

# Exploring local history

## Group learning story

October

After reading the story about Hinemoa and Tūtānekai, we talked about the carvings in the whare of Tūtānekai and what each part of the wharenui was called in te reo Māori. We talked about how they could have been made.

Grayson said, "Special carvers made them with hammers and knives." The other children agreed.

Azia asked if she could make a whare. I said, "Sure. What do you think you could use to make it?"

Grayson said, "You could use the ice block sticks like I did, see?" She was pointing to the pictures that she, Joel, and Tessa had made of the wall of Tūtānekai's whare.

Azia said, "Okay, but I want to make my own whare."

Grayson, Joel, and Tessa had created their own whare and talked about how they should look while referring to the pictures that we found and the storybook.

## What next?

Organise a trip to the local museum to see more Māori art and craft and also the maihi of a wharenui, because that really interested the children. The upcoming marae trip will also stimulate lots of discussion and interest.

Talk more with the children about the different parts of the wharenui and what they are called. This will provide an excellent lead-in to our trip to the marae, as the children will have an understanding of the physical aspects of the marae before we go.

## Grayson's learning story

Lately, we have been focusing on sharing New Zealand legends with the children. Their interest is continuing each day, with them asking for the stories to be repeated. We have displayed some kōwhaiwhai patterns in the art area to create an awareness of the beauty of these designs. Today, we made "te whare a Tūtānekai" after reading the local story about Tūtānekai and Hinemoa.

What wonderful interest and concentration Grayson showed in doing her work! She used natural materials and ice cream sticks to make her whare.

She came to me when her work was finished and said with a smile, "These are the Māori people inside."



*Grayson making her whare.*



*Grayson's whare completed.*

Grayson is developing an expectation that books can inform and excite and is also developing familiarity with stories valued as part of our New Zealand heritage.

## Group learning story

November: Ihenga marae visit

Today, we went on a trip to visit Ihenga's marae at Waiariki Institute. We travelled there on the bus in the rain. When we arrived, we waited in the gateway to be invited in by the tangata whenua of the marae.

Whaea welcomed us on with a karanga.

We then went inside and had a kōrero with Whaea about the whakairo (carvings) inside the building.

It was interesting to hear Whaea talk about the history and stories behind the whakairo, who carved them, and why the designs and stories were chosen. We heard of Ihenga and his travels around Aotearoa and how he named many places in this area and throughout Te Ika a Māui. She told us about Captain Cook and Abel Tasman.

We discovered that Ihenga named Ngongotahā after climbing the mountain and meeting the

patupaiarehe, who gave him a drink out of a calabash. “Ngongotahā” means “to drink water out of a calabash”.

The children enjoyed going around the wharenuī and looking closely at and feeling the whakairo.

### **What next?**

Revisit the children’s memories from the trip and talk a bit more about the history.

Talk with the children about designing their own whakairo and creating stories about them that relate to their lives.

### **Programme evaluation**

Over the past few months, we have been exploring many stories about the history of our city.

Through our project on Lake Rotorua, the children have developed an understanding of its physical shape and the placement of Mokoia Island. Through the story about Hinemoa and Tūtānekai, the children developed their knowledge of the island’s history.

The rock warriors story provided a vivid story to explain the rocks that we see as we drive out of Rotorua on State Highway 5. The children really enjoyed this story. They asked for it frequently and created their own rocks.

Reading all these stories created another interest in Māori art and crafts. We explored this by creating new resources for the children to use and view, such as koru and kōwhaiwhai in the art area. A student teacher got involved in this interest by working with the children to create a cloak for the kindergarten.

The trip to the museum provided the children with information about the eruption at Mount Tarawera and the history of the Bath House. The museum also gave the children a chance to see a lot of Māori art and craft up close and to hear the history behind some of the pieces that relate to the iwi of this area.

The marae trip to Ihenga at Waiariki Institute helped to develop a link between the marae and our learning community and provided the children with the chance to experience pōwhiri and hear stories about the whakairo.

This has been a rewarding interest for all. All the children became involved and increased their understanding of our local history and culture, in particular, of Māori art and craft.

### **What’s happening here?**

This documentation is part of this centre’s ongoing record of their experiences exploring significant people, places, and things in the local area.

### **What aspects of community participation does this assessment exemplify?**

The learning community functions both within and outside the early childhood centre, reading stories, constructing representations, and visiting the museum and local marae.

The local community are represented in te reo, whakairo, pōwhiri, and story. Peers suggest ideas to each other, and experts teach the children the area’s history.

Exploration and reflection are ongoing. The knowledge the children gain about people from the past contributes to their sense of community.

### **How might this assessment encourage community participation?**

The record here is part of the centre’s careful preparation for the visit to the marae. The record will be revisited in the same way as the stories from local history are revisited again and again. Valuing records in this way encourages others to continue to participate in the learning community.

### **What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?**

The teachers are encouraging the children’s interest in a number of ways: through stories, construction activities, projects, trips, and input from local experts. They value the links with the community and carefully craft a diverse programme to strengthen these understandings and links. The teachers have included in their planned learning outcomes for the children: “That the children develop knowledge about the features of our area, Rotorua, particularly areas of physical and/or spiritual significance, such as our local lakes and mountains.”