

Rangiātea

Rangiātea, the 146 year-old historic church in Ōtaki, burned down in October 1995. The community was devastated. The rebuilding has been a major undertaking that has touched the lives of many of the kindergarten children.



We took the children in small groups to visit Rangiātea. Whānau came with us. Many stories were told that we would not otherwise have heard.

One child's great-grandfather's carpentry tools were used – the planes were just like the ones used in the original.

Another child had gone with his dad to help dig the drains before the construction started: *He didn't build the church. He just dug the holes.*

Another child said *I know about it. Someone went with a torch and matches and burned it down. The police chased him but couldn't catch him. My mum told me.*

We walked through the town to get to the church and saw many familiar people.

The children recognised many of the workers: *There's Uncle Skinny. Smile, we're taking your photo!*

There was lots of kōrero about scaffolding and pulleys and how the workers could stay on the roof. There was also kōrero to uncles and grandads in the urupā and karakia when we left.

One group met up with the priest who told them lots about how the old church had been built without nails. He promised to come and visit us at kindergarten.

The photos we took will become historic artefacts – these children saw history in the making. We have made a formal connection with the church that acknowledges our respect and the value we have for this building and what it stands for.

The next time we visit, we wonder what we will see. A roof? Windows? Children who pass by or visit it regularly keep us updated.



The learning that happened

- Kaiako made new connections with individual children's whānau.
- Spiritual aspects about the urupā and the rebuilding became big conversation topics.
- Back at kindergarten, the children re-enacted the rebuilding in their block play.
- The children made deeper social, cultural, and whānau connections with each other.

Our assessment

The visit to Rangiātea fostered strong links to the community:

- inside the kindergarten with whānau;
- outside the kindergarten with community and whānau, too.

The experience allowed conversations to emerge, and we learned about different dimensions of our community.

The story continues ...

As the children get out the term books or their own kindergarten books and look at the photos and the newspaper cuttings, they remember and reflect. They update us on the progress they notice as they drive past the church.

Informing curriculum

At kindergarten, they build churches with blocks, including the scaffolding and often the urupā. There have been many conversations about deaths and burials.

The shared knowledge of the group consolidates their adventures and strengthens the connecting links between kindergarten and home.

What's happening here?

This exemplar tells the story of visits to a historic church, Rangiātea. It gathers together a selection of comments and photographs from a range of documentation sites in the early childhood centre: term books (including newspaper cuttings), wall displays, and the children's "kindergarten books".

What aspects of community participation does this assessment exemplify?

This community story records aspects of the children's engagement with people, places, and things over time.

People in the community include the children, whānau (including whānau from the past), construction workers on the building site, familiar people in the town, and the priest.

Places in this community story include the kindergarten, the historic church, the building site, the town, and the urupā.

Things or artefacts in this exemplar include one child's great-grandfather's carpentry tools, models of the church constructed with blocks, the technological machines used in the construction (scaffolding, pulleys, the original building built without nails), and the photos taken by the children.

Aspects of community that are shared include kōrero, karakia, and spiritual aspects of the urupā.

How might this assessment encourage community participation?

The exemplar includes a section on the continuing story: "As the children get out the term books or their own kindergarten books and look at the photos and the newspaper cuttings, they remember and reflect. They update us on the progress they notice as they drive past the church."

Through this ongoing interest, the children will continue to engage with people, places, and things in the community.

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

The centre has written an "Assessment Assessment" (see below). The body of the text reads, "We have an emergent curriculum that spirals and curls. At its heart is assessment that grows from a holistic view of the child, the whānau and the community. Our assessments are formal and informal, verbal and documented. The documentation, with its strong visual content, is used in many ways – archival record, a medium for reflection and a way to show what happens here. It translates the curriculum of *Te Whāriki* into our own languages. The format allows for assessment and planning to be included in the documentation and for ongoing assessments to be made by children, whānau, kaiako and the wider community."

