

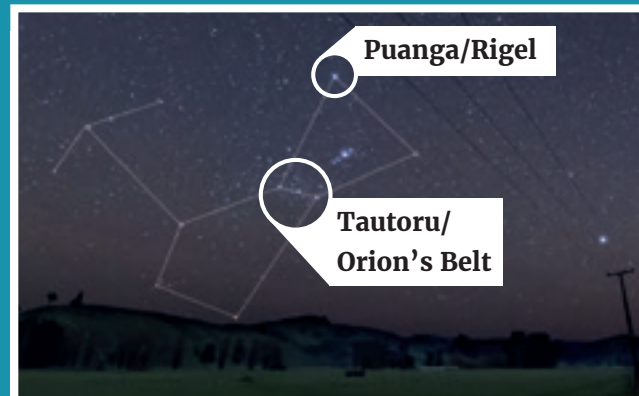
Celebrating Puanga at Ramanui

by Maakere Edwards
and Kiwa Hammond



Near the maunga (mountain) of Taranaki, a small school is celebrating a very special event. Every year, Ramanui School in Hāwera honours the arrival of the star Puanga. When Puanga appears in the eastern sky just before dawn, it marks the start of the Māori New Year in Taranaki.

Hāwera



Puanga and Matariki

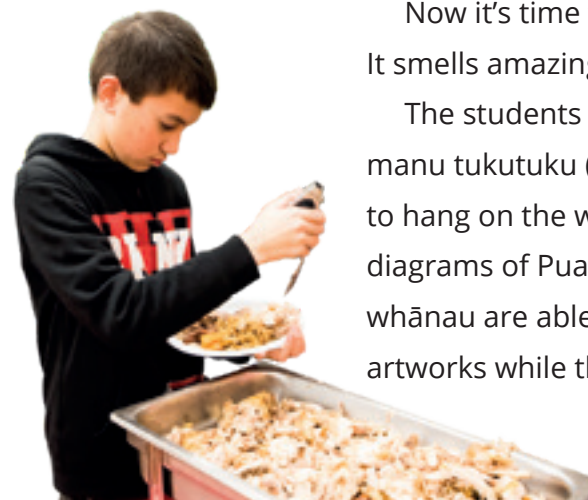
In many parts of Aotearoa, people celebrate the Māori New Year when Matariki (a group of stars also known as the Pleiades) appears. However, if you live in Taranaki, Matariki is hard to see because it's very low in the eastern sky. Instead, the people of Taranaki look for Puanga (also called Rigel). Puanga is the very bright star that can be seen above the three stars named Tautoru (or Orion's Belt).



This year, the students have invited friends and whānau to join them for a hākari (feast). Earlier in the day, a hāngī was put down. Everyone had a job. It's the first time the school has had a big hāngī for Puanga. Koro Bill is the "hāngī master" – he knows how to make a really good hāngī.

The evening starts with a mihi (speech) and karakia (chant) led by Matua Louie. He greets the whānau of Ramanui School and takes time to remember those who have passed on. Farewelling the ancestors and welcoming the living are important parts of celebrating Puanga.

Next, it's kapa haka in the school hall. All the students are in the kapa haka. It's a great performance – whānau and teachers start singing along, too. Everyone is buzzing!



Now it's time to eat the food from the hāngī. It smells amazing and tastes even better!

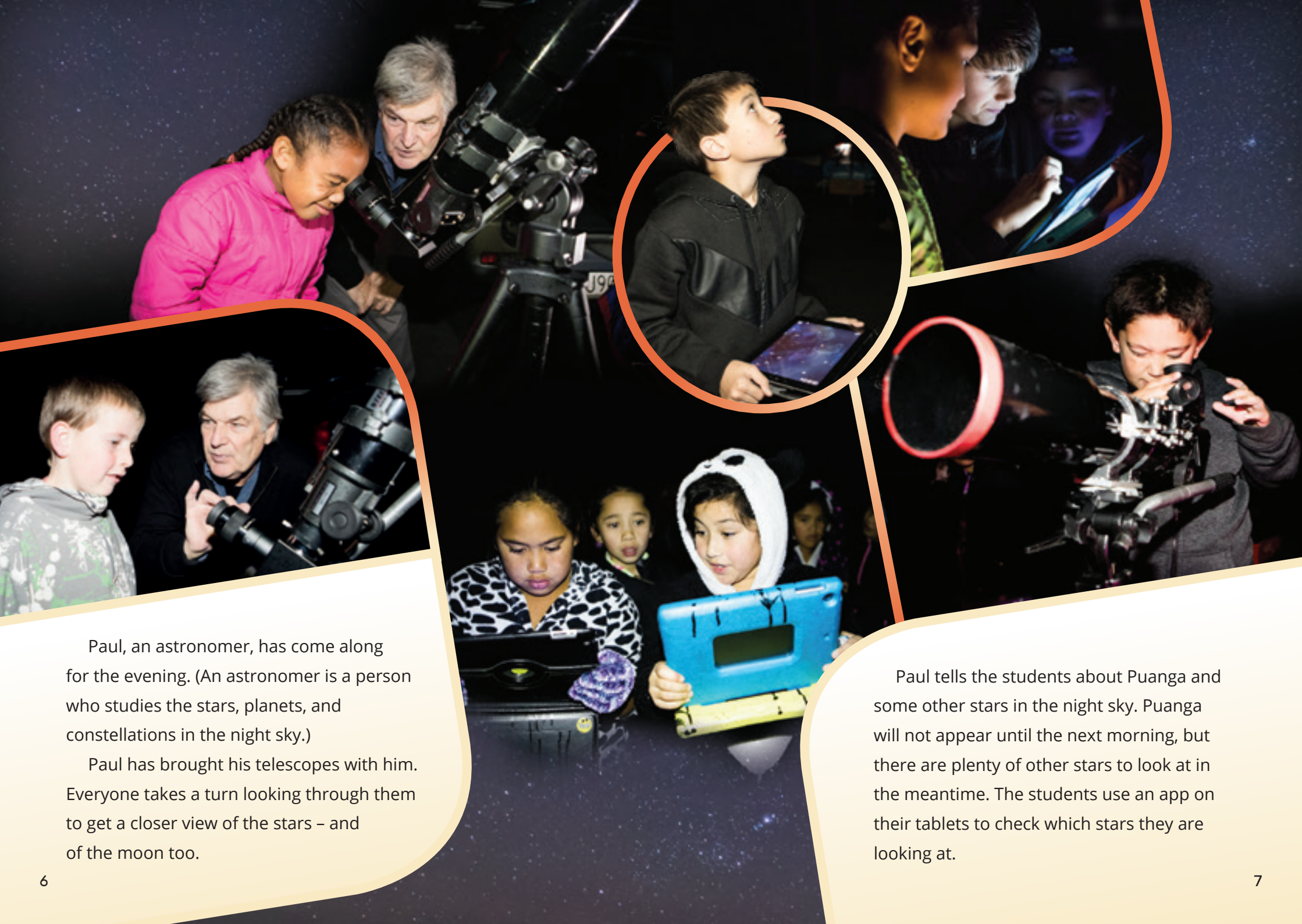
The students have made Puanga stars, manu tukutuku (kites), and rama (lanterns) to hang on the walls of the hall. There are diagrams of Puanga and Matariki too. All the whānau are able to have a good look at the artworks while they eat. Tau kē!

Puanga Kai Rau

The celebration for Māori New Year is often called "Puanga Kai Rau". Kai rau means "lots of food". At this time of the year, the ancestors' crops had been harvested, so the pātaka (storehouses) were full.

Puanga is also a time for new beginnings and making plans. It was the time when the ancestors got their gardens ready for planting. At Ramanui, new raised gardens are being made so that the students can grow lots of vegetables. Kōwhai trees and koromiko are also ready to plant around the school.






Paul, an astronomer, has come along for the evening. (An astronomer is a person who studies the stars, planets, and constellations in the night sky.)

Paul has brought his telescopes with him. Everyone takes a turn looking through them to get a closer view of the stars – and of the moon too.

Paul tells the students about Puanga and some other stars in the night sky. Puanga will not appear until the next morning, but there are plenty of other stars to look at in the meantime. The students use an app on their tablets to check which stars they are looking at.

That night, the students sleep over at school. For some, it's the first night they've spent away from whānau. Everyone has brought their sleeping bags and blankets. They sleep on mattresses on the floor – just like staying on a marae.

Next morning, some kids are wide awake before dawn, ready to search the sky for Puanga. Unfortunately, they can't see it because the sky is too cloudy. Never mind. Māori New Year isn't just for one night – it's celebrated over a whole month. There will be plenty more opportunities to look for Puanga.



It's just like staying on a marae.



*Happy Māori New Year at Ramanui!
Puanga Kai Rau!*



RAMANUI SCHOOL
1953



History in a Capsule

As part of the Puanga celebrations, Ramanui School has been preparing a time capsule. It contains pictures of the school, the students, and their whānau. The students have written about their dreams for the future, and those have gone into the capsule, too. It will be opened in 2053 when the school celebrates its one hundredth birthday. By then, most of the students will be in their forties. That's older than some of their parents now!

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The Ministry of Education and Lift Education would like to thank the students, staff, and community of Ramanui School for their help with “Celebrating Puanga at Ramanui”.

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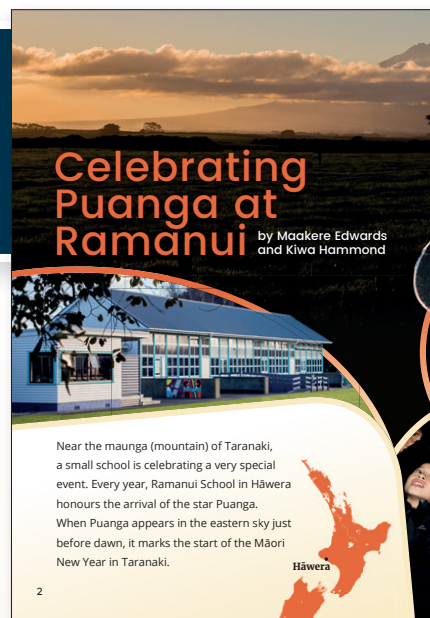
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