

POUNAMU AND MAORI

The Coast has a rich and long Maori history. Significant and ancient sites span its entire length, including those investigated at **Mahitahi** (Bruce Bay), **Okahu** (Neil's Beach-Jackson Bay) and the **Buller River mouth**. Such sites are amongst the oldest in the country and have unearthed many artefacts including all manner of weaponry, fishing and hunting tools, ornaments and jewellery. More importantly these sites offer us a window into the past and into the lives of the earliest inhabitants.

POUNAMU – GREENSTONE

Ngati Wairangi were the first people known to have worked pounamu for at least 400 years prior to **Ngai Tahu** gaining control over the Tai Poutini/West Coast in the 1700's. It was the pursuit of pounamu which led Ngai Tahu to seek control over Ngati Wairangi in a war that spanned 100 years. Ngati Wairangi established **greenstone trails** using the Browning Pass (Noti Raureka) and the Harper Pass in North Westland as well as various trails over land and passes in South Westland.



Pounamu or greenstone was used for tools and ornaments and was not only highly valued but also considered a tradeable commodity throughout Aotearoa and, to a lesser extent, Polynesia.

Ngai Tahu owns all naturally occurring pounamu located within its traditional **Takiwa** (territory) under the Ngai Tahu (Pounamu Vesting) Act 1997.

Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu developed their Pounamu Resource Management Plan in 2002. This is recognised by the tribe as an iwi management plan and is therefore recognised as such under



the Resource Management Act 1991. Currently both of the West Coast Runanga are developing their own local management plans.

The **Mawhera Incorporation**-owned Arahura catchment is the key source of pounamu (NZ jade) in North Westland and, accordingly, features strongly in tribal traditions. There are also significant pounamu deposits in the southern region of South Westland and Fiordland, and less significant deposits in North Westland.

While ownership of pounamu rests with Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, management of the resource is the responsibility of local Runanga.

Pounamu / greenstone is a nephrite which has many varieties ranging in colour from opaque to highly prized translucent green known as Kahurangi. The export of raw greenstone was embargoed in 1947. The greenstone industry revived in the 1960s when helicopters were used to retrieve large boulders from remote areas. There are significant opportunities for the development of pounamu on the West Coast for the two local Runanga, Ngai Tahu and the benefit of the entire West Coast community.

The **Toi Iho™** trademark guarantees the authenticity of works having been produced either in whole or in part by an indigenous artist. Local Runanga are developing their own brand-name to distinguish Ngai Tahu sourced and worked pounamu. Tai Poutini Polytechnic in Greymouth offers a traditional jade carving course.

MAORI LINKS SPANS CENTURIES

Marae (gathering places) are central to tribal life and unfortunately by the end of the 19th Century there were none left on the Coast. After 140 years without a marae on the West Coast, on 23 January 2005, the **Te Tauraka Waka a Maui Marae** was officially opened at Bruce Bay. At least 1,000 people gathered for the dawn ceremony to celebrate the opening of the marae built by **Kati Mahaki**, the hapu (sub-tribe) represented by **Te Runanga o Makaawhio**.

In 2007 **Ngati Waewae** began the process of developing their marae complex on the hillside adjacent to their cemetery overlooking the beautiful Arahura River and the area is known to locals as the 'pa'.

Development West Coast thanks Kara Edwards for these pages.



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Development West Coast actively supports Maori enterprise and business and also provides support and skills training directed towards Maori organisational governance and directorships. It has provided project funds to Te Runanga o Makaawhio. It supports a major initiative to incorporate cultural, creative and heritage values of pounamu in regional tourism.