

Exemplars

Te rakiraki

Paul found a rakiraki (duckling) on the road as he was walking to school. Whaea Margaret asked Paul if she could bring the rakiraki to the centre to show the tamariki. He agreed, and Whaea Margaret brought the rakiraki to the centre.

She introduced the rakiraki to the tamariki at morning mat time and told them that he had lost his mother. The tamariki were fascinated with the rakiraki and gathered around the new addition to the fold. The staff suggested we give him an ingoa (name), and the tamariki decided to call him Atawhai after a boy who left the centre to live in Australia.

The tamariki discussed the types of food Atawhai might eat and the sort of covering he has on his body. They discussed the fact that he has wings to help him fly from one place to another, and this led to a discussion about other types of birds. They talked about how Atawhai swims, how he uses his beak to pick up food, how he can turn his neck right around to scratch his back, and how lovely and soft he feels. The tamariki tried to turn their own heads right around and discovered how difficult this was.

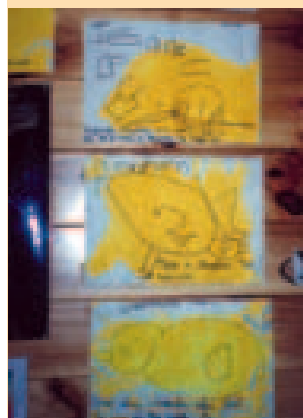
Afterwards, some of the tamariki wanted to hold Atawhai. Some were a bit frightened, but after a while, they all found enough confidence. The staff encouraged the tamariki to be gentle because Atawhai was only a baby.

The duckling became part of the centre and was allowed to walk freely around, inside and outside. Tamariki were asked to watch Atawhai in case he got stood on (a remark one of the boys made).

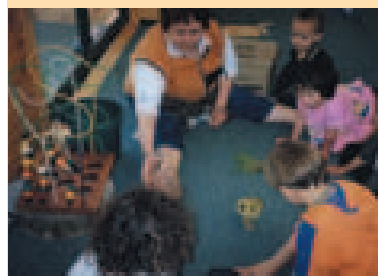
Short-term review

Atawhai impacted on our tamariki quite strongly. They wanted to stroke, cuddle, and kiss him. The discussion that occurred during this one session could lead to our exploring lots of other areas within the early childhood curriculum.

Ngā tauaromahi



Artwork by the tamariki related to Atawhai the rakiraki is displayed around the centre.



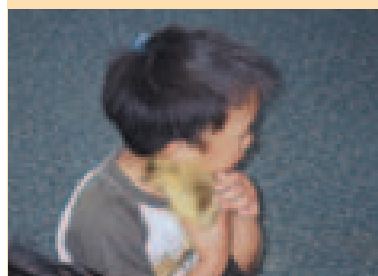
Can you see Atawhai?
The tamariki crowd around him at mat time.



Dayharn encourages Atawhai to walk towards Isaac.



Whaea Margaret encourages Dayharn to hold Atawhai.



Doesn't he feel lovely and soft?
Dayharn thinks so, too.

Learning outcomes

The tamariki will gain:

- a sense of “who they are” – their place in the wider world of relationships and the ways in which these relationships are valued;
- a perception of themselves as capable of acquiring new interests and abilities.

What learning occurred here?

Discussions; adult–child interactions, with the adults encouraging the tamariki to be caring, nurturing, gentle, and confident enough to hold the rakiraki; dramatic play (when imitating Atawhai as he scratched his back); and turn taking.

What next?

We could base the programme around related areas, such as:

- fostering nurturing skills;
- studying other types of birds;
- encouraging artistic exploration;
- making a whare for Atawhai to rest in;
- looking at safety around water (due to Atawhai living in a watery environment);
- thinking about road safety (because Atawhai was found on the road);
- singing waiata about ducks;
- reading books about ducks;
- comparing ducks with other types of animals;
- learning alongside each other;
- learning about hygiene (the importance of washing hands after handling animals).

Evaluation

Since Atawhai joined us, the children have learned many skills. They have learnt to be caring, not just towards the rakiraki but towards each other as well. One child, in particular, was a bit rough around other children and was always being told to “use your safe hands”. Since having the rakiraki, this child’s behaviour has changed. The staff encouraged him to be gentle with Atawhai. He now tells other tamariki to use their safe hands, cuddles younger children when they cry, and looks after equipment in the centre. We often find this child holding Atawhai and stroking him gently.

Isaac became very interested in the way Atawhai swam in the tamariki’s water play trough and asked lots of questions about how he could float. This brought up the fact that we need to be safe around water and that ducklings are born knowing how to swim. The staff told Isaac’s mum about his interest in swimming, and she now takes him to the town pools for swimming lessons.

14 August

Whaea Margaret draws a BIG rakiraki on the mat (with thin masking tape) for the tamariki to sit in. She encourages them to help her to make a rakiraki shape.



They start with one toe



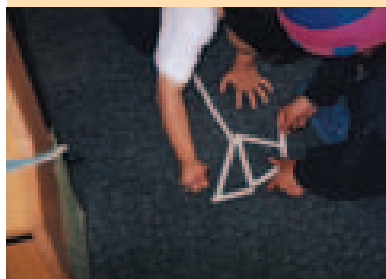
... then another toe
(2 toes ...)



... then the third toe



... and then the web that helps him to swim.



They put the finishing touches onto the webbed foot.



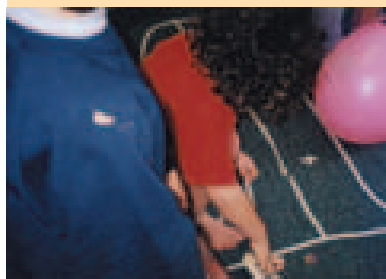
Whaea Margaret asks William to help her make the rakiraki's wing.



Isaac and Hape come to help William. What great teamwork, tamariki mā!



"That's right, Isaac, a little bit to the left." Isaac holds the tape while Hape gets ready to cut it.



Isaac and Hape then begin on the beak ...



... and complete it with one last piece.



The completed rakiraki. Now we can sit in it, do activities in it, and even put Atawhai in it. We can even have mat times inside the rakiraki.

Ka rawe hoki te mahi a ngā tamariki!

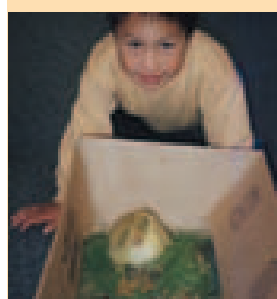
He aha anō he kaupapa, e pā ana ki a Atawhai, mā tātou hei mahi?

What are some other things we could do that relate to Atawhai?

We'll see.

A whare for Atawhai

During mat time one day, Dayharn said, "Whaea, where's Atawhai's house?" She told him that he didn't usually live in a house but lived at the lake in a kōhanga (nest). The tamariki then decided to help make a nice, comfortable kōhanga for Atawhai.



Dayharn looks in on Atawhai to see if he is comfortable.

Then we discussed other sorts of animals. We talked about the types of animals that we could keep at home or at the centre. The tamariki suggested cats, dogs, and birds (in cages).

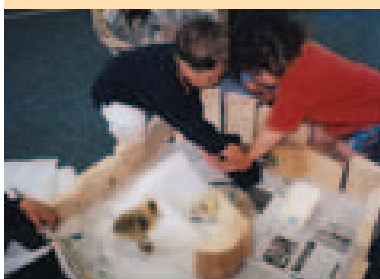
Christian said that he had a guinea pig at home and that his name was Chocolate. We asked Christian if he would like to bring Chocolate in one day, and he agreed.

The next day, Christian brought along his guinea pig. The tamariki crowded around Chocolate. Our discussion revolved around Atawhai and Chocolate's habitats and the differences between the two animals, for example, the differences in their coats.

Soon, the tamariki were talking again about houses for different types of animals. The staff encouraged them to build a whare out of small pieces of wood for Atawhai and Chocolate to share.



The tamariki begin building a whare for Chocolate and Atawhai.



Isaac and Christian put Chocolate into the whare.



Can you see Chocolate? Atawhai loves his new whare, but Chocolate is a little bit shy, isn't he, tamariki mā?

The tamariki watch Atawhai and Chocolate exploring their whare.

Evaluation

Atawhai opened up a whole new perspective for tamariki thinking, learning, and development. The tamariki became more confident, expressive (in art and other activities), and creative. They developed a greater sense of self-worth and took responsibility for caring for other living creatures (including each other).

Atawhai fostered their nurturing skills when they realised that he had no mother. He made the tamariki aware of safety issues such as hygiene (washing hands after handling pets), water (swimming and wearing safety jackets when in a boat), and road safety (Atawhai being on the road by himself when he was found).

The staff elaborated on the topic of road safety by explaining the importance of having an adult with tamariki when crossing the road. As part of the road safety kaupapa, the tamariki went for a walk to another centre, using a pedestrian crossing to get there. The centre also had a "wheels day" to show the tamariki the importance of wearing helmets when riding bikes, skateboards, and so on.

A waka taua group from Raukawa Health invited the tamariki to sit in their waka. They gave the tamariki life jackets to wear and talked to them about water safety. The tamariki and staff thoroughly enjoyed this wonderful day.

Atawhai brought not only learning to the centre, but he brought love and joy to all of us as well.

What's happening here?

This is an example of an unexpected event, a visitor, who makes a difference to the curriculum over some time. The early childhood centre documents the event with a record of group stories and individual responses that touch on:

- well-being: nurturing skills, safety issues, caring for others, and being lonely;
- belonging: welcoming Atawhai and making him feel at home, building a kōhanga and whare, and returning Atawhai to the lake;
- contribution: a sense of responsibility for others;
- communication: the creative expression of aspects of Atawhai's life;
- exploration: developing working theories about the living world and knowledge of how to care for it.

What aspects of continuity does this assessment exemplify?

Atawhai becomes a member of the learning community. The teachers document his visit, recording the difference he makes to the children's lives and learning.

The children develop their knowledge and understanding about ducks and ducklings, a process that includes imitating Atawhai's gestures and movements and drawing him.

The teachers continue the pathway of learning when a discussion of rakiraki and pets encourages one of the children to talk about his guinea pig at home. Chocolate the guinea pig then visits as well. The children develop their knowledge about animals when they compare the duckling and the guinea pig.

At least one child develops his caring behaviour, not just towards the rakiraki but towards other children as well.

At least one child increases his interest in floating and swimming. (The family adds to the continuity by taking him to swimming lessons.)

Atawhai's visit anchors further curriculum developments on road and water safety.

How might this assessment contribute to continuity?

Atawhai becomes, for a time, an anchor for a wide range of learning. This role is documented over time, illustrating the interconnectedness of the curriculum strands. That interconnectedness – kotahitanga – is often only revealed over time. In this case, the learning can be revisited, and there is potential for it to continue after Atawhai has "left home".

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

This is a good example of curriculum development in which the staff were prepared to build on unexpected events to sustain the children's interest in, and motivation to learn more about, the living world and in helping to create a safe and caring environment.