

Cultural Celebration Award Highly Commended: New Zealand Tertiary College



Video Link <https://vimeo.com/178545433/3b75fdbffb>

A wide and varied project team at early childhood education teacher training provider New Zealand Tertiary College embraced the opportunity to create a te reo Māori learning resource that successfully encourages biculturalism and bilingualism in early childhood education.

The creation and dissemination of Te Reo Māori: He taonga ma a tatou mokopuna (He Taonga) was a united New Zealand Tertiary College (NZTC) team effort. NZTC leadership, senior management, academic, IT, design, enrolment and communication teams came together to offer their unique professional skills to create He Taonga.

Multicultural staff members embraced the opportunity to contribute to the creation of a resource to support staff and their families learning te reo, as well as the wider early childhood community.

NZTC employs more than 100 people throughout New Zealand and India, representing more than 20 different cultural backgrounds. The College also contracts more than 1300 Associate Teachers spread across early childhood centres around the country with many different cultural backgrounds who support NZTC students as they practice in early childhood centres in New Zealand.

With the diversity of the team, lecturers and Associate Teachers found that supporting students in their te reo Māori was a challenge at times as they lacked confidence speaking te reo and were nervous about ensuring they engaged in appropriate ways.

“With our commitment to biculturalism and bilingualism underpinning our college work we contemplated how we could address this,” says communications manager Melissa Ingram.

“NZTC began to develop Te Reo Mori: He taonga ma at tatou mokopuna (He Taonga) several years ago to develop a te reo Māori learning resource,” she says.

Multicultural staff members embraced the opportunity to contribute to the creation of a resource that would support staff and their families learning te reo, as well as the wider early childhood community.

Lecturer Roimata Rokx (Kaiarahi - Teaching and Learning Support) began compiling the te reo resources she had created for her students over the years, before 10 academic team members and various departments of the college reviewed and offered feedback. The design team spent months designing the resource, with specific illustrations created to support learning and to ensure the teaching resource was inviting and easy to follow, allowing readers to use it in everyday, natural ways.

The resource was initially launched internally in February 2016 - NZTC staff gathered at the Auckland and Christchurch campuses, and at the office in Mumbai, creating unity as an array of cultures came together to celebrate the NZTC team achievement and share New Zealand’s indigenous language and culture.

He Taonga was then publicly launched at graduation ceremonies in Auckland and Christchurch in April 2016 and a copy of the resource was gifted to each graduate. Professional development evenings were also held to share and gift the resource to Associate Teachers.

“As part of NZTC's commitment to the teaching and learning of te reo through biculturalism and bilingualism, it will also gift a copy of the resource to more than 2000 early childhood centres in the country who support NZTC students, with a Teaching and Learning guide support plan for early childhood education teachers,” says Melissa.

The bold idea to distribute a copy to more than 2000 early childhood centres in the country who support NZTC students, came from NZTC chief executive Selena Fox. Ms Fox endorsed the need for a Māori learning resource to serve students, the early childhood community and beyond, and identified the opportunity for such a development for the NZTC team.

She was also instrumental in pulling all the project threads together, briefing the various college departments and checking their work with an overall vision for the resource. Commitment to the College values of Vision, Heart, Competence and Spirit remained a theme for staff throughout development, through to the final version of He Taonga.

The He Taonga initiative unified NZTC staff and boosted team morale with a large number of staff proudly working on the project over a lengthy time, knowing that they have contributed to assisting te reo Māori learning in New Zealand.

He Taonga has created cultural engagement across all the various departments of NZTC. Examples include the finance team, where He Taonga enabled them to be included in a Māori cultural celebration, enriching their workplace experience and giving them a greater perspective and understanding of the value that the NZTC team adds to its students' professional lives on an everyday basis. Even IT team members were delighted to show and share the resource with their children.

NZTC registrar James Clark said, "He Taonga gave me a rare opportunity to take a step back from my role as registrar and enjoy the collaborative team effort that went into the resource. I enjoyed celebrating the NZTC team and the Māori culture at both our internal launch and our external graduation launches.

"Having moved to NZ from England a number of years ago with absolutely no understanding of the Māori language, I've found it to be an amazing introductory resource for myself."

As is not uncommon in Auckland, a large percentage of NZTC staff were born overseas and the He Taonga project has offered engagement, direction and passion to contribute to the sustenance of an integral part of Kiwi culture - the Māori language.