

# Tō Mātou wāhi - Our Place

by Donna Reader,  
Principal, Fox Glacier Weheka School



Fox Glacier Weheka School is a small, rural kura. You'll find it in the middle of South Westland. The school has only fourteen students. Some of them live near Fox Glacier Te Moeka o Tūawe, but others live at Bruce Bay Mahitahi. The Bruce Bay Mahitahi students have to travel for over an hour to get to school.

At the front of the school is a large, colourful mural. It was made by the students. Here's how they did it.



## 1. Planning the mural

The students live in different communities, but every day, they come together to learn. They wanted their mural to show that they all belong to the same place. They decided to paint a picture of their area and to include the things that are special to them.

Jemima Pedro is an artist from Dunedin. She helped the students to design the mural. Then they shared their draft design with the community. People in the community suggested some small changes. Once the tamariki had made the changes, they had their final design.

## 2. Getting the materials

The students used their maths skills to work out how much wood and paint they would need. Most of the paint came from a large paint company that helps with school projects, but some came from another school. Concord Primary School in Dunedin had just finished their own artwork. They heard about the mural and gave Fox Glacier Weheka School their leftover paint. They also provided some painting trays and cloths.

When the wood arrived, the tamariki moved it into the room where they were going to paint the mural.

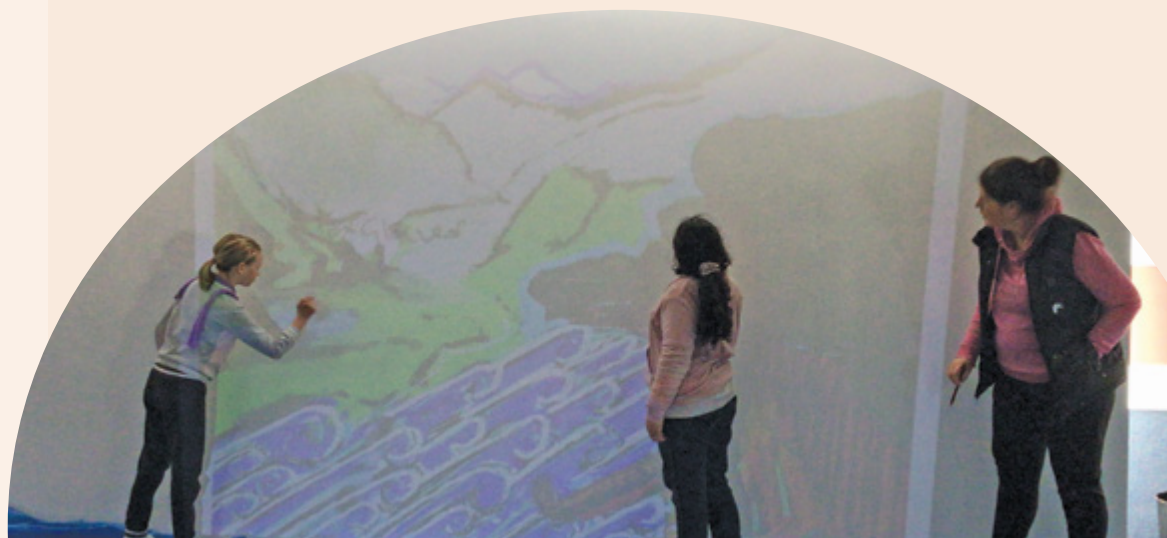


## 3. Preparing the panels

Caleb Freeman, a local builder, made a **frame**. Then he fixed wooden panels to the frame. The students brushed it all down to make sure it was clean. Then they painted two lots of undercoat on each side.

## 4. Drawing the design

Jemima used a **data projector** to shine the design onto the panels. Then the students drew in the design with pencils.





## 5. Painting the background

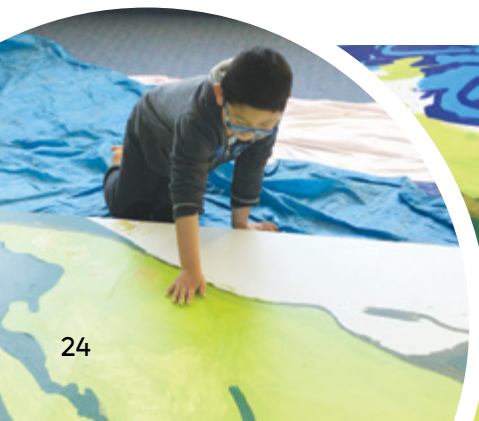
The mural was put flat on the floor again so that it was easier to work on. Then the students painted all the big areas of colour. These would become the sky, the bush, the sea, and the beach – all the

places the students love. They used different shades of each colour to add **contrast**. They also used their handprints to add **texture** and shape.

## 6. Adding the details

After the large areas of colour were finished, the students painted in the details. They added:

- stones and driftwood on the beach
- trees and shrubs in the bush
- koru patterns on the sea to show the movement of waves
- handprints to paint the bush around Lake Matheson
- layers of snow on Aoraki Mt Cook and the **glacier**.



After that, they completed a fence and painted a waka on the beach. The bright, colourful fence stands for the local marae, Te Tauraka Waka a Māui. The waka shows that Māui landed at Mahitahi. The story of the tipuna Māui is very important not only for local iwi Kāti Māhaki ki Makaawhio but to all Māori of Aotearoa.



## FOX GLACIER – TE MOEKA O TŪAWE

Fox Glacier Te Moeka o Tūawe is a long river of ice. It runs for 13 kilometres, from the Southern Alps down into the forest. Fox Glacier is also the English name of the town beside the glacier. In te reo Māori, the town is called Weheka.

## LAKE MATHESON

Lake Matheson is near Fox Glacier. On a clear day, the lake is like a mirror. You can see a perfect reflection of the glacier in the water. Lots of tourists come to visit the glacier and Lake Matheson.





## 7. Making the final changes

When they had finished adding the details, everyone looked carefully at the mural. Did anything need to change? The students decided to outline some things with black to make them stand out more clearly. They also used dark green to paint over some of the handprints – they decided there were too many! The shape of the glacier and the height of Aoraki Mt Cook needed changing a bit, too.



## 8. Signing the mural

Once everyone was happy with the mural, Jemima added a note saying “Painted by the Fox Glacier School Tamariki 2021”. Then each student signed their name on the back. Serena, the school dog, put her paw print on the mural as well!



Last of all, they painted over the mural with **sealant** to protect it against the weather. It was also given an **anti-graffiti coating**. Finally, it was ready to hang!





## 9. Hanging the mural

When it was time to carry the mural outside, they found it only just fitted through the door. No one had thought to measure it! The mural was fixed to a wall at the front of the school so that everyone could see it when they arrived.



## 10. Making the front page news

A reporter from the local newspaper heard about the mural. He interviewed the students and wrote a story about it. The story was on the front page. The students are very proud of their mural. It tells everyone about their area and the things that make it a great place to live.

### SERENA – OUR SCHOOL DOG

Serena belongs to our principal, and she comes to school every day. She enjoys sitting on the mat and getting lots of hugs. Serena is always interested in what we are doing. If we're having a bad day, she likes to sit in our lap. She makes us feel better.



### CONNECTIONS

Many of the students at Fox Glacier Weheka School have connections to the area through their **ancestors**. Two children from Bruce Bay Mahitahi are the sixth **generation** of their family to live there. Another student, whose family farm is in Fox Glacier, is also the sixth generation of his whānau.



## Glossary

**ancestors:** the people that someone is descended from

**anti-graffiti coating:** a clear coating that makes it easier to clean off unwanted marks

**contrast:** difference

**data projector:** a machine that shines words or pictures onto a wall or screen

**frame:** the part that gives something its shape and strength

**generation:** a group of people born about the same time (usually over about 20 years)

**glacier:** a river of ice that moves slowly down a valley

**sealant:** a clear coating that protects a surface from water and weather

**texture:** the way a surface feels or looks



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The Ministry of Education and Lift Education would like to thank the staff and students of Fox Glacier School for sharing the story of their mural.

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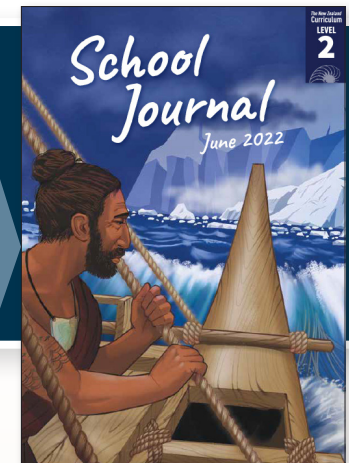
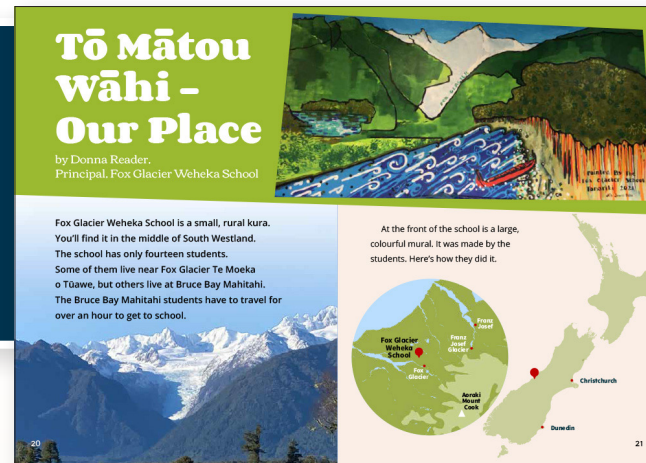
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