for mana whenua to traditional sites.

