

## Working theories for making sense of the natural, social, physical, and material worlds

### So, what is camping?

#### *A Group Learning Story*

Date: 1 February

Teachers: Marilyn & Ruth

#### *Noticing*

When the children returned from their holidays we noticed that there was a lot of talk about various holiday topics within the centre. However, it seemed that camping was a topic that was most often discussed among various children. So we called a meeting to investigate this further. The children took turns sharing their holiday experience, and this is our first *kōrero*!!!

#### *Holiday news*

Jimmy: Mum and Dad built a big tent with a bedroom and a lounge. At night time I slept in the tent. At the daytime I got dressed and played. We needed to put them on in the daytime cos we needed to have clothes. I jumped in the river. (Jimmy demonstrated this with great enthusiasm.) Some snow came off the mountains and it went down into the river and melted cos the sun was out. I walked into the water holding my dad's hands. I made some friends and one was a boy. If he went that way we would run that way.

Ruth: Did you chase the boy?

Jimmy: No, he chased us.

Ruth: So you made some new friends.

Kim: Did the boy run really fast?

Kelly: How fast did you go?

Jimmy: Sometimes I run so fast!

Kim, Kelly, Jamie: Was there stones?

Jimmy: Yes, but not on the grass, just in the river.

Ruth: How did you cook your food?

Jimmy: On a fire.

Ruth: Did you take your toilet with you?

Jimmy: NO! We went to the toilet place.

Jade: I went camping and you had to do wees in the bushes.

Kim: I stayed home and slept. I dressed up and put my own clothes on.

Taylor: I went rock climbing and we went swimming.

Ruth: You went rock climbing. Can you tell us more about rock climbing? Did you get up to the top?

Taylor: No, I was too scared.

Ruth: Did you have any special equipment?

Taylor: Someone was down there and they made sure you didn't fall down.

Sam: I went on an aeroplane to Auckland. Mum sat beside me. I got some lollies.

Ruth: What are the special names for the people who work on the planes?

Kelly: Pilot, Lolly people.

Jimmy: Drink people.

Ruth: Who lives in Auckland?

Sam: I goed with my mum and dad and my brother. I went to a motel.

Luka: I stayed home and went snow boarding in my room.

Ginny: I went to camping. We went to Pioneer. I went under with my swimming togs and my goggles. I did that (shaking her head from side to side) under the water.

At this point Ruth took up a pen and told the children that as a number of them had talked about camping, we would use the whiteboard to note some ideas and knowledge that we had about camping.

#### *Camping*

Ruth offered Ginny the pen to scribe her ideas on the board about camping. Ginny took the pen and very carefully drew a tent. (The graphic was half round with the open door carefully placed in the middle.)

Ginny: We've got a door on Nana's tent. When you go camping you need a tent!

Ruth: So, what is camping?

Jimmy: Sleeping somewhere else!

Kelly: You take sleeping bags.

Kim: When I go camping I take blankets. My grandma takes a camper van.

Jamie: We have blankets in our camper van.

Ruth: What else do you need?

- Jade: Food.
- Jamie: There might be an oven in the camping tent?
- Jade: You need boats when you want to go camping at a river.
- Kerry: You bring plates for food, a spoon for breakfast, and cups.
- Jamie: You need water.
- Marilyn: What if you are near the river and you catch a fish? How would you cook it?
- Jade: You make a fire.

### *Children's Representation*

Following this discussion the children were given paper and pens in order to draw their representational ideas about camping.

### *Recognising*

While I value small groups, the value of large-group discussions and the sharing of ideas, as demonstrated here, can be a valuable process. The children were able to draw on and weave prior knowledge into this discussion (as evidenced by Jimmy's expression of ideas about the mountains and the snow melting). This is a topic we had covered in a previous experience where the children drew the melting of snow and the development of rivers. This topic was also discussed in our snow project. (I wonder if this prior knowledge is a reflection of these experiences?)

The children display knowledge of the format of meetings. They are competent and confident sharers of information.

Ginny has become more competent and confident in a group. This is the first time I have witnessed her take up a pen and draw her ideas on a whiteboard to share with the group.

I have also noticed that the adult scaffolding of the discussion in these group projects is becoming less significant as the children take more responsibility for driving the discussion.

It became evident as our discussion developed that Kim and Jamie understand camping as involving camper vans rather than tents.

### *Responding*

It would be interesting to ask the children more about the equipment required for camping and perhaps explore this avenue further. It would be

interesting to take up Kim and Jamie's idea and look at caravans and campervans. I wonder how the graphics will develop and what the before and after representations might look like?

It would be great to take this project out into the community and beyond the centre fence.

### *A parent's voice*

Just about every day for at least 3 weeks before the camping trip we heard about it from a very excited Isaac. Camping is nothing new to Isaac but having all his "big" and "little" friends there was something to look forward to.

He had never been to Spencer Park but he heard all about it from pre-school. He had a picture in his mind about swimming, roasting marshmallows on an open fire, and the sea. I think the thought of going on a trip with his pre-school **and** with his family, Mum, Dad and 2 older sisters, was also important to him.

On arrival, Isaac could see all his friends, but being in a totally different place, went a little bit shy. This was quickly overcome and he had a great time over the whole weekend playing with his friends. Big sisters, Arnia and Elysia, also played a useful role, playing with the pre-schoolers, and especially taking them to the play park where the flying-fox was.

For me the highlight of the weekend was the walk to the beach with our fellow campers. It was almost dark on arriving at the beach. It was lovely listening to all the comments and chat from all the pre-schoolers on that walk. A couple of the children were saying to each other how special it felt to them.

The whole event was so successful in a number of ways: helping families get to know each other; seeing the staff relate so well with the children, each other and all family members, in such a relaxed way; seeing the children playing and sharing together; the knowledge that this camping event was the culmination of the children's camping project due to the staff's excellent approach of listening and pursuing the individual child's interest. Thank you teachers. Isaac is looking forward to the next trip and having that open fire to toast marshmallows!

Debbie

Apart from Jimmy, the children's names used in this exemplar are not their real names.

### What's happening here?

After the holidays, the teachers notice that a lot of the children are talking about their experiences camping, so they call a meeting to investigate the topic further. They also organise a camping trip for the children, and although the details of the trip are not included in this exemplar, comments about the trip by one of the parents have been added.

### What does this assessment tell us about the learning (using an Exploration/Mana Aotūroa lens)?

Jimmy provides a verbal description of his experience of camping, and the teachers (Ruth and Marilyn) and other children ask him questions. The teacher then encourages the children to note down their ideas and knowledge of camping by drawing details on the whiteboard, and the group discusses the different representations.

The teacher notes that the children have different working theories about camping, and a wide range of experiences is discussed: for some, camping involves a tent, for others a camper van. The teacher scaffolds the children's discussion.

The teacher also recognises the children's growing ability to draw on prior knowledge – not just of camping but also of an earlier topic discussion about snow – and also their prior knowledge of taking part in meetings.

The Parent's voice provides a commentary on a family member's experience at a camping trip organised by the teachers, acknowledging the success of the event.

### How might this documented assessment contribute to Exploration/Mana Aotūroa?

The teachers make a display of the children's comments and drawings, and children and families will revisit this information both before and after the camping trip.

The teacher comments on the development of group discussions at this early childhood centre: questioning and discussing topics of interest are clearly features of its culture, and the teachers are monitoring the children's development of these skills. This written learning story will enable the other teachers to continue reflecting on the

process of questioning and discussing as a large group. The teacher notes that the children now understand the format of a meeting, that they can draw on prior knowledge and weave it into the discussion, and that the adult scaffolding is "becoming less significant as the children take more responsibility for driving the discussion". She also comments on Ginny's growing confidence in the group situation.

### What other strands of Te Whāriki are exemplified here?

The teachers here are exploring the role of large-group questioning and discussion: this is something that they do here, part of belonging to the community of learners at this early childhood centre. The documentation also notes that the children are taking more responsibility and contributing more to this process. Both verbal and visual *communication* are part of this exploration.