

Tōpuni of Ngāi Tahu

Ngāi Tahu Deed of Settlement Act 1998

Who are Ngāi Tahu?

Ngāi Tahu is a South Island iwi. Their takiwā (ancestral land) is defined by the Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu Act 1996 as being all the area of Te Wai Pounamu south of the northernmost boundaries confirmed by a decision of the Maori Appellate Court in 1990. The takiwā covers most of the South Island (excluding northern segment), and the islands to the south including Stewart Island/Rakiura and other islands. The Crown's settlement with Ngāi Tahu (Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 and Deed of Settlement 1997) included recognition of the special traditional relationship Ngāi Tahu have with the natural environment. Tikanga (customs) relating to the use and management of natural resources are an essential part of the unique culture and identity which defines Ngāi Tahu as an iwi. The cultural redress elements of the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 and Deed of Settlement 1997, introduced the concept of Tōpuni, to give practical effect to Ngāi Tahu's kaitiaki (guardian) responsibilities.

What is a Tōpuni?

The concept of Tōpuni comes from the traditional Ngāi Tahu custom of rangatira (chiefs) extending their mana (power and authority) over areas or people by placing their cloak over them. The Tōpuni cloak was invariably made from the kurī or Māori dog. This distinguished those who wore such cloaks from all others and represented the highest order of mana. Tōpuni provides a public symbol of Ngāi Tahu manawhenua and rangatiratanga over some of the most prominent landscape features and conservation areas in Te Wai Pounamu/South Island. It is an enduring symbol of the tribe's commitment to conserving areas of high natural and historic values, as well as ensuring an active role for Ngāi Tahu in the management of these areas. Tōpuni has been laid over 14 areas of public conservation land of significance to Ngāi Tahu.

Aoraki/Mt Cook

To Ngāi Tahu, Aoraki is the most sacred of ancestors, from whom Ngāi Tahu descends and who provides the iwi with its sense of communal identity, solidarity and purpose. The ancestor embodied in the mountain remains the physical manifestation of Aoraki, the link between the supernatural and the natural world. The tapu associated with Aoraki is

significant to the tribal value, and is the source of the power over life and death, which the mountain possesses.

Aoraki (cloud in the sky) was one of the four sons of Raki (sky father), who travelled down to explore Papatuanuku in a canoe known as Te Waka o Aoraki. When they tried to return to their celestial home, their canoe overturned on a hidden reef and turned to stone. The whole waka formed the South Island.



Aoraki and his brothers clambered on to the high side and were turned to stone, and are still there today. Ngāi Tahu seek to encourage respect for their association with Aoraki by providing information to climbers and guides, explaining that standing on the very top of this mountain denigrates its tapu status.

Kia tuohu koutou, Me he maunga teitei, Ko Aoraki anake.

If you must bow your head, then let it be to the lofty mountain Aoraki.

Kahurangi

Kahurangi within Kahurangi National Park is a distinctive and significant landmark to Ngāi Tahu, marking the extreme north western point of the tribal takiwā (boundaries). The name Kahurangi – Te Kahu o te Rangi – translates as the blue skies of Rangi (sky father) as this part of the coast is known for its clear skies.

Kahurangi was a natural landing point for seafarers travelling south by waka, to stop and prepare for the next stage of their journey where there were few safe landing sites. Such tauranga waka (landing places) represent the intimate knowledge the tūpuna (ancestors) had of navigation, river routes, safe harbours and landing places and the locations of food and other resources.



Tititea/Mt Aspiring



Kura Tāwhiti/Castle Hill

Ōtūkoro Iti

Located within Kahurangi National Park, the name Ōtūkoro Iti relates to a battle between Ngāi Tahu and Ngāti Rarua (a hapu of Ngāti Toa – one of Ngāi Tahu's northern neighbours), which took place in this area in the 1820s. As a result of the blood spilt and loss of life here during the battle, and the significance of the Ngāi Tahu victory, Ōtūkoro Iti is now regarded as a wāhi tapu site. Such places hold the memories, traditions, victories and defeats of Ngāi Tahu's ancestors. It is also the northern-most of Ngāi Tahu's traditional settlements and closest to the tribal boundary of Kahurangi.

Kura Tāwhiti/Castle Hill

The limestone formations of Kura Tāwhiti/Castle Hill dominate the high tussock basin in which it sits, bordered by the Torlesse Range to the east and the Craigieburn Range to the west. Hidden amongst the limestone outcrops are traces of 500-year-old charcoal drawings, left behind by Waitaha the first people to shelter here.

Kura Tāwhiti was claimed by the Ngāi Tahu ancestor Tane Tiki, son of the celebrated chief Tuahuriri. The nearby mountains were famed for kākāpō and Tane Tiki wanted their soft skins and glowing green feathers for clothing for his daughter Hine Mihi.

Ngāi Tuahuriri hapū are the current guardians over these lands; they are centred at Tuahiwi, near the ancestral pā at Kaiapoi. The area was well used mahinga kai area for Kaipoi Ngāi Tahu, and an integral part of a network of trails for hunting and gathering.

Tititea/Mt Aspiring

As with all principle maunga (mountains), Tititea is regarded as an important link to the primeval parents Rangi (Raki) and Papa. Tititea is a prominent and majestic peak, clearly viewed from a number of vantage points in the south, and as such plays an important role in many of Ngāi Tahu's stories and legends.

The Bonar Glacier is known as Hukairoroa Tā Parekiore. Parekiore was a giant who used to stalk up and down the country, taking tītī northwards and returning with kūmara. The lakes represent his footprints, and splashes froze into glaciers.

Tūtoko

The Fiordland area in which Tūtoko stands, represents in tradition, the raised up sides of Te Waka o Aoraki, after it foundered on a submerged reef and its occupants, Aoraki and his brothers, were turned to stone.

Tūtoko is not the original name of the mountain, but refers to an old rangatira (chief) Tūtoko. Tūtoko was an important rangatira of this region in the 1860s and is represented by the mountain.

Tūtoko is the kaitiaki (guardian) of southern settlements and important pounamu (greenstone) trails. Mountains such as Tūtoko are linked in whakapapa to the gods and parents Rangi and Papa.

Pikirakatahi/Mt Earnslaw

Pikirakatahi (Mt Earnslaw) is said to be created during the time of Te Waka o Aoraki, and tūpuna (ancestor) Tū Te Rakiwhānoa, when a wedge of pounamu was inserted into the highest peak of the region. Pikirakatahi stands as kaitiaki (guardian) over the local pounamu resource, and marks the end of a trail. Staging camps for the retrieval of pounamu were located at the base of the mountain, while semi-permanent settlements relating to the trade were located closer to Whakatipu-wai-māori (Lake Wakatipu). The retrieval of large amounts of pounamu from this area, so far inland and over a range of physical barriers, attest to the importance of this resource to the economy and customs of iwi over many generations.

Te Koroka/Dart/Slipstream

When Captain Cook moored in Dusky Sound, he and his men were told by local Māori of a giant in the interior that emits pounamu (greenstone) from its mouth. This was Te Koroka, which looks, from the right vantage point, like a reclining giant. The slip from which pounamu is actually gathered is known as Te Horo.

Staging camps for the retrieval of pounamu were located at the base of the mountain, while semipermanent settlements relating to the trade were located closer to the lakes. Pounamu transported back to coastal settlements was fashioned into tools,

ornaments and weapons. The actual area from which pounamu was collected, is now, and was in traditional times, under a tapu until an appropriate karakia (incantation) and ceremony was performed to permit access and retrieval of the taonga that was of the highest value to iwi. The area is largely unmodified since it was last visited by the ancestors and is a taonga to be treasured. Access is not permitted to the area without a special permit.

Takitimu Range

The Takitimu maunga (mountains) in Southland were named after Tamatea, the captain of the Takitimu waka (canoe) in memory of the waka after it struck trouble in the Te Waewae Bay and was eventually wrecked near the mouth of the Waimeha stream. In some accounts, the ranges inland from Te Waewae Bay are likened to the huge waves that caused the demise of the waka. In other accounts the mountains are considered to be the upturned hull of the waka. The Takitimu maunga are a symbolic reminder of the famous exploits of Tamatea in the south and a reminder forever locked into the landscape of the tūpuna (ancestral) waka, Takitimu. The range is visible from all points of the Murihiku landscape, and is also a noted weather indicator.

Motupōhue/Bluff Hill

The name Motupōhue is an ancient one, brought south by Ngāti Mamoe and Ngāi Tahu from the Hawkes Bay region where both tribes originated. Oral traditions say that the Ngāti Mamoe leader, Te Rakitauneke, is buried upon this hill. Some traditions also place another Ngāti Mamoe leader, Tū Te Makohu, on this hill. For Ngāi Tahu, histories such as these represent the links and continuity between past and present generations, reinforce tribal identity, and solidarity and document the events which shaped Ngāi Tahu as an iwi.

Maukaatua

West of the Taieri Plains, stands Maukaatau, a prominent feature guarding the interior of Otago. Travellers by sea, along the lower Taieri or travelling inland or returning to the coast could not escape the gaze of Maukaatau. The maunga was likened to a sleeping giant and was said to be the source of strange noises in particular winds or weather. Maukaatau is an ancient name brought to Te Wai Pounamu from distant homelands, and is one of a number of Māori place names that reappear in a similar form elsewhere in the Pacific Islands and into Indonesia. The name serves as a reminder of the links between Ngāi Tahu and their whānaunga of Te Moana Nui a Kiwa (the great Ocean of Kiwa – the Pacific Ocean).

Matakaea/Shag Point

The name Matakaea recalls the tradition of the Arai Te Uru canoe, which capsized off Moeraki. The crew managed to swim ashore, leaving the cargo to be washed ashore. The crew members fled inland, and were transformed into mountains. The Arai Te Uru canoe is said to have carried kūmara from Hawaiiki to Aotearoa, along with the karakia (incantations) and tikanga (customs) connected with planting it successfully.

The Matakaea area has been occupied for many centuries and is the site of numerous urupā and wāhi tapu. Urupā are the resting places of Ngāi Tahu tūpuna (ancestors) and as such are the focus for whānau traditions.

Ripapa

Tucked close against the southern shore of Whakaraupo/Lyttelton Harbour, the small island of Ripapa was an ideal site for a fortified pā. Taununu, a Ngāi Tahu chief who had moved south from Kaikoura, built a pā here in the early nineteenth century, and several skirmishes were fought on its shores.

In the 1820s, Taununu became involved in fighting an inter-tribal war against related Ngāi Tahu hapū, known as the Kai Huanga (eat relatives) feud. An arranged marriage between the feuding groups, and the need to unite against the threat of Te Rauparaha in the early 1830s brought an end to the internal fighting. In 1832, the pā fell to Te Rauparaha and it was never occupied by Ngāi Tahu again. This island is of special significance to Ngāi Tahu as a place of memories and traditions associated with these skirmishes and the ancestors who died in them. The hapū of Ngāti Wheke based at Rapaki are the current guardians of Ripapa.

Tapuae o Uenuku

The name Tapuae o Uenuku refers to the sacred footsteps of Uenuku, one of the principle Ngāi Tahu atua (gods), who is represented as a rainbow. Uenuku is often found in tribal traditions as the tūpuna (ancestor) who instigates the migration from Hawaiiki to New Zealand. In one tradition, Uenuku is portrayed as one of the survivors of the Arai Te Uru waka that foundered at Moeraki. Uenuku fled north and turned to stone on the spot where the mountain now stands. In Ngāi Tahu oratory, Tapuae o Uenuku is likened to an overarching portal that must be crossed by all visitors from the North Island. Visitors to the takiwā of Ngāi Tahu are welcomed as Ngā Tapuae o Uenuku – those whose feet have been made sacred by passing beneath Uenuku.

