

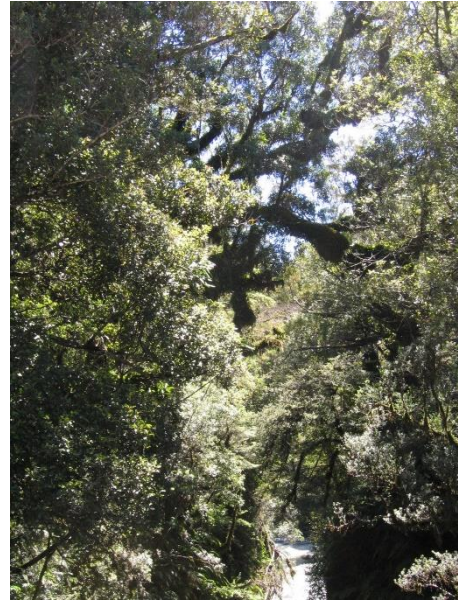
Reflections on the Nature of Communities

Reflections

Whenever I walk into a forest I receive a strong sense of community and an invitation to belong. So simple, so natural, and yet in our 'human' communities things get complicated and difficult so easily.

Looking to Nature as a teacher for our own nature here is an invitation to let go of apprehension, assumptions and pre-judgement and replace these with anticipation, curiosity and a celebration of simply being alive.

The gnarled old Rata tree doesn't allow concerns about its appearance interfere with being fully alive and present; it is fully engaged with its community of birds, insects, epiphytes and other trees.



The Kereru doesn't need to evaluate possibilities as it soars across the forests, displaying awe inspiring flight for such a heavy bird, and carrying seeds from one place to another to ensure continuance of species.

It is us humans that often want to know all the options before we engage, bench mark our physical ability against others before we embark on a shared walk and lose some of our adventurous spirit in the process. Creativity is often stifled in anticipated judgement by others and we miss out on joyful moments because of this. Just walk down your street and see how many people are courageous enough to paint their house in bright colours, and yet it is scientifically proven that bright colours bring a sense of joy. The Danish have known this for a long time as they paint their houses and fishing boats in bright blues, red, yellows to counter even the greyest days.

If we re-connect with our curiosity, open up to shift our perceptions and venture out into the natural world we can experience inspirational lessons every step of the way. Lessons we can bring back and apply to our own communities.

- Have you noticed that in a healthy forest, the largest trees don't reach much above the top of the canopy? And on those rare occasions they do, they often have broken tops, from their exposure to the elements without the support of their peers. What does that teach us about leadership in our human communities?
- Take some time to go into a mostly undisturbed ecosystem and spend some time in reflection and observation. How much diversity do you encounter and what does your mindset allow you to include in this diversity? Have you noted the rocks that hold the moss? The substrate of soil beneath the mushroom? Reflecting on the human communities you are part of – what levels of diversity do you encounter? How can you contribute to growing this diversity for healthier communities?
- A sapling in the forest is hit by a fallen branch and bent in half. It grows around the branch back up to the light and displays its full presence. It doesn't waste its energy on regret or anger, it simply grows, true to its genetic and environmental blueprint. How is our own growth journey in comparison to this sapling?





How can we allow our vision of life and communities to expand, to go beyond 'functioning' and aim for thriving communities?

What can we do, to bring in the richness of diversity, to see disruption as an opportunity and to let go of our own mental barriers that prevent growth.

I recommend a walk in nature, to fully allow ourselves to be present to flourishing communities and to bring the learning back to enrich our own lives as well as that of the many different communities that we participate in. I noticed that if imposed group rules or hierarchy interfere with the rich potential of a community, I can always grow around it, just like that sapling that was hit by a big branch. There is always room to show my "bright green being alive" as an inspiration to others.

May your nature open community pathways and enrich them wherever you walk.

Mehemea ka moemoea ahau, ko ahau anake. Mehemea ka moemoea tātou, ka taea e tātou.

If I dream alone, then I am limited by my own resources. If we dream together then we can all achieve together. **Princess Te Puea Herangi**



*Nga Mihi
With deep Respect
Maria*