



INNOVATIVE LEARNING TOOLKIT

PROJECT TITLE: Te Rangatahi o te Whenua Trust

Tags; restoration, alternative education

Overview:

Te Rangatahi o te Whenua Trust is involved in a range of activities which aim to improve ecological, social and economic outcomes through environmental education, restoration and protection. The trust is based on the East Coast near Opotiki and carries out general environmental education, alternative education programmes, pest eradication and bush regeneration initiatives and environmental restoration projects.

The trust's main focus is to protect the interests of the youth and their traditional taonga, empowering them to take control of their resources and their destiny. Across all the projects it undertakes, the trust seeks to create training, employment, social and economic development opportunities.

The general environmental education initiatives involve instructing locals on plant propagation, working with the local school, for example on establishing a shade house where the children can grow trees to use for local restoration projects, and the development of a marine biodiversity resource kit for schools, iwi and community organisations.

The alternative education programme lasts for eight weeks, and its aim is to use the environment to heal youth who have been rejected from mainstream schooling. Based on the students' understanding of their natural environment and their links and responsibilities to it, they learn standard subjects such as creative writing, maths, biology, social studies as well as life skills. The programme has a particular focus on pest control – particularly possums which are used as a basis for much of the teaching and for generating employment opportunities. Students also learn plant identification skills, along with their environmental and medicinal roles, and traditional bush survival skills. Participants in the alternative education programme have continued to engage in ongoing ecological restoration after leaving the programme.

The varied activities of the trust has led to skills development and employment creation in the areas of fencing, trapping and baiting and processing possum skin and fur. The programme involves the rangatahi/youth directly in measuring the environmental outcomes and indicators such as kaimoana surveys, species assessments and observations. The rangatahi designed and implemented the survey processes and documented the results with assistance from marine scientists.

The trust was established in 2002 and has received a Green Ribbon Award from the Ministry for the Environment.

Restoration projects have improved participants understanding of the importance of wetlands, native vegetation and its local significance.



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An estimated 24000 possums have been removed as a result of the trust's work.

Why is it relevant to PTS?

The programme includes a general environmental education component and an alternative education component

It has a specific focus on reaching 'difficult' youth – characterised by violence, drug and alcohol problems, gang affiliations, marginalisation and loss of maoritanga/self esteem

The trust has developed a resource kit for use in schools and with iwi groups

Ideas and tips for PTS:

Develop a resource kit and roadshow to take into schools to adapt into their formal curriculum

Develop alternative education models for youth threatened with suspension (or already suspended / truant) from mainstream schools

Identify and promote employment and business opportunities associated with the programme and its goals

In addition to teaching planting skills, the education programme also discussed the role that each plant plays in the environment, including how they heal the land when adverse effects are evident, and how they can be used for medicinal purposes

Involve the community, rangatahi/youth directly in measuring the environmental outcomes and indicators

Focus on economic development opportunities as well as environmental and social outcomes

Contact and further information:

Email rangatahiwhenuatrust@xtra.co.nz

Refer to the document "[Not just trees in the ground](#)", a report listed on the WWF website www.wwf.org.nz