

Executive Summary: Matapura Ellison

My name is Matapura Ellison. I was born in 1955 and I have lived in our seaside kāika (settlement) of Karitane for all but one year of my life. I am the Chairperson of Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki and have held this position for more than twenty years. I am Kaiwhakahaere (Facilitator) of our rūnaka Komiti Kaupapa Taiao, which focuses on matters pertaining to the natural environment. I am the representative for my rūnaka on Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu – the Tribal Council. Within my rūnaka I am a recognised cultural expert.

Our whānau have a long association with the Queenstown Lakes District. In the late 1980's and early 1990's I travelled as part of an ope (group) made up of representatives of Ōtākou, Moeraki and Puketeraki, to "takahia te whenua" or to visit and warm the wāhi taoka and wāhi tapu of our ancestors across Central Otago, Whakatipu, Wānaka and Hāwea Districts. We retold the pakiwaitara (stories and histories) we knew of this area. Such cultural associations warm our connection to these places. We visited the pounamu rivers and old settlement sites we knew of throughout the Whakatipu area, offering our own karakia to honour the wairua (spirit) of these special places.

Before European settlement, Ngāi Tahu travelled around nearly the whole of Te Waipounamu hunting and gathering the island's resources. The Whakatipu-wai-Māori region was used primarily as a base for seasonal hunting and gathering expeditions and the extraction of pounamu.

Ngāi Tahu spiritual, cultural and historical values remain in the Queenstown Lakes District today. The locations of ancient settlements deemed significant in Ngāi Tahu traditions and stories are still standing, and the place names and whakapapa that are entrenched in the landscape endure. As the descendants of the first people of Te Waipounamu, Ngāi Tahu seek to preserve these historical, spiritual and cultural sites for future generations.

A cultural mapping project undertaken by Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu has significantly broadened the breadth and depth of information on the Kāti Tahu cultural landscape. The extensive cultural research and mapping that has taken place provides the foundation for the proposed wāhi tūpuna mapping project.