



Stories from the Streamside

# Te Piatātā Visit Pre-European Life



## Using Our Native Plants

In March 2009, students from Te Pīataataa Trust, a local alternative education unit, visited The Cascades, part of the ARC's Waitakere Regional Parkland. There the group was fortunate enough to have a talk with Riki Bennett, an expert on pre-European Maori lifestyles.

Riki showed the students some of the tools and items their ancestors created out of native plant materials - the same plants the group plants along the streambanks.

## Traditional Knowledge

From shoes, to casts for broken bones, Riki illustrated how the students' ancestors utilised much of the locally available materials and also adapted the techniques and material used in the Pacific Islands to the materials available in New Zealand.

As well as talking about traditional legends, Riki showed the group how to make fire with just two sticks and some kindling.

Each student took their position and tried to replicate what Riki had done. They soon realised it was much harder than it looked and started trying different methods.

"I'm not keeping anything secret from you guys. I showed you exactly how it is done," Riki told them.

"Don't reinvent the wheel man," the boys told each other as they continued trying. Soon only two keen firestarters remained - they stuck at it and together they created a flame.

Afterwards, Riki took the group into the bush to show them native plants and talked about some of the traditional uses for them (such as for medicine or for starting fire) before showing them some traditional musical instruments made out of dog and whale bones.

*"They came away with a valuable lesson - through perseverance and listening to instructions they could achieve what they set out to do."*

- Riki Bennett

Surrounded by the magnificent bush and listening to the music of their forefathers, it was clear the boys developed a deeper appreciation for the traditions of their ancestors, and the need to protect them.

They also learnt what a vital role waterways played in their ancestors' lives.



For more information on the work of Project Twin Streams visit [www.projecttwinstreams.org.nz](http://www.projecttwinstreams.org.nz)

