

# Whangarei Falls first stop in river rejuvenation plan

Whangarei Falls will be the centre of World Water Day celebrations later this month when students, staff and families of Te Kura Kaupapa Maori O Te Rawhitiroa and visiting schools participate in a day of events there.

The school has chosen to clean and restore the Waitaua River, which runs at the back of their school to the Whangarei Falls, as part of their Kura environmental project and this year's focus is on educating the community to keep the river clean.

In term three last year students walked the river from the school to the falls, where they found car parts, household rubbish and dead sheep.

"And there was a sign up at the Falls saying no swimming," says Year 8 teacher Jo Murray. "We used to swim there as kids."

The river has become a centre of learning for the students. Whitebait Connection, an educational Ngunguru group taught the students about the macro invertebrates and fresh water fish of the river.

Students have performed a play, fund raised for a helicopter, then taken aerial shots and videos of the Falls.

They've recorded radio ads and a hiphop jingle which will start playing on radio Ngati Hine next week, and students have learnt the Whakapapa of the river, where it comes from



□ Students Storm Pomana-Hemara and Stormy Maihi with teacher Jo Murray - plan to clean and restore the Waitaua River as part of a school environmental programme.

and goes out and the marae along the way. They've made posters and pamphlets and written for journals and to the media.

"It's a five-year project," says Jo who says the next step will be clearing the river and eventually restoration and plantings. "Part of the World Water Day will be tapping into the community,

finding out who can help us and what they can do."

Te Rawhitiroa is one of the leading Kura throughout the country in Environmental Education.

Everyone is welcome to attend the World Water Day which will start at 10am and finish at 2pm on March 22.