



Tiwaiwaka

healing the mauri of the whenua

Ka ora te Whenua, ka ora te tangata

Rob McGowan

(Pa Ropata)



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Introduction



I was recently at a symposium on climate change. (29th March, 2019; Mount Maunganui). It was excellent in every respect, well organised and run, outstanding presentations from truly remarkable people, and lots of very appreciative and actively involved participants.

People really did understand the issues and were committed to addressing them. There was no shortage of practical ways to do this.

But somehow I went home with a worry. There was something missing; it seemed like there were so many strands, but somehow they needed to be woven together. There needs to be more than effective and positive ideas to achieve change. They needed to be brought together. The word “kotahitanga – unity” was heard more than once; we must work together.

But how is kotahitanga to be achieved, when we come from so many backgrounds and have so many differences which have a potential to keep us apart? That’s when the Tiwaiwaka Principles came back into my mind. They had been sitting there, waiting for me to give them life.

Maybe the time had come to share Tiwaiwaka with a much bigger audience. It can become a channel that will enable us to achieve the kotahitanga/unity that is needed to effectively reverse the ecological decline that threatens life.

We have to begin by changing the order of priorities we work to. New Zealand’s greatest priority is not economic development but caring for the Earth.

Rob McGowan
(Pa Ropata)
Tauranga

Tiwaiwaka

Ka ora te Whenua, ka ora te tangata.

Tiwaiwaka is a collective of people committed to healing the mauri of the whenua.

We bring together our gifts and abilities, matauranga, skills and experience, and networks throughout Aotearoa, many groups and individuals, all committed to realising this vision, each in our own way, regardless of culture, religion, beliefs, history, etc.

It works by sharing this vision and empowering more and more people to give it effect. We share a common voice that in time will embrace the whole of Aotearoa.

By following the Principles of Tiwaiwaka set out below we have a way forward that gives us hope for the future. Keeping the whenua well is always the first priority. That is what will ensure our long-term future, especially for the generations that follow us.

The whenua, Papatūānuku, is the source of all life.

She is the Mother.

Ka ora te Whenua, ka ora te tangata.

Caring for the whenua is the first priority.

Everything else must be measured against this.

Ka ora te Whenua, ka ora te tangata.



Key principles

1

Te Whenua, Papatūānuku, is the source of all life. She is the Mother. *Ka ora te Whenua, ka ora te tangata.*

Caring for the whenua is the first priority. Everything else must be measured against this.

2

We are not the centre of the Universe but we are part of it.

All living creatures are our brothers and sisters, and we are the potiki, the last born. Papatūānuku is our mother. We must care for them.

3

The mauri is the web of connections that sustains life.

If any of those connections is weakened or broken the mauri is less able to sustain life. The integrity of the mauri and its web of connections has greater priority than the rights and needs of any individual or species.

4

Te tangata, people, are not the masters of the mauri; we are part of the mauri and embraced by it.

Our role is to care for the mauri. In doing so we are cared for by it. We find peace. We are at home.

5

No individual person is more important than any other.

Each must contribute what they have to offer, and receive what they need to be well. We are most well when we are sustained by the mauri, the web of connections that makes us who we are.

6

We give special care to the tiniest living creatures.

Even though they are too small to be seen they are the foundation that keeps and sustains all life. Caring for them is caring for the mauri. This is the source of wellness, of sustainability.

Tawhiao's kōrero

The context is Rewi Maniapoto and the Kiingitanga leaders had crossed the aukati line for the first time. In the references the author states this was a kōrero given to her in 1983 by Henare Tuwhangai.

“In the main street of the frontier town Alexandra (Pirongia), Tawhiao, Manuhiri, and their followers laid down their guns at the feet of Mair. This was, said Tawhiao, the end of the war between them. In the oral traditions it is told how he placed on the stack of guns, as an offering, pigeons, kaka, tui, and kokako. The joyful fantail, however, he kept for himself, a bird of peace for the future days when war would again come to the world. For Tawhiao crossing the border in 1881 was his return home.”

Cf. “An illustrated History of New Zealand”. Judith Binney, Judith Bassett, Erik Olsen. Chapter 7, Judith Binney: “The Native Land Court and the Maori communities, 1865-1890”. Page 154. Allen and Urwin 1990. ISBN 0 04 614010 1.

Maybe the time of war that Tawhiao predicted could be the wars that will inevitably happen when the earth's resources are depleted so much that people once again have to fight to get what they need to survive?

Maui and the Tiwaiwaka

There are many versions amongst Iwi of the story of how Maui, one of the super heroes of Maori mythology, tried to overcome death by re-entering the womb of Hine-nui-te-po. Maui swore the birds that accompanied him to silence but the Tiwaiwaka couldn't stand the ridiculous sight and burst out into laughter. This awoke Hine-nui-te-po who slammed her legs together killing Maui.

As a result some people associate the Tiwaiwaka with death and ill fortune. But it does highlight the ridiculousness of mankind trying to conquer nature instead of living with it. To do so is to invite a similar fate to that experienced by Maui.

The thinking behind Tiwaiwaka

We need to find a way of living sustainably with Mother Earth, not just for us, but for everybody. We need to tell that story in a way, in time, that everybody will not just accept, but positively embrace and work to make happen. It can happen; it needs to happen.

It needs to happen to ensure that those who follow us will have a world to live in that will sustain them, and not just us but all the living creatures that are part of the family of life. At the moment that future looks very bleak.

We believe we can help make this happen. We can touch people, move people, give them hope. We can connect more and more people, and together we can effect real change.

Together we can be like the rain that comes at the end of a long drought. Just as the brown and burnt hills slowly begin to turn to green and

then burst into new life, so we want to bring hope to a dry and desperate world.

To do this we need to earn enough to be able to carry our message without the day to day stress of trying to make ends meet. We need to be able to find the resources not just to carry our message but to do so in a way that stops us from burning out.

Our energy comes from the whenua, the living growing earth with all its beauty, from the ngahere (forests), from the rivers and mountains, the special places where Papatūānuku still retains that gift of life that once flourished throughout all of Aotearoa.

We belong to the whenua. We need to be able to reconnect when we need to, so that we can keep bringing that message of hope.

We all walk that journey, at times on a knife edge, often too close to slipping and falling, too close to giving up in despair and defeat. If we give up now we will never find peace.

We need each other. Tiwaiwaka is about giving each other strength.

Where did it start?

We are rongoa practitioners, traditional healers. We work very closely with the whenua; that is where we draw our healing and our strength. To us, looking with healers' eyes, it seems that the whenua is losing the power to heal itself. The plants we look to for healing are becoming harder and harder to find, and we are seeing many other signs. It seems that the state of New Zealand's environment is even worse than the experts are telling us.

Aotearoa/New Zealand has a very dynamic landscape. It is a land of earthquakes and floods, volcanoes and fires, constantly changing and restoring itself. The landscape has an incredible power to heal itself. Each disaster that strikes leads to a new burst of life and new energy as the land begins again to restore the life that has been damaged or destroyed.

But that seems to be changing; the Earth is losing the power to heal itself. Slips and landslides remain bare years later, or covered in nothing but weeds; rivers and lakes no longer come clear after a storm; the coast never overcomes the pollution that is constantly seeping in; life once

so abundant and so diverse is fading; so many different signs that even the most unobservant are beginning to notice.

How can we be well when the whenua is unwell?

Ka ora te Whenua, ka ora te tangata.

The time has come to step back and begin again, this time using a different set of principles to guide us forward, principles that reflect the wisdom that people used to follow when the world was more in balance.

A lot of people are thinking this way. There is nothing new in these thoughts. But too often people who share the same positive thoughts do not hear each other clearly and end at odds with one another. This blunts their message and makes it easy to ignore.

Tiwaiwaka began as a way of bringing those people together, to work towards finding a way that makes our future seem more sure. These are the principles, the priorities, we must adhere to if, in the long term, our descendents are to survive.

I can hear the land crying ...

This is something that more and more people are saying, in many different ways. They are saying it spontaneously, people from lots of different places and walks of life, without reference to each other. When I first heard that crying I thought I was imagining it, maybe even coming a bit unstuck, and kept it to myself.

I've since found out that so many others have done the same; they've heard the crying and kept it to themselves in case those around them might think they were going a little mad. But too many people are saying the same for this to be ignored.

They feel, they see, they hear, in many different ways but all receiving the same message: they can hear the Earth, the Whenua, Papatūānuku, crying.

It was that experience that finally prompted me to write down the Principles of Tiwaiwaka.

The land is not just crying; it is calling us to action.

Part of the message of Tiwaiwaka is that we must learn again how to listen to the Whenua.



She talks to us in many ways, through the birds, the insects, the trees and plants, the waters, the wind.... Mostly we are too busy with our day to day lives to hear, let alone take notice. And all the time our future becomes less certain. The Whenua is losing the power to heal herself, to provide for us, her children, all of her children, not just the ones who are human.

It reminds me of what I was told many years ago in Whanganui by the kaumatua who I had hoped would teach me rongoa. “We don’t have to tell you anything; all you have to do is get to know the trees and plants and they will tell you everything you need to know.”

All the answers we need for our future are already to be found in the world around us, the living, growing, feeling Earth. All we have to do is to learn to listen, and listening to hear, and hearing to take action.

That’s what Tiwaiwaka is about.

The principles are about surviving

The extreme weather events that are becoming more frequent around the world are the Earth reacting to cleanse herself, to restore the balance she needs to survive, that life needs to survive. If need be she will flush away the world that we have created with our technology, the magnificent monuments of the civilisation that we have developed over many millennia, so that she may survive, along with the many living creatures, on land and sea, that draw life and give life to our planet.

The Earth does not want to destroy us. We are her children, just like all other creatures that share the gift of life. However, nor will she tolerate one species becoming so dominant that it threatens the very existence of life itself. If need be she will flush us away and begin again.

Tiwaiwaka is about learning to live with the Earth - Papatūānuku and her many children - in a way that will make that unnecessary and unlikely. It is about learning again to live as a family, connected and united so that all may thrive.

Sustainability is a lovely concept; lots of people talk about it. But is it a reality that could really happen?

Tiwaiwaka is a message of hope.

Tiwaiwaka is about sustainability, about making it happen.

Sustainability is a goal ... not just a dream!

Its guiding principles represent a different set of priorities to how the world operates today. The number one priority is not profit, but caring for the whenua. That's the only way to ensure long term sustainability. The Earth's resources are finite. They are already beginning to run out.

Lots of people have the vision but have to compromise because of the cold hard facts of surviving in the world we live in. That does lead to efforts to live more ethically, minimising impacts and caring for each other better, but still far short of being truly sustainable.

Tiwaiwaka aims to bring that vision within reach.

This also means that we must be prepared to do what is necessary to achieve that, a way of living that is in balance with the world we belong to. We must be prepared, willingly and positively, to give up many things that we have come to consider we are entitled to, because they have become luxuries we can no longer afford. They are putting our future in jeopardy.

Just as a diabetic must choose to make major changes to his or her lifestyle so that he can continue to live and enjoy life, so must we, as children of the Earth, make the changes and choices we need to make, to ensure that that we can continue to enjoy the gift of life, to survive. We do this for ourselves, and for all other species that share the gift of life.

Consumerism, the driving force of the world's economy, is in fact the sugar that fuels the sickness that is consuming the Earth!

Finding a way forward

More and more people are aware of the seriousness of the state of the environment, and want to help towards doing something about it. However there are some big obstacles in the way of doing something effective:

1. **The size of the problem.** Many feel overwhelmed. Many older people have a quiet hope that they will have faded away before things really get so bad that life itself is threatened. Younger people feel that things will get inevitably worse; no matter how hard they try, they are not going to stop the slide. There is a real sense of hopelessness.
2. **The biggest problem we face is** not climate change, not global warming, not sea level rise but **pollution: we are poisoning the world and destroying life.** Not only are we taking too much from what the Earth can provide, and wasting much of it, but we are covering both land and water with our rubbish.
3. **There are a lot of people working with real hope trying to address the issues** involved, and they are having a positive effect. **However efforts lack coordination,** and people who should be working together often end up opposing one another because they find it difficult or impossible to reconcile different ideas and ideals. They often end up nullifying the efforts being made. That situation provides excuses for those who don't want to acknowledge the situation, or at least, don't want to change their lifestyles to make the changes necessary to bring about the change that is needed.

The need for Kotahitanga - unity

Lots of people have wonderful ideas about how to address these issues; but how good are we at listening to other peoples' ideas? More often than not we are too focused on what we have to say that we are actually too busy in our minds to listen ... and get irritated when people interrupt us.

That's not going to help achieve kotahitanga – unity.

The key to Kotahitanga is listening, not talking!



Where Tiwaiwaka fits in

“We bring together our gifts and abilities, maturaanga (knowledge and wisdom), skills and experience, and networks throughout Aotearoa, many groups and individuals, all committed to realising this vision, each in our own way, regardless of culture, religion, beliefs, history, etc.”

The differences that divide us are luxuries we can no longer afford. The situation is too serious. People are different; they come from different backgrounds and histories, and have different ideas. But these can be seen as strengths rather than obstacles.

In fact they give us the range of ideas and skills to enable us to deal with the many-faceted reality of environmental decline.

The keys

Earth is the Mother.

This has been forgotten by most people.

Connection to the whenua.

Most people have lost connection; in fact most are oblivious to it. Many don't even know where their food comes from; they just presume that it will always be there.

The mauri is the web of connections that sustains life.

The integrity of the mauri and its web of connections has greater priority than the rights and needs of any individual or species.

The biggest problem is pollution: we are poisoning the world and destroying life.

Not only are we taking too much from what the Earth can provide - and wasting much of it - we are covering both land and water with our rubbish.

It is easy to use global warming, climate change, sea level rise, etc. as excuses to avoid talking about the way we are polluting the planet.

Who should take the lead?

In a very real sense, Māori are tuakana (senior) to all the peoples who have made Aotearoa home.

They were first here, they made their mistakes and have learnt from them. They came to Aotearoa because of overcrowding and poverty, and found a land of plenty. But the plenty gradually disappeared because they didn't remember to use what the land provided with care and respect. Once again they found that life was a struggle, and had to learn from the land how to live with it.

The matauranga (knowledge and understanding) they developed is the basis for the Tiwaiwaka principles.

It is those principles that gives us a way forward to the future.

What is a rangatira?

The role of a rangatira, if you look to the origin of the words, is somebody who weaves the people together, so that they can work together, in a united, a co-ordinated way, to achieve their common goal.

That's the sort of leadership that is needed today.

Rangatiratanga is not about power and authority; it's about humility and courage.

Humility enables us to see that, if we are to meet the challenges of our time, we need to work together.

Courage is what is needed to take the lead in bringing people together to achieve that.



Catching Wisdom!

We try to restrain Papatūānuku by confining her within the limits that our own minds impose.

We are so limited, so tiny, so recent in our walking of the whenua, too short in our life experiences to even begin to appreciate the depth and breadth of the gift of life that exists within the whenua.

Rather we must concentrate on listening and watching, using what words we can find to give expression to the glimmers of light that trickle through our limitations.

What we see we must share so that together we will come by the wisdom we need to start to heal the hurt that we have done to the whenua, to ensure that we can continue to survive.

We won't succeed by blaming and condemning others for the state of the environment. Rather we must encourage more and more people to walk the journey of listening and learning. Wisdom is not a personal gift. It is something that we grow by walking together, forgiving, encouraging, always seeking and listening, watching and taking note, and sharing the fruits of our journey.

The solutions we need come not from you or me, but from us, all of us. What we most need is the faith to believe it is so, not to close our minds to the possibilities of what we can achieve when we truly learn how to walk together.

Tiwaiwaka – he kupu whakamutunga

Tiwaiwaka is out of the cage.

She now flies freely. Where she flies to is beyond our control. We must fly with her. Now that she is free her message will become clearer and stronger. She is the voice for the whenua, Papatūānuku. We must add our voice to hers. Our role is to get many people, more and more people, to do so.

By setting her free we have stopped ourselves from becoming the controllers. It is not our message but hers; she is the voice of Papatūānuku.

“Care for me so that I can care for you my children. Ignore me, forget that I need to be well, need you to care for me, to help me to be well, and I will not be able to care for you much longer. Too long have you taken much and given little. Soon I will not have enough to give and you will struggle to survive. The struggle to get what you need will lead to a war more devastating than any that have gone before.

Now is the time to listen to my voice. It is urgent, listen, listen and take action. The six principles will guide you”.



Many people already have this message but their voices are not strong enough to be heard. The energy to keep growing the economy seems irresistible. It keeps taking more and more and giving little in return. It is an addiction that is beyond control.



The role of Tiwaiwaka is to unite the voices so that they become strong enough to be heard.

It is urgent.

Our children's lives are at stake!

7 May 2018

Afterword

I am often told that I am wise. That has always troubled me. Really I can only say “wise” things when I am trying to find words to explain to people things I am still trying to work out for myself.

But for the people and their questions those words would never happen. Wisdom is really the fruit of the interchange between people, people together finding understanding through being and searching together.

Robert McGowan
(Pa Ropata)

For more information or more copies, please contact:

email: pa.r.mcgowan@gmail.com

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We encourage you to share widely the principles and wisdom of Tiwaiwaka.

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