

The History of Harakeke Use in Aotearoa

Use the word bank to help you fill in the missing words so the article makes sense. Each word can only be used once.

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|---------|---------|----------|----------|
| rigging | shell | Britain | 81,000 |
| Pora | native | national | whāriki |
| guns | fashion | Hawaiki | Indian |
| trading | flax | scraping | Aotearoa |

Harakeke (New Zealand _____) is one of our country's most distinctive _____ plants. Its benefits and uses are numerous. The uses of the harakeke plant are woven throughout the history of Aotearoa.

1250

Around 1250, the first Māori arrived in Aotearoa from _____ and soon discovered the multiple benefits of harakeke. They used it to make sweet-tasting drinks, poultices for skin infections, disinfectants, laxatives, bandages and splints. Māori women wove baskets, containers and mats from the harakeke leaves. They learnt to get the strong fibre (muka) from the leaves by _____ the flesh away with a sharp _____. The muka was used to create fishing nets and traps, footwear, cords and ropes. Muka was often woven with feathers and dog skin to create warm clothing.

1700s

European explorers to New Zealand could see the potential in muka (flax fibre) as rope for _____ on their sailing ships. Rope was in high demand, and Māori began making flax ropes for visiting ships. They started _____ fibre and weaving for European goods. Trading products and skills brought Māori and Europeans into close contact with each other for the first time.

1800s

The 1800s saw ups and downs in the flax industry in Aotearoa as many Māori began wearing European-style clothing, and weaving skills began to decline. Flax fibre was traded with Australia and then re-exported to _____. Māori muka producers were paid with _____ which escalated tribal conflict into full-scale war. Tribes began fighting to control the flax trade and supply of guns. This warring contributed to the flax trade beginning to die off. Eventually, wool, timber, potatoes, grain, kauri gum and whale oil

became Aotearoa's main exports.

Hand-stripping of flax stopped due to the war between Māori and European settlers. Mechanical flax strippers were created; by 1870, there were 161 flax mills across Aotearoa. Weaving skills began to fade, and missionaries discouraged young women from learning to weave. Near the end of the century, ethnologist Elsdon Best authored a book called, 'The Art of The Whare _____', which described the introduction of young Māori wāhine to the customs and rituals surrounding every part of the weaving process.

1900s

The 1900s saw huge strides in the flax industry and the art of weaving. Aotearoa's largest flax mill, Miranui, was built, which, at its peak, had seven stripping machines and employed 300 people. The government restricted imported woolpacks made from _____ jute, allowing the survival of muka manufacturing and allowing for the opening of more factories. The government also purchased Moutoa Swamp during the Second World War as an experimental flax plantation to supply farmers and the military with fibre. Post-war, government restrictions on importing fibres also helped the flax industry. However, in the 1970s, import restrictions were lifted, bringing the competition of imported and synthetic fibres, leading to the end of the flax industry and the closing of the last flax mill in 1985.

Rene Orchiston spent 30 years travelling the country, collecting, growing, sharing and recording knowledge about flax and its uses. She later gifted her collection to the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) to form the basis of a _____ collection. This collection was later taken over by Manaaki Whenua (Landcare Research).

Rangimārie Hetet hosted a hui to promote _____ making and other weaving traditions. Her daughter, Diggeress Te Kanawa, attended this hui and went on to spend 50 years promoting and encouraging the revival of Māori weaving. This includes forming a group called 'Aotearoa Moananui a Kiwa Weavers' whose goal was to share resources and knowledge about weaving.

2000s

The 2000s have been a time of renewal for the flax industry. Flax and woven products have been the focus of much research, such as investigating ways to improve the strength of flax fibres by mixing them with other fibres, promoting flax's environmental and commercial benefits, investigating ways of softening muka to make it fine enough to be used by the _____ industry, and the recommendation that whānau be provided with a flax-woven safe sleeping basket for newborns. The first major Māori weaving exhibition occurred

across Aotearoa and North America. Its final show attracted _____ visitors. This exhibition showed the spiritual significance of weaving and featured the works of more than 40 leading Māori weavers.

Harakeke and the muka that can be taken from its leaves have been an important part of Māori life since they arrived in _____ and continues to be today. The future of the flax industry in New Zealand is bright.

