



## RIMU: OUR ECOLOGICAL NICHE: TŪRANGA HAUROPI

In an ecosystem, every species has its own tūranga hauropi [ecological niche]: its unique place in the environment. We believe that all people, groups, communities and ecosystems have their own essence and distinctive potential. We are all part of a larger whole and have a special role within each system we occupy. So what is the ecological niche of the **Learning Environment**? What is our special role?

**Inā kei te mohio koe ko wai koe,  
 I anga mai koe i hea,  
 kei te mohio koe.  
 Kei te anga atu ki hea**

If you know who you are  
 and where you are from,  
 then you will know where  
 you are going

The **Learning Environment** is *kind of like* an education campus, a wellbeing retreat centre and a regenerative farm all in one - and much more. The **Learning Environment** offers opportunities to develop skills and experience in regenerative practice at the post-secondary level - including how to rejuvenate wellbeing, restore and steward land, and enable community resilience.

### IT'S KIND OF LIKE... A TERTIARY INSTITUTE



Images: isenz.com; twoa.ac.nz

Aotearoa New Zealand is fortunate to have a variety of Tertiary Institutes that offer funded programmes in a diversity of fields. Unfortunately, many of these programmes have some detrimental qualities such as student debt; stressful and uniform assessment practice; and separation from social and environmental landscapes. There are several Polytechnics and Wānanga that are making significant steps towards transforming education by valuing learner wellbeing and real-world skills. Examples include Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, Eastern Institute of Technology, and Otago Polytechnic.

The **Learning Environment** is *kind of like* these tertiary education providers. The difference is that we maintain an entirely different kind of campus and learning model. Sustainably constructed infrastructure is embedded in a regenerating landscape. Exemplar biological systems offer a fertile environment for learning about the ideas and skills that will be necessary for the future, but are currently inaccessible at most tertiary institutions. Rather than segregated disciplines of knowledge, different ways of knowing are interwoven throughout the Learning Environment: a playground for hands-on, multidisciplinary learning and teaching.

### IT'S KIND OF LIKE... A BUSH SCHOOL



Images: hikeitbaby.com; ibuku.com; newshub.co.nz

Bush Schools are education centres focused on early childhood, primary and secondary school level. These schools engage youth with the natural environment around them. There are a number of incredible education providers like these in Aotearoa New Zealand, including Forest School, Talking Tree Hill, EcoSchool, and Green School NZ. These schools are popular and making amazing changes to the way our youth are supported in their learning.

The **Learning Environment** is *kind of like* a Bush School. The difference is that we are opening up this kind of learning to a post-secondary school audience. There are very few education providers in Aotearoa New Zealand that offer this kind of learning environment to teenagers and adults.

### IT'S KIND OF LIKE... AN OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROVIDER



Images: hillaryoutdoors.co.nz; dofehillary.org.nz; duncan-nz.com

Aotearoa New Zealand is home to a number of remarkable Outdoor Education Providers. For example, Outward Bound, Spirit of Adventure, Whenua Iti and Hillary Outdoors offer personal and leadership development programmes in adventurous environments. These programmes push people beyond their comfort zone, expose them to the wilderness, build capacity, develop skills, and support collaborative learning. These examples have learning environments crafted to suit the needs of their programmes - including the sailing ship Spirit of Adventure, the Hillary Outdoor Pursuit Centre, and the wilderness camp at Anakiwa.

The **Learning Environment** is *kind of like* an Outdoor Education Provider. The difference is that our focus is multidisciplinary, and the campus will be both larger and tailored to include both wilderness elements and exemplar systems such as polycultural food production, rehabilitating native ecosystems, ecological buildings, and much more. The living campus of the **Learning Environment** will also be closer to an urban centre, so it will be more accessible while continuing to offer deep connection with ecological systems.

### IT'S KIND OF LIKE... A WELLBEING RETREAT



Images: manaretreat.com; temoata.org

Wellbeing Retreats are beautiful environments for rejuvenation, self-awareness, and programmes focused on mental and emotional wellbeing. Examples include Te Moata Retreat Centre, Mana Retreat, Aro Ha, Waihoanga Centre, and many more. The majority of these retreat centres are focused on human wellbeing, and are generally small facilities that can host one or two events at a time.

The **Learning Environment** is *kind of like* a wellbeing retreat. The difference is that our focus is the interconnection between internal wellbeing and external wellbeing. We learn how the patterns and health of our external landscapes can inform and affect us internally - and vice versa. The **Learning Environment** will be a hub for holistic wellbeing, with a multi-disciplinary team including psychologists, nutritionists, alternative body specialists and occupational therapists. With wellbeing at the core of every learning experience and surrounded by thriving ecological systems, people will feel nourished and cared for.

### IT'S KIND OF LIKE... A FARM



Images: koanga.org.nz; mangarara.co.nz; econnect.com

As the climate shifts, we are collectively recognising the need to change the way we produce food and consumable products. We honour the great efforts being made by our farming communities to adapt farming practices. There are a number of farming organisations leading the way in the field of Regenerative Agriculture, including Soil Connection, Quorum Sense, Permaculture in New Zealand, Permadynamics and the Koanga Institute.

The **Learning Environment** is *kind of like* a fully operational farm. The difference is that learning programmes are interwoven with daily farm life and will explore the relationships between land stewardship and the wellbeing of our communities. The farm will become a large-scale demonstration site that supports training in a diversity of future-oriented farming strategies.

### THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT TŪRANGA HAUROPI [ECOLOGICAL NICHE]



The **Learning Environment** builds on existing ideas that are supporting social and ecological change, and weaves them together to fill the gaps in the current education landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The **Learning Environment** is a holistic living campus for post-secondary education that empowers community-led development. With a core focus on wellbeing in collaborative learning settings, teenage and adult learners will gain meaningful skills for 'real world' situations that they can share with their communities.

### WHAT'S FEEDING US

Thanks to all of you who have sent in juicy bits and bobs! Here is some of what is feeding this community:

Better Work Together <b>Enspirai Foundation</b>	Robin Wall Kimmerer on Indigenous Knowledge <b>For the Wild</b>	NZ Wars: Stories of Waitara <b>RNZ</b>	Non-Māori for ending colonisation <b>Tuiwi mō Matike Mai Aotearoa</b>

### WHAT'S FEEDING YOU?

What are you reading, listening to, watching, and doing that's relevant to this kaupapa? We can help spread information through the network to provide nutrients for this community.

Reply to this email with relevant information and links.

### EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

We would love to hear from people who are keen to engage with the Learning Environment. At this stage we're particularly interested in hearing about opportunities for financial support, and expertise in developing businesses and organisations.

### GRATITUDE

For their advice and support of our most recent funding-oriented documents.

**Julia McPhee, Steve Henry, Karen Brook, Lucas Kengmana, James Ryan, and Richard Hursthouse**

#### Arohanui

The Kaitiaki of the Socio-Ecological Learning Environment



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