

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AT WHIRINAKI WHARE TAONGA

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

 Whirinaki Whare Taonga
ARTS | CULTURE | EVENTS

Whirinaki Whare Taonga is Upper Hutt's own art and culture hub. We are committed to offering FREE engaging and accessible experiences for local students and have a range of exciting world class programmes.

About Whirinaki

Whirinaki Whare Taonga is a living house of treasures. Our name was gifted by Ōrongomai Marae in 2011 and reflects the centre's deep commitment to community, cultural connection, and creative learning. "Whirinaki" means "to lean on" or "to support," reminding us this is a space where people, knowledge, and creativity are woven together.

We host incredible exhibitions curated by experts and drawn from collections around the world. These taonga (treasures) are now here in Aotearoa for us all to enjoy, explore, and connect with.

Whirinaki Whare Taonga is proud to welcome your ākonga to our latest exhibition

Te Ao Māori

Darcy Nicholas:
Land of My Ancestors



Ōrongomai Tū Tonu



Oho Mai: *The Awakening*



These exhibitions invite students to explore the powerful ideas of:

- **Whakapapa** – our connections to ancestors, people, and place.
- **Identity** – who we are and the stories that shape us.
- **Belonging** – our relationship to communities and the world around us.
- **Whenua** – our connection to the land.
- **Storytelling** – how memories, history, and culture are carried through words, images, objects, and art.

What happens during our visit?



- **Mihi Whakatau – Welcome**

Students will gather at the **pou** where we will introduce ourselves, learn about the significance of the pou, and begin with a **karakia** to welcome everyone.

- **Ōrongomai Tū Tonu**

Students will explore the history of **Ōrongomai Marae** through photographs, videos, and stories. Together we will discover how the marae grew from a community vision into an important place of belonging, culture, and connection.

- **Oho Mai – The Awakening Exhibition**

Students will explore artworks by contemporary Māori artists and discover how different artists express identity, culture, whakapapa, and their connection to the world through a range of artistic styles and materials.

- **Darcy Nicholas – *Land of My Ancestors***

Students will investigate how Darcy Nicholas uses art to express whakapapa, whenua, identity, and storytelling. They will sketch ideas inspired by their own whakapapa and a person, ancestor, or guardian who is important to them.

- **Creative Workshop – My Pepeha**

Students will create a mixed-media pepeha artwork, combining drawing, collage and colour to represent the people, places, and connections that make them who they are.

Big Questions We Will Explore

- **What makes a place a home?**

A home is more than a building. It is a place where people feel safe, welcomed, loved, and that they belong.

- **What is whakapapa and why is it important?**

Whakapapa is your family history and the connections between you, your ancestors, your people, and the land. It helps us understand who we are and where we come from.

- **Why are places like Ōrongomai Marae important to communities?**

Ōrongomai Marae is a place where people come together to celebrate, learn, support one another, and remember loved ones. It helps keep Māori culture, language, and traditions alive while creating a place where everyone belongs.

- **How do people keep stories and traditions alive?**

People keep stories and traditions alive by sharing them. They tell stories, sing waiata, perform kapa haka, speak te reo Māori, and pass their knowledge from one generation to



New Zealand Curriculum links

Whakapapa • Identity • Belonging

VISUAL ARTS

VISUAL ARTS		Level 1-2	Level 3-4	Level 5-6	Level 7-8
Concept Programme Connection					
Understanding the visual arts in context	Explore how Māori artists communicate identity, whakapapa, culture and belonging through traditional and contemporary art.	Share ideas about how and why artworks are made.	Investigate artworks from past and present cultures.	Explore how artworks reflect context and culture.	Analyse and evaluate artworks within social, cultural and historical contexts.
Developing ideas	Develop personal pepeha artworks inspired by identity and place.	Investigate visual ideas.	Develop and revisit ideas.	Clarify and extend ideas.	Generate coherent and resolved bodies of work.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Social Studies Concept Programme Connection		Years 1–3	Years 4–6	Years 7–8
Identity, Culture & Organisation	Explore whakapapa, pepeha, identity, whānau and community through Ōrongomai Marae and Māori artists.	Recognise how relationships, language and culture shape identity.	Understand how culture shapes individual and collective identity.	Examine diverse perspectives and how identity is shaped by history and society.
Place & Environment	Investigate connections to whenua, marae and the Hutt Valley.	Identify significant local places.	Explain how places influence communities and belonging.	Analyse how people and places influence one another over time.
Aotearoa New Zealand Histories	Discover the story of Ōrongomai Marae and contemporary Māori voices.	Hear local stories and community histories.	Explore how historical stories shape communities.	Investigate multiple perspectives and the significance of local history today.

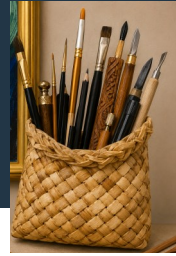
TE REO MĀORI

Te Reo Māori Strand How this learning programme supports the curriculum		Level 1–2	Level 3–6	Level 7–8
Whakarongo – Listening	Students listen to greetings, karakia, pepeha, Māori stories and discussions throughout the gallery experience. They hear and respond to te reo Māori used in authentic cultural	Recognise and understand familiar words, greetings and simple phrases supported by actions and visual cues.	Understand familiar language used in classroom and cultural contexts, including simple descriptions and instructions.	Interpret spoken te reo Māori in a range of authentic contexts and recognize cultural meaning and intent.

Darcy Nicholas: Land of My Ancestors

• 60 years •
of

DRAWING • PAINTING • JEWELLERY • CARVING • SCULPTURE



Exhibition overview

Darcy Nicholas is one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most visionary storytellers. His creative career has spanned more than fifty years as an artist, sculptor, leader and strategic administrator.

His art often combines symbols, text, and imagery to express ideas about land, whakapapa, and important events in New Zealand's past.

Nicholas has been recognised for his service and leadership fostering the growth in Māori art in local communities and bringing it to the globe.



Who is Darcy Nicholas?

Darcy Nicholas is a Māori artist from Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Hauā-te-Rangi, and Ngāti Ruanui, based in the Hutt valley.

As a child, Darcy loved drawing, creating, and making things. Today, he is an artist, sculptor, writer, and teacher. His paintings, sculptures, and public artworks can be found in galleries and communities across Aotearoa New Zealand and was awarded

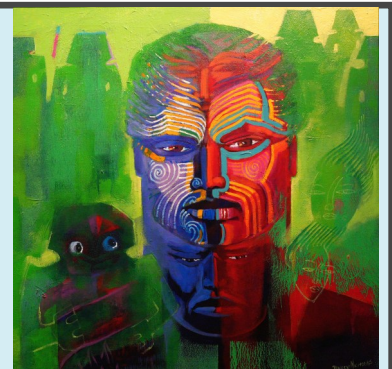


What inspires his art?

Darcy's artworks tell stories about:

- **Whenua** – the land
- **Whakapapa** – family connections
- **Community**
- **Māori history and culture**
- **Identity and belonging**

He believes that art can help us understand the past, celebrate the present, and imagine the future.



Sharing Māori stories

Darcy uses art to share Māori stories, values, and traditions with people from New Zealand and around the world. His artworks help us learn about important ideas such as **whakapapa**, **whenua**, **mana** (respect and strength), and **kaitiakitanga** (caring for people and the environment).

His work shows that Māori art is living, growing, and continues to inspire new generations.

How does he create his art?

Darcy combines traditional Māori ideas with contemporary art. He uses:

- Bright colours.
- Bold shapes.
- Māori symbols and patterns.
- Paint, wood, stone, and other materials.

Every artwork tells a story and invites people to think, ask questions, and make connections.



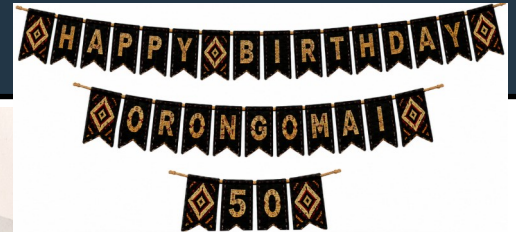
Ōrongomai Tū Tonu



Hera Katene-Horvath



Mere Poutu demonstrating the making of tuku-tuku panels to Danika Kara and Molly Wood, 1976. Photograph courtesy of Orogo Marae



Jock McEwen

HE WĀHI MŌ TE KATOA

A Place for Everyone

Exhibition overview

In August 2026, Ōrongomai Marae marks 50 years in Upper Hutt with an exhibition that brings together the people, moments, and movements that made it possible.

From the bold decision to establish a marae in the heart of a growing city, this exhibition traces how Ōrongomai came into being. It celebrates the visionaries, builders, and cultural leaders who shaped its foundation, including the powerful legacy of Mā-wai-hakona, whose performances carried Ōrongomai onto national and international stages.

At its heart, this is a story of belonging: how a community created a place for itself, and how that place continues to serve, welcome, and grow.

Ōrongomai Marae

The Place of Rongomai

The name **Ōrongomai** connects the marae to the history of Te Awa Kairangi (the Hutt Valley). Rongomai is an important ancestor remembered as a guardian and

RONGOMAI

GUARDIAN AND GUIDE

In ancient tradition, Rongomai is remembered as a guiding and protective presence.

He takes different forms – sometimes a falcon, sometimes a man – watching over his people and their journey through Te Awa Kairangi.



RONGOMAI TRAVELLED THE JOURNEY NORTH

Rongomai rested several times along the way and these places are remembered to this day.
.....

AI image

Parts of a Marae

Wharenui (Meeting House)

The heart of the marae. It represents an ancestor and is a place for welcoming visitors, sharing stories, learning, and holding important gatherings.

Wharekai (Dining Hall)

The place where people prepare, share, and enjoy meals together after ceremonies and events.

Marae Ātea (Courtyard)

The open space in front of the wharenui where pōwhiri (welcome ceremonies) take place. It is a place of respect where visitors are formally welcomed.

Wharepaku & Accommodation (if your marae includes these)

Many marae have sleeping areas and facilities so visitors can stay overnight during special occasions.

Waharoa (Gateway)

The entrance to the marae. Walking through the waharoa marks the beginning of your visit and your welcome onto the marae.

PARTS OF A WHARENUI

A wharenui is a meeting house. Each part has a special name and meaning.



NUMBER	TE REO MĀORI	ENGLISH	WHAT IT MEANS
1	 Tekoteko	Figurehead	The head that watches over and protects the meeting house.
2	 Koruru	Guardian or ancestor	A person from the past who looks after the people inside.
3	 Maihi	The arms	The carved arms that reach out to welcome and protect.
4	 Raparapa	Fingers	The fingers that hold the wharenui together.
5	 Amo	Legs	The legs that support and stand strong.
6	 Pare	Window	The eyes of the house. They let in light.
7	 Kuaha	The door	The entrance to the house – a place of welcome.
8	 Matapihi	Window	The window that brings light and clarity.
9	 Paepae	Orator's bench	The place where speakers stand to share and speak.

KA MAUMAHARA TONU TĀTOU: THOSE WHO LAID THE WAY

Ōrongomai Marae stands today because of the vision, hard work, and leadership of the people who came before us.

Jock Malcolm McEwen (1915–2010) – Te Oka



Carvers at work, under the guidance of Mr J. M. McEwen.

Jock McEwen one of the founding leaders of Ōrongomai Marae. Jock is of Scottish descent he master carver, writer, composer, and champion of te reo Māori and Māori culture, he played a key role in planning the marae, establishing the marae trust, and leading the carving of Kahukura, the wharehau (meeting house). His knowledge of whakapapa, tikanga, and Māori arts helped shape Ōrongomai Marae into the welcoming community space it remains today.

Hera Katene-Horvath (1912–1987) – Aunty Dovey



Hera Katene-Horvath, known as Aunty Dovey, was a respected cultural leader, composer, performer, and founding member of Ōrongomai Marae. Of Ngāti Toa, Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Tama, and Ngāti Whātua descent, she dedicated her life to strengthening te reo Māori, waiata, kapa haka, and tikanga.

As President of the Māwai Hakona Māori Cultural Association, she composed many well-loved waiata that are still performed today. She also played a key role in fundraising, caring for, and bringing people together at Ōrongomai Marae, becoming its first caretaker after it opened in 1976.

In recognition of her service to Māori culture, she was awarded the Queen's Service Medal in 1978. Aunty Dovey is remembered for her leadership, generosity, and lasting contribution to her community.

"E kore rātou e warewaretia."
They will never be forgotten.



Where did the need for Ōrongomai Marae come from?

After World War II, many Māori moved from their homelands to towns and cities like Upper Hutt to find work. While they found new opportunities, many also left behind their whenua (land), whānau, and marae.

The growing Māori community came together to support one another and create a place where they could belong. One of their greatest needs was a place to hold tangihanga (funerals) according to tikanga Māori. Families were often using homes and garages because there was no marae.

This need brought the community together as collective action led by women.



Mike Poe at Durlops Upper Hutt, Photograph, Courtesy of Upper Hutt Library

Extra thinking for the students.

- Why do you think having a marae was important for the people of Upper Hutt?
- How can a special place help people feel like they belong?

Who started the vision for Ōrongomai Marae?



TE MATAKITE A NGĀ WĀHINE

A Vision Carried by Women

The story of Ōrongomai Marae began with the vision, determination, and leadership of women.

The idea for Ōrongomai Marae began with a group of strong Māori women. In the 1960s, members of the Māori Women's Welfare League supported Māori families who had moved to Upper Hutt. They cared for each other, shared food, helped families, and built a strong community.

The women realised their community needed a marae—a place to gather, celebrate, learn, and farewell loved ones. They joined with Māwai Hakona and many others to turn this dream into reality.

For more than 10 years, the community worked together by raising money, finding land, and planning the marae. Hundreds of people helped, but it was the vision and leadership of these women that started the journey.

The vision for Ōrongomai Marae began with a group of determined Māori women who believed their community needed a place where everyone could belong.

Extra thinking for the students.

- Why do you think the women believed a marae was important?
- How can one person's idea grow into a community project?

Mā-wai Hakona in Motion

How did Mā-wai Hakona help build the Ōrongomai community?

Mā-wai Hakona began in the early 1960s as a kapa haka group that raised money for the Māori Women's Welfare League. It soon became a place where people learnt waiata, haka, tikanga, and te reo Māori while building lifelong friendships.

The group welcomed everyone, creating a strong sense of whānau and belonging. As it grew, members helped raise funds for Ōrongomai Marae and played an important role in keeping Māori culture alive in Upper Hutt. The group performed at the opening celebrations of the Sydney Opera House.

Mā-wai Hakona became one of New Zealand's leading kapa haka groups, performing across Aotearoa and overseas. Many children who joined the junior group later became tutors, leaders, and kaumātua, passing their knowledge on to future generations.

For more than 60 years, Mā-wai Hakona has brought people together through kapa haka, helping to preserve Māori culture and strengthen the Ōrongomai community.



Ramona Mercer performing with Mā-wai Hakona in Kapa haka competitions, 1973, courtesy of Ōrongomai Marae

Extra thinking for the kids

- Why do you think kapa haka is more than singing and dancing?
- How can music and performance help keep culture alive?



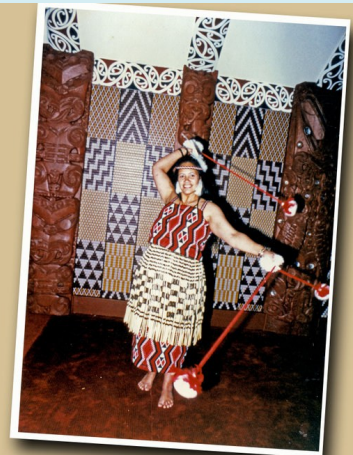
Mā-wai Hakona float, part of the Queen's Birthday parade fundraiser for Ōrongomai, 1970

(Pat Rainey, Ōrongomai: Birth of a Marae)



Official opening of Ōrongomai, 1976

(Pat Rainey, Mā-wai Hakona of Upper Hutt)



Briony Fiso demonstrating Poi

(Eric Wood Collection)



Mā-wai Hakona at the opening of Kahukura meeting house, 1989

(Upper Hutt Leader)



Mā-wai Hakona members at the club's 40th Anniversary, Ōrongomai, 2002.

(Eric Wood Collection)

OHO MAI – The Awakening

About the Exhibition

Oho Mai means *to awaken*. This exhibition brings together the work of three Upper Hutt artists inspired by Te Ao Māori (the Māori worldview).

Although they work in different ways—wood sculpture, weaving, and painting—they all explore themes of whakapapa, identity, culture, and storytelling, expressing their own unique creative journeys.

- **Garry Nicholas**

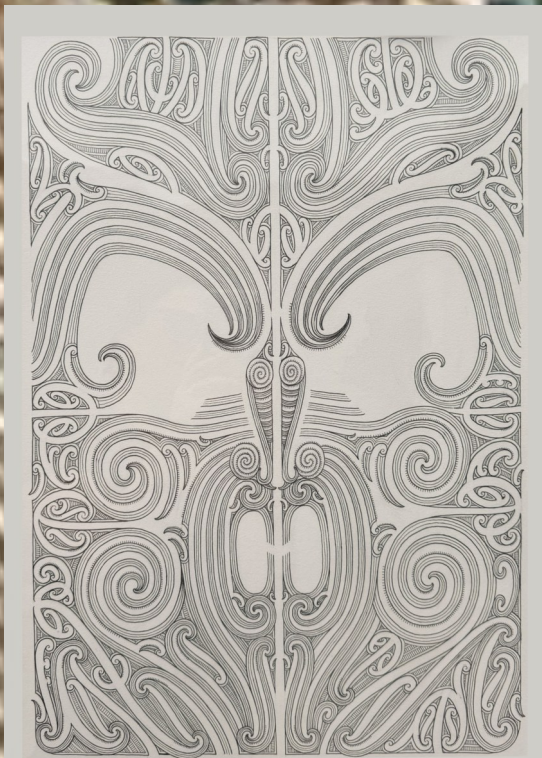
Garry Nicholas is a self-taught wood sculptor inspired by the carvings and kōwhaiwhai of Te Ikaroa-a-Māui at Owae Marae in Waitara. His sculptures reflect the stories, forms, and ancestral connections found within traditional Māori meeting houses.

- **Joanne Kahui**

Joanne Kahui is a contemporary Māori weaver whose work celebrates the art of raranga. Using natural materials such as harakeke, kiekie, and pīngao, she creates woven taonga that explore identity, whakapapa, and storytelling. Her practice is grounded in tikanga Māori and a deep respect for the natural world.

- **Stephen Thorpe**

Stephen Thorpe is a painter, graphic designer, and practitioner of tā moko and kirituhi. His work blends traditional Māori art with contemporary practice, celebrating the history, cultural knowledge, and ongoing evolution of these important art forms.



Ko Wai Au? – Who Am I?

Identity, belonging, and personal stories.

- What makes me unique?
- What things have shaped who I am?
- What traditions does my family have?
- What places are important to me?



My name is: _____

My whānau are: _____

The things I love are: _____

My favourite place is: _____

Something I am proud of: _____

A dream I have for the future: _____

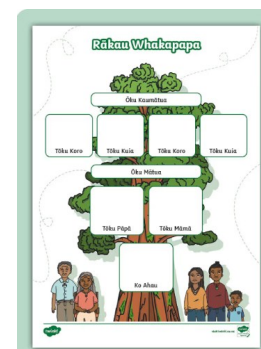
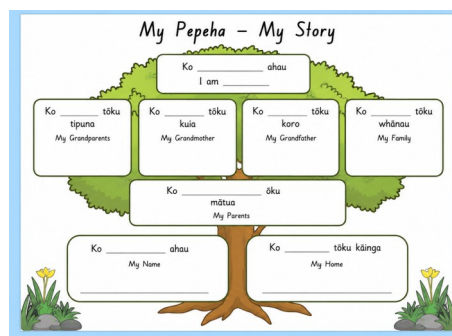


A tree can represent our connections.

Roots

My ancestors, culture, and history.

Who I am today.



My hopes, dreams, and future.

The people and places that support me.

https://www.twinkl.co.nz/resource/nz-mfl-83-rakau-whakapapa-write-up-worksheet?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=organic-social&utm_campaign=0726-pinterest-nz-rakau-whakapapa-write-up-worksheet

Kōwhaiwhai Pattern Investigation

What is Kōwhaiwhai?

Kōwhaiwhai are painted patterns often found in where tūpuna and can represent stories, genealogy, and the natural world.

Observe:

- What shapes do you notice?
- Do you see repeated patterns?
- What might these shapes represent?

Create Your Own Pattern

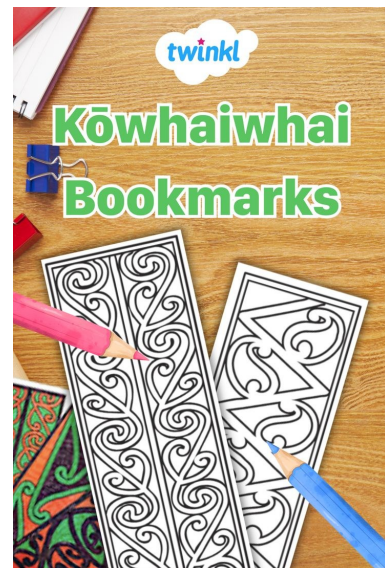
Materials:

- Paper strips
- Paint
- Markers
- Dye
- Collage materials

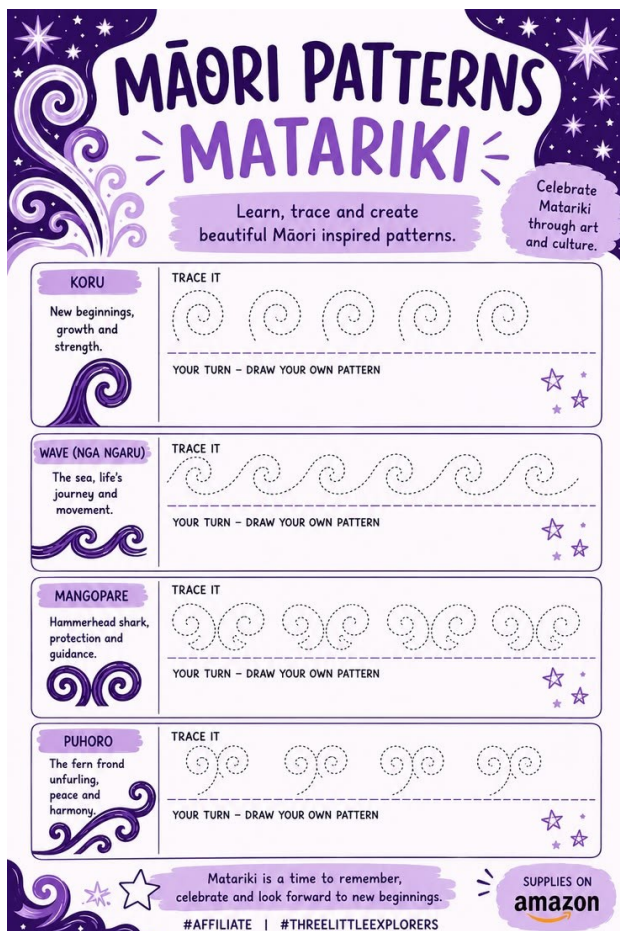
Design a pattern inspired by:

- Rivers
- Mountains
- Waves
- Plants
- Family stories

Simple but effective art learning Te Reo colours and putting them into a koru. We're getting some lovely results from our year 4 and 5 kids! Block letters are always a challenge.



[Kōwhaiwhai Bookmarks](#)
[Colouring Activity](#)



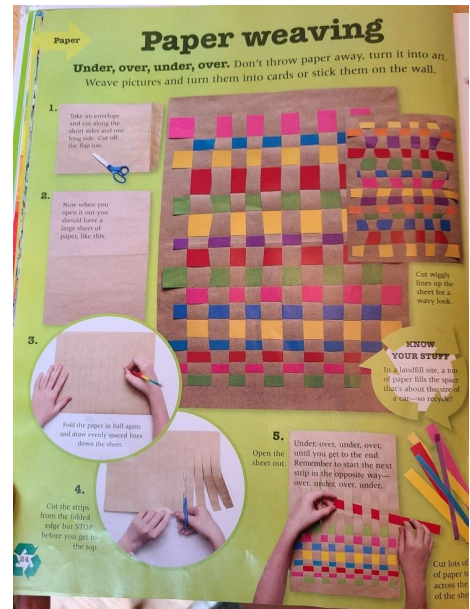
Raranga (Paper Weaving)

Big Idea:

Weaving connects people, stories, and knowledge.

Materials:

- Coloured paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Natural fibres (optional)



<https://nz.pinterest.com/pin/20477373300279586/>

Harakeke

[Te Papa – The Wonder of Harakeke Activities](#)

Students can investigate the importance of harakeke in Māori culture, including practical uses, stories, and connections to the environment.



[How To Weave A Putiputi \(Flower\) using Harakeke \(flax\) - EcoMatters Environment Trust](#)

Taonga Box

What objects tell the story of who we are?

Students bring an object, photograph, or drawing representing something important.

They explain:

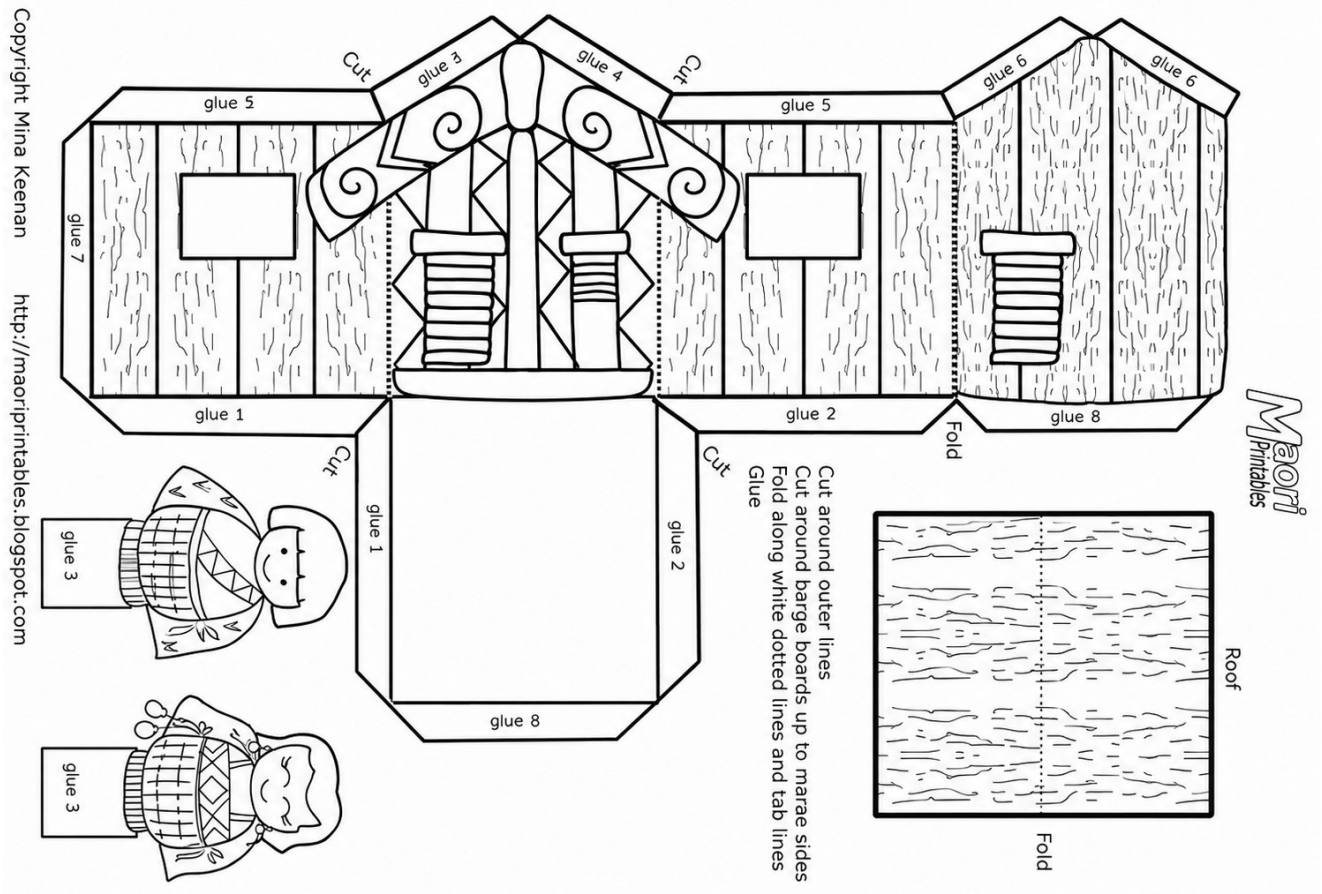
This taonga is important because:

Family Story Interview

Students interview a family member.

Questions:

- What was your childhood like?
- What games did you play?
- What traditions did your family have?
- What was school like?
- What advice would you give me?





DARCY NICHOLAS

A LIFE IN ART AND CULTURE

Artist. Advocate. Leader. One extraordinary career. A lifetime dedicated to creativity, cultural leadership and the advancement of Māori art in Aotearoa and beyond.



1945 - 1963

GROWING UP

Born in Waitara, Taranaki, in December 1945, Darcy Nicholas was the second youngest of twelve children, six of whom were whāngai into the family. He spent his childhood between Waitara and Ōmokoroa, immersed in a rich Māori environment. His mother was the kaikaranga of Ōwae Marae and his father the kaikōrero, respected kaumātua. Community leaders were frequent visitors to the family home. Listening, observing and absorbing these conversations laid the foundations for his lifelong interest in history, whakapapa and storytelling.



1963 - 1973

NEW ZEALAND POLICE

At seventeen Nicholas joined the New Zealand Police as a cadet. By 1966 he was a qualified police officer, serving in general duties, plain-clothes investigations and Youth Aid. He also helped develop the Police identikit programme. Although policing offered a successful career, his passion for art ultimately led him in a different direction.



1967

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

On October 7th, 1967, Nicholas married Anne, née Leith, in Upper Hutt, with the wedding reception held at Trentham and both sets of parents there to see the couple wed. Three years later, in 1970, the couple welcomed their first daughter, Lara, followed by Elaine in 1972, and finally their son James in 1977.



1973 - 1980

FULL-TIME ARTIST

After spending time in Melbourne, Darcy left the police to become a full-time artist. He opened his own gallery in Lower Hutt. The night before the show opened, an American visitor purchased his entire first exhibition before it officially opened—an extraordinary start that launched his career.



1980 - 1986

DIRECTOR, WELLINGTON ARTS CENTRE

Darcy established one of New Zealand's most successful employment programmes for artists. Nearly 2,000 artists passed through the initiative, which became the model for similar programmes nationwide. Many participants went on to distinguished careers in the arts.



1984

FULBRIGHT AWARD

Awarded a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship, to study Native American and African American art and culture in the United States. The experience established lasting international relationships and inspired major cultural exchanges between Māori artists and Indigenous communities overseas.



1986 - 1989

CENTRAL REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL

As Director of the Central Regional Arts Council, Nicholas led arts development across thirty communities from Gisborne to Nelson. As part of the senior executive of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, he also helped shape national arts policy.



1988 - 1989

ZIMBABWE HERITAGE

Selected alongside Arnold Wilson, Nicholas was one of two New Zealand representatives selected for a twelve-person judging panel — predominantly made up of African judges — for Zimbabwe Heritage, a showcase of the country's top artists.



1988 - 1992

IWI TRANSITION AGENCY

Appointed Assistant General Manager of the Iwi Transition Agency, Nicholas managed a \$120 million housing loan portfolio, land development, Māori access and iwi development programmes, supporting eighteen iwi from Taranaki to Wellington, alongside the Māori Women's Welfare League, Rātana and Māori and Pacific communities.



1993 - 2012

PORIRUA CITY COUNCIL

Over nearly two decades with the Porirua City Council, Nicholas moved through the roles of Director of Cultural Services, Group Manager of Cultural Services, and finally General Manager of Cultural Services, alongside affiliated responsibilities as Director of Pātaka Museum, Director of Library Services, and Director of major city events.



1998

CREATING PĀTAKA ART + MUSEUM

Nicholas led the vision, planning and development of Pātaka Art + Museum. From securing council support and funding to overseeing construction, recruiting staff and shaping the collection, he played a pivotal role in creating one of Aotearoa's leading public art museums.



2005

MAORI ART MEETS AMERICA

As Creative Director of Māori Art Meets America, Nicholas led one of the most ambitious international Māori arts initiatives ever undertaken. The project showcased Māori culture throughout the United States, including the historic journey of a waka beneath San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, and strengthened enduring cultural and business relationships between New Zealand and the United States.



2005

ABSOLUTELY POSITIVELY WELLINGTON CREATIVE AWARD

Received for his outstanding contribution to the creative arts and for strengthening international cultural connections through Pātaka Art + Museum.



2005 - 2007

TOI MĀORI - ETERNAL THREAD

Launched at Pātaka Museum, this exhibition went on to tour Rotorua, Auckland, San Francisco, Salem, Seattle, and Warm Springs, and the tour itself forged strong contacts along the West Coast of the United States and into Canada.



2007 - 2011

CREATIVE DIRECTOR FOR MĀORI ART MARKET (2007-2009, 2011)

Created in association with Toi Māori Aotearoa, Wellington City Council, Air New Zealand, Te Puni Kōkiri, Pātaka Museum, and other sponsors, this greater-Wellington event showcased the best of Māori art, adomment, contemporary cloaks (kākau), food, wine, tourism, books, and music — forming part of a ten-year investment in Māori and New Zealand creative industries.



2010

QUEEN'S SERVICE ORDER (QSO)

Presented in Wellington, this honour recognised his services to museums through the award-winning Pātaka Museum, which he had steered in the late 1990s and which went on to collect numerous accolades as an innovative and culturally relevant institution.



2013

TE TOHU AROHA MŌ TE ARIKINUI DAME TE ATAIRANGIKAĀHU SUPREME AWARD

Received the Supreme Award for Lifetime Service to Māori Art, presented at his ancestral marae, Kairau, in Matarikōriko, fittingly, just across the road from the family home where he had grown up.



2023

NGĀ TOHU TOI ICON AWARD

Honoured with the Ngā Tohu Toi Icon Award in recognition of his lifetime contribution to Māori art and culture.



2024

FELLOWSHIP, NEW ZEALAND ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

Awarded a Fellowship of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts by president Wayne Newman, becoming only the second Māori artist to receive the honour.



2026

LAND OF MY ANCESTORS

The first major survey exhibition of Darcy Nicholas's work in decades brings together more than sixty years of drawings, paintings, jewellery, carving and sculpture, celebrating the remarkable career of one of Aotearoa's most influential Māori artists.