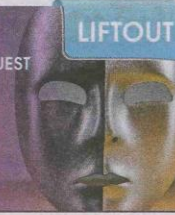


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FULL OF TALENT: Te Wharekura o Huiarau students Kirihou Teka, Puhikura Teka and Te Arahe Mitai compete in the Pacifica Beats competition at the Smokefree-rockquest.

Photo supplied

Ruatahuna produces more stars

Karla Akuhata
Staff reporter

THERE must be something in the air at Ruatahuna.

More than 30 years after the death of the beloved performer, Prince Tui Teka, his hometown is still pumping out talented singers.

The latest is a trio of students from Te Wharekura o Huiarau – Kirihou Teka, Puhikura Teka and Te Arahe Mitai – who perform as Mana Kotiro.

Last weekend they won the Pacifica Beats award, which runs alongside

the Smokefree-rockquest, at the Bay of Plenty regional heat.

Their music teacher, Merepeka Teka, said they performed a song they had composed that was all in te reo Maori.

"Being a kura kaupapa we have always gone for Maori waiata that are entirely in te reo Maori. It is a way of growing the language."

Mrs Teka said the girls were delighted when they were announced as the winners of the Pacifica Beats award and the experience would keep them in good stead as they progressed.

"The main thing is exposure and experience. Being on stage isn't easy for some of our children because they

are very humble. It is something that we have to teach them to own the stage and to grab the judges and audience in the palm of their hands and take them on a journey."

Ms Teka said the girls now had to submit a video of them performing a song so they could be considered for a place in the finals.

Meanwhile, Mana Kotiro weren't the only group to participate in the Pacifica Beats Bay of Plenty heats. A group of year 7 and 8 boys also performed as Nga Whakatipuranga.

The group included Manawaru Rangihau, Hoani Tawhi, Manaaki Ahuriri and Ruao Te Moni.

Mrs Teka said the two groups were continuing on with the legacy that had been started several years ago.

"Our school has been to the Pacifica Beats since 1995, Able Teka (Children of the Mist band) was in the first band that the school ever entered."

She said singing and performing was a large part of life in Ruatahuna and at the school.

"It just comes down the generations. A lot of them are born with the gift, a lot of them have singing abilities, they are very fortunate to have it in their DNA.

"For the whole school, music is part of our everyday lives.