

Stories and symbols of their own and other cultures

Te marae

The story so far... Over the past year the kindergarten has been involved in a programme of bicultural development as part of our special focus on biculturalism. During this time the children have been involved in kapa haka and have demonstrated their learning through performances at Te Waitawa House and at the kindergarten for the new entrants class from school. We have also been becoming familiar with a range of Māori stories from the past and te reo me ngā tikanga Māori.

Last year we were fortunate to have our pouako mātauranga, Pip working alongside us at the kindergarten. We had discussed taking the children to visit a marae this year, and then Pip began a new job based at Murihiku Marae. We decided to go for a visit ...



Getting ready

We talked with the children about some of the things they would see and hear on our trip, and the tikanga that would need to be observed on the day.

We listened to a karanga at the beginning of the National Anthem CD and talked about what a karanga is, why it is important and what it says. We discussed not wearing shoes or eating inside the wharenuī, and listening to the speeches. We talked about hongī and modelled to the children how to do this. We borrowed a video showing a school group taking part in a pōwhiri at an Otago marae and watched it as a group, then put it on for the children to watch again if they were interested during the session. We looked at photos of different marae. We began to practise "Te Aroha" regularly and talked about how this would be the waiata we would sing to support our kaikōrero (speaker).

We took a bus to the Murihiku Marae and waited in the car park. We were supported by Sheryl, Sonny (our kaikōrero) and Sheree (our kaikaranga). We assembled at the arch and waited. The kaikaranga (caller) for the tangata whenua (local people) began to call us on. We followed Sheree as she answered and led us up to the wharenuī (large meeting house).



When the karanga was finished we went up to the wharenuī, took off our shoes and went inside and found a seat. It was wonderful to see Whaea Pip sitting with the tangata whenua. We listened to the whaikōrero (speech) and waiata (song) of the tangata whenua and the reply by Sonny on our behalf. Then it was time to line up for the hongī.

We went through to the wharekai (dining room), where we had a delicious morning tea after listening to the karakia kai. Afterwards we went up on stage and put on a performance for the wera ringa (kitchen workers), with Whaea Pip playing the guitar for us.

We went back into the wharenuī and Whaea Peggy told us about the inside of the wharenuī, the poupou (carvings) and tukutuku panels on the walls and what some of them stood for. She explained that these are like photographs we have in our houses and remind them of their ancestors. Then the children did some colouring in of bird outlines with Māori designs while Whaea Peggy talked to the parents about the significance of the rest of the poupou and tukutuku.

We had some time left before the bus came back to get us so we went outside to play some games before singing "E Toru ngā Mea" to Whaea Pip and Whaea Peggy to thank them for letting us come to visit.

The teaching

The teachers have used describing, demonstrating, reading, singing and instructing as strategies for preparing for our trip to the marae. They have used documentation as a tool for co-constructing (forming meaning and building knowledge about the world around us with each other).



The learning

The children are gaining knowledge about the stories and symbols of the Māori culture and making meaningful connections between the songs, language and stories they hear at kindergarten and a marae. The children are learning about the dual cultural heritage of New Zealanders. This enhances their linguistic development and their understanding of their world.



What's happening here?

As part of a long-term programme of bicultural development, the children at this kindergarten visit their local marae.

What does this assessment tell us about the learning (using a Communication/Mana Reo lens)?

To prepare for the visit, the children become familiar with Māori stories from the past and with te reo me ngā tikanga Māori. This includes becoming familiar with karanga, hongī, pōwhiri, and waiata. The children learn the tikanga that they will need to observe when they visit the marae and practise a waiata to support their kaikōrero. They also look at photos of different marae.

When they reach the marae, Whaea Peggy explains the meaning of the poupou and tukutuku panels, and she then gives a more detailed explanation to the accompanying parents.

Finally in the exemplar, the teacher summarises the children's learning, acknowledging that they are gaining an understanding of the dual cultural heritage of New Zealanders and are making meaningful connections between the songs, languages, and stories they hear at kindergarten and those they hear at the marae. This enhances their linguistic development and their understanding of their world.

How might this documented assessment contribute to Communication/Mana Reo?

The stories and symbols of tikanga Māori are documented in detail in this exemplar. The marae visit is a learning experience, and revisiting the documented version is a continuation of that learning. People, places, and events from the meaningful context of the marae visit (for example: "kaikōrero", "kaikaranga", "tangata whenua", "wharenuī", "whaikōrero", "wharekai", "karakia kai", "wera ringa") are written down in te reo Māori to be read back, recognised, and understood.

What other strands of Te Whāriki are exemplified here?

This exemplar is also about Belonging/Mana Whenua – belonging to a wider community than the kindergarten, in this case, the country of Aotearoa New Zealand. This documentation reflects not only an interest but also an informed valuing of and respect for learning and experiencing something of te reo me ngā tikanga Māori. In terms of Exploration/Mana Aotūroa, the documentation also acknowledges the role of knowledgeable experts (Whaea Pip and Whaea Peggy) as sources of information and wisdom in cultural matters.