

Taipa team takes revival of Maori traditions to Europe

Press Release

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Students at Taipa Area School were excited to learn they had produced the winning garden at the 2010 Manawhenua Challenge Awards held last week at their school.

But that's not all. Students on the winning Poutama Koru Whenua team are also heading to Europe in September to promote Ki-o-Rahi, an ancient Maori ball game making a groundswell comeback in the Far North and now they want to take their Manawhenua success with them.

"It hasn't been an easy task trying to raise the \$81,000 needed to get the team to Europe but they have been working really hard however we're still a long way off.

"Our group has been invited to perform kapa haka and demonstrate Ki-o-Rahi at a cultural festival in Barcelona as well as participate in a major tournament in Paris. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity for our students" says Hailey Tobin, Head of Maori at Taipa leading the tour.

A senior student, Dayna Wetere, noted that most of the vegetables harvested from the garden contributed to several fundraising events including a couple of major hangi.

"The dedication the team has shown to the garden has been highlighted by several successful harvests but it hasn't always been easy. The group endured some challenges along the way competing with severe water shortages, and sporting and family commitments."

The winning garden, Poutama Koru Whenua, came about with an offer of land by Hohepa Body, a retired factory manager with a keen interest in traditional Maori planting methods, gardening implements and structures. Together with the support and guidance of Matua Hohepa and wife Vivienne, the Year 9-13 students have unwittingly initiated a community garden.

"News travels fast. We now have interest from four local groups who want to join our 2 acre garden including a group of alternative lifestylers, a Northtec horticulture class, an early childhood group and a second group of students from Taipa Area School" said Vivienne. "We are even looking to have a mini challenge in our own garden."

A very proud Hohepa says "It was a great achievement for the whole team and they are keen to carry on. Next season, we will be building a pataka - a raised storehouse for our produce".

Gardening members of the tour group are now preparing to take their trophy to Europe where they will share their knowledge and enthusiasm for the revival of Maori traditions including ki-o-rahi, kapa haka and their developing relationship with the land. 'Rongo' is the name attributed to the Manawhenua Challenge trophy, the ancient Maori guardian of cultivated foods.

"The students will have time regroup and prepare a tapapa (kumara bed) before they leave for Europe beginning our next round of planting" says Hohepa.

There is much significance between all of these traditions in that they refer to the celestial body of stars known as Matariki. Matariki is a reference not just for the harvest of food but for the outer posts of the ki-o-rahi playing field.

This year, the Manawhenua Challenge was hosted by Taipa Area School where the presentation of awards formed part of the schools' week-long Matariki Celebrations.

It was a hugely successful week for the school with wide participation from community organizations, local schools, families, students and teachers at all events.

The organizers of the Manawhenua Challenge, Taitokerau Organic Producers, would like to thank the following sponsors for their support: Te Puni Kokiri, Te Waka Kai Ora, Far North Environment Centre, Tautoko Radio, Trees Company, Far North REAP, Taipa Area School, Pepi Patch Inc and Mana Magazine.

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Media & Community Relations: Ki-o-Rahi Tour to Europe

