



## Kiwi Corkers – traditional tales with a Kiwi twist

Scholastic New Zealand Publishing Manager Diana Murray shares the story behind the stories.

The Kiwi Corkers series hatched from the idea of taking well-known tales and retelling them with a New Zealand flavour. The concept of reworking fairy tales is not revolutionary; however the idea of bringing them into our familiar, uniquely Kiwi environment has made them popular stories that our children can relate to.

Every aspect of the series has been carefully considered. We decided to publish them with bright, fun and durable hardcovers, but sell them at lower than paperback prices to make collecting the full series affordable. We identified the traditional tales children are still growing up with. Initially we asked New Zealand authors to write stories for us, but after a time the series took on a life of its own and we have received a high volume of manuscripts for it.

Sounds straightforward? Well – not always!

Take *The Elves and the Cloakmaker*, written by Chris Gurney and illustrated by John Bennett (October 2011). There were twists and turns in bringing this book to publication, as we had to consider things such as whether men can weave cloaks (yes, our research tells us, they can) and what patupaiarehe might look like (bright red hair, pale skin). At one stage, the title was going to be *The Patupaiarehe and the Cloakmaker*, but we were concerned that such a complicated looking word in the title might be off-putting to non-Maori speakers and changed it to *The Elves and the*

*Cloakmaker* – which begged the question whether patupaiarehe are elves? After research and consultation, we decided yes, that would be fine.

And it took a long time to come up with the Kiwi wolf for *Little Red and the Cunning Kuri*, also written by Chris Gurney, with illustrations by Sarah N Anderson (October 2010). What nasty New Zealand creatures do we have that could fit this character? We thought of a katipo – but it wouldn't have been the right size in relation to Little Red, and not the right shape either. A kahu (harrier hawk)? No, still not right. It was a light-bulb moment when the author came up with the kuri, a Maori dog.

Scholastic New Zealand has now published 12 books in the series, and have another two in the pipeline for 2012 – both of which promise to uphold the 'high standards' of 'this series of poetic parodies' (Trevor Agnew *The Source*, 6 July 2011).

You can read more about the books in the series at <http://www.scholastic.co.nz/publishing/index.ph>