Aoraki Mount Cook - The highest Mountain in NZ
- Geoff Cloake

Two creation stories feature waka.

Some say that an ancestral waka Ārai-te-uru sailed past what is now Te Tihi-o-Maru Timaru, down the coast and capsized near Matakaea (Shag Point). The food turned into the Moeraki boulders and the passengers became landmarks of Te Waipounamu (South Island). Aoraki is on his grandfather Kirikirikatata shoulders. Pātītī, Tarahaoa and Hua-te-kerekere (Big and Little Mount Peel) were also passengers.

In another creation story Aoraki and his brothers were forced to climb onto the back of their waka. They were stranded and turned the Southern Alps. The canoe became the South Island, and is known by Māori as Te Waka o Aoraki. This creation story of the landscape surrounding Arowhenua is a central tradition for the Waitaha, Rapuwai, Kāti Hawea, Kāti Mamoe, and Kāi Tahu tribes from which the local hapū Kāti Huirapa carry descent.

Creation stories vary. These examples are just a few among many and should not be considered exhaustive or definitive representations of all creation narratives.

Timaru looking West and North to Southern Alps
- Geoff Cloake

2.5 M years ago lava flowed like fingers from the Waipouri (Mt Horrible) area.

This is the most recent volcanic activity in the South Island. It was formed in a single event from a line of fissures, rather than a cone shaped volcano and is believed to be dormant. The lava flowed down a slope to what is now the coastline. The sea was probably nowhere near the erupting lava but has advanced, eroding the basalt and helping to shape the coastline's reefs.

Today you can see the lava as an "apron" at the foot of Dashing Rocks. The basalt rocks below the Benvenue Cliffs was quarried and placed to mitigate erosion.

Basalt was used as a construction material and the "bluestone" blocks can be seen in many of Timaru's heritage buildings, homes, and bridges. The quarried rock was also used to construct Timaru's artificial harbour, this work began in 1878.

The floor is lava obstacle course is a nod to our volcanic geology.

Timaru's Dashing Rocks loess cliffs
- South Canterbury Drone Photography

The glaciers ground rock and the dust blew in to form Timaru's loess cliffs.

Loess (wind-blown silt from the mountains) was deposited over 9,000-11,000 years ago. This was when the Canterbury Plains were covered in glaciers, in the last ice-age. As the glaciers retreated, they left a layer of gravel and sand.

Winds blew across the plains, picked up the fine sediment and deposited it on the lee side of hills forming loess cliffs. Timaru has some of the thickest and most extensive deposits of its kind in the world. The loess layers change in thickness, grain size, and mineral content depending on the climate at the time and deposited in layers.

In the 1890s amateur Timaru geographer John Hardcastle realised the layers were a time-line of past climates and wrote an important scientific paper on it. It's still used world wide today, to help us better understand our changing climate, and to predict future change.

The stripes in the light house mound and boulders are a nod to our loess geology.

South Canterbury Museum and Te Ana Rock Art Centre displays
- Roselyn Fauth

The reefs were abundant in marine life and an important food source for Māori.

Mahika kai (to work the food) is about traditional ways of how food is grown, gathered, and safeguarded.

Māori came to Aotearoa New Zealand from Polynesia in the 1200s.
Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua is the principal Māori kainga (settlement) in the Aoraki region, from the Rakaia to the Waitaki and back to the main divide. Their marae is in Te Umu-kaha (Temuka). They are one of 18 Paptipu Rūnanga (main villages) leaders among their southern communities. They primarily claim descent from the hapu Kāti Huirapa and affiliate to the iwi Waitaha, Rapuwai, Kāti Hawea, Kāti Mamoe and Ngāi Tahu.

Trading trails, settlements and events extend into the lakes, rivers, and corridors of native bush which provided rich hunting and gathering grounds. A long established cycle of gathering, traveling, and trading endured until the late 1800s.

The mahika kai, whare, tuna eels are inspired by our local Māori history, stories and culture.

DRAFT

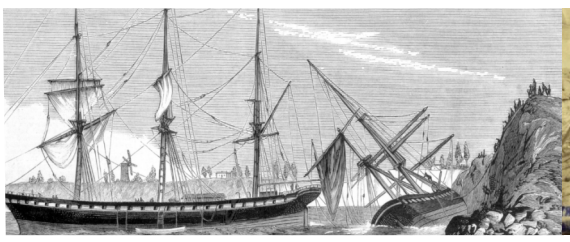
The stories that inspired CPlay...

One of the most meaningful types of play is when children engage their imaginations, leading the story while a trusted adult joins in the fun with them.

Therefore, it was important for CPlay to ensure that people of all ages, abilities, and sizes could play together and be encouraged to use their imaginations.

An added bonus was if their imaginations were sparked by the stories and history of our area.
It helps us learn about where we have come from, gain a better understanding of ourselves.
A strong sense of self, helps foster self-confidence, resilience, and the ability to make healthy decisions while navigating life's challenges.

Here are some of the stories that have inspired the CPlay playground.



City of Perth crashing into the Benvenue at Caroline Bay 1882
- Illustrated Australian News p85

Whalers arrived 1839, and sheep farmers in 1851.

Abel Tasman, is recognized as the first European to discover New Zealand in 1642. Captain James Cook reached New Zealand in 1769, mapped the coast, documented the flora and fauna, met Māori, and opened the door for European exploration and colonisation.

Whalers set up camp here 1839-1840 near Pohatu-koko and nicknamed the stream "Whaler's Creek." This is now piped under the playground and comes out at the bay. The whalers may have named the bay after a whale supply ship "Caroline" that also collected whale oil in the region.

The first European settlers arrived in 1851 to establish a sheep station.
The first immigrant ship to sail direct from the UK to Timaru arrived in 1859 with 120 settlers. There were just five houses here at the time.

By 1866, 1,000 people lived in Timaru.
In 2023 the Districts population was 48,400 with 21,090 households.

The crates floating around the wreck are symbolic of the immigrants, their hard work, and early exports.

Timaru Volunteer Rocket Brigade Photographer William Ferrier c1882.
- South Canterbury Museum 0844

The challenges of crossing wide rivers made the sea key.

30 Ships wrecked or stranded in Timaru between 1864-1892. The sea could become rough with little wind and sailing ships didn't have enough wind or sea room to sail to safety, often dragging their anchors and wrecking. The harbourmaster kept a lookout and gave ships instructions by hoisting flags. The 1878 Blackett lighthouse used to be on the cliff above the harbour, before this, they used a watch tower. They could summon rescuers with a signal gun. The Volunteer Rocket Brigade fired a rope to ships, so people could zip-line to shore. Or the Alexandra lifeboat could help.

The locals funded their own harbour to improve safety and efficiency, helping to secure the Timaru and South Canterbury's economic future. Major industries and exports were wool, grain, flour and frozen meat. South Canterbury was known as the food bowl of NZ in since the early 1900s. Timaru is one of the major cargo ports of the South Island. Fishing, logging, tourism and management of industrial land also contribute to revenue.

These stories inspired the lighthouse, flying fox, double swing and shipwreck.

Caroline Bay and Express Train 1912
- Te Papa (PS.001034)

A changing coastline forms new sandy bay.

The sea used to reach the cliffs at Caroline Bay. After the harbour was constructed and the north mole completed in 1890, sand started to build out from the cliffs and to create a new sandy bay.

The council leased the foreshore from the harbour board in 1902 for a European-style beach resort.

In 1904 the volunteers from the Beautifying Association helped erect a band rotunda, caretaker's cottage and tearooms. In 1911 Caroline Bay Association was established by volunteers to host Christmas carnivals, attracting thousands. The first swings and seesaw arrived in the 1912, and a new playground built in 1915.
The Soundshell was built in 1936.
A paddling pool and rocking horse were added in the early 1960s.

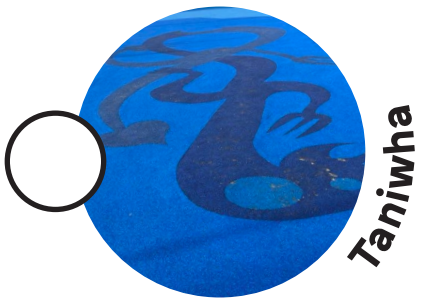
By 2020 the beach area had extended seaward by 34 hectares.

Cplay volunteers further enhanced play at the bay, by fundraising and organising the 2023 playground, which draws on art, history and culture to fire up local and visitors imaginations.

Can you can find elements in the playground that link to interesting stories and history?

This is reproduction of rock art that was removed from Takiroa (Waitaki Valley). It is an example of the 500+ Māori rock art images in South Canterbury and North Otago created by Ancestors of the Arowhenua people in the earliest tribal groups of Rapuwai and Waitaha. The meaning and function have been lost over time, so we are left to interpret the art.

What does this look like to you?



Cplays' taniwha design is by artist Francine Spencer, Ko Taranaki, Kati Mamoe, Waitaha, Rapuwai, Ngai Tahu ngā Iwi. Taniwha feature in Māori creation stories and are often associated with rivers, lakes, or oceans. They can be guardians, ancestral spirits, even dangerous spiritual creatures capable of causing harm.

Can you imagine what the taniwha could do when you fly over it?

Cplay viewed the waka as a symbol of ancestors' ties to the sea, navigation skills, and connections to mahika kai stories. Waka (Māori canoes) were used for transportation, fishing, and intertribal warfare. They could be made from a single hollowed-out tree, and capable of carrying many people and supplies on rivers, lagoons and oceans.

Can you pretend to use your waka to find tuna (eels), shark and flounder?

This barrel acknowledges Timaru's first shipwreck, The Prince Consort which dragged its anchors in a big sea and gale. It's ballast shifted and broke up in the night. A swimmer rescued a man who had washed overboard. And the crew of the 1864 Alexandra life-boat rescued two more. The lifeboat was also used to save 40+ men in the 1882 Benvenue diaster.

Can you pretend to evacuate with your crew from the sinking ship?

This is a symbol to our shaky past. The Alpine Fault runs along the South Island and ruptured in 1717, 1620, 1450, and 1100 AD. Earthquakes have shaped our land and history, even uncovering 50 M year old fossils (which you can find at Pareora River).

Can you escape the lava by only stepping on the rocks?

Cplays' flower symbolizes Pasifika hospitality and the deep connection across the ocean, as reflected in the migration of tuna (eels) who swim from NZ to the Tongan Trench to spawn. The Frangipani is used in lei, kahoa, salusalu (flower garland) known as the kakala (lei making) process. The lei is gifted to welcome, show love and kindness to the person receiving the gift.

Can you pretend you are on a journey to the pacific islands?

South Canterbury's boundaries are the large, snow-fed rivers Waitaki and Rangitata. **Māori used Mōkihi rafts made of flax or raupō to cross rivers.** Imagine how challenging it must have been to cross these rivers before we had ferry's and bridges. The Rangitātā River was bridged at Arundel 1872. The Waitaki was bridged at Glenavy 1877.

Fun Fact: *In 1873 the Duke of Edinburgh wrecked in Timaru, it was carrying timber from Auckland for the Temuka bridge. It was refloated and re-named the Euphrosyne and disappeared while sailing from Dunedin for Oamaru in 1875.*

The Volunteer Rocket Brigade rushed to the rescue with two rocket guns, they fired lines to ships so crews could zip-line to shore. This brigade was disbanded when the breakwater was completed.

Can you create your own disaster scenario using the mouse wheel?

This boulder reminds us of the last ice age. As the glaciers melted and retreated over the last ice age, the ice ground boulders like this into dust.

Can you find volcanic basalt, and sandstone greywacke? Feel the mauri stone - a sedimentary chert.
Mauri is the life energy which binds and animates all things in the physical world.

This is a reproduction of an actual moa foot print found at Pareora beach. South Canterbury was the home to the extinct giant moa. The discovered footprints were 3D scanned by the South Canterbury and Canterbury museum. CPlay made 3D moulds to push into the concrete paths.

Can you compare your foot with an extinct moas?

Europeans and Americans arrived to hunt whales, leading to the establishment of whaling stations across NZ. The Sydney-based Weller brothers set up a short-lived whaling station in Timaru in 1839. **The first recorded whale oil shipment from Timaru was "70 tun". A tun of oil was 8 barrels by volume, (a wine tun was 252 gallons). Some say Caroline Bay was named after a whale supply ship, hence the stencil on this barrel.** The Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) was signed in 1840.

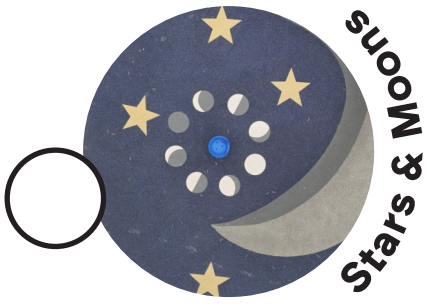
Fun Fact: *The first European to be born in Timaru was the son of a former Timaru whaler and his cradle was a gin crate.*

Stowaways on our shipwreck! NZ's birds and bats have declined rapidly due to stowaways and introduced pests like rats, mice, stoats, cats, deer, goats, pigs, and wasps.

Fun Fact: *Sculptor Donald Patterson made these two rat sculptures. He also made the Landing Service's Captain Cain sculpture.*

The stripes in our lighthouse mound are a nod to the loess layers. Dust blew over Timaru and created loess cliffs Over 1000s of years. As the climate changed so did the characteristics of the dust, creating distinct layers.

Can you see these layers in the cliffs around the bay?



Seafarers used the Southern Cross to help navigate. Some Māori saw it as an anchor, while European's saw a cross. CPlay integrated the stars to help people learn how to find celestial south. **The moon's phases are inspired by maramataka, a traditional Māori calendar that recognizes the link between humans and nature.** This includes understanding subtle changes in time and seasons for planting and fishing.

Can you make the stars and moon phases spin around you?

The first Europeans to settle in Timaru established the Levels sheep station, this is their branding iron. Their first export was 20 bales of wool in 1853. James McKenzie was accused of stealing 1000 sheep from them in 1855. He escaped jail twice before being pardoned. The Mackenzie District was named after him.

Fun Fact: 1859 120 British settlers arrived to Timaru on the Strathallan, the journey took 60 days. A lady wrote in her diary, that if Timaru was a third of the size of London she would be happy. When she arrived there were only five houses!

Cats were kept on ships to control the rats and mice who damaged food and ropes. There are many centuries old, maritime stories about ship cats loyalty, bravery, and companionship.

What do you think this cat is up to?