Working with Ōnuku Rūnanga

Christchurch City Council is working closely with Ōnuku Rūnanga, to ensure they have the opportunity to share their potential land use ideas for the site for consideration alongside others from the community. Ōnuku have provided the following cultural narrative to provide context for this consultation.

The Akaroa Butchery site at 67 Rue Lavaud, Akaroa lies within the takiwā of the Ngai Tahu hapū of Ngāti Irakēhu and Ngāi Tārewa who are represented by Ōnuku Rūnanga. The land is part of Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū or 'the great food store house of Rākaihautū' which was named as testament to the work of the tipuna, Rākaihautu, and in recognition of the abundance of food and resources found there. The māhinga kai values of the peninsula have always been highly valued by manawhenua and continue to form an important part of the identity of Ngāti Irakēhu and Ngāi Tārewa today.

The importance of the natural landscape of Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū to manawhenua is recorded in the whakapapa and history of the early Waitaha and Ngāti Māmoe settlers, the earliest of whom occupied the peninsula seven or eight hundred years ago. These tīpuna laid their whakapapa on the area, naming many features of the natural landscape and coastal environment after important events, tīpuna and atua. When Ngāi Tahu moved south from the North Island in the 18th century many intermarried with people of these earlier tribes, adopting many of their traditions. Some placenames of Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū also originate from the period of Ngāi Tahu ascendancy.

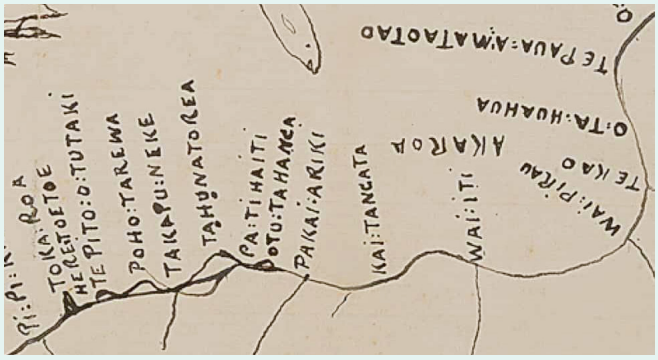
The Akaroa Butchery site is bounded to the northeast by the Wai-iti (Balguerie) Stream, which is one of several waterways including Te Kao, Ōinako, Pākai-ariki, and Waipirau that flow through the present-day Akaroa township into the harbour. In 1908 well-known Ngāi Tahu leader, scholar, and authority on Ngāi Tahu place names, Teone Taare Tikao recorded Wai-iti on a map he drew of the harbour. Wai-iti was also recorded in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by several Pākehā ethnographers who learned it directly from Ngāi Tahu informants.

Traditional oral evidence suggests that the area now known as French Bay was an important place of Māori occupation in earlier times. This is substantiated by early Pakehā reports of extensive areas of fern and scrub, an indication of Māori gardens in the bay. The extent of Ngāi Tahu use of the Akaroa Butchery site itself is unknown however the entire harbour area was utilised for mahinga kai and signs of Māori occupation and activity are evident in the archaeological record with several shell middens recorded nearby (N36/254 and N36/196). By the mid-1830s, and Pākehā arrival, the main Māori settlement in Akaroa harbour was Ōnuku, however 'French Bay' became an important place of cross-cultural interaction between Ngāi Tahu and the new arrivals when the French settlement was established there.

The Akaroa Butchery site was a key part of the French town centre established in 1840. Buildings including the Nanto Bordelaise Company store, the residences of Belligny, Lavaud, and Langlois, and the French naval gardens were also in the immediate area. Important discussions between Ngāi Tahu chiefs and French and British officials would almost certainly have taken place on the Akaroa Butchery site or in proximity (further research is required) – for example, in 1845 Belligny seeking to complete the Nanto Bordelaise Company's purchase met with 400 Ngāi Tahu who reportedly trod on his garden when he offered goods rather than cash for their land; and in December 1849 the final payment for Kemp's Deed (the Canterbury purchase) was made to Ngāi Tahu chiefs in the garden of Resident Magistrate John Watson whose land was to the immediate east of the Akaroa Butchery site.

French settlement of the Akaroa area and the later claiming of the land by the English had devastating consequences for Ngāi Tahu. Most of the land in Akaroa harbour was taken up by French and British settlers before it had even been sold by its Ngāi Tahu owners. The Akaroa Deed was signed at Akaroa on 10 December 1856. Initially, Ngāi Tahu rangātira had rejected the Crown's offer to purchase Akaroa however, in 1856 they were persuaded to sign a document that surrendered a vast area to the Crown for a miserly sum. The Akaroa Deed used vague language, did not describe the extent of the land being sold, did not include a deed plan, and gave a very broad description of the vendors. As the historian Harry Evison has said, the Akaroa Deed was virtually incoherent. Under the Akaroa Deed, three reserves were granted to Ngāi Tahu at Ōnuku, Ōpukutahi and Wairewa. In addition to the reserves, the rangātira were paid £150 in silver coin.

The effective confiscation of their lands removed the ability of our tipuna to cultivate food and thus to trade. Ngāi Tahu had no option but to take jobs working for the newly arrived Pākehā settlers who were establishing farms on what had been Māori land. As such, any opportunity, should be embraced to acknowledge Ngāi Tahu history, values, and aspirations on whenua that was unjustly 'purchased' in the nineteenth century – this includes the Akaroa Butchery site.



Detail from Teone Taare Tikao map of Akaroa (1908) showing the Ngāi Tahu placenames recorded within 'French Bay' including Wai-iti which was later named Balguerie Stream. MS-7, Johannes Andersen Collection, Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.