

Maru kai atu
Maru kai mai
Ka ngohengohe
Through mutual exchange of kindness
Comes a softening/ understanding

Submission on Te kawa o te Urewera
7/7/17:
Tangaroa a mua, Takurua

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Minginui.

Ki nga awa: Whirinaki, Horomanga, Waiohau, Ohinemataroa, Waimana, Waiotahe, Waioeka, Hangaroa, Raukituri, Waipaoa, Wairoa, Manganuiohau, Waiau, Te Hoe, tena koutou me nga Maunga: Tuwatawata, Tawhiuau, Hikurangi, Maungapohatu, Te Wera, Manuoha, Panekiri, Maungataniwha , tena koutou Katoa.
Ki nga Tangata o te Poari o Te Urewera me nga iwi o Ngai Tuhoē. Tena koutou.tena koutou, tena koutou Katoa.

Ko wai ahau?
Ko Tawhaowhao ahau,
Ko te kapua i te rangi
Tōku Maunga
Ko te ua i heke mai i tōku tuarā
Tōku Awa
Ko te whāriki nei
Tōku turangawaewae
Ko tōku whatumanawa o tōku ngakau
Tāku koha anake.
Tēnā koutou.

Tuatahi

I first started working for the Forest Service, in Te Urewera, in 1983. I was responsible for managing the huts and tracks in the Waioeka catchment. In 1986 I was the last Forest Service Ranger at Ruatahuna. From there I have spent most of my time living and working in Minginui.

One of my special places is the Okui, now named the Te Whaiti block in the Te Urewera Settlement Act 2014.

What I have written here has been derived from many years of walking the hills and slowly, stubbornly, acknowledging a growing awareness. In thirty or so years I have worked and camped in all the major catchments of this forest.

After reading Te Kawa o te Urewera several times I could not for a long while find anything to engage with or comment on. It is however such a significant document of our times, about an area I am familiar with, so I thought I would try and make a small contribution to the korero.

If my thoughts and opinions are considered to be “out there” and somewhat preposterous, it is because wandering the margins of civilisation has eased somewhat the bonds of convention. I answer to no one, free to think.

As with the many conversations, had around fires in remote places, I have tried to talk as straight as I can and as truthfully as I can.

Nga mihi.

“If on occasions the Maori had carelessly destroyed part of his natural heritage, it had only been because he lacked efficient means of rectifying human errors in conservation. The destruction was not for want of discipline, for more than once when Best had become a little too free with his axe he had received the salutary reminder: “Take care, son, you are meddling with your ancestor, Tane.” ?

From page 124, Man of the Mist by E.W.G. Craig pub.1964.

“5) Principles for implementing this Act

- 1) In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons performing functions and exercising powers under this Act must act so that, as far as possible,-
(b) the indigenous ecological systems and biodiversity of Te Urewera are preserved, and introduced plants and animals are exterminated.”

Te Urewera Act 2014.

I consider that there is the dilemma facing management of Te Urewera, a dilemma reflected in the draft of Te kawa o te Urewera. The reconciliation of indigenous lore and ways with the Pakeha law, that has been imposed invisibly on Te Urewera in various forms.

This Settlement Act 2014 being the latest version.

So while the Te Kawa o te Urewera document begins by acknowledging the perspectives of tangata whenua, from a need arising to follow the requirements of the Act , it devolves into standard Government -speak about dealing with “pest” species both animal and plant. Dividing by prejudice, the ora/life of te Ao Marama into separate forms and ascribing values. Through this separation of the tamariki of Tane, destruction is allowed to take place.

The word pest and the legal requirement to exterminate all introduced plants and animals, does not sit well within the forest lore of traditional Maori life.

Tane is the creator, man his potiki. (Youngest born)
(Who is man to usurp the role of Tane? The peril is here).

All life originates from the one and cannot be in existence without mauri.
Is not mauri apportioned equally and fully connected to the whole? It is entire.

None of this contemplation of a complete spiritual/physical system sits well in the Pakeha realm of “saving” the planet by killing off certain plants and animals. Leaving only “natives”.

Yet the term native, like that of pest, or introduced, is difficult to define and very much dependant on who is defining it. More and more science is discovering the trans global nature of life forms. (Pohutukawa once existed/originated in Tasmania, now extinct there.)

The over-riding message from almost all indigenous cultures and holistic belief systems is:

Do No Harm. Without qualification.

Take what you require to live and no more. Gather your essential, meagre resources whilst holding an attitude of extreme gratitude and respect. Karakia often. Leave the unfolding of life to Tane, the great intelligence of nature.

Deep ignorance, and arrogance, (we all have our share) are the foundation stones of current “conservation” thinking in Aotearoa. In other places new science and new thinking for a New Age, are increasingly referring to whole system/ indigenous concepts as being the more correct path of enquiry and action or inaction.

New Zealand however continues on, with an outdated view of how natural processes actually work. Attempts to “save” or “preserve” a single species are often described as nga pakanga/battles against, or for, some aspect of the environment.

It started in Te Urewera with deer culling in the 1950s. The killing industry has grown and expanded, exponentially, since then.

Review!

A drastic, America’s- cup-type, change in tack, is desperately needed.

Instead approach Te Urewera with an open heart, and in humility, and amazing things can happen.

I would encourage tangata whenua, through guidance from a well composed Management Plan, to re-inhabit this ngahere with such an attitude.

Discard, as much as possible, the Pakeha whakaaro, most suited for distant high-rise offices in Whanga nui a Tara. Though the shadow of the legal entity will always be present, can I suggest we allow te ture o te whenua/ the lore of the land, to shine through.

HAA! Take a new breath!

Place more emphasis on whanau residing on the whenua and being present in a much more harmonious state within Te Wao Nui o Tane.

Revitalise this relationship with every awa and maunga. Encourage and foster like-minded visitors. Observe without judgement how nature flows, functions and unfolds. Constantly changing.

AUE! Oh Dear!

I say all the above knowing a new level of pest elimination is about to unfold around the Motu.

1080 poison is going to be applied over large areas, multiple times. Poison drops, diseases and epigenetics are all going to be employed in order to attempt to exterminate a range of so-called pests by some date in the future. (2050- the same date it is projected, there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans). Possums, not even a predator, gone by 2025.

Millions of dollars have been spent in attacks on the natural world. Billions more dollars to go.

Te Urewera will not be exempt. Legally it cannot be. The Act has been cleverly written by lawyers. It signatories duty bound. No different from all conservation lands, compliance is requested.

There is however on the cliff-face of intransigence, a thin ledge of moral/cultural ground, unique to this Settlement Act, a contrary proviso, that could be invoked to ward off compulsion, or used in any reasoning. Alongside words like: plants and animals to be exterminated, wandering stock seized horses barred and all manner of draconian measures.

Ngai Tuhoe have due recognition. This is an opportunity for Tuhoe to express their Tuhoetanga in a grey legislative area.

As far as large scale poisoning goes, social resistance to this enormous act of cruelty is increasing and is particularly strong among the people of Te Urewera.

Poisoning Papatuanuku is an anathema to most people that dwell within the rohe potae. It is hurtful to the heart of all. A great shame on everyone.

If we are to survive, not just in this greenest of forests, but on this planet, we must revise our thinking at fundamental levels.

The usual busy-ness of business as usual is too destructive to everything we touch.

I therefore exhort you to do the best that you can with what you have.

Through legislation the "system" has its grip on Te Urewera, only through wholehearted actions will Tuhoe regain a true possession.

I live on small hopes for my beloved

Te Urewera.

"In the beginning was the Tao

All things issue from it

All things return to it"

LaoTzu.

Mauri ora

Na

Andy Blick.