

The Dawn Raids apology

Connecting current events to the past

E sui faiga, ae tumau lava fa'avae.

Approaches and methods change, but foundations stay the same.

On 1 August 2021 the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Jacinda Ardern, apologised to New Zealand's Pacific community for the Government's implementation of the immigration laws of the 1970s that led to the events of the Dawn Raids. In her apology, the Prime Minister stated that the past actions of the Crown were wrong and acknowledged the distress and hurt that they have caused to generations of Pacific New Zealanders.

"I welcome what I've heard tonight from the Government in an effort to seek out how a new dawn can be found ... Let us move forward together with the hope of a very bright future."

[Toesulu Brown, a representative of the Samoan community, in response to the Dawn Raids apology](#)

What events led to the apology?

After the Second World War, Pacific people were encouraged to move to Aotearoa to work in the growing manufacturing sector. People mainly came from Western Sāmoa, the Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, and Tokelau. Most migrants were already New Zealand citizens due to New Zealand's annexation and administration of their home nations. Pacific people came to New Zealand for job opportunities, money, and their children's education. Many sent a portion of their wages home to support their extended family.

In 1973 New Zealand's biggest trading partner, the United Kingdom, joined the European Economic Community. This severely impacted New Zealand's export economy. The same year, crude oil prices rose 666%. Meanwhile, large numbers of migrants from across the world were arriving in New Zealand on temporary visas. These events contributed to rising unemployment.

New Zealand's Pacific community became a scapegoat for the country's economic downturn. Pacific people were falsely portrayed in the media as taking jobs from "New Zealanders" and they were described as "overstayers" despite the majority of illegal immigrants being from Europe, Australia, and South Africa.

Between 1974 and 1976, police and immigration officials invaded the homes of Pacific people in the early hours of the morning, demanding evidence that they were lawful citizens of New Zealand. Random checks were often carried out during the day in public. Māori, and other people of colour were also stopped and checked. Many people who had previously been regarded as valued members of New Zealand's workforce were prosecuted and deported. While Pacific people comprised roughly a third of overstayers, they represented 86% of all prosecutions. This racially targeted policy caused widespread trauma and grief.

The Polynesian Panthers, formed in 1971 to challenge discrimination and racism, gathered evidence of police brutality during the Dawn Raids. The tide of opposition to the Dawn Raids grew as more people spoke up including the Polynesian Panthers, church and community leaders, and other anti-racism groups.

Information sourced from [NZ History Ngā Kōrero a ipurangi o Aotearoa](#)

Why is this an important story to know?

The Dawn Raids story is part of a wider narrative about the settlement and experiences of Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand and the exercise and effects of power. Kaiako and ākonga can use this story as an entry point for learning about:

- the migration experiences and settlement stories of Pacific people
- how immigration policy has been used to exclude some peoples and to restrict conditions for entry and citizenship
- the social action led by the Polynesian Panthers and other groups to contest power and address injustices
- our collective and diverse identities as New Zealanders.

Through these learning experiences students can:

Understand	The big ideas of Aotearoa New Zealand's histories
Know	<p>Whakapapa me te whanaungatanga Culture and identity</p> <p>This context focuses on how the past shapes who we are today – our familial links and bonds, our networks and connections, our sense of obligation, and the stories woven into our collective and diverse identities.</p> <p>Tino rangatiratanga me te kāwanatanga Government and organisation</p> <p>This context focuses on the history of authority and control, and the contests over them. At the heart of these contests are the authorities guaranteed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi The Treaty of Waitangi. This context also considers the history of the relationships between government agencies and the people who lived here and in the Pacific.</p> <p>Kōwhiringa ohaoha me te whai oranga Economic activity</p> <p>The choices people made to meet their needs and wants, how they made a living individually and collectively, and the resulting exchanges and interconnections.</p>
Do	Think critically about the past and interpret stories about it

Linking to the KNOW element and showing progression

Phase of learning	Years 1-3	Years 4-6	Years 7-8	Years 9-10
KNOW progress outcomes	By the end of year 3, I know: People in our area have come from a variety of places and some retain connections to those places.	By the end of year 6, I know: The stories of groups of people from different periods in our history convey their reasons for and experiences of migration. These stories have shaped their culture and identity in Aotearoa New Zealand.	By the end of year 8, I know: Pacific peoples have experienced Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial authority and control. Throughout these experiences, they have continued to sustain their cultures and assert their authority. The New Zealand Government has apologised to the people of Samoa for past injustices.	By the end of year 10, I know: Since the mid-nineteenth century, immigration practices and laws have shaped Aotearoa New Zealand's population and sought to realise dominant cultural ideals and economic ends, including via Chinese goldminers, Indian and Scandinavian labourers, and Pacific workers. Māori as tangata whenua were excluded from these cultural ideals, which they experienced as colonising and assimilating. At different times, various groups have been marginalised in Aotearoa New Zealand. These groups have sought to remedy injustices associated with immigration policies and practices (e.g., through the Disability Action Group, the Polynesian Panthers, and petitions to governments). Governments have sometimes acknowledged these injustices (e.g., through the poll tax apology and the apology for the dawn raids). Aotearoa New Zealand's relationships with Pacific states since the Second World War have reflected its own interests. These have coincided at times with the interests of Pacific states. The New Zealand economy has both benefitted from and been vulnerable to the impacts of economic interdependence.

Phase of learning	Years 1-3	Years 4-6	Years 7-8	Years 9-10
Potential inquiry questions	Where do people in our community come from? Do they have connections to the places that they come from? How do they keep up those connections?	What stories do different groups of people tell about their experiences of migration? When did they come, who did they come with, and why did they come? How did these stories shape who they are now?	Historically, what opportunities and barriers have different groups experienced when participating in or contributing to Aotearoa New Zealand? How have they advocated for their rights? What were Pacific peoples' experiences of Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial power in the Pacific? How did they continue to sustain their culture and assert their authority? What were the historical events behind the New Zealand Government's apology to Samoa in 2002?	How have groups of people sought to remedy injustices associated with immigration policies and practices? Since the Second World War, how have Aotearoa New Zealand's relationships with Pacific states reflected its own interests? To what extent have these coincided with the interests of Pacific peoples?
Possible learning experiences	Years 1–3: Exploring the relationships between the people of the Pacific nations and New Zealand.	Years 4–6: Learning about the settlement stories of Pacific people to New Zealand, with an introduction to the Dawn Raids.	Years 7–8: Focusing on the Dawn Raids; the causes, responses, and impact.	Years 9–10: Focusing on the Polynesian Panthers and the Dawn Raids apology.
<p>These activities and prompts weave together the three elements of the histories curriculum helping ākonga to -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the big ideas of Aotearoa New Zealand's histories know national, rohe, and local contexts think critically about the past and interpret stories about it. <p>Understand</p> <p>Know</p> <p>Do</p>	<p>Read A Quilt for Kiri from the Instructional Series. Then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locate the Cook Islands on a world map and explain that many people from the Cook Islands and other Pacific nations have made New Zealand their home over the last 70 years. Research the special relationships that New Zealand has with its former colonies which include the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau and Western Sāmoa. Find out who has Pacific whakapapa in your class. When and why did their families move to New Zealand? What do they have/do at home or in the community that shows them that they are a Pacific person? In what ways does our community and/or school celebrate Pacific culture? What are some ways that we could celebrate in the classroom? Connect with Pacific families and communities in your area. Learn about their migration stories. How are the stories similar and different to each other? 	<p>Watch excerpts from Children of the Migration. Then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the migration stories shared in the documentary series. What were people's different reasons for migration? Recount some of the positive and negative settlement experiences that are shared. Interview Pacific people in your own community about their migration and settlement experiences. Compare and contrast their stories with those from the documentary. 	<p>Read Rise Up: The Story of the Dawn Raids and the Polynesian Panthers and Brave Flower from The Instructional Series. Then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the impact of the Dawn Raids on people's wellbeing and lives. Explore how the actions of the Polynesian Panthers contested power and led to positive social change. Read other accounts of the Dawn Raids and Polynesian Panthers to gain a fuller, more layered understanding. How do the stories that people remember and share reflect their views and what they feel is important? Draw a diagram or timeline to show the pull factors that brought Pacific people to New Zealand and the economic and societal changes that led to acts of racism and violence against them. 	<p>Watch the Polynesian Panthers documentary from NZ On Screen. Then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the different social actions carried out by the Polynesian Panthers to contest power and challenge racial discrimination and injustice. Compare and contrast the actions of the Polynesian Panthers with the Black Panthers in the United States and other movements that fight against inequality.

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Discover more about the Dawn Raids and Polynesian Panthers

- [NZ on Screen - Dawn Raids](#) (documentary)
- [NZ on Screen - Polynesian Panthers](#) (documentary)
- [NZ History, The Dawn Raids: causes, impacts and legacy](#) (website)
- [NZ History: Teaching about the Polynesian Panthers and the Dawn Raids](#) (teacher support material)
- [National Library topic explorer - The Dawn Raids](#) (curated resources)
- [Any Questions? Dawn Raids](#) (website)
- [Dawn Raid by Pauline \(Vaeluaga\) Smith](#) (teacher notes)
- [The Women of the Polynesian Panthers](#) (blog)
- [Speech to Dawn Raids apology](#) (speech transcript)

Discover more about Pacific histories

- [National library topic explorer - The Pacific: Culture, History and Geography](#) (curated resources)
- [Untold Pacific History](#) (Radio New Zealand podcast)

Discover more about human rights

- [New Zealand Human Rights Commission](#) (website)
- [Anti-racism and Treaty of Waitangi activism on Te Ara](#) (website)