

Roma learning from Waikirikiri reo strategies

by Christine McCafferty

STRATEGIES for preserving minority languages were discussed when Waikirikiri School staff met with teachers from Europe who are working to develop the teaching of Romani language in schools.

Romani is the dialect of Roma — the largest ethnic minority group in Europe. Erika Adamova, a secondary school teacher from Slovakia, and Florin Nasture, who works for the Roma Education Fund in Budapest, were in Gisborne to attend the Democracy in the Pacific Conference held in Ruatoria.

‘ It seems Maori people have a lot of focus on retaining and teaching their language whereas Roma people are just starting to deal with this type of thing ’

— Erika Adamova

“We have met with people who work in the Maori education field to find strategies that may be applicable with teaching the Romani language.”

She said New Zealand was far more developed in terms of preserving the Maori language compared with how European countries were with Romani.

“A lot has been achieved here. It seems Maori people

The pair also took the opportunity while they were here to learn more about teaching Te Reo Maori and heard from Waikirikiri School staff about their development as a bilingual and total immersion school.

“We are sharing strategies on the retention of native languages and particularly drawing on the Maori experience,” Ms Adamova said.



A group of students from Waikirikiri School are pictured with, from left, deputy principal Horiana Kaaho, Erika Adamova, Florin Nasture and Waikirikiri principal Yolande Julies. Ms Adamova, from Slovakia, and Mr Nasture, from Budapest, met with the staff to discuss strategies for teaching minority languages. Picture by Paul Rickard

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Waikirikiri School principal Yolande Julies said they had looked at similarities and differences between Maori and Roma, shared experiences and made connections that both cultures could use to improve their language strategies.

“It is a good opportunity to network and share ideas about developing minority languages. Our visitors have been looking at how we as a school have implemented

immersion and bilingual education and they are able to learn from our trials and errors.”

Mr Nasture said he learned plenty of ideas to take and present to his colleagues in Budapest, to create policies for teaching Romani in schools.

Meanwhile, Waikirikiri School deputy principal Horiana Kaaho will share her experience in bilingual teaching at a Minority Languages Conference in Corsica in July.

Ms Kaaho hopes to bring back new skills that will help further develop Maori literacy in New Zealand.