

Tihei Matariki Programme

Location: Wellington Region, New Zealand.

Libraries: Rōpū: “Ngā Mata o te Ika”:

Libraries from: Masterton City, Kāpiti Coast District, Hutt City, Porirua City, Wellington City.

Mission/Objective and Targeted Audience:

We designed a creative writing competition for children aged 10-13 years, during Matariki (Pleiades), June 2011 and aimed to:

- encourage creative writing by children,
- gather local stories to be used as resources for our libraries and schools.

We named the programme “Tihei Matariki”. ‘Tihei Matariki’ may be translated as ‘Everlasting Matariki’ or ‘Long Live Matariki’ and is a time for celebrating our unique place in the world.

Description:

Matariki is the appearance of the Pleiades constellation in the dawn sky, around June of each year. This signals the Māori new year, and is an event that is becoming widely observed and celebrated in New Zealand and in the south pacific.

We embraced the concept of Matariki as a time for reflection and creativity and encouraged school children to research, write and illustrate a story based on a local kaitiaki – be it a maunga, taniwha, awa or kaumatua.

The stories were written mainly in English.

We promoted the underlying messages of Matariki :
<http://www.korero.maori.nz/news/matariki/index.html>

Each regional library tailored the supporting activities and back-up resources to suit their community. Classes were encouraged to visit libraries.

At Porirua Library the Tihei Matariki programme was taken up by students from Y.6-Y9. Sessions began with a traditional powhiri (welcome), mihi/hongi (greeting), karakia (prayer) and shared kai (food).

At Wellington City Libraries there were a variety of streams:

- The meaning was discussed in an historical context as well as the present day. Students received research and reference guides, and had useful free-ranging discussion.

- students sometimes worked in pairs - one as author, one as illustrator. Three books will form part of the library collection, to be launched with lots of praise, non-alcoholic bubbles and snacks!
- Children familiar with the stories of Matariki focussed on either rewriting legends or making up their own stories. Most incorporated some te reo Māori.
- Others enthusiastically produced A3 size posters - many of these were acrostic poems from the word Matariki.

Emphasis was on participation and production of resources rather than a competition for the best piece of work.

At Kāpiti Coast Libraries the Tihei Matariki programme was taken up by students from eight to twelve year olds. Sessions began with a traditional powhiri (welcome), karanga (call to our ancestors and to Matariki), mihi/hongi (greeting), karakia (prayer) and shared kai (food). Local writers shared pūrākau (an ancient legend of our ancestors) in Te Reo Māori and English languages and whakaari were enacted to highlight key components of the story. The use of a traditional Māori game played with sticks thrown in time to a song, known as 'Tītī Tōrea' further enhanced the programme allowing classes to find their natural rhythm in a hands-on exercise.

Results:

1. 2,000 students participated in the programme.
2. Student age range varied from library to library, and included 8 – 13 year olds.
3. Strengthened community relationships – schools, libraries, community members
4. Quality of experience.
5. All sessions gained strength when framed with traditional Māori tikanga (custom).
6. Emphasis was on participation and production of resources rather than competition for the best piece of work.
7. Stories created will form part of the library collection, to be celebrated with a launch.

But in the end this programme was about quality of experience – as shown at Porirua Library, where a special session of Y9 college students tagged with 'behavioural difficulties' was calmed by the traditional tikanga. Their teacher was impressed with the positive responses and behaviour of her students, as they gained an understanding of the importance of Matariki, with its triple themes of reflecting on the past and honouring ancestors, celebrating the present with whānau and planning for the future during the dark days of winter. Also noteworthy, was the strength of beginning our sessions with traditional Māori practices, which set a calming and engaging disposition for children to maximise participation.

It was a fantastic opportunity to showcase:

- The kaupapa (subject) of Matariki
- Methods of researching information in the library
- A creative writing project
- Traditional Māori stories and practices

Relevant documents:

Matariki

<http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/maori/downloads/matariki/MatarikiBooklet.pdf>

Christchurch City Libraries

<http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Education/MatauraNGĀMaori/MatarikiTeacherResourcePack.pdf>

Te Wānanga o Awanuiarangi

<http://library.wanaNGĀ.ac.nz/library/pdfs/pathfinders/MatarikiPathfinder.pdf>

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