



Victoria Square

Victoria Square is a place of special significance for Ngāi Tūāhuriri, from both pre-European times to current day.

In its earliest days it was recorded as the site of Puari, a Waitaha pā which stretched along the banks of the Ōtākaro, close to Victoria Square.

This stretch of river has always been an important mahinga kai site where a large variety of food was gathered including tuna (eel), inaka (whitebait), kokopū (native trout), koukoupara – native trout, pāpera – grey duck and pūtakitaki – paradise duck. Cultivated foods such as pora (turnip) and aruhe (fernroot) were also grown in the area. It was also a central meeting space for Ngāi Tūāhuriri – a place where people gathered to meet and engage in practices associated with mahinga kai.

Following colonial settlement, the Square became a busy centre of the European township and retained its position as the trading space for Ngāi Tūāhuriri / Ngāi Tahu and Pakeha settlers, hence the early name for this space was Market Square. As the colonial population grew in Christchurch, Maori became progressively unwelcome in the Square and it took on the role of a key civic space for European

settlers. This role is reflected in the erection of statues of Queen Victoria, and James Cook and the name change to Victoria Square (1903).

Matapopore involvement in the redesign of the Square post-earthquake was strongly anchored in a desire to retain the shared sense of space and history of the Square and surrounding landscape, while acknowledging the early Ngāi Tūāhuriri connection to the area and its use for gathering mahinga kai and trading. We wanted it to reflect our shared sense of history and community.

1. NGĀ WHĀRIKI MANAAKI – WOVEN MATS OF WELCOME

The three Whāriki in Victoria Square are by artists Morehu Flutey-Henare and Reihana Parata. They are part of a series of thirteen weaving patterns that feature within Te Papa Ōtākaro/Avon River Precinct and they are a core element of the Ōtākaro | Art by the River, positioned along the river promenade. Each whāriki is an arrangement of natural stone pavers (3m x5m) of varying shades and colours. In sequence, they reference the whakamanuhiri process of welcome and manaakitanga for the people of Christchurch and visitors to the city. The overarching concept for the artworks, and for the restoration work in this area, is drawn from the key founding kaupapa – *Kia atawhai ki te iwi – Care for your people*, words from Pita Te Hori, Upoko Ngāi Tūāhuriri Rūnanga, 1861.

Mahinga Kai – Customary practice of gathering food and resources

The whāriki, Mahinga Kai, located near the Colombo Street northern entrance illustrates our customary rights of gathering and harvesting natural and cultivated foods and other resources from the land and waterways. We offer manaaki, or share with others our hospitality, by presenting visitors with delicacies from this area. These designs symbolise edible delicacies such as manu (birds), ferns, vegetation and fish.

Our home people's obligation to look after guests is sustained by reserves of local delicacies, resulting in new alliances and strengthened relationships.

Tai Waiora – Water resources, wai or water to drink, wai for good health

Water sustains all living things. Mahaanui tidal coastal waters surround Canterbury. Mahaanui directs the flow of incoming and outgoing waters, and it is imperative that we keep the waterways clean for the wellbeing of all living things. The design, Tai Waiora, located on the Hamish Hay Bridge depicts differing waters intermingling and merging.

Ngā Pou Riri e Iwa – The nine tall trees that made up the Ngāi Tahu claim

The Ngā Pou Riri e Iwa whāriki, located near the Armagh Street western entrance, represents the unsettled grievances regarding the eight land purchase agreements between Ngāi Tahu and the Crown, with the ninth grievance being the loss of mahinga kai or food gathering places and resources. The lower design represents the nine tall trees and the middle pattern, tūhura, 'brings to light' these topics. The top pattern, whakaaro tahi, carries the meaning 'that everyone be of one heart and one mind'.



Mahinga Kai
Reihana Parata, Morehu Flutey-Henare



Tai Waiora
Morehu Flutey-Henare



Ngā Pou Riri e Iwa
Reihana Parata, Morehu Flutey-Henare



2. PEPEHA

On the corner of Colombo and Armagh Streets there is an extract from Kems Deed:

Ko ō mātou kāinga nohoanga,
ko ā mātou mahinga kai,
me waiho mārie mō ā mātou tamariki,
mō muri iho i a mātou.

*Kemps Deed Ngāi Tahu Signatories
12th June Akaroa 1848*

This translates to:

“Our places of residence, cultivations and food gathering places must still be left to us, for ourselves and our children after us”.

This powerful extract, drawn from Kems Deed, has a strong relationship to the Treaty of Waitangi and is also a reflection of the current whakatauki that is a driver for the work of Te Runanga o Ngāi Tahu.

A second literary work commissioned from writer Fiona Farrell called “The Deal” is also part of the featured literary trail in Victoria Square. The words are a direct reference to the origins of the Square as a Market place and they reflect the bicultural response that Matapopore was determined to incorporate in the post earthquake redesign. It reads:

In the Market Place

They traded leaves for a song,

Solid ground for a fistful of water.

(Fiona Farrell ‘The Deal’, 2015)

3. PARERAU

A 40 metre long, curved low wall runs behind the Queen Victoria Statue in the Square. The work incorporates sandblasted illustrations by Ngāi Tahu artist Jennifer Rendall. The wall is faced in basalt and the illustrations reflect the importance of indigenous and introduced flora of the area. It was developed in discussion with the Christchurch Beautifying Association. The work is titled *Parerau*, which can be translated as ‘garland of leaves’. Its placement in relation to the statue of Queen Victoria was deliberately chosen to reflect and entwine with the existing features and landscape of the Square. This co-existence of Ngāi Tahu and Pakeha history was an essential aspect of the redesign. As part of the engrained design, the wall features plant species, leaves and seed pods that appear as if blown by the prevailing winds of Canterbury.



An illustration of the design for Parerau.

4. TE AHI KAA

Te Ahi Kaa was crafted by master carver Riki Manuel as part of the 1990 commemorations of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. The six-metre-high poupou was carved from totara and erected in Victoria Square on the banks of the Ōtākaro in 1994. Post earthquake the poupou has been restored and brought back to its original location. A blessing for the return of this carving to the Victoria Square site was held in July 2017.

5. MANA MOTUHAKE

Mana Motuhake will be a significant work for, and acknowledgement of, mana whenua, Ngāi Tūāhuriri in this area. The work is currently being progressed by Ngāi Tahu carver Fayne Robinson and will be one of the last installations to be placed in the newly renovated Square.

Mana Motuhake is a new element that offers balance to the bicultural narrative of our city and it is a celebration and reflection of our shared cultural heritage. The work will complement the existing statue of Queen Victoria and emphasise the enduring relationship between Ngāi Tahu and the Crown.

6. KANAKANA TABLE

From very early in the design process, Matapopore and Ngāi Tūāhuriri were keen to see whānau have access to Victoria Square for gatherings, reminiscent of our past use of the area. We suggested the inclusion of places adjacent to the river for whānau gathering and sharing food. A new table and water tap will be positioned on the lawn close to Tauranga Waka (boat stop). The table features a mythical depiction of a kanakana (southern lamprey), an important yet elusive mahinga kai species. It also integrates a karakia mo te kai, or a blessing for food. The work has been progressed through collaborative development by Matapopore and the Ōtākaro project team.

