

Native Schools to Kura Kaupapa Māori

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The Native Schools Act 1867 was enacted and became law in October 1867. This piece of legislation enabled the creation of a national system of state-controlled primary schools for Māori children. Hundreds of Native Schools, or Māori Schools as they were later known, were subsequently set up throughout the country.

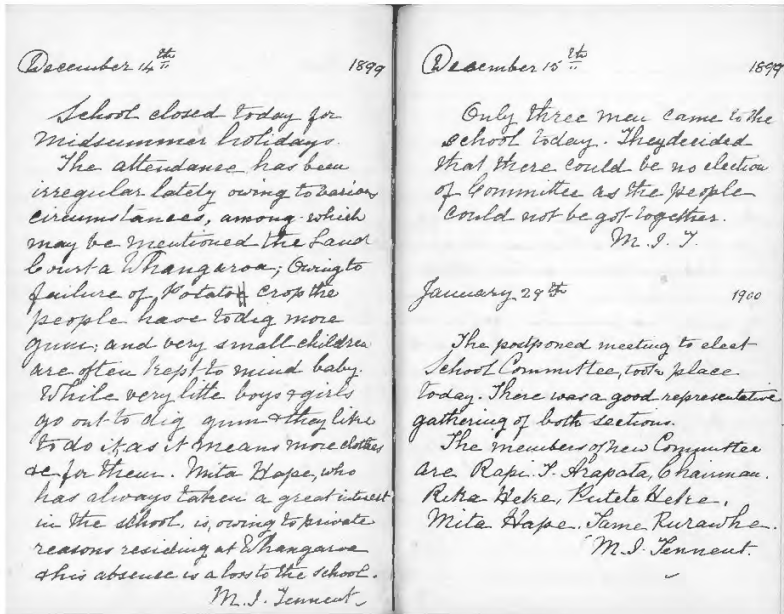
Up until 1879 schools were operated through the Native Department, which, in 1880, transferred responsibility to the newly established Department of Education. For almost 100 years Native/Māori Schools were administered separately from the general State system. When the Māori Schools system was disestablished in 1969 responsibility for the remaining 105 Māori schools again shifted, this time to Education Board control. Many schools still survive today, and some have become Kura Kaupapa Māori, such as Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Rotoiti.

Many records of Native/Māori Schools still survive with most being held at the Archives New Zealand Auckland office. The records of approximately 450 schools include:

- Photographs and albums, some of which are digitised and freely available online – Series 1005
- Admission registers – Series 1004
- Registered files – Series 1001
- Log Books – Series 1003

Although the Native/Māori School records were created by the Crown, for whakapapa, Te Ao Māori researchers and historians these records are a rich resource. They provide insight to education practices and government policy of the day, especially those concerning Māori. On a more personal level these school records can enable researchers to connect with their past. Photographs can provide an opportunity to picture tūpuna, and paper records document the conditions in which they lived. Researchers are allowed a glimpse into matters that affected Māori communities.

To place these early schools in historical context: they were opened during the New Zealand Wars, at a time of uncertainty, full of challenges,



Kaero Native School log book 1897-1901, Department of Education.
Reference: BAAA 1003 Box 1/e.

with conflicting and changing allegiances. This is often reflected in school correspondence and log books, as were other events in their regions.

In 1887, for example, Te Kooti visited Omaio in the Bay of Plenty. His presence was strongly felt by the Māori community, so much so that many left the area with Te Kooti. The 1886 Tarawera eruption is mentioned in Te Wairoa School records, a significant proportion of the local population were killed, including the school's teacher Charles Haszard.

Building and site files, often the earliest records, are more varied than their name implies. They can include lists of pupils, letters from locals and teachers, inspectors' reports, plans, and photographs. Correspondence suggests a lot of variation in character and attitude of the schools and their communities. The records are full of negotiations, strategic comments, optimism and despair, good intentions and bad faith, success and failure, often all encompassed in a single file.



Ahipara Native School 1936, Department of Education, c.1900-1936.
Reference: BAAA 1005 Box 1.