

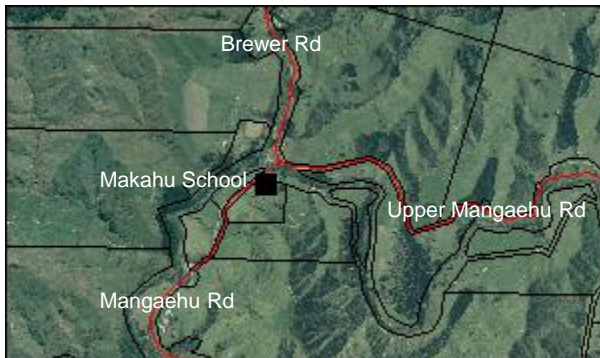


Makahu School

Brewer Rd, Makahu

1905

Use:	School	Historic Value:	2 out of 5
Materials:	Timber	Architectural Value:	1 out of 4
NZHPT Registered:	Not registered	Technical Value:	- out of 2
Legal Description:	Sec 35 Blk XV Ngatimaru SD - Makahu School-	Symbolic Value:	- out of 3
		Rarity Value:	- out of 2
		Townscape Value:	1 out of 2
		Group Value:	- out of 2
		Overall Heritage Value:	4 out of 20



Makahu was first settled in 1896, and with the opening of the Makahu Co-operative Dairy Company in 1904, the need for a local school became even more apparent, with many families settling in the area. The decision to build a school in 1905 followed three years of petitioning by the settlers, with a large amount of correspondence between in the Education Department and the Board, and numerous visits and reports by school inspectors.



The site of ten acres was cleared by Thomas Manning, and on the 26th of July 1905, Makahu School was opened, with a total cost of £386. The building was described as a “tall box-like affair”, with one room of 22 ft x 17 ft, 6 inches. When the school first opened, the floor was in three tiers, with platforms that were removed when social functions were held. After several years, however, approval was given for the school to operate on one level. A residence was built in 1908, but was destroyed by fire in 1929 and was never replaced.

The school was opened with Mr. Gunther Becker, a German, as teacher. He taught three days a week at Makahu, and the other three days of the week at Puniwhakau. It was not until October 1906 that Makahu became a full time school. Before this, the teachers had to travel on horseback – through mud and unkempt bush – between the two schools, so it was a relief to all when Makahu was permitted their own full-time teacher.

The opening school roll was 18, with family names including Foley, Martin, Ford, Walker, Coyne, McCracken, and Riddle. The roll continued to increase throughout the years, although it has now dropped off.

The Makahu Hall was opened in 1927. Before this, however, the school was used as the social centre for the district. Everyone took great pride in the school, equipping it with an asphalt tennis court, and caring for and developing its extensive gardens. This community service to the school was also seen in 1947, when the school grounds were leveled and grassed, and in 1958, when 25 ewes were donated when the school decided to set up a farm on the school land not in use.

Puniwhakau School closed in 1950, with the pupils from there enrolling at Makahu. This gave the roll an immediate rise to 33 pupils, who were all taught by one teacher. This was because there was a rule at the time that stated that for a second teacher to be appointed, the school roll must be at least 36. A year after this, a new school house was built, the classroom was remodeled, and a new administration block was added, with a total cost of £6722. In 1961, a swimming pool was constructed.

Because Makahu is a reasonably small and remote community, the roll depends a lot on the families of the district – with a considerable drop being noticed if even one family moves on. For this reason, in 1964, only nine pupils were attending Makahu, and so talks were being held of consolidating upon Huiakama. However, by the next year the roll was up to 14, with 28 pre-school aged children in the district ensuring a healthy roll for the next few years. In fact, by 1968, the teacher’s wife was able to be appointed as a teacher aide for three hours a day for the 25 pupils attending. Later, two full-time teachers were appointed, with a sliding door being

installed between the old and new buildings, making two separate rooms.

The school at this stage was prospering, with the roll remaining in the 30's. In May 1971, the junior room was extended by 108 square feet, and a work bay, storage shelves and an additional exit were built. The two rooms were also supplied with blackout curtains and vinyl. By 1980, however, the school roll had dropped down to 25, and so the school went back to having only one teacher.



Makahu School sign (Makahu means 'white hawk')

Unfortunately, the school roll continued to decrease, and the last ERO report (April 2005) showed the school with a roll of 9 pupils. However, Makahu is one of the highest decile-rated schools in Taranaki, with a rating of 8. The report highlighted the culture of Makahu that has always existed – being well resourced with extensive, well-maintained grounds and play facilities, attractive classrooms, and a very committed and supported community, board and staff.

Bibliography

Makahu Districts School 1905-1980 75th Jubilee
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