

Dates: Monday 2nd February to Friday 6th February 2021

Destination: Great Barrier Island – Orama Trust – Karaka Bay – 4km from Port Fitzroy

Objective of the week: Mindfulness and Respect in accordance with our four Whenuapai school values

Group: Year 7 and 8 students from Whenuapai School



Day 1: Tuesday 2nd February 2021

Nineteen students and parents met at 6pm and flew out from Auckland Airport on two flights in two little 12 seater airplanes heading for Great Barrier Island. One flight left at 7am while the other left at 9am.

We are privileged to have two parents Tamara Hogg and Morgan Vermeulen travelling and attending with the group and I am sure they will enjoy the experience as much as the students. The students were a little nervous as this, was for some of them, their first flight on a plane. The view however was great flying over the city and coming into the Barrier over the range and landing was very exciting. The weather was perfect and stayed like this for the whole day. The students then got in minivans and travelled for 30-40 mins to their destination which is Orama Trust Lodge in Karaka Bay where they would spend their next four nights.

On arrival at the lodge students were introduced to their instructors Jo and Will who welcomed us. These instructors would be our guides to life on the Barrier for the next five days. The Whenuapai group was split into Hillary X and Hillary Y with the plan for each group doing separate activities culminating in them coming back each day to share their experiences with each other.

After this we got into our rooms and were straight into activities and learning with one group doing team building on an inflatable 10-person paddle board while the other group did team building activities on sit on top kayaks. Both teams then swapped over activities. Objective was to paddle in unison on the paddle board, maintain balance, work together and teamwork and group dynamics became very apparent in how successful each group was.

The instructors across both groups gave us a combined score of 12.5 out of 20 for teamwork so this was our baseline and with this score there were areas of improvement we can make as individuals and collectively as a group. After activities there was free time before dinner of which Hillary X did a splendid job preparing and then cleaning up. The group showered, prepared themselves and finished the evening with a group reflection on the first day and some areas of improvement and successes that they had while looking forward to the next four days. This was a great debrief and was an opportunity for us to practice our full value contract and ways we had been mindful across the day in relation to others, ourselves, learning and the environment.

A quick cooperative game that went till dark then lights were out at 9.00pm when all students were asleep in their rooms. Overall a great first day and a lot of fun had and excitement in the group.

Day 2: Wednesday 3rd February 2021

The day started with an early morning breakfast of which some of our students prepared. Then the students who were split into small groups did their duties of which consisted of breakfast duty, rubbish collection, lunch making and bathroom and toilet cleaning. These duties allow the students to take ownership and responsibility of their participation at the camp while also giving service back. The student's contributions and ability to fulfil their duties is a significant requirement of day to day life at the camp.

Once these duties were completed the students met with their instructors and both groups alternated between two activities across the day. The first activity was a high ropes course where students firstly did group problem solving initiatives then they supported each other with safety plans around how to manage risk around a student performing on the high ropes activity. Once these safety requirements were in place and learnt we saw students performing such activities as climbing up a cargo net then over the other side, running along a log and climbing along tandem wires all approximately 10 metres in the air. Some students even did press ups on the log while students below were belaying them and ensuring their safety. This showed great learning with some technical rope skills and great teamwork.

The second activity for the day saw students head up the Orama stream which is close to the centre. Students placed their wetsuits on and helmets and navigated themselves up the stream while tied together in their group of 10. They had to work together climbing up and over parts of the stream rocks and water pools while making sure that they payed attention to the fact that the rope required them to cooperate and support each other as they couldn't leave each other behind.

The stream involved many rock formations where the students had to crawl through and tight fits were a key ingredient of the day along with the bombs into the rock pools off the rock ledges. Once these activities were complete it was clearly evident that the teamwork and cooperative work between the groups had improved and the groups were showing greater support and encouragement for each other.

The day was not complete without swimming including backflips, bombs and jumping off the jetty. Students then prepared for dinner which was nachos and then a cooperative learning game and debrief of the day was held. All the students are in good spirits and enjoying each others company. The positive values students are demonstrating and connections students are making with each other and their instructors is clearly evident and is a great area of improvement over the two days we have been here. Students are having fun and are all in good spirits.

Day 3: Thursday 4th February 2021

Today the day started with sunshine again at the Barrier and students woke a little tired but had breakfast as usual at 7.30am. They then did their team duties and met their instructors to get the briefing on what they would be doing today. Will and Jo the instructors said that we would be travelling to Whangapoua

reserve then travelling by Kayak and the giant paddle board up the Okiwi estuary. Before we started the students with their instructors, they had to plan their equipment requirements. After all the kayaks and the paddle boards were roped on the vans we set off.

It was about a 30-minute drive to the reserve where we were met with a nice easterly swell with a number of surfers out picking up waves. We unpacked the kayaks and paddle board and then organised our vans back up to our get out point. We then set off up the Okiwi estuary with one group on the kayaks and the other group on the giant paddle board. The water was perfectly calm and students did a number of team building activities in amongst stand-up paddle boarding on their kayaks and challenging each other to see who the last person could be to stay on the paddle board without being pushed off. All great Fun!

Part of the way up the estuary, in amongst the mangroves, the students did some jumping off a tree into the water and then both groups proceeded on their expedition heading up the estuary till eventually the water ran out and we got to our get out point. With all our equipment placed back in and on the top of the vans we returned back to the centre.

On our arrival all students had to self manage themselves by washing down their equipment and taking responsibility for the return of everything back into the equipment shed which has become second nature and a key part of their responsibilities. Once finished, a number of the students got one last swim in on the jetty where the occasional backflip, manu and belly flop could be seen. Students then returned to their cabins and had some free time before dinner which is at 6pm. The evening is set with group Y assisting with the evening dinner then we have one of our instructors taking us for an evening activity before bed and lights out at 9pm. The key takeaway for the group today I think was a genuine appreciation for our environment in what was a special trip and some amazing scenery. It was absolutely beautiful with sun, warm water and a great expedition in the outdoors.

Friday 5th February and Saturday 6th February

Friday and Saturday would be our overnight expedition. Friday started with great weather and students were very excited to be heading out but at this point they didn't know where or what they would be doing. The students had breakfast then did a small team building initiative game before the instructors let them know that they would be walking 2-3 hours on the Harataonga track to a private beach where they would be camping overnight. Before anyone departed all students would have to organise all their personal equipment as well as their group equipment which would include cooking equipment, food and tents. When this was successfully done both groups did some more high ropes activities prior to departing in vans to get to the start of their tramping leg.

All the students carried their packs and many packs were 2-3 times the students' size. It was amazing that through sheer will power and determination that they completed both days of tramping and what was great to see was the support and encouragement that each student gave each other. The views upon reaching the peak and top of the ridgeline were amazing with students able to see where they had paddled on Thursday up the Okiwi estuary. There were two camp sites at either end of the beach with Hillary X at one end and Hillary Y at the other. Both groups setup their sites and pitched their tents and started to prepare their evening meal which was Mexican burritos. There was more than enough food for everyone and after dinner students were able to play on the beach and wade in the water. The conditions for swimming were too rough but students had fun and enjoyed the new environment. The overnight sleep involved sleeping on a foam mattress on the bare ground and although testing it gave students a better perspective of the comforts of home.

Breakfast was weetbix, canned fruit and hot chocolate which went down very quickly. The walk out was relatively steep before we had a gradual climb back out to the end of the track and our waiting vans. All students mustered all their energy and perseverance to complete what had been two days of tramping

back to back. Upon arrival back at the Hillary Outdoors centre students cleaned the vans then returned their equipment and the cabins, bathrooms and toilets then required cleaning. A final swim was had by some then we formally thanked our instructors and parents for their support of the group across the week. Jo and Will had been amazing instructors and invaluable to our students learning and leadership.

Likewise, Morgan Vermeulen and Tamara Hogg acted as parent helpers for the week and with their guidance, patience and support had helped our students in many and varied ways. Thanks to all these people on behalf of our school, students and myself as we couldn't have done it without your valued support.

Once good byes were done we boarded the shuttle and returned to Claris Airport on the Barrier for our return flight to Auckland, which once again was a smooth trip back into Auckland where eager parents were waiting to meet their children after what had been a great Hillary Outdoors trip for 2021. Special thanks to our students who were wonderful ambassadors for the school and a pleasure have as part of our Hillary Outdoors group for 2021.

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