

Bi-lingual approach to pre-schooling — best of both worlds

Bi-lingual education is not just the preserve of primary or secondary schools with pre-school groups now joining in the move.

Three playcentres at Horohoro, Whangamarino and Rotoiti are now incorporating Maori values into their programmes with some success. The move came about through meetings with elders, Department of Education Officers and Maori Womens League and Health League.

It was decided to use flax, hand and finger games, stick and string games, action songs, legends and story telling and the use of natural materials e.g. stones, leaves, weeds, grass, water and sand.

HOROHORO

A positive approach in the use of the language has developed rapidly. The mothers, as often as possible, use the language with their children and the interaction and relationships are a splendid sight. The influence of the elders who continually attend the sessions can be seen in their support of the mothers. The centre is situated on school grounds and enjoys good relationships with the primary school and the teachers. Added to this, the marae and church buildings are close by so that the community spirit and atmosphere is conducive to the learning of maoritanga.

With the help of a support group member and an elder, the craft work is emerging and the mothers are enjoying learning to make playthings from flax. Other facets of the culture are also developing.

Weekend schools have been held on their marae for both the Rotorua Playcentre Association Mother Helper Training Course, and the Kindergarten movement. They speak proudly of the extension of their work into the Rotorua City where during Playcentre Publicity week they held a Court, the theme, Maoritanga in Pre-School Education. The mothers with their children at their knees, worked with the flax and other natural materials.

HINE POTAKA
Maori Education Foundation
pre-school officer

WHANGAMARINO

Began with much enthusiasm and established the environment for learning, however they need greater support from their elders. The leaders are in the community and need to come forward, otherwise the programme is a difficult

string games are used spasmodically as well as the language.

The elder of the group is steeped in the culture of her people, but because of family commitments and for health reasons, her skills have not been deployed consistently.

ROTOITI

This group has the full support of the elders who attend some of the sessions, however more help is required from the younger folk of the community. A resource person has been enlisted to help the mothers learn songs, action songs and poi dances.

Rotoiti has the experts in flax-weaving and so adept are these



one for the mothers and their children.

The craftwork is being developed, and it is pleasing to report that Whangamarino Playcentre mums have made piupius for the primary schools cultural group.

Singing, action songs, stick and

mothers, that they are creating all sorts of craft work never seen before. Their skills are being sought after throughout Waiariki and more recently at national level.

The language is just emerging from the elder who constantly attends and supports the group, and