

Pasifika Beatz helping kids connect and learn Pacific languages through music

Kids in Aotearoa can move to the beat of their own drum thanks to a collaboration between Whānau Āwhina Plunket, local musicians Loopy Tunes and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of Auckland playgroup Pasifika Beatz, Whānau Āwhina Plunket has launched 100 fun and interactive kids' songs integrating 10 different Pacific languages for the whole fanau to try.

"This is first time anything on this scale has been created in Aotearoa for Kiwi families," says Chief Executive of Whānau Āwhina Plunket, Amanda Malu.

"The videos and songs are a great introduction to Pacific languages and Te Reo for tamariki and their families."

Over the past few months, Loopy Tunes sister duo Siu Williams-Lemi and Leah Williams-Partington – whose waiata 'He Uri Ngāti Hua-Rakau' is a finalist for the APRA Best Children's Song, to be announced later this month – have been recreating nursery rhymes and traditional cultural songs in Māori, Rotuman, Samoan, Kiribati, Cook Islands Māori, Tongan, Tuvaluan, Fijian, Niuean and Tokelauan to help families learn and connect with different Pacific languages.

Launched today at a party for local Auckland families with special guests Minister for Pacific Peoples Hon Aupito William Sio, Suzy Cato, radio 531 breakfast show host Agnes Tupou and former Chief Advisor Pacific Health (Ministry of Health) Hilda Fa'asalele, the songs are available to stream for free on YouTube, Spotify and iTunes.

Whānau Āwhina Plunket Pacific Support Coordinator Natalia Gasu says the Pasifika Beatz playgroup is a wonderful way to help children learn and preserve their Pacific language, and is an important part of building their wellbeing and self-identity.

"There has been a loss of Pacific languages in Aotearoa, and we wanted to create a playgroup to support local Pacific families to connect with their culture and language through music."

Whānau Āwhina Plunket has also launched a pilot mobile culture and music sessions in partnership with West Auckland Libraries.

The sessions – which run from 31 May to 28 June – will share Pacific and Māori stories and culture through music.

"Pacific and Māori culture is traditionally shared through oral storytelling. As the host of stories, libraries are the ideal place to not only host Pasifika Beatz but also to help more Pacific and Māori families access local resources and information," says Ms Gasu.

Pasifika Beats is available at:

- Plunket's YouTube page <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCW0IYBAff1qUR0qtWdt-Ncw>
- Loopy Tune's Spotify <https://open.spotify.com/artist/0nyv9lZZ2dBi8WzcRfyH6y>
- Loopy Tunes's iTunes <https://music.apple.com/nz/artist/loopy-tunes-preschool-music/1467320079>