

The Kindy Chronicle

The Magic of Nature-based Learning

Our kindergarten team recently came together for an inspiring professional development workshop led by the wonderful Celia Hogan, diving deep into the heart of nature-based learning and play.

The session served as a powerful reminder of how vital it is to connect our tamariki with the natural world—and how we, as educators, can intentionally weave our own localised natural environment into our daily curriculum. Celia shared invaluable insights, practical strategies and fresh perspectives on how the great outdoors truly acts as our best classroom.

What is Nature-Based Learning you say?

In an Early Childhood Education (ECE) setting, nature-based learning is an educational approach where young children spend significant, regular blocks of time learning in, through and with the natural environment.

What does this look like in practice? Instead of structured indoor lessons on measurement and counting, children might head out into the garden to build a makeshift shelter out of fallen branches and harvested leaves. Working together to balance logs and test structural stability invites rich problem-solving, collaborative communication and hands-on mathematical thinking and this all happens while fully immersed in the outdoors.

Sparking New Ideas

Celia concluded the day by dividing us into breakout groups to brainstorm key topics. This sparked lively conversations and generated fantastic ideas for our association to explore and potentially weave into our growing Nature Discovery programme.

Exciting times lie ahead for our little learners and our teaching teams!



Te Rua a Takurua

Rakaunui/Full Moon - 29 July 2026

Whiro/New Moon - 13 August 2026

The Journey of Rākaihautū

Travelling south with his faithful kō (wooden spade), Tu Whakarōria, the ancient explorer Rākaihautū carved and named the breathtaking lakes of Te Waipounamu/Te Waka a Aoraki (the South Island). As Ariki of the ancestral canoe Uruao, he and his son Rokohouia initially surveyed Te Ika a Maui (the North Island) before deciding to explore the south. Dividing their parties near Whakatū (Nelson), Rākaihautū set off into the interior with his wooden spade to shape the landscape and his son Rokohouia took the Uruao waka along the East Coast of the island.

Reaching the southern interior, Rākaihautū stopped to perform protective rituals, marking the site as Wānaka (the lore of the tohunga). Further south, he encountered the great expanse of Whakatipu Waimāori (Lake Wakatipu). Crossing the western ranges, which he named Kā Mauka Whakatipu, his party navigated up Whakatipu Kā Tuka (Holyford River) and went west towards Piopiotahi (Milford Sound)

Turning inland and heading further south, the party encountered wet weather, inspiring the names Te Ana Au (cave of rain) and Roto Ua (the lake where rain is constant, mistakenly known today as Manapouri). Pressing onward, Rākaihautū reached Te Ara a Kiwa (Foveaux Strait) the southernmost tip of the island, where he stationed two guardians before turning his journey northward up the eastern coast.

As he travelled back, he named Roto Nui A Whatu, Waihora (later Waihola) and Kai Kārae (Kaikorai), eventually reuniting with Rokohouia near the Waitaki River. The reunited group crossed the Canterbury Plains (Kā Pākihi Whakatekateka A Waitaha) to reach a northern shallow lake called Waihora (Lake Ellesmere), also known as Te Kete Ika A Rākaihautū (the fish basket of Rākaihautū), alongside Wairewa (Lake Forsyth).

Here, the epic lake-making journey of Rākaihautū concluded. To commemorate his life's work, he climbed a high hill overlooking his creation and planted his faithful spade, Tu Whakarōria, firmly into the ground. The hill was renamed Tuhirangi, and Rākaihautū lived out his remaining days at Akaroa. To this day, these legendary waterways are celebrated as Kā Puna Karikari A Rākaihautū - the springs of water dug by Rākaihautū.



Whitiki te hoe, taketake te whenua.

(Grip the paddle firmly, and make your mark upon the land.)