



Ko te Pakipoto Pātangaroa

The Starfish Story

Kia hua mai he kōnekeneneke – mā te kōtiritanga o ngā pātangaroa

Making a Difference – One Starfish at a Time

“Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work.

One day, as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself at the thought of someone who would dance to the day, and so, he walked faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a boy, and that what he was doing was not dancing at all. The boy was reaching down to the shore, picking up small objects, and throwing them into the ocean.

He came closer still and called out “Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?”

The boy paused, looked up, and replied “Throwing starfish into the ocean.”

“I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?” asked the somewhat startled wise man.

To this, the boy replied, “The sun is up, and the tide is going out. If I don’t throw them in, they’ll die.”

Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, “But, young man, do you not realise that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can’t possibly make a difference!”

At this, the boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean.

As it met the water, he said, “It made a difference for that one.”

– Loren Eiseley, American Anthropologist and Educator

