



Kowhai Montessori Preschool
entry for the
Dr Nicola Chisnall
Memorial Award

Where was the idea from?

I had begun background reading for a Self-review report concerning how we could increase our bi-cultural participation. One particular report by Jenny Ritchie & Cheryl Rau* struck a chord “Our journey becomes one of self-change as we seek to learn from Māori whānau what is important to them, and respond accordingly.”

I understood that if we (Kowhai Montessori) were to move forward on our bi-cultural journey we needed more Māori families to become part of our learning community – but how could we encourage their enrolment?

* Ritchie, J & Rau, C (2006). *Whakawhanaungatanga – partnerships in bicultural development in early childhood care and education*. Wellington, Teaching & Learning Research Initiative.



Create a Māori
Scholarship
Award

Consultation process

- I did some initial research into what would be required of our Montessori to set up an on-going educational scholarship.
- I received the go ahead and approval from our owner and manager, who was 100% on-board with the idea.
- I canvassed other local Montessori to find out if they did anything similar. One out of four did have a Māori/Pacific Island child scholarship programme which was running well.

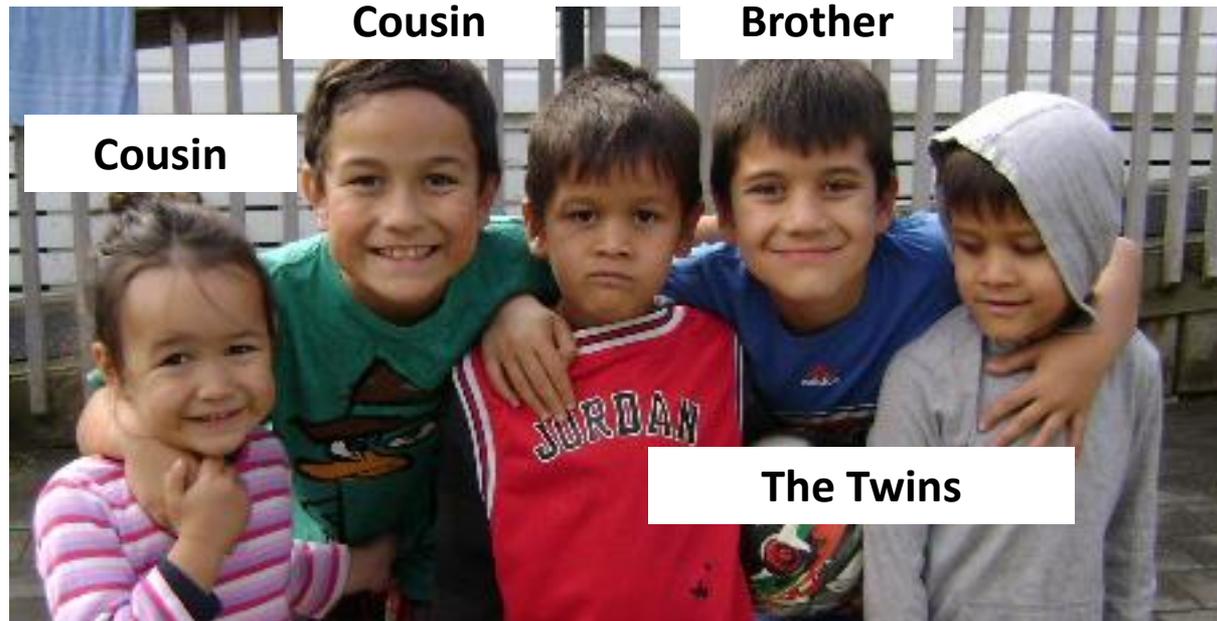
Who would be the first Scholarship recipient?

I had been talking with the mother of a Māori child we had in my class, she mentioned her sister would have liked her twin boys to attend our Montessori but were unable due to financial constraints.

The timing was perfect, what if we could offer places for both boys but only charge for one, would this work for the family?

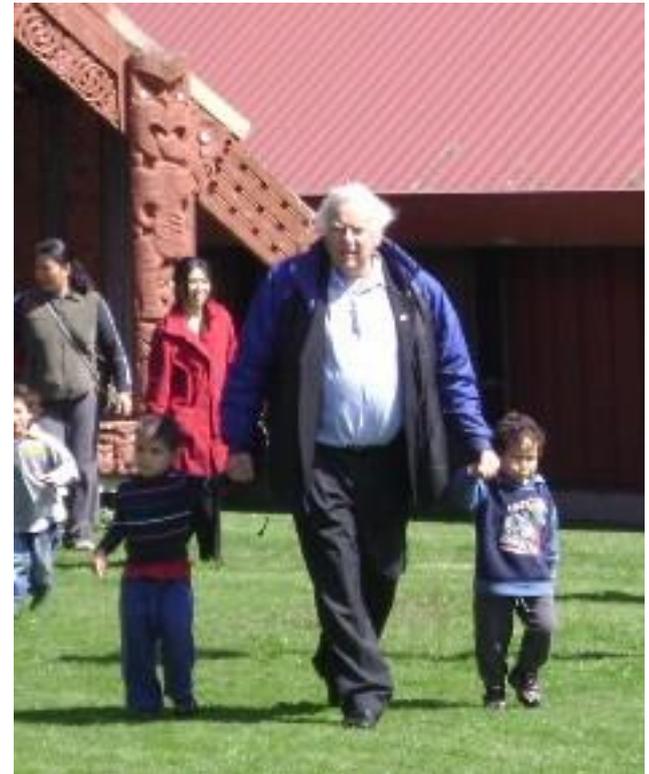
Next step action taken

Rebecca (our owner & manager) contacted the whānau of our prospective scholarship and enquired if they would like it. The answer was a most definite YES, YES, YES! Next term we will enjoy the company of twin boys from this whānau.



Commitment to community

Kowhai Montessori have known this whānau for a long time. Their eldest son and middle son attended, as well as two cousins (one is currently with us). Their grandparents are huge supporters of our Montessori, they helped us during a visit we made to our local Marae by speaking on our behalf at the pōwhiri, and often come in to share Māori culture with us.



What happens next?

- For us this scholarship is just the start of our engagement with greater bi-cultural awareness and action.
- Having the twins will encourage teachers to use more te reo Māori in the classroom in authentic ways.
- We will formalise applications for awarding our scholarship ready for after the twins have left.
- We are thinking about involving our local Marae to help us select candidates, this will help us to strengthen ties with our local Māori community.

Encouragement for others

- It is very early days for us, but when we have been up and running with our scholarship award for a while, we would like to share the learning with other Montessori's who would like to do the same.
- We will have tangible evidence of its success in terms of benefits to the whole of our Montessori learning community.

Next step forward

As a former student of Nicky Chisnall I just knew this project was “meant to be”. I could somehow feel Nicky channelling me to reach the very obvious solution of creating a scholarship. I think she would have liked that the idea sprouted from educational research.

This scholarship is a small step towards greater social justice, if we can all do something positive for one child belonging to one family/ whānau in one centre/school then soon it spreads to a larger community and to a nation.

From: Pauline Norris (project leader) and all the teachers at Kowhai Montessori Preschool. *It takes commitment from the top down to make special things like this happen, we are blessed our owner Rebecca is one of those special, caring individuals who believe in making this world a better place.*