

THE DOWSE
EDUCATION TEAM

Tikanga of Harakeke

Estimated Time: 1.5 hours



Pre / Post-Visit Activities

- If you do not have school access to harakeke, you could plant some within the school grounds for future use. After the visit, encourage children to look after them.
- Using the brushes made, students write a recount of the process.
- Using harakeke brushes and block tempera, create an artwork about harakeke.
- Reiterating what the students learnt on their visit, harvest some harakeke leaves and weave a putiputi (a woven flower).
- Instructions can be found on YouTube, such as the one on Daniel Daly's channel, and on Christchurch City Libraries' website if you search for "putiputi".

Further Web Resources

- "History of New Zealand Flax" on alibrown.co.nz
- "Māori use of Flax" on teara.govt.nz
- "Tikanga Customs Protocols" on whatu.jimdo.com

Glossary

Harakeke — flax

Tikanga — customs, protocols

Pipi — cockle

Piupiu — flax skirt; to swing

Karakia — prayer

Whakatauki — proverb

Mauri — life principle

Rongoa — medicine

Kete — flax bag

Putiputi — woven flower



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BACKGROUND INFO

Harakeke (flax) was the most useful plant in New Zealand to Māori. Each pā or marae typically had a pā harakeke or flax plantation.

It was used to make clothing, shelter, baskets, mats, ropes, sails for canoes, nets, traps for catching birds, and fishing lines. The flower stalks (kokari) were used to make rafts and the nectar from the flowers used as a sweetener.

It was also used for medicinal purposes: the sap applied to boils and wounds, the leaves for binding broken bones and matted leaves were used as dressings. The root was often applied to wounds as a disinfectant.

The traditions surrounding the harvesting and weaving of flax are mostly based on the preservation of the plants and producing good quality pieces.

A harakeke proverb reflecting the Māori reference to the harakeke plant as whanau:

**Hutia te rito o te harakeke,
Kei whaea te komako o ko?
Ki mai ki ahau; He aha te
mea nui o te Ao? Maku e ki
atu, He tangata, he tangata,
he tangata!**

**If the heart of harakeke was
removed, where will the bellbird
sing? If I was asked, what was the
most important thing in the world?
I would be compelled to reply, it is
people, it is people, it is people!**

A karakia to say before harvesting:

**Tenei matou i inoi atu ka koe
e Tane Mahuta; Nau enei
rawa kua poipoia; Nau enei
hua kua whakatipu; Tenei au
he piapono whare tohungatanga
raranga; Homai ngā rau o tenei
taonga te harakeke.**

**We are praying to you Tane
Mahuta; For these things that you
have nurtured; And for these fruits
you have grown; We are dedicated
students; From the place of the
old weavers; Give me some leaves
of this treasure the harakeke.**

THE SESSION

Learning Experience

Students will take part in the tikanga around harvesting harakeke and make a small object to take away.

Students will discuss and compare traditional items made from harakeke, contrasting them with the same items made today.

Curriculum Links

Social Studies: Continuity and Change (Level 2)

Achievement Objectives: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express peoples' customs, traditions and values. Students will recognise that all living things have certain requirements so they can stay alive.

Key Competency

Thinking

Key Concepts

We are learning how important Harakeke was to the Māori in their day to day living and traditions.

We will learn why there are customs and tikanga around harvesting and using harakeke.

We are learning to appreciate and understand the value, time and effort put into making a piupiu by using the technique of scraping (hapene) flax.

Lesson Sequence

- Your class will be greeted outside on the deck. If students have bags, they will be gathered and stored in a locked up cupboard.
- Walk to Riddiford Gardens (if wet, we can run this part inside The Dowse instead).
- Karakia, tikanga and harvesting of harakeke (flax).
- Activity: hapene harakeke exposing muka.
- Look at objects Māori once used in day to day living.
- Looking within the gallery if more works using harakeke are on display.
- Discussion and reflecting on the uses of harakeke past and present.