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Mr Mac writes his dream

ALISTAIR MCINTYRE is living proof that dreams can come true if they're built on courage and perseverance.

When McIntyre left school to live every little boy's dream – to drive big trucks and operate heavy machinery – he was semi-literate. He's now an acclaimed author and publisher of two children's books, and promotes reading for a living.

He's told his life story to over 1000 New Zealand schools, and this week he's sharing it with Rarotonga primary school students.

McIntyre came to Rarotonga for a five-week holiday, but said that after doing the obligatory "15 minutes poolside", he found he was "bored".

He decided to spend his days visiting schools and sharing his Doug the Digger story series. On Monday he spoke at an assembly at Papaaroa School and spent the rest of the day visiting the school's classrooms. Yesterday he spent some time with Kevin Iro's boys at the Cook Islands Sports Academy, and he has plans to speak at Te Uki Ou School, among other schools he has yet to contact.

McIntyre, known to his readers as Mr Mac, fell in love with "big machines" when he was five or six years old.

"My dad was a civil engineer and I fell in love with the machines on work sites. I had a dream of leaving school and driving machines, and that's

what I did at 15 (years old)."

By the time he was 17, McIntyre was running two landscaping businesses from his Whangarei homestead. At 25, his arm was crushed between a roof and a truck in a tragic accident.

"For 10 years I struggled to do what I loved to do but physically it was too hard," he said. "But you can either sit back and whinge and moan or do something. I thought, 'What can I do next?' And I had a dream of writing a book. But to write a book you have to know how to read and write."

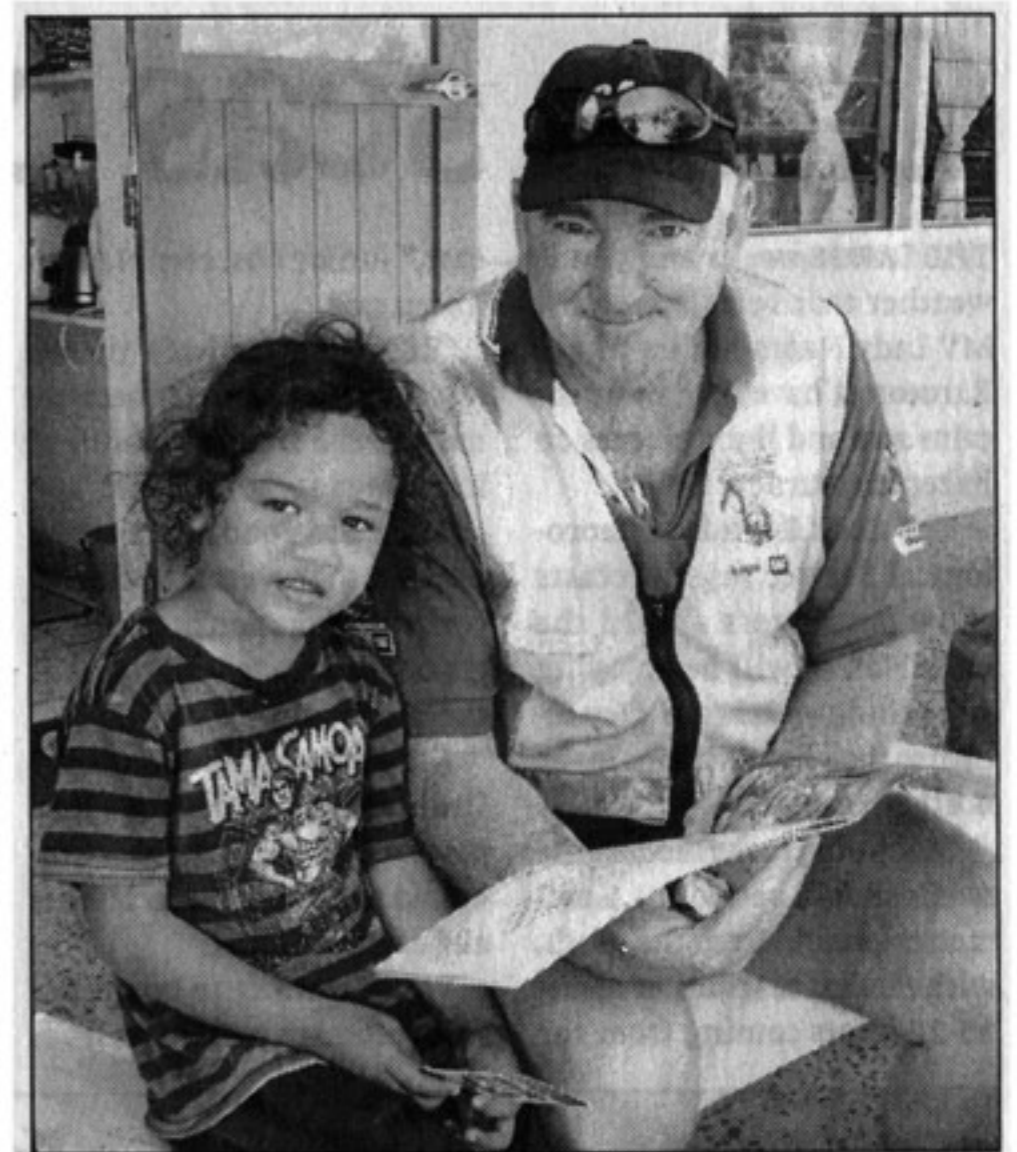
McIntyre faced his most daunting fear and at 37, took his place next to primary school students and learned to read and write.

In 1995 he "put pen to paper" and resolved to write a children's book. Three years later, his character Doug the Digger was born, and six months later there was a sequel.

Mr Mac's books follow the adventures of a talking digger whose priority is safety on the job.

McIntyre takes Doug the Digger books along when he speaks to young people about the joy of reading and the importance of safety, and to tell his bigger-picture story about the power of believing in yourself.

"I personally believe we all have dreams but do we have the courage to turn them into reality?" he asked. "It's about putting pen to paper, and doing it."



'Mr Mac' reads to Papaaroa School student Leota. PHOTO: [unreadable]

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