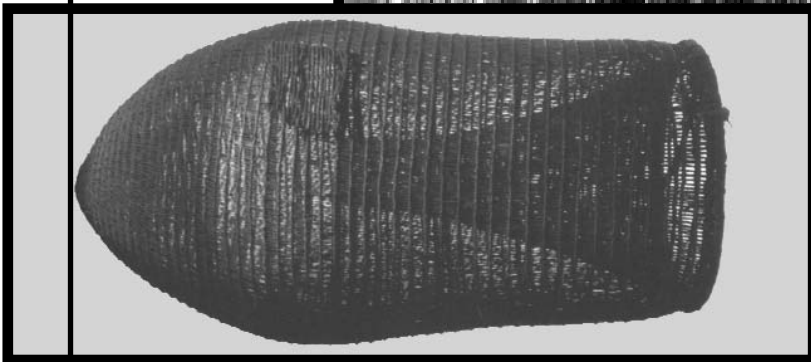


Auckland Museum

TE MAHI KAI
Maori Food Gathering

education kit

Tamaki Paenga Hira



BACKGROUND NOTES YEARS 1 TO 10

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	<i>page</i>
About this Resource	1
Booking Information	1
Introduction	2
SECTION 1	
Background Notes	3
SECTION 2	
Curriculum Links	
SECTION 3	
Gallery Activity Sheets	7

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE:

This resource is designed to support Social Studies classes of all levels, and may also be used by teachers of science, history and technology.

Further resources are available, dealing with:

- He Taonga Maori (Maori Treasures)*
- Te Ao Kohatu O Te Maori (Maori Technology)*
- Te Ao Turoa (Maori Natural History)*
- Whakaraka (traditional Maori games and pastimes)*
- Whakairo Tuturu Maori (carving)*
- Tukutuku Tuturu Maori*
- Kowhaiwhai Tuturu Maori*
- Raranga Tuturu Maori (weaving)*

Adult/child interaction is important to maximise your museum experience. Group leaders need to have some background knowledge of what the students are expected to cover and they are advised to participate in the introduction on arrival.

BOOKING INFORMATION:

All school visits to the museum must be booked. We advise booking 2–3 months in advance.

Numbers:

He Taonga Maori Galleries
90 maximum (including adults)

Hands-On Sessions
35 maximum students.

Adult/child ratio:

Y 1–4	1:6
Y 5–6	1:7
Y 7–8	1:10
Y 9–10	1:30

Booking:

Contact the Museum School Bookings Officer at:
Private Bag 92018 Auckland
Phone: (09) 306 7040
Fax: (09) 306 7075

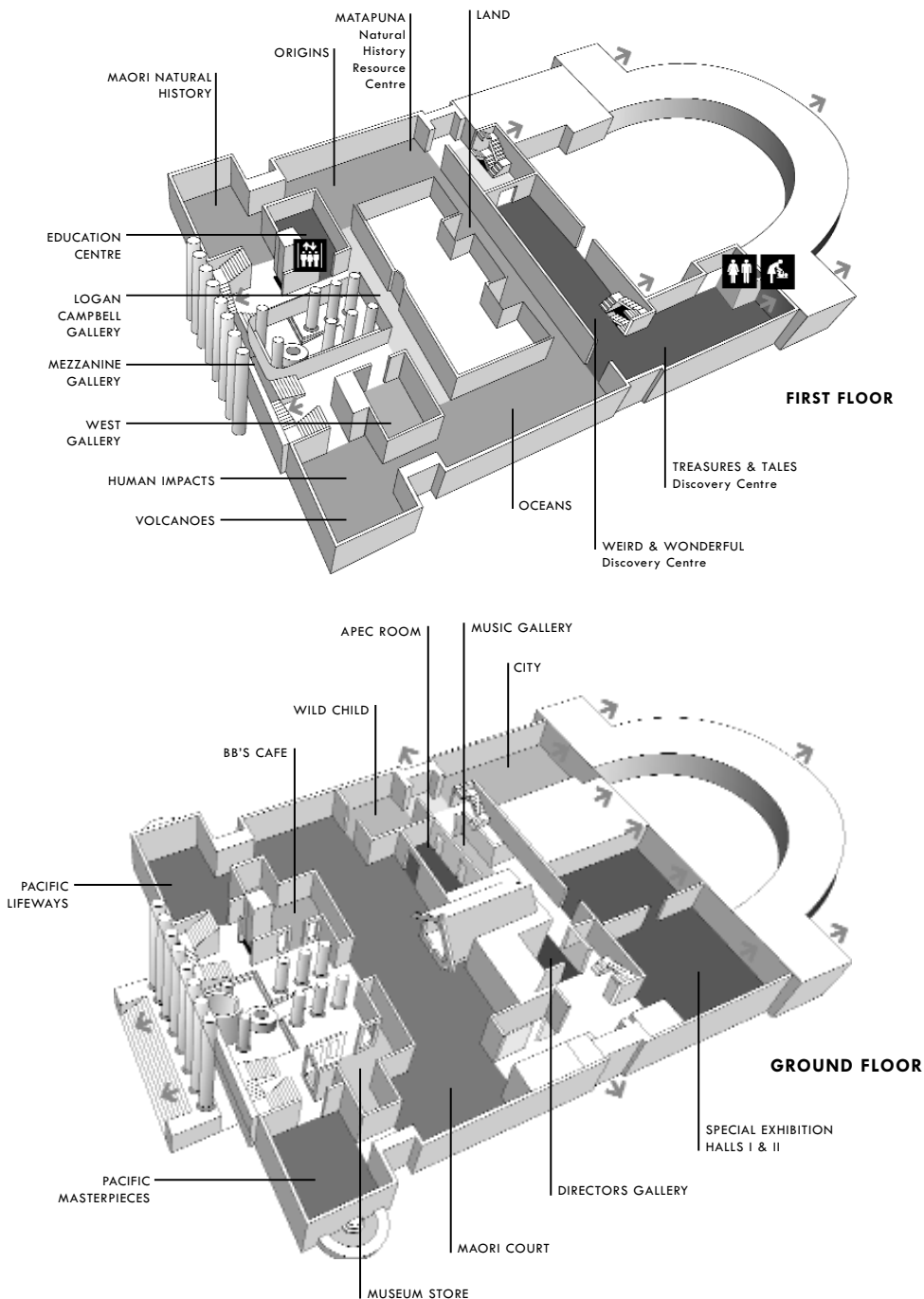
Introductions and Hands-on Sessions facilitated by Education Staff are available. Please ask the School Bookings Officer for more information.

Auckland Museum Education kits may be downloaded free at www.aucklandmuseum.com

Introduction

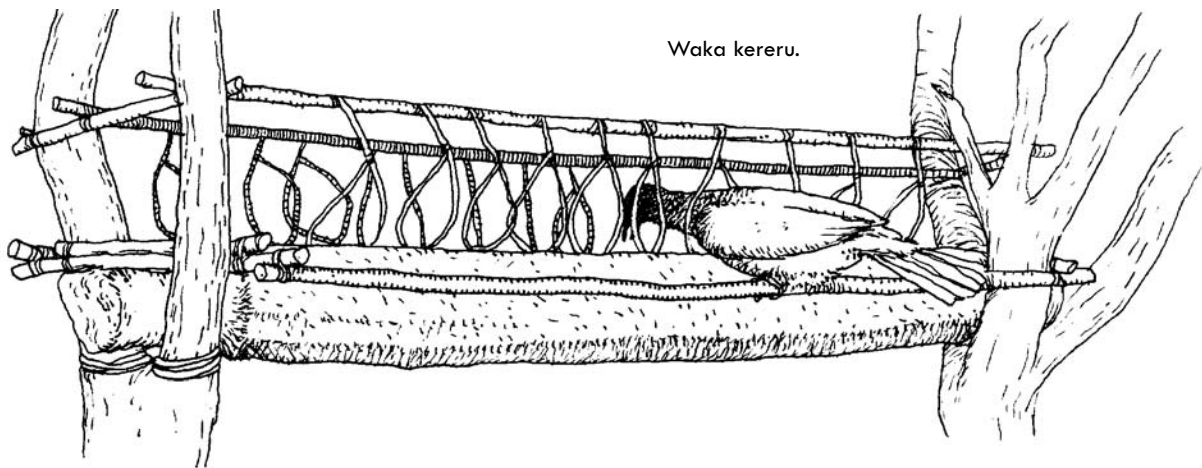
AN INTRODUCTION TO TE MAHI KAI

When Maori tupuna (ancestors) arrived in temperate Aotearoa, they brought traditional cultivated plants from a tropical environment. The new land provided different birds and fish but little in the way of mammals. In order to feed themselves, the new arrivals required new skills and knowledge.



BIRDING

The first Maori to New Zealand discovered a land abundant in birds. Many were flightless and provided easy game. Moa was an important source of food until they died out five hundred years ago. They were named after the domestic fowls (moa) that the first settlers left in their Pacific Island homeland.



Tane, the god of the forest was often honoured before taking birds, Tane's children. Spears, snares, decoys and nets were used for catching birds. Domesticated birds were sometimes used to attract prey to traps. Often birding parties would set out when particular berries or flowers were in season. Some of the snares included:

Waka kereru

This trap was filled with water and was set out when the miro berries were in season to catch kereru (wood pigeon). The berries made the birds very thirsty and they were attracted to the troughs of water. If they put their head through a nose it tightened when the bird attempted to fly away.



Taki weka

While the inquisitive weka was attracted to the bundle of feathers the nose was slipped over its head.

After the loss of the moa, care was taken so no other animal met the same fate. Tohunga (wise men) would close areas of hunting and fishing grounds when animal numbers declined. This restriction is called rahui and extends to gardens and other food resources. Rahui acts as a conservation measure. Any one who did not adhere to rahui was severely punished.

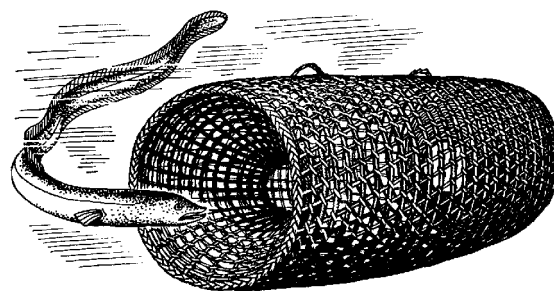
FISHING

Fish and shellfish provided an abundant source of food for Maori. Nets, hooks, traps, lines, spears, clubs and dredges were used to collect food from the sea, lakes and streams. Flax was used to make nets and fishing lines, hooks were made from wood or bone. Pau shell on fishing lures was used to attract fish. Traps were made from flexible branches such as manuka. They included:

Fishing Nets

Fishing nets varied from tutoko - small hand nets, to kaharoa - huge seine nets more than a kilometre long and ten metres deep. A kaharoa required two canoes to cast it. One half of the net was placed in each canoe and the two canoes paddled away from each other, letting out the net. A kaharoa could catch several thousand fish in one haul. Many people were required to help bring in the net and the catch was shared among the whole tribe. The bottom of the larger nets were weighed down with mahe (stone sinkers). Whau and houama, particularly light woods, were fashioned into poito, floats. Gourds were also sometimes used as floats.

North Island, they were made of the strong flexible branches of mangemange (climbing fern). In the south, mangemange was not available and stronger traps had to be made for swifter flowing rivers. Split aerial roots of kiekie were used.



Hinaki - eel trap.

Fish Hooks

Hooks were fashioned from wood, bone and shell. Wooden hooks could be made by coiling a growing branch and securing it so it would continue to grow in the desired curved form. Once cut from the tree, the hooks were buried in the hearth beneath a fire to render them inflexible.

Fish migrating seaward in autumn were directed into hinaki by barriers (weirs) built of posts driven into the river bed.

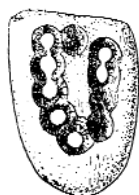
Taruke

Taruke were used to catch crayfish. Crayfish would fall through the opening and the flax net at the mouth of the opening prevented them from escaping. They were made from young manuka stems, bent round a supplejack and manuka frame and tied together with flax and vines.

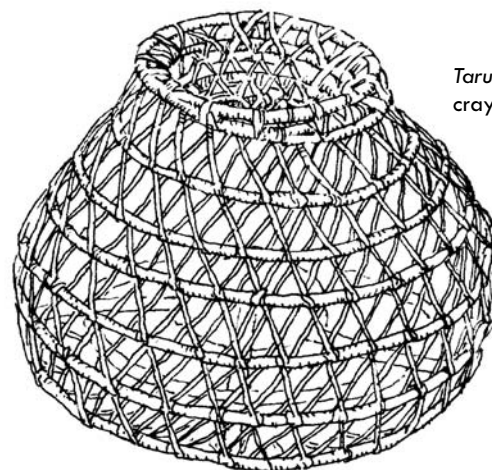
Mahe - sinker.



Making a bone hook.



Bone hooks were made by drilling out the central part of the hook and filing smooth with sandstone.



Taruke - crayfish pot.

Hinaki

Hinaki were used to trap eel (tuna). The entrance of the hinaki narrows like a funnel. Eels could enter the trap by forcing their way through the funnel. Once inside, it was difficult for them to exit the narrow end of the funnel. In the north of the

Fishing was considered a tapu occupation. It was only done by the men and food was not eaten while fishing. The prow of the fishing canoes often had a head with an outthrust tongue to warn Tangaroa, god of the sea, that men were entering his domain.

HUNTING MAMMALS

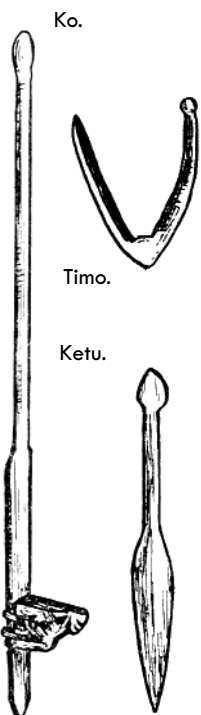
Bats were initially the only land mammals on New Zealand and were a rare delicacy in the hangi. Māori intentionally brought the kiore (pacifika) and dog from their homeland. The rat was brought as a food source. The dog provided a supply of meat and was used to hunt flightless birds.

Seals provided an important source of meat for the earliest inhabitants throughout New Zealand. Their numbers were gradually reduced in the northern regions and only remained a food supply for some South Islanders.

Whales were not hunted, however a stranded whale provided ample food for the tribe. Whales were often carved on the outside of pataka (food store houses) to show abundance of food.

CULTIVATED CROPS

The plants that were brought to New Zealand and successfully grown were kumara (gourd), taro and yam (uwai). All were restricted to the warmer northern areas of New Zealand.



To prepare an area for cultivation the scrub was first burnt and the ashes used as fertilizer. Men worked in unison, often to the sound of chants, loosening the soil with ko (pointed digging sticks) to prepare the soil for planting. Windbreaks were built to protect the young plants and timo and ketu were used to weed the crops. Caterpillars were removed from the crops by tane sea gulls tethered to the fields or acrid smoke from burning kawakawa or kauri gum.

The stars and moon were carefully observed for each stage of cultivation. The appearance of certain constellations showed the coming of a new season and indicated when to begin planting or harvesting.

Kumara was the most important crop grown and often several kumara plantations were hidden in the bush in the hope that at least one would survive if the pataka was attacked and crops destroyed. Kumara was cultivated at latitudes well south of its normal growing range. This was achieved by keeping the tubers alive in storage pits over the cold winter months and maximizing the sun's energy in the growing season by planting them in mounds of earth and stones. The stones absorbed the heat of the sun, providing warmth for the growing kumara. The extra attention required to grow them resulted in much ritual to ensure successful crops. Only men were allowed to plant kumara and tchunga moved about the field reciting prayers as the planting took place. A whakapakoko atua (god stick) of Rongomātāne (god of agriculture) was often placed in the fields. This was a resting place of the god, a place where a tchunga could call on the god and communicate with him to ensure a good crop.

God stick.



PLANTS GATHERED FROM THE FOREST

Roots, leaves, berries and kernels were all eaten. The most important food source gathered from the wild was aruhe, the rhizome of bracken fern. It was cooked and beaten with patu-aruhe (pounders) to remove the outer hard skin.

The curled shoots of pikopiko (hen and chicken fern) were cooked and eaten as a green.

Ti (cabbagetree) provided a source of carbohydrate that was particularly important in the South Island where kumara did not grow. The trunks and underground roots were cooked and eaten. The centres of the leaf heads were also picked out and cooked as a green, giving the name 'cabbage tree'.

Karaka berries were cooked and soaked in water to destroy their poisons, before being eaten. People who had consumed them without removal of the poisons, suffered severe convulsions. They were buried up to their chin to prevent their muscles convulsing.

SWEETENERS

Nectar was obtained from flax, rata, pohutukawa and rewarewa blossoms. The flowers were plucked then tapped lightly on the inner part of a small gourd. It was a tedious task often carried out by children.

HANGI

Hangi are earth ovens that cook food using steam generated by water and heated stones.

A fire is started in a pit, using slow burning hardwood such as manuka, kanuka or puriri. Stones are placed in the fire. These stones are chosen for their ability to hold heat without shattering. Once the fire has burnt out, shellfish (if available) are placed on the heated stones. They release salt water to provide steam and flavour. Mats are layered on next, followed by meat and lastly vegetables. The food was traditionally wrapped in leaves of particular plants to add flavour and prevent drying out. Water is sprinkled over the food to provide steam. Lastly, top soil covers the hangi to insulate the cooking food and prevent loss of steam.

FOOD STORAGE

Much of the food was collected in the warmer months and needed to be preserved for winter. Fish were dried in the sun. Birds were stored under water or preserved in their own fat in gourds.

Kumara, unable to grow all year round, were stored in rua kumara – low roofed storage pits. They were located in sloping ground to ensure good drainage. The pits were first disinfected using fire and then lined with decaying wood and ferns to absorb moisture and aid insulation.

Other food was kept in pataka, buildings raised off the ground to be free from rats and dampness. A large pataka was the sign of abundance of food and therefore a wealthy chief.

WERE HUMANS USED FOR FOOD?

Cannibalism did exist in New Zealand, although it happened on rare occasions. In most tribes women were prohibited from eating human flesh. Battles provided an abundance of meat. Eating an enemy or preserving the head of an enemy was viewed as the ultimate revenge. The war god was given the first of fering and the slain were shared among the victors. Sometimes slaves or other persons were killed and eaten on special occasions such as the funeral of a high chief, a chiefly marriage or the tattooing of a high chief's daughter.



Pataka.

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