Archaeology of the Kāpiti Coast

There are over 280 recorded archaeological sites on the Kāpiti Coast. These sites have been recorded over the last 100 years from lots of sources – Maori traditional knowledge, cultural and historical records, early archaeologists and local residents observing the landscape, and archaeologists in the last 30 years or so.

Archaeological sites are mainly on the sand dunes that run along the coast and are usually on or near the tops of the dunes.

Typical archaeological sites that pre-date European occupation and settlement are:

### Middens
Early Maori recognised the area as an environment rich in kaimoana (seafood and fish). Kaimoana made a major contribution to the subsistence economy that existed prior to European settlement. This is shown in the high occurrence of middens in the region - they make up 65% of recorded archaeological sites on the Coast.

### Burials
A number of burial sites have been found in the region. They are mostly located within sand dunes and range from single graves to extensive urupā. They are often revealed through wind moving sand, or they might be unexpectedly discovered during earthworks for development.

### Earthworks
The area comprises a number of sites where some modification of the ground surface has already occurred. These include pits, terraces and platforms largely thought to be used by Maori for habitation or crop storage purposes.

### Archaeological research
The information from the archaeological sites and the investigations undertaken for the M299 Expressway can help answer lots of research questions about the archaeology of the Kāpiti Coast. Some of these questions are:

- Were the early people on the coast living here permanently? Or were they moving in and out of the region to take advantage of fish, shellfish and wetland resources through the seasons?
- Are the biggest shell middens near the coast or further inland? What can this tell us about settlement patterns? Where did people prefer to live? Did this change over time?
- How old are the oldest sites on the coast? How does this age compare to other coastal areas in New Zealand? What can this tell us about the settlement patterns of New Zealand?
- Why haven’t archaeologists ever found any archaeological evidence of Maori gardening? Were the early people on the coast not gardening? Or has the archaeological evidence of this not survived in the shifting sands?
- Are the species found in middens changing over time? What might this tell us about the changing environment?
- Do the middens seem to be large areas where people were living, or small areas where people stopped to rest and have a quick snack?
- What was the general lifestyle of the first people on the coast? Where were they living? What were they eating?
- How does the life of the first people on the coast compare with Maori in other coastal parts of the New Zealand?

### Te Ati Awa
The land on which you are standing lies within the tribal takiwa (jurisdiction) of Te Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai. The takiwa extends from the Whararoa Stream at the southern end of Queen Elizabeth Park to the Kukutauaki Stream north of Peka Peka Road. The descendants of Te Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai maintain traditional manawhenua and manamoana status over this area of the Kāpiti Coast.

This takiwa is inclusive of the Takamore wahi tapu area which is close to the Expressway alignment south of Te Moana Rd. This urupa and wahi tapu area is managed by the Takamore Trust – the body responsible for representing the mana whenua of that area. The takiwa is bounded to the south by that of Ngati Toa and to the north by Ngati Raukawa.

### Charitable Trust
The Te Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai Charitable Trust represents Te Ati Awa as an “iwi authority” and are involved in resource management and fisheries processes.

### Waikanae Marae
The Waikanae Marae, located on Marae Lane just behind the Waikanae shops, holds a special significance for Te Ati Awa. It is the only remaining marae and has been the focal point for iwi activities since the 1880s.

The marae is governed by the Waikanae Marae Reservation Trust.

### Where Te Ati Awa comes from
Te Ati Awa arrived on the Kāpiti Coast in the early 1820s after migrating south from their ancestral lands in Taranaki in a number of Heke (migration).

Te Ati Awa occupied several locations around the Kāpiti Coast before finally settling in what is now Waikanae.

When colonial European settlers began to encroach on ancestral lands in Taranaki in the 1940s, some of Te Ati Awa returned to Taranaki. As well as Kapiti and Taranaki, Te Ati Awa also have an ancestral base in the South Island.