

Safety from harm

# Alexander and the trees

## Alexander loves painting



Child's name: Alexander  
Date: December  
Teacher: Rosie

### *The Child's Voice*

#### Learning Story

Alexander and I were having a conversation about things that really scare us.

"Dad has an axe at home. It is the best axe in the world. It chops trees – and wood ... and MONSTERS!"

#### Big Forest by Alexander

"There was a big forest and it had seven trees! I t's got a big tree – it's got a mouth, eyes, ears and hair – HEAPS of leaves. The tree got big because it ate heaps of sharks!"

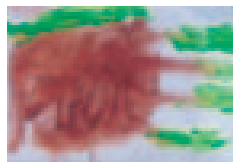
#### Tree Number Two by Alexander

"That tree didn't eat anything – and no little trees – no – nothing at all!

There's some dots and I just did a stripe in the sun. There's blue sky – it will make the sun a little bit cold – and make the tree REALLY cold – and that's all about the story."

July

"I said to Alexander – UGH – your sun is very close to your tree – won't it BURN it? That's when he explained about the cool blue sky!"



## More wonderful trees!

Alexander painted more wonderful trees today!

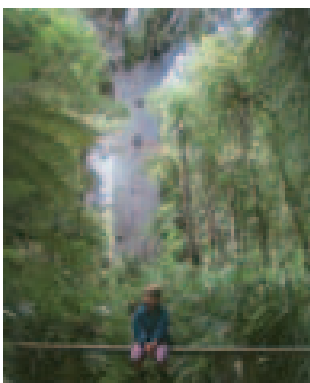
He is really enjoying them as a subject for his paintings. His trees are getting fatter by the day.

I told him about Tane Mahuta and he looked at me and laughed disbelievably – no doubt he thinks I'm tricking him – AGAIN!

#### The trees and Alexander

Alexander was into painting trees at kindergarten. His trees were becoming bigger, more colourful and more exciting every day. Then one day Julie said to him that she had seen a huge tree, too big to put her arms around. Alexander didn't believe her but kept talking about this huge tree and his paintings became even larger. We needed to visit Tane Mahuta.

Our first day at the kauri forests was a visit to Trounson kauri forest. Alexander thinks the kauri is amazing to have special bark which it sheds to stop climbing plants growing on it. Especially impressive was the age of the trees and trying to work out what was happening in the world when they were young.

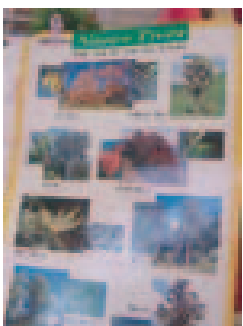
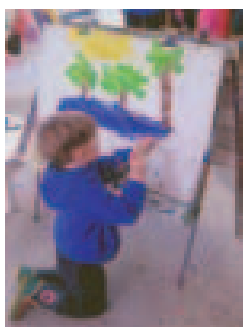


We came back for a nighttime walk sneaking quietly in the dark to try to spot a kiwi. Four excited boys tried hard but no kiwis were seen. Great excitement though in finding some large kauri snails, koura, native trout, wetas and a particularly long fat eel.

Tane Mahuta was the tree we came to see. I think everyone was more impressed by its age than its size. For Alexander this was more than a tree, this was Tane Mahuta, the God of the Forest. The amazement was written on his face, "Wow, it's cool, it is humongous. It is so fat!" He had to lie down to see the top.

We had a fantastic holiday, and Alexander's interest in trees carries on.

For his birthday his request was a feijoa tree which is now growing at the bottom of the garden. All our boys have their own native [to their own countries] trees planted at our holiday home, and these trees are watched closely and cared for as an extension of themselves.



## Trees in water!

Today Alexander produced this lovely work.

"The trees are in the water!" he told me and then proceeded to paint the blue.

"What sort of water?" I asked. "A river" he told me.

I told him about weeping willow trees and he listened with great interest.

"Two small trees – and one BIG one – of those you said!" he said as he painted.

I must get hold of a book on trees and show Alexander. And get him to look at all the different trees in our environment.

Alexander came to me today and said, "Julie – I want to do a tree painting."

"Great, Alexander – would you like to look at that poster of trees?" I asked.

He said he would. We spent quite a while together talking about the various different trees and leaves.

"Cabbage tree ...?" he pondered. "Can you eat it?"

"Ummm – I don't think so – but I'm not sure – I wonder why it's called that?"

He didn't know. That might be something we think about another day.

Alexander and I had looked at this tree poster before, a couple of weeks ago when he was in full flight with his tree painting. He was very drawn to the pōhutukawa tree – and today he decided he would paint it.

He drew several branches then joined them together.

"I'm making a big branch," he said. I told him new pōhutukawas often have lovely big bouncy branches – you can sit on them and ride them like a horse!

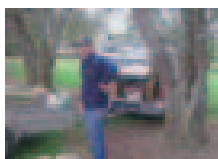
He painted a wonderful picture, complete with flowers and waves and big rocks.

### Summary

This tree painting interest of Alexander is quite delightful. I really am enjoying watching it develop and spending time with him talking about trees!

I've noticed his paintings are becoming more and more complex. He loves making his branches, rocks and suns bigger and bigger as he paints – and often enthusiastically comments on this as he works.

Julie



## “Julie, come quick. A man in the park is hurting the trees!”

Alexander took my hand and ran me over to the park to look.

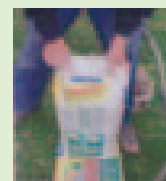
“QUICK – PHONE THE POLICE,” he added. “THEY’LL STOP HIM!”

“We’re powerful Alexander – let’s go over there and see what’s going on!” I said.

Alexander, Toby and Willie piled at the gate to investigate the goings on!

The man looked a little astonished at first. I explained that my friend Alexander liked trees a lot and was worried he might be hurting some. He told us he wasn’t doing anything unkind to the trees – but had put in a new rubbish bin. The boys asked how he had done that and he showed us the cement.

Phew – all was well!



### What’s happening here?

These excerpts from Alexander’s portfolio record his growing fascination with trees – to the extent that he takes action when he perceives that some trees in the local community need protecting.

### What does this assessment tell us about the learning (using a Well-being/ Mana Atua lens)?

The well-being of people cannot be separated from the well-being of the environment, and Alexander’s interest in trees leads him to take responsibility for protecting the well-being of the environment. His involvement in a “trees project” includes painting different types of trees and trees in different situations, writing and listening to stories about trees, and responding promptly to a real, and potentially a conservation issue: “Julie, come quick . A man in the park is hurting the trees!”

Alexander’s urgent expression of concern for the safety of the trees also demonstrates his confidence and ability to express his emotional needs and trust that the teachers at the centre will take his concerns seriously.

### How might this documented assessment contribute to Well-being/Mana Atua?

Part of this exemplar relates to discussions about conservation and about what it means to “hurt” trees. Alexander could revisit this assessment to discuss and explore his experiences further as he develops his sense of responsibility for protecting others from being injured.

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

In this assessment, Alexander uses art to *explore* and *communicate* some imaginative ideas about trees.