

He mihi Ōtanewainuku.

On our Forest/Farm Adventures, we get to go to places that are unique and very special to tangata whenua. These places resonate with us as tangata triti too - the partners of The Treaty of Waitangi. I had been thinking about te ngahere, and wondered how could we show how much these places mean to us. We go to connect with te ngahere, to restore our wairua, our spiritual selves and come away feeling revitalised and full of energy. Some time spent with tangata whenua up at our chiefly maunga, Ōtanewainuku, had me thinking about the way we arrive at these significant places as manuhiri, the visitors, and how we show our appreciation for the energies received.

Some wisdom shared by Aroha suggested we karanga three times; for the past, the present and for the future. Karanga is a ritual, a call from the heart that communicates a message and emotion and this felt right as a way to introduce ourselves.

Arriving at Ōtanewainuku, and before we filled the space with our noise and busyness we paused. Quietly we joined together in a circle and stood in silence. Tāne Mahuta greeted us, as his manu began to sing and talk to us, and Tāwhirimātea moved around us in a gentle breeze. As our energies began to intertwine, our hearts and minds tuned into this majestic place. We acknowledged those that had come before us, and then turned our thoughts to the present with the waiata, E tu kahikatea. This waiata speaks of connection, and how we are all stronger when we support each other. We held our palms down onto Papatūānuku to feel her energy, then following on with karakia to acknowledge our journey here today, we felt calm and ready to settle into eating and chatting.



To begin our day with our wairua and mauri settled, balanced and energised could only mean that it would be a day of great accomplishments. We had the opportunity to chat to volunteers from the Ōtanewainuku Kiwi Trust. We saw the sharp teeth of a stoat, inspected the feet of a weasel and the big belly of a rat that had all been preserved so people could have the opportunity to look at them closely. We often inspect the trap lines on our walks, and chat about the pests that damage Tāne Mahuta and his tamariki, killing our beautiful native birds. This close up inspection further affirmed our opinion that these pests really have to go. With gratitude that Ōtanewainuku is wrapped in kaitiakitanga, we began our way up the track.

The wise words of Lesley Rameka tell us of the “interconnectedness of the physical and the spiritual, and the connection to previous generations.” Together, these aspects influence the wellbeing and development of us all. Perhaps it was because we acknowledged these domains today, building on the mahi of the previous week, that we were so ready to take on a challenge. We followed the track, noticing the orange markers that help us know where to walk, and the pink markers for trap lines. Our energy was so vibrant that no one felt tired, and so just we kept going, inspired by the taonga we found at each corner. Small, soft ferns were noticed, as was the tallest of rākau - the trees, and the springy supple jack. Before long, Melissa and I thought that today could be the day we make it to the top of this chiefly maunga. Our team agreed that we could do this, and so inspired by the challenge, we walked on. Sometimes Tāne Mahuta reminded us to slow down with a tricky root sticking up out of the ground, and other times he showed us the berries and seeds that his manu like to eat to help grow new trees. Just as we were beginning to get tired legs, we looked up and noticed that there were not many trees higher than where we were standing. Up one last little hill, and we were there! At the trig on top of Ōtanewainuku! It is such a huge accomplishment, that Ranginui wanted to be part of it, and let the gift of his tears for Papatūānuku fall gently down on us. We walked back down to the van with the light rain softly swirling around us. Kia ora Team Tuesday, what a truly fabulous day.



