

Enviroschools Ōtākou

Enviroschools

Pipiri
June 2026

Nau mai, haere mai e te Enviroschools whānau

Haere mai, Arron and Hannah!

We are excited to introduce two new facilitators to the Ōtākou Enviroschools team! A massive welcome to Hannah McLeary, who has joined our team as the new Clutha Facilitator, based in Balclutha at Clutha District Council and to Arron Harvie, who will be delivering Enviroschools as the Central Otago Facilitator, based in Alexandra at Central Otago REAP.

“Hi! I’m Hannah born and bred in the Clutha District. I have had the wonderful opportunity to teach here for years and am excited to be able to continue to teach through delivering the Enviroschools kaupapa”.

“Hey, I’m Arron. I just moved down to the mighty Central Otago with my young family a year ago from Auckland. I came out of high school with a scholarship in Fine Arts and pursued that for a year at Elam School of Fine Arts, from which I then changed and instead studied Horticulture for two years at Manukau Institute of Technology. Now, having over a decade of knowledge behind me and a variety of different jobs, I’ve become quite passionate about sustainability, espaliering trees, grafting, living off grid, permaculture and one day becoming self-sufficient on my own land.”

Arron and Hannah have already started in the community and amongst the Ōtākou Enviroschools tīma, and we’re so excited for their schools to gain from their rich knowledge and expertise! Welcome to the team, Arron and Hannah!



New Clutha facilitator, Hannah McLeary, out and about in the world.



Our newest facilitator, Arron Harvie, based in Central Otago.



Akoka from Clutha Enviroschools toast to their success in making apple juice, where they harvested apples and then used the apple press to make the juice.

Opportunity for Funding with Enviroschools

Through the Environmental Outcomes project fund provided by Toimata Foundation, the Ōtākou Enviroschools team has created the Ōtākou Enviroschools Food Resilience Fund for schools. This fund aims to support schools in the Otago region with funding for their community gardens, food forests or other food resilience related activities.

The fund can be used for a range of actions and activity including the purchasing of resources for the creation of a community garden or the purchase of vegetable seeds or fruit trees for planting and/or garden tools, and more. Schools can apply for up to \$1000 and broadly, anything food resilience related will be accepted.

Please get in touch with your facilitator for more details about how to apply.

Enviroschools

TOIMATA
FOUNDATION



KIA ORA KOUTOU

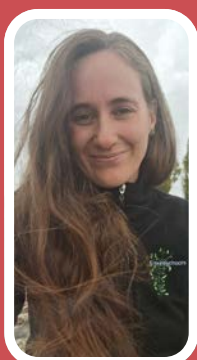
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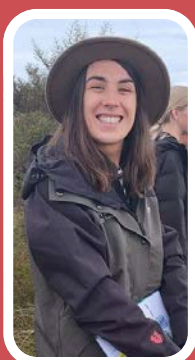
We are super excited to announce our Environmental Outcomes fund, specifically for any food resilience or community garden projects that schools are wanting to, or are already undertaking. We're dedicated to making it a really simple process for both applying and reporting, so get in touch if you have any questions!



Plastic Free July is upon us! Plastic Free July shares resources and ideas to help individuals, workplaces, schools, and communities reduce single-use plastic waste every day at home, work, school, and even at your local café. If you are interested in learning more about this month and getting involved, head to their website at www.plasticfreejuly.org/



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Upcoming dates for Ōtākou Enviroschools

CENTRAL OTAGO/QUEENSTOWN LAKES

18 Sept - Queenstown Primary Hui
Term 4 - Wānaka Primary Hui (usually Dec)
Term 4 - Central Otago Primary Hui

CLUTHA

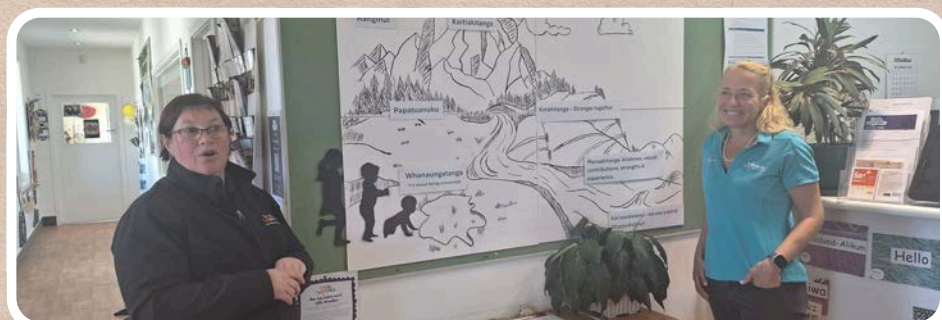
Term 4 - Clutha Primary Hui Year 3-8

DUNEDIN

4 Sept - Dunedin Year 7-10 Hui
Oct/Nov - Dunedin Primary Hui Year 4-6

REGIONWIDE

30 July - Southern Teacher Cluster Workshop (online) - Ecological Building



The Ki Uta ki Tai poster for Holistic Reflections is an important part of how we reflect in Ōtākou, connecting us all through the water cycle of our region.

Haere ra, Lucy!



After years of inspiring action, connection, and environmental learning across Central Otago, we're saying goodbye to our wonderful Enviroschools Facilitator, Lucy Francke.

Lucy has been an incredible part of the Ōtākou Enviroschools team, supporting kura, ākoka, kaiako, and communities to bring sustainability to life in meaningful and lasting ways. Her passion, dedication, and energy have made a real difference across the region.

While we're sad to see Lucy go, we're also excited for her as she begins her next chapter. We know she'll continue to make a positive impact wherever her journey takes her.

Kā mihi nui, Lucy – you'll always be part of the Enviroschools whānau. We wish you all the very best for the adventures ahead!



Central Otago Facilitator, Lucy Francke, with a (fake) Hoiho egg at the Ōtepoti Dunedin Enviroschools Teacher Hui earlier this month.

Creating Fashion from Waste

What happens when you mix fashion and items that would otherwise end up in the rubbish bin?

The Trashion Competition, held by the Cromwell College Sustainability Committee last week, was a huge success. All of the house groups entered their fashion items into the competition, using only items that are ready to be disposed into the various waste streams. Lucy Francke, Central Otago Enviroschools Facilitator, and Abi Hawkins, CODC Waste Advisor, had the tricky job of judging. The students had a great time creating and modelling their trashion entries.



An ākoka proudly models her 'trashy' gown.

Matakauri Wetland Planting



The last week of April was a busy one for the Year 5 and 6 ākoka from Queenstown Primary School, as they had their second session at the Matakauri Wetland since the restoration began in spring last year.

Over the two days, ākoka had the chance to explore all aspects of conservation and wetland health with The Conservation Curiosity Collective (C3), building on their knowledge from last year and gathering data for the monitoring they are conducting over time.

What hands-on learning experiences were there on the day?

- Predator habitats, signs of predators, and trapping with Bonnie (Southern Lakes Sanctuary)
- Bird counts, habitats, and ecosystems with Anna (Whakatipu Wildlife Trust)
- Riparian planting with Anna (Whakatipu Reforestation Trust) and Yvette (QLDC)
- Stream Health Assessment with Nicky and Lexie (Enviroschools)



Queenstown Primary School ākoka pause for a group photo at the end of a long day learning, planting, trapping and assessing streams.

Otago Girls Planting Day

Every year, enthusiastic Otago Girls High School ākoka return to Tomahawk Lagoon to plant natives. Last month, they had a fantastic day of teamwork, learning and giving back to the community - with plenty of muddy boots and smiles along the way!



Ākoka from OGHS get muddy doing their planting!

Adopt-A-Drain at Papakaio School

What a fantastic start to the Adopt a Drain programme with the Papakaio Primary EnviroGroup! Around 15 enthusiastic ākoka joined us for Day 1, bringing plenty of curiosity, energy, and thoughtful questions. We wrapped up at the school's chosen drain, talking about an important message: Only Drain Rain!



Ākoka watch as catchment advisor, Polly, demonstrates the water cycle on the EnviroScape.

Schools in Action



Waikouaiti School got pickling with vegetables they grew in their garden.



Ākoka at St Joseph's in Ōamaru started their Air Quality journey in May with the Air Quality Collective and Otago Regional Council.



Waiholo School test the health of Lake Waiholo to see what is needed to keep this lake healthy for years to come.



Makarora School are busy bees with beeswax wraps!



Teachers Learn Food Resilience

Key Kaiako from Enviroschools across Central Otago and Queenstown Lakes have started their Term 2 Enviroschools journey off strongly with a day dedicated to the connections between food, people, place, and planet.

Inspired by the Enviroschools Sustainable Communities through Kai project, the goal of this hui was to discuss food supply and security and how our living landscapes can enhance our resilience, self-reliance and health. Teachers were guided through the history of food systems in our region and connected the concepts of sustainable kai with examples in their kura or community.

An important part of our role is finding ways to support schools in the network, so it was great to have Skye lead a discussion on the successes and challenges schools face in maintaining their gardens. Kaiako shared their inspiration and actions going forward, drawing on ideas our wonderful facilitators presented to them during the hui. We look forward to seeing the learning opportunities presented to ākoka from their inspired teachers.



Kaiako get busy cutting food in preparation for pickling.



Showing off their pickling are Kaiako Emma and Susan.

Regions Join Together For Shared Learning Opportunity

The Murihiku and Ōtākou team took advantage of the last week of school term to join together for 3 days in the beautiful area of Blackmount in Murihiku, at Te Kōawa Lodge.

With new facilitators about to join our team, it was an apt moment for us to bring the two teams together to connect, share stories, practice activities and explore the kaupapa. Being the busy teams that we are, it was refreshing to move slowly through the theme area, Energy, and draw on experience and knowledge from our diverse teams. It was an opportunity to deep dive into what our schools are leading with and revitalise our own knowledge and expertise.



Some of the Murihiku and Ōtākou facilitators splash around in Redhills Creek.

Enviroschools does the Wheels on the Bus!



Teachers from across Ōtepoti came together to connect, learn, and explore some of the incredible environmental, cultural, and community initiatives happening right on our doorstep. From coastal ecosystems and biodiversity projects to local stories of kaitiakitanga, the day was filled with rich learning and meaningful conversations.

This hui encouraged kaiako to see more of the Otago Peninsula as a part of our wider Ōtepoti Dunedin living landscape, an important concept in Enviroschools. Habitats are places to live; the Earth provides habitats for an incredible array of microscopic life, insects, plants and animals which make up our 'biodiversity' – the variety of life. We have a tendency to override natural limits and systems and impose our structures and lifestyles on the environment, whether or not they are appropriate. Instead, we need to adapt to our surroundings and 'tread more lightly on the Earth'.

A huge thank you to our tour guide, Hoani Langsbury; and everyone from the NZ Sea Lion Trust, Yellow Eyed Penguin Trust, Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group, Save the Otago Peninsula, Marine Studies Centre and OPERA who shared their knowledge, passion, and commitment to caring for people and place. These opportunities help strengthen connections between schools, communities, and the environments we learn from every day.

We loved seeing kaiako gathering ideas so they can return to their kura inspired to support ākoka in taking action for a more sustainable future.



Kaiako chat with Hannah Ravn from the NZ Sea Lion Trust about actions that they can undertake with their ākoka.

Getting Stuck into the School Garden



Ākoka from St Brigid's School have been enthusiastically giving their school garden some aroha this term, adding their bokashi and compost to their garden beds in preparation for planting spinach, broad beans and garlic. A big thank you to Bunnings for the seedlings and compost!

As an environment where children spend a lot of their time, an Enviroschool landscape is a great place to learn. The school grounds are part of the 'hidden curriculum' and send messages to children every day about what is valued and 'how we do things'. Edible environments teach valuable lessons about where food comes from, what it takes to grow and cook healthy kai, and how enjoyable it is to share it.



St Brigid's ākoka pause for a smile while digging out their school garden ready for composting.

Schools in Action



Andy from Cook Brothers and Murray, a local, helped Waikouaiti school build birdhouses and bug hotels to put around the school with appropriate food for their chosen bird. Next step - decorating!



Catlins Area School senior science ākoka learnt more about pakake / sea lions with the Marine Studies Centre and went on an adventure to find some - and were successful!



Year 9 ākoka at Wakatipu High School explore local community groups who work with volunteers by playing the pest matching game.



Young Leaders Everywhere



Sometimes partnerships are made across regions! Our Ōtākou team supported the Murihiku team with an inspiring few days at Te Kōawa Lodge with students and kaiako from James Hargest College for a Secondary Enviro Hui.

The hui brought together passionate young leaders to connect, collaborate, and explore ways to create positive change in their schools and communities. Through workshops, outdoor activities, kōrero, and shared experiences, students strengthened their leadership skills while deepening their understanding of sustainability, wellbeing, and connection to place.

A huge thank you to everyone who contributed to making the hui such a meaningful and energising experience. It was fantastic to see ākoka stepping up with creativity, enthusiasm, and a strong commitment to caring for people and the environment - most had been part of the hui from last year! Clearly an enjoyable experience for all.



Two of the James Hargest ākoka look for macroinvertebrates in Redcliff Creek, near Te Kōawa Lodge in Southland.

Remarkables Ākoka are Curious!



Queenstown put on a beautiful blue-sky day for Remarkables School to be immersed in hands-on learning at Frankton Beach, a spot right on their doorstep. Six groups of Year 4-6 ākoka rotated around the Conservation Curiosity Collective (C3) experts to explore the lakefront and consider the wildlife, plants, and water health in the area.

After lunch, the Enviroclub, a group of Year 3-8 ākoka who have a passion for environmental learning, wandered down for the afternoon. Many of these students have already participated in the Adopt-a-Drain program and know the Frankton Beach area well. To improve the health of the stormwater soak pit, they planted around the water edge, tested water quality using clarity tubes, measured the temperature, and looked for sensitive macroinvertebrates. Each group also played an important role in setting predator cameras, tracking tunnels, or traps.

Being part of this Enviroclub session was special, as we got to witness tuakana-teina in action. The older members of the Enviroclub took the younger ākoka under their wing, sharing their knowledge and being excellent role models of manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga.

Toitu te Hapakupu and North East Valley School

Ākoka at NEVNS were gifted some pots that were used during the Otago Regional Council/Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki Toitū te Hapakupu partnership project and put them to good use helping their seedlings grow! NEV school supports their local community garden with help from a classroom every Friday. There are many enthusiastic students helping make plants and food grow across the garden, which is a veritable hive of activity most days!



Ākoka plant seedlings in the reused pots from the Toitū te Hapakupu project with ORC.



Queenstown Facilitator, Nicky Gray, shows Remarkables School ākoka what they are looking for when considering water health.

Enviroschools Ōtākou

Our Team Out and About!



Leisa de Klerk and Megan Greer at the Nature Dome for the Wild Dunedin festival, showing off kites that they helped young people colour and make during the festival.



Our Central Otago Facilitator, Lucy Francke, holds up her new Enviroschools repurposed bag she received as a gift from the Ōtākou Enviroschools tima.



Scott Martin, Clutha Facilitator, Hannah McLeary, and Craig Simpson from Otago Catchment Community, at the Waiholo School Stream Health day in May.



Ōtākou Enviroschools Tīma



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