

ALWAYS A GOOD VIEW



Brooke Whaitiri has lived nowhere else but Rēkohu. Her mother's karapuna are Moriori, and her father's tipuna are Ngāi Tahu and Rakiura Māori. Brooke talked with the *School Journal* about her life in the small fishing settlement of Kāingaroa, in the north-east corner of the island.





I've lived in Kāingaroa my whole life. I've been to New Zealand heaps of times, but I always get homesick. Mostly it's because I miss my family – but I also really miss the island. In a few years, I'll have to go to boarding school over there. I'm not sure how I feel about that.

Kāingaroa is really small: only about forty people live here. There are no shops, so Mum usually drives us to Waitangi once a week. It takes over an hour because the road's gravel and pretty slow. In Waitangi, we visit my grandparents and cousins, go to the shop, and sometimes go to the café. If the boat's come in, we pick up our groceries, which we order every couple of months by fax or over the Internet.

The rest of the time, we just stay in Kāingaroa, but I don't mind because there's lots of fun stuff to do here. After school and in the weekends, I like being with my best friend, Reed. We ride our bikes, go fishing, look in the rock pools, go to each other's houses, and watch TV. Reed and I have been best friends since we were two or three. We never fight.





I also like going up to the cemetery. It's a special place for my family, and it has a good view of the fishing boats and the lagoon. My favourite place, though, is probably the beach. I collect shells and special rocks that break off from the coral reefs during storms. Most days, I pick up rubbish from the beach. I find bits of rope and net, plastic bags, bottles – all stuff that can kill seals and dolphins.

The beach is the best place to go fishing in Kāingaroa. In the holidays, my dad takes us fishing off the rocks. I don't like going out on his fishing boat because I get seasick, but it doesn't matter – you can catch really big fish from the beach. We get mostly barracuda and blue cod – and one time, my sisters caught a shark. The most exciting thing I've ever caught was a conger eel. Fishing off the wharf can be pretty good, too.

Sometimes, in the holidays, I help my dad. I pile up his floats and ropes and pack up the frozen bait, which he uses in the crayfish pots. Dad has 170 pots – we like climbing over them when he's trying to mend holes in the netting. As well as crayfish, Dad catches blue cod, and when it's the right season, he dives for pāua and kina. Most of the things he catches are seasonal – even the cod. They bite better in August and September.

Dad gets up really early in the morning. On a good day, he catches up to 200 kilograms of crayfish. The size of his catch mostly depends on the weather. Reed's father is a fisherman, too. Nearly all of the dads here work on the boats.

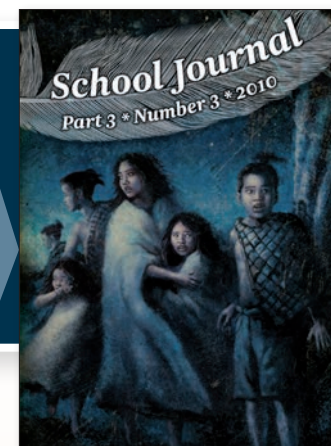




The school I go to, Kāingaroa School, is really small. There are only nine kids, and we have one classroom. That means I'm in the same class as my little sisters, Serena and Nicole, although we do different work. I sometimes help them with their schoolwork. It's fun being with the little kids. We play with them and look after them. I like that.

It's a good school because there's lots of space for everyone. Actually, there's lots of space everywhere in Kāingaroa – and no matter where you are, there's always a good view of the sea. It's especially good from my trampoline.

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First published 2010 by the Ministry of Education,
PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.
www.education.govt.nz
This edition published 2022.

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Enquiries should be made to the publisher.

ISBN: 978 1 77690 704 5 (online)
ISSN: 2624 3636 (online)

Publishing services: Lift Education E Tū
Series Editor: Susan Paris
Designer: Jodi Wicksteed

SCHOOL JOURNAL PART 3 NUMBER 3 2010

Curriculum learning area	Social Sciences: ANZH
Reading year level	5 and 6
Keywords	beach, belonging, Chatham Islands, family, fishing, friendship, home, homesickness, island, isolation, Kāingaroa, Moriori, place, Rēkohu, school, whānau