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A Shared Sunset On The Marae

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A Shared Sunset on the Marae

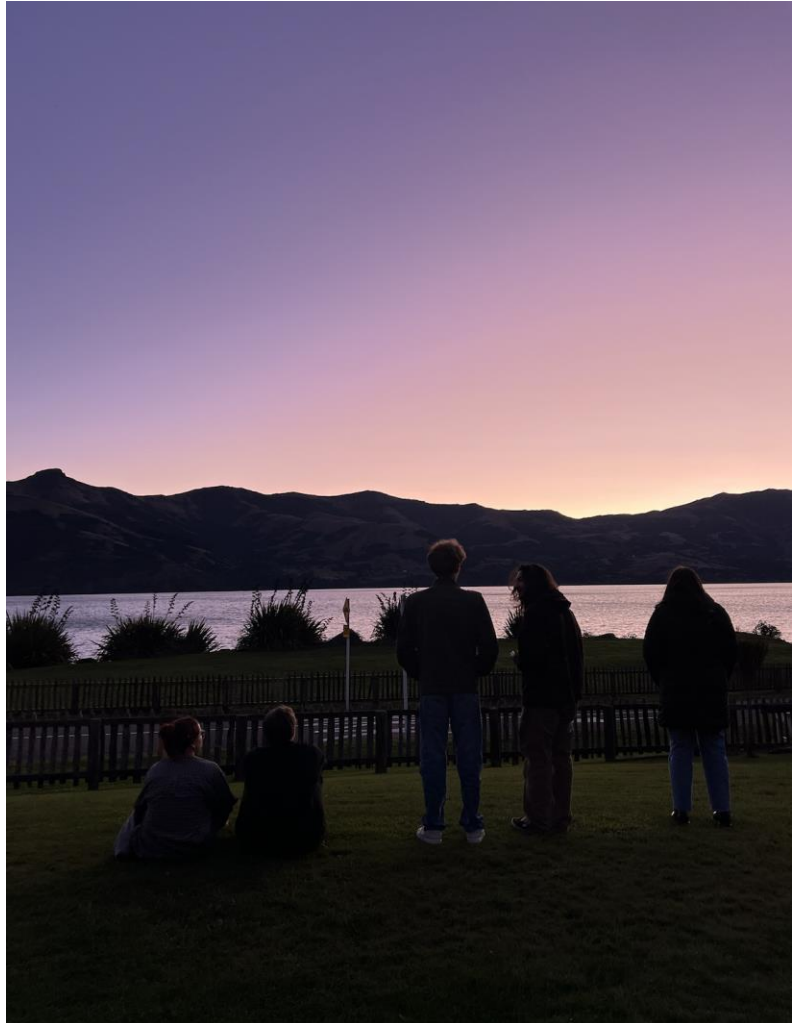
By Seneca Schwartz

A group of newly found friends gather on the soft green lawn of a Marae, thousands of miles away from anywhere close they would call home. The sun, which moments earlier had illuminated the vibrant blue water and the crevices etched into the mountain range, slowly made its way toward another part of the world, leaving behind a canvas of pastel purples and pinks.

These friends, silhouetted by the remaining light that spilled past the mountain range, stood peacefully, savoring every aspect of the landscape, and the presence of each other. The wind

did not bite, although being by the water you would have guessed that there would be a chill. But it hugged us, blowing pieces of hair into our faces and inviting us to stay as long as we could.

The two of them sat, taking in deep breaths along with the breeze. They kept their eyes on the sun, there was no need for the sunglasses they had left on the coach bus. The boys chatted quietly, letting the others enjoy the sound of the waves crashing on the shore. They talked about



the stories they wanted to tell once we would get to Christchurch, about plans for the next day, and beyond, beyond the mountains.

People often feel captivated by the vastness of the ocean. The roaring water, and the never-ending blue that merges with the sky at the horizon. I do not feel this same fascination with the sea, however, I do with the mountains. Time and time again, I am reminded that the mountains make me feel connected to the planet we call home. The sturdy ground below my feet, the mighty cliffs, and the layers of rugged sediment that give us insight into the past.

The mountainscape in front of us brought on a calm feeling of strength. With the knowledge we had recently acquired by listening to the Maori people, I felt even more tied to the ground beneath me. I could not help but think of all the people who came before me, who walked on the same paths I have, the art they created that informs my art now, and the communities they built. Mother Earth has been here for far longer than any of us, and I have the honor of sharing the space that my ancestors once shared with her.

Sharing this sunset with my friends was a magical experience. It was a moment for us to reflect upon the trip so far. The Maori people taught me that it is not gravity that keeps our feet planted, but the weight of all of those who came before us. They taught me that there is value in preserving stories for the sake of history and lineage. They taught me that storytelling is collaborative and can not be done by one person alone.

In the future, when I think back on this trip, I'm confident that the image of the uproarious mountains, glimmering water, and strong standing Marae will be at the forefront of my mind. These images have been painted into memory and will serve as a reminder of everything I have learned, the people I met, and the moments we shared together.