

Matariki

Matariki is one of the most important Māori celebrations - it is a celebration of people, culture, language, spirituality and history. Matariki is the Māori New Year. Matariki can be translated as: Mata Riki - Tiny Eyes or Mata Ariki - the Eyes of God.



Did you know?

Māori believed that if the stars in the cluster were clear and bright, it would be a warm season with a lot of food. If Matariki looked hazy or shimmering, then it would be a cold and difficult season.

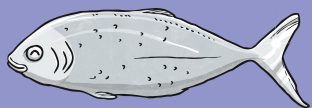
Matariki is the Māori name for a cluster of stars. It is known in other parts of the world as Pleiades, Subaru, Seven Sisters and Messier 45. Matariki is the shoulder of Taurus the bull, a constellation of stars.

Before Māori had calendars, they tracked time by using events that happened in the natural world like the flowering of plants or the movement of stars in the sky. Matariki reappears in the north eastern pre-dawn sky in late May or early June. This is the Maori New Year and it is a sign of a change in season to winter.

There are different names for each of the Matariki stars and these vary between tribes. These are the names commonly used: the brightest star is also known as Matariki (Alcyone); the other six stars are: Tupu-ā-rangi (Electra), Waipuna-ā-rangi (Taygeta), Waitī (Maia), Uru-ā-rangi (Pleione), Tupu-ā-nuku (Atlas) and Waitā (Merope).

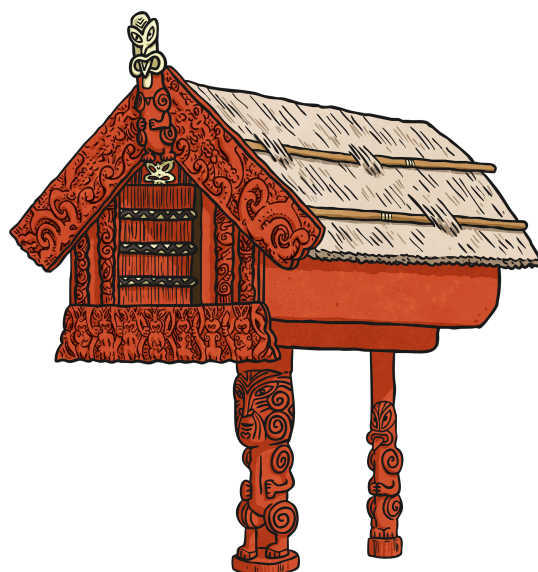
Matariki was celebrated at the end of the harvest season. It was a time when the pātaka kai (storage house) was full of food. There was kūmara, kererū and fish such as moki and korokoro.

During the celebration, there were big Hākari (feasts). People came together to remember the past, their ancestors and to learn about their whakapapa (ancestry). Māori would plan for the future and prepare the whenua (land) for planting. Whānau (family) would share songs, traditions and stories.



There are many myths and legends that relate to Matariki. One tells of Tāwhirimātea, the God of Wind, getting so angry that he threw his eyes into the sky. Another explains the story of a mean fisherman that captures 7 fish and Tane, the God of Light, rescues them, throwing them into the sky where they become stars. Some believe Matariki is a mother star surrounded by her six daughters.

Now, Matariki is a time to celebrate Aotearoa and everything Māori. We can learn about our land and our whakapapa (ancestry). Matariki is celebrated through education, remembrance and the planting of new trees and crops. It is a sign of new beginnings. Lots of celebrations focus on music, songs, dance, food and family. You can celebrate in traditional Māori ways or choose your own way to celebrate.



Questions

Answer the questions in full sentences below.

1. What is Matariki?

2. When was/is Matariki celebrated?

3. What is another natural event like the flowering of plants or the movement of stars in the sky that Māori might have used to track time?

4. When does the Matariki cluster reappear?

5. What did Māori believe the stars would look like if it was going to be a good season?

6. Why do you think there is more than one myth to explain Matariki?

7. What do these words in Te Reo Māori mean in English?

a) pātaka kai

b) hākari

c) whenua

d) whānau

e) whakapapa

8. List three ways Māori people celebrated Matariki.

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9. What stories do you think Māori shared at these times?

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10. Name a celebration that is important to you. When is it celebrated and how do you celebrate it?

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11. Think of one way you could celebrate Matariki with your class or family. What would you do?

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