

A Case Study on Connecting
Communities Through Play

WORLD OF PLAY

#THEPOWEROFPLAY



Overview

At the heart of World of Play was a simple but transformative vision:

Play breaks down barriers, sparks belonging, and connects us across cultures and generations.

On a crisp winter morning, this vision came alive through a playful, community-led festival blending tradition, creativity, and curiosity.

This event was an open invitation to join in, move, share, and connect.

What made the day special weren't just the activities themselves, but the moments they sparked: moments of learning, pride, and connection.

Here's what truly brought World of Play to life:

Celebrating cultural richness by doing, not just watching.

Traditional games, dances, and storytelling weren't just performances to watch, they were invitations to join in and explore. Children learned new words and movements; parents rediscovered games from their own childhoods; and elders shared wisdom and stories, reminding everyone that culture isn't just taught, but lived and passed on in many ways, including through play. Tamariki connected with their own whakapapa and openly welcomed the games and stories of others through fun, movement, and authentic connection.

Moments that matter

- **Over 350 attendees** participated on the day
- **19 community groups** and organisations worked together to bring the event to life.
- **110 families** journeyed together through the Matariki Exploration Passport.
- **8 Different cultures** were represented in the event.
- **175 free warm drinks** were shared through the Hey Neighbour initiative.

Breaking down barriers

Play offered a universal language where it didn't matter if people spoke the same language, everyone was welcome to join in on fun. It allowed for cross culture connections and intergenerational play.

Growing youth leaders

Tamariki and rangatahi weren't just guests at this event, they helped shape the day.

They performed, welcomed visitors, and led games. In doing so, they stepped forward not just as participants, but as leaders, culture bearers and valued members of the community.

More than an event, a vision of what is possible

World of Play wasn't just an afternoon of activities. It offered a vision of what happens when play sits at the centre of community life:

- We build spaces of joy, pride, and belonging.
- We see young people step forward as leaders.
- We celebrate culture not by holding it apart, but by living it together.

With the support of the Upper Harbour Local Board and the dedication of local cultural groups, World of Play planted a simple yet powerful seed:

Play is how we build the connected, vibrant communities we all want to live in.

"Anyone can play and that's what makes it powerful. Seeing families, neighbours, and strangers laugh and connect reminded us that it's often the simplest moments that build the strongest communities."

Pat Green - Play Lead, Harbour Sport.

