

Nelly in Aotearoa: Naming places

In this fourth episode of Nelly in Aotearoa, Nelly the kuaka | godwit learns about the names of places in Aotearoa New Zealand. In four episodes, especially developed for years 1-3 learners, Nelly explores aspects of Aotearoa New Zealand's histories. Teaching support material links each video to your classroom context.



The [Aotearoa New Zealand's histories](#) context of Tūrangawaewae me te kaitiakitanga | Place and environment focuses on the relationships individuals, groups, and communities have with land, water, and resources, and on the history of contests over their control, use, and protection.

These ideas are reflected in the video: [Nelly in Aotearoa - Naming Places](#). This video can be used as a hook to introduce ākongā in years 1-3 to the topic of place names.

The activities in these teaching support materials offer rich learning experiences related to Tūrangawaewae me te kaitiakitanga | Place and environment. They are arranged in sections related to activating prior knowledge, inquiry, and using learning to create.

Select from and adapt these activities to suit the learning needs of ākongā. Look for ways to make meaningful connections with critical local histories.

Understand Big ideas

Through building knowledge about contexts and drawing on inquiry practices, I am beginning to understand that:

- Māori history is the foundational and continuous history of Aotearoa New Zealand
- colonisation and settlement have been central to Aotearoa New Zealand's histories for the past 200 years
- the course of Aotearoa New Zealand's histories has been shaped by the use of power
- relationships and connections between people and across boundaries have shaped the course of Aotearoa New Zealand's histories.

Know Contexts

The Tūrangawaiwai me te kaitiakitanga | Place and environment context explores the deep connection tangata whenua have to the local area.

Naming places was key to establishing and maintaining mana and tūrangawaewae.

The names of geographical features, towns, buildings, streets, and places tell stories. Sometimes there is more than one story.

Do Inquiry practices

In my learning in Aotearoa New Zealand's histories, I can:

- retell a story from the past and talk about how other people might tell it differently
- use historical sources with deliberate attention to mātauranga Māori to help answer my questions about the past
- make observations about how people have acted in the past and how they act today.

Understand

The big ideas of Aotearoa New Zealand's histories

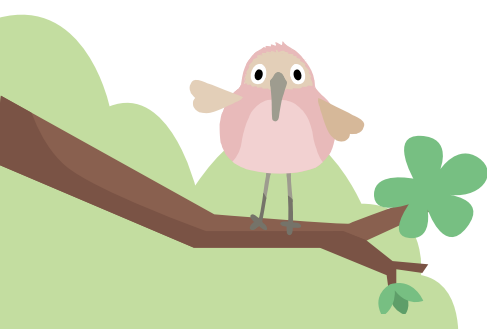
Know

National, rohe, and local contexts

Do

Thinking critically about the past and interpreting stories about it

the learning that matters



Key questions from the curriculum document

- What are the names of the features of the landscape in our area? Do some features have more than one name? If so, why, and where do the names come from?
- How did Māori name marae, hapū, iwi, and features of the landscape? How and why have some place names in Aotearoa New Zealand changed?

Learning experiences

Explore examples of:

- tangata whenua connections to the local area – names of marae, hapū, iwi, and geological features and how they relate to experiences and whakapapa
- names of geographical features, towns, places, streets, and buildings, and the stories people tell about those names – including those that have more than one name.



Nelly in Aotearoa - Naming places

In the animated film [Nelly in Aotearoa - Naming places](#), Nelly the kuaka | godwit visits Rangitoto ki te Tonga / D'Urville Island. Manaia, a visiting kererū, explains the origins of the island's two names and why many places in Aotearoa New Zealand have more than one name.

The video can be used to introduce or clarify vocabulary and concepts that will be useful as ākonga explore the context of place names, for example, *tūrangawaewae*, *tangata whenua*, *place names*, *geographical features*, *naming traditions*, *commemoration*, and *renaming*.

Before watching the video, explain that Nelly is learning that place names can tell stories. Tell ākonga to listen for ways that place names are chosen and why some places in Aotearoa New Zealand have two names.

Encourage ākonga to make connections with stories of places they are familiar with.

After watching the video, ask:

- Why are kuaka known by more than one name?
- Do you know of any places that have more than one name?



Rewatch the video and choose when to pause and discuss, according to the interests and needs of your ākonga, for example:

⏸ **1:10** Why are there several names for kuaka and kererū? Ask ākonga to share other bird names they know in more than one language.

⏸ **1:35** Manaia says most place names tell a story. Discuss what the story could be behind the name Rangitoto-ki-te-Tonga, which means, "red heavens look to the south". What stories could ākonga tell Nelly about places in their rohe?

⏸ **2:27** Look at the map of Aotearoa New Zealand and identify where the school is.

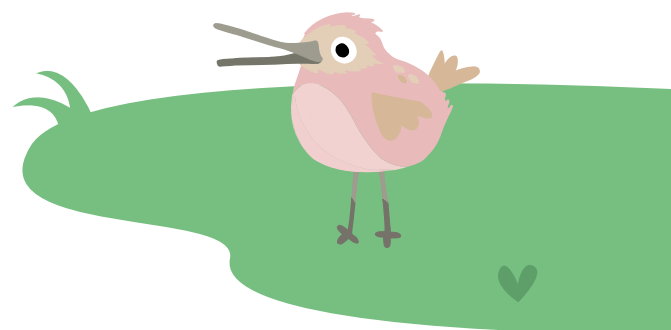
Ask ākonga what they know about the names on the map.

⏸ **2:45** Discuss why later arrivals to Aotearoa New Zealand gave places new names.

⏸ **3:00** Ask ākonga why they think people have strong feelings about names.

Brainstorm different reasons for naming places, for example:

- to indicate ownership, occupation, and connections
- to acknowledge and honour significant events and people
- to maintain connections with other places.





Background information for teachers

The voyagers who first discovered and settled in Aotearoa brought with them names and naming traditions. Many of these names are still in use today, for example, Motutapu, Aorangi/Aoraki, and Hikurangi.

Māori naming traditions include:

- describing a geographical feature, for example, Kirikiriroa
- using place names from another location, for example, Heretaunga
- commemorating an event, for example, Te Ahi Kai Kōura a Tama-ki-te-Raki
- acknowledging a significant ancestor, for example, Te Whanganui-a-Tara.

British naming traditions include:

- describing a geographical feature, for example, Bay of Islands

- using place names from another location, for example, New Plymouth
- commemorating an event, for example, Cape Farewell
- naming areas after settlers (Hobsonville), soldiers (Mercer), military people (Auckland), aristocrats, and people associated with colonising organisations.

While some place names weren't changed or misunderstood, like Whakatāne, other introduced place names are based on misunderstandings of the original Māori name. Examples of these are Petone instead of Pito-One and Tolaga Bay, which could be Cook's mishearing of the words Te Raki, a north wind blowing into the bay. The ongoing use of these names is a legacy of colonisation. Treaty settlements sometimes include an agreement to change a place name back to an original name in recognition of a wrong that has been done.



Activating prior knowledge

The following activities can be used to find out what ākonga already know and build initial knowledge.

Display a map of the local area and write down the names of places ākonga can identify. Ask whether they know the stories behind any of these place names and note down their ideas.

Create a word wall and invite ākonga to write down words related to place names.

Create a wonder wall and write down things ākonga wonder about place names.



Inquiry

The following activities can be used to explore the significance of local and national place names. Choose activities that suit the needs and interests of your ākonga.

Potential inquiry questions

- How do place names connect us with the past?
- How are place names chosen and how has this changed over time?
- Why do place names change and who decides?

Describing geographical features

[Do 2] In this activity, ākonga explore how place names can be used as historical sources to learn about the past and build their understanding that Māori history is the foundational and continuous history of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Present Google slides with images of each feature and discuss the meaning of words commonly used in place names, for example:

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| • maunga – mountain | • puke – hill |
| • awa – river | • whanga/aka – harbour |
| • ao – cloud | • nui – big |
| • motu – island | • iti – small |
| • papa – flat | • whiti – shining. |
| • wai – water | |

Practise naming the slides in te reo Māori.

For each word, introduce an action, for example:

- pairs of children could form a maunga by stretching their arms up and touching fingertips
- a group of three children could form a winding awa.

Give the ākongā plenty of time to practise forming the words in response to them being called out.

Provide ākongā with playdough, blocks or other objects and ask them to create a local landscape that they can add place names to based on geographical features.

Exploring your rohe

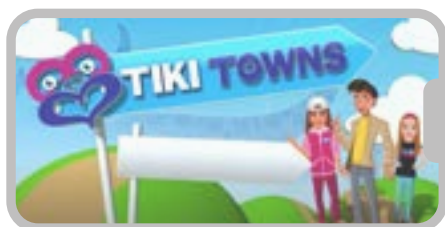
[Do 1] In this activity, ākongā identify, learn about, and retell stories of place names in their rohe.

Take the ākongā for a walk around the neighbourhood, taking photos of place names, for example, of streets, hills, streams, and suburbs. These could be used to create a scavenger hunt for the ākongā to do with their whānau.

Create a wall map of the local area and have ākongā place the names on the map. Use their knowledge of Māori place names to identify any that are in te reo.

If possible, invite a community member with local knowledge to explain the meaning and origin of place names in your rohe (area). Ask ākongā to retell the stories they hear, checking their stories with one another to ensure that they are accurate.

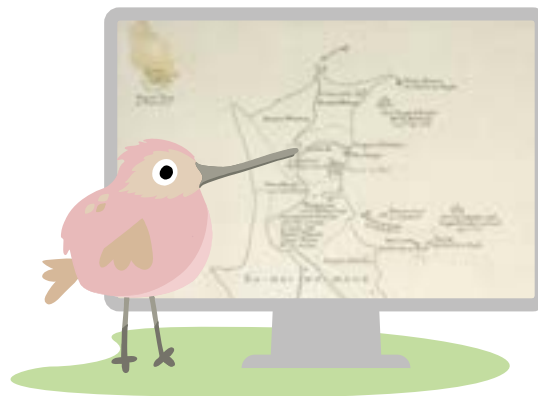
If available, watch a [Tiki Tour video](#) related to your rohe.



Using historical documents

[Do 2] In this activity, ākongā explore a historical map and use it to make statements about the past and build their understanding of Māori history as the foundational and continuous history of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Explore [Te Ara: Tuki's 1793 map of New Zealand](#) by a northern rangatira. Zoom in to explore some of the names and features of the map, for example, Tuki's knowledge of Te Waipounamu as the source of pounamu and the te ara wairua, the path of the spirits leading up to Te Rēinga. Discuss how maps don't show everything in a place, just the important things for the people using the map. Note also the reference to Māui in the name of the North Island.



Discuss what we can learn from historical documents such as maps. Ask ākongā to predict what they think were some important things for Tuki based on his map.

Creating an artwork

[Do 2] In this activity, ākongā use a sculpture as a source to build their understanding of Māori history as the foundational and continuous history of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Learn about the story of Rākaihautū using the information on [Toitū te Whenua Land Information New Zealand: Rākaihautū - Naming great lakes of the canoe of Aoraki](#).

Note that additional stories: linking tūpuna such as Kupe, Paikea, and Tōhē with place names are available on the Toitū te Whenua website. Trace the journey of Rākaihautū on a map, learning about the meaning of associated place names

Explore the related symbolism in this artwork by Brian Flintoff, [Rākaihautū shapes the land](#).

Explain that one way to claim land was to show that an ancestor had discovered or named it. Ask ākongā to describe what features they can see in this artwork by Cliff Whiting [Kahupeka naming the land](#). Tainui ancestor Kahupeka is said to have named Mt Pirongia and Te Aroha.

Carrying out a case study

[Do 3] In this activity, ākongā explore how places were named in the past and how they are named or renamed today in order to build their understanding of the consequences of colonisation.

Learn about the process Te Paina school in Mercer, [Stuff: North Waikato school changes name to better represent area's history](#), went through to change their school name, including why this was important for the school community and who was involved in the renaming. Discuss how the rohe was named Mercer, who chose that name and why they had the power to change the name from the original one.

Investigate the way ākongā at Kaiti School contributed to a proposal for a name change in this Stuff article [Dual name 'Tūranganuiākiwa Poverty Bay' gets support](#). Discuss why Captain Cook chose the name Poverty Bay and the impact that has had on people today. Ask ākongā how they feel about the dual name.

Action

[Do 1] In this activity, ākongā explore how names tell stories about the past and take action to ensure a place in their school tells a story that reflects the school's values and history.

Ask ākongā to identify a name in their school that could be changed or given a dual name, for example, the class or syndicate names, or areas within the school like the office, library, playground. Learn together about the steps required to do this, including finding out what other individuals and groups think about the idea and why they think this.

Emphasise to the learners that it is important to do this in a way that acknowledges learning from the past, and espouses manaakitanga and whakawhanaungatanga. How could they creatively present narratives to inform and share their reasons why the name change is happening?

Explore options for making or implementing bilingual signage for areas of the school.

Picture books

[Do 1] In this activity, ākongā use picture books to help them retell stories from the past, with a focus on the story of Māui that connects Aotearoa with the Pacific.

Display this Te Ara map [Māui in New Zealand](#) and discuss the different names of the islands:

- Te Ika-a-Māui
- Te Waka-a-Māui
- Te Punga-o-te-waka ā Māui.

Read a picture book version of Māui fishing up the giant fish, for example:

- *How Māui Fished up the North Island* by Donovan Bixley
- *The Fish of Māui* by Peter Gossage.

Make a story walk: ask ākongā to draw a scene from the story, making sure all the important parts are covered. Unroll a long piece of paper, for example, a roll of wallpaper or wrapping paper. Have ākongā place their images on the paper, referring back to the book and collaborating to ensure that the images are in the correct order.

Once they have done this, they can glue them onto the paper. Ākongā can walk alongside the length of the paper and practise retelling the story, using the images to support accuracy and correct sequencing.

Instructional series resources

The following resources from the Instructional series can be used to develop and extend ākongā understanding of the significance of names.

The Literacy Online: [Pasifika dual language books](#) include stories about children teaching their class how to pronounce their name correctly (look for "My name is ..." in each language). Support ākongā to connect to the child's emotions when her name is pronounced correctly and discuss why it is important to pronounce all names (including place names) correctly.

Use the School Journal article [Kurī](#) (SJ L2, 2015) to learn about names related to Tānetua and his kurī.



The following resource is at Level 3, but could be read to the class or excerpts could be used as source material.

- *Tautai* (SJ L3, 2015) is about a boy and his love of planes, but students will also read about the importance of his name and how a chance meeting helped him gain confidence.





Create

The following activity provides ways that ākonga can consolidate, develop, and share their learning.

Creating digital maps

[Do 2] In this activity, ākonga create digital maps to share their learning about place names in their rohe.

With the ākonga, research the meaning and/or origin of place names in your rohe. Gather photographs or create videos to support the research. If some places have more than one name, discuss why.



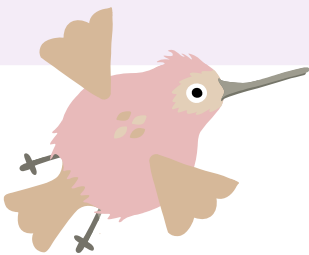
Use [Google Earth](#) to create a project based on this research, using this [Google Earth tutorial](#) as a guide. [Māori maps](#) is another good resource for looking at names, landmarks, and stories in your rohe. Once ākonga have completed the project, it can be presented or shared with others.



Related resources on aotearoahistories.govt.nz

ANZH in action: Years 1-3 examples

These videos show teachers actively trialling elements of the new Aotearoa New Zealand's histories curriculum content in their classroom. Watch them demonstrate a range of teaching strategies and learning activities to bring the new histories curriculum content to life.



A sense of place: Years 1-3

The relationships of individuals, groups, and communities with the land, water, and resources are reflected in the names of places and in the stories we tell about them. This resource shows how five texts from the School Journal series can be used to support learning in the context of tūrangawaewae me te kaitiakitanga through stories, names, whakairo (carvings), and pepeha.

Teaching tips: Using historical images

Historical images, including photographs, drawings, paintings and cartoons, are useful resources to support teaching and learning about Aotearoa New Zealand's histories.

