



TORU: SOIL

In the last issue of Mycelium Mail we explored the cultural DNA of the Learning Centre - the parameters that guide the growth of an organism. In this issue we explore the **vision** of the Learning Centre, which we see as the Soil, as the web of meaning from which everything grows.

**Ma te rongo, ka mohio;
Ma te mohio, ka marama;
Ma te marama, ko matau;
Ma te matau, ka ora**

From listening comes awareness;
From awareness comes understanding;
From understanding comes knowledge;
From knowledge comes life and wellbeing

The Learning Centre refers to three statements to articulate it's vision:

**Weaving ways of knowing
Exploring the relationships in between
Nourishing shared futures**

For us, this vision connects deeply to the opening whakatauki [proverb]; from **listening** to diverse ways of knowing we become more **aware** of inner worlds and outer worlds. When we **understand** the relationship between these systems we deepen our **knowledge** around nourishing life and well-being.

We seek to explore this further by providing examples from a learning experience we prototyped earlier this year, in collaboration with Earthcare Education Aotearoa. This course, **Empowered Activism Training**, was a week-long embodied experience, seeking to reframe activism as an essential, positive contributor to the transformation of social and ecological systems. Our intention is to tell the story of that experience more fully in a later newsletter, for now **drawing on examples to support our vision statements**.

WEAVING WAYS OF KNOWING



Breathing as one at Empowered Activism 2019

Whakarongo, whakarongo, whakarongo ki te tangi o te manu e karanga nei; tui, tui, tui, tuia
Listen to the cry of the birds calling for unity

Every person sees the world through a lens informed by their **unique cultural stories and values**. The majority of our systems in Aotearoa-NZ are dominated by one way of knowing that neglects the role we as humans play within wider systems. These systems privilege ways of behaving and thinking that can marginalise and disempower others.

We seek to move away from these dominant patterns by weaving different ways of knowing throughout Learning Experiences. During Empowered Activism Training we did this by weaving **different learning styles in different learning spaces**, acknowledging different paces and interests. For example, in one session we would be in the outdoor classroom working as individuals expressing our life story through art, in another session we would be on the beach working in teams to play a game about patterns then reflecting collectively on the best way to leverage pressure points in systems.



Expression through clay, music and dance at Empowered Activism 2019

Wisdom was integrated throughout focus areas, embedded in different ways through a range of activities. For example, instead of having one session on the topic of 'culture forming' we wove cultural check-ins throughout different sessions and in different ways: explicit brainstorming and sharing sessions; indicating how we're feeling using hand signals and movement; leading by example; and reflecting on our own behaviour. We started to unpack conditioned habits and dominant behaviours (e.g. competition over cooperation, taking up space), cultivating space for **cross-cultural sharing**.

Our deepest wisdom may only emerge when we honour and respect different ways of knowing and the cultures they emerge from. If we **weave our unique perspectives in unity**, we can all flourish and inform our collective evolution.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIPS IN-BETWEEN

He kopu puta tahi, he taura whiri tatou, whiringa a nuku, whiringa a rangi, te whatia e
From one womb, we are a plaited rope, plaited on earth, plaited in the heavens, we will not be severed

When we observe the relationships that exist between all elements of life, we start to see what indigenous wisdom and holistic sciences have been indicating for eons: that **everything is interconnected**. We see how personal decisions, patterns of behaviour, and social norms affect social inequity or ecological decline - how **our inner worlds affect our outer worlds**.

Throughout the week of Empowered Activism we played with movement games, scenarios and language awareness exercises which **explore relationships and systems**. We drew on the work of "Theatre of the Oppressed", with exercises like 'Colombian Hypnosis' where people are connected hand to face, hypnotised by their partners hand. When a large group is all connected in this way, a small move from one person can cause a chain of unexpected reactions throughout the wider group.



'Colombian Hypnosis' at Empowered Activism, facilitated by Jen Hyde and Andy Dolling

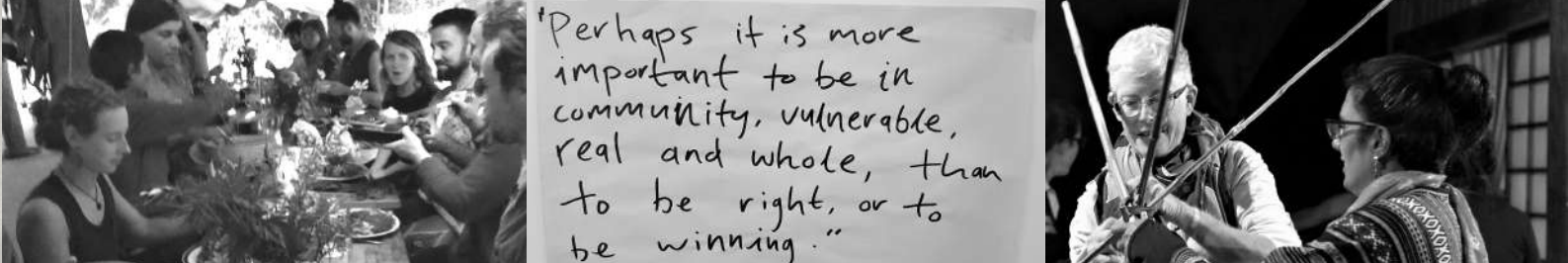
Reflections on this exercise reveal deep insights into the interconnectedness of systems, power dynamics, perspective and ripple effects. For example, when we focus too intently on following the hand in front of us, we ignore the person following our hand - resulting in someone on the margin left struggling and unsupported. We can then take the patterns from these learnings and start to reflect on **how our actions affect wider systems** and the small changes we can make to support a future where both people and planet thrive.

NOURISHING SHARED FUTURES

He waka eke noa
We're all in the same waka

In response to social and ecological challenges, we seek to **nourish a thriving future** which cherishes human and planetary wellbeing.

This means letting go of what we think the best outcome is and being open to a genuine shared future where everyone feels empowered to participate authentically. When we pursue a future based on our individual views of what we think is best, without acknowledging others, we can end up controlling outcomes, reproducing existing unhealthy patterns. In providing space for people to express themselves while connecting and interacting, what emerges is something **new and contextually appropriate**.



Co-created celebration - lavish feast and decoration collaboration

On the last night of Empowered Activism the group co-created a celebration. The week was designed to **guide people into uncharted territory together**; transitioning from intensely planned sessions to open un-planned sessions. As facilitators we had been stepping further back, encouraging participants to take responsibility for their own learning, and pushing ourselves to engage authentically as learners. During the planning phase the group had to let go to any expectations of what we individually wanted to happen and work together to see what would unfold. We waded through uncertainty, complexity and clashing forces and what emerged was a **beautiful, creative burst of abundance**; a musical opening ceremony; a lavish banquet feast; an evening of performances, stories and laughter; and a community of support and nourishment.

As a species, it is time to put aside our conflicts, honour our differences, and **come together in cooperation** to create our shared future.

WHAT'S FEEDING US

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



Games for Actors and Non-Actors
Augusto Boal



Becoming Wise
On Being



Meet the microcosmos
Journey to the Microcosmos



Tuia 250 Voyage

WHAT'S FEEDING YOU?

What are you reading, listening to, watching, and doing that's relevant to our 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 support this kaupapa. Right now we're particularly interested in hearing from people about potential land for the Centre, opportunities for financial support, expertise in developing businesses and organisations, website development, and administration support.

GRATITUDE

We would like to express deep gratitude for all those involved in Empowered Activism training, the participants and facilitators. In particular:

Jen Hyde and Andy Dolling
Wiremu Grace
Robina McCurdy
Earthcare Education Aotearoa

Arohanui
Activation Group
ecosystem.learning@gmail.com