



ONO: GERMINATE: TINAKU

Kia ora e te whānau! Welcome to the Pākehā New Year - we hope the start of 2020 has been as smooth and abundant for you as it has been for us.

We give thanks for all the love and support that has been flowing in for this initiative throughout 2019. In turn, we direct our best wishes and support to all those who are struggling in this new decade already - from the drought-plagued farmers of Northland, to those losing their homes in Australia, and the millions of insects, birds and mammals that have lost their lives in fires. Powerful reminders that the climate crisis is affecting life all over the globe already.

He kai kei aku ringa

There is food at the end of my hands

In this issue of Mycelium Mail, we'd like to share our story of finding whenua (land) that may nurture the growth of this Learning Environment.

IN SEARCH OF WHENUA



During 2019, the Learning Environment crew was exploring Te Ika a Maui (the North Island), in search of whenua (land) and hapori (community) that would feed and be fed by the Socio-Ecological Learning Environment.

We narrowed down the possible regions to: the Bay of Plenty, Coromandel, Northland and the coast between Wellington and Whanganui. This has been informed by the following land criteria:

- Supportive mana whenua
- Part of a nurturing, cohesive community
- Within a large population catchment
- A responsive Local Government
- Climate resilient, or a strong community intention to develop climate resilience
- Easily accessible - within 1hrs drive of an urban centre with transport hubs
- Upwards of 40 hectares
- Northern aspect and ample sun access
- Fresh, accessible water source
- Healthy soil
- Capacity to grow subtropical species
- Ample space for agriculture and horticulture
- Ample space for buildings and event site
- Bordering native bush



While sowing this seed in an abundant paradise would be nice, we are specifically searching for an area of land that needs healing so we can demonstrate the process of regenerating land to its full potential - learning alongside it as forests, waterways, soil and biological life is restored.

After exploring many areas, in April 2019 we were approached at the Annual Permaculture Hui in Aparima/Riverton by a beautiful man almost overcome by the potential he saw in this initiative. He and his partner in love and life are holding a similar vision and they strongly encouraged us to come and visit the land they steward to explore this potential together.

Six months and a few visits later, we were offered the rare opportunity to steward this land over the summer months while the kaitiaki were away. And so, for the last three months, Sam and Dave have been living in close relationship with this land and surrounding community, and we have all been spending time there, exploring the viability of the region and developing relationships with local iwi, government and community groups.

A STORY OF SAM'S NEW FOUND RESILIENCE

When the opportunity arose to spend my summer living on a 90 hectare farm, I knew it was the right decision to make. I was to spend the first month living alone in an unfamiliar region, before being joined by Dave, and I had never lived rurally before. As a Clinical Psychologist, most of my experience has been with the ecosystem of the mind and heart, rather than the biological ecosystems around me.

On my first day alone I walked around the farm soaking in sights, turning on irrigation systems, feeding plants, and scything thistles. All was going well, but a few days later I turned on the tap and no water came out...

I took a few deep breaths and set off to explore the kilometre of pipe running up to a spring on the other side of the property. I managed to work out where in the system the problem was and I got the water back on. I felt immensely proud of myself because instead of asking for help, I had trusted in my own abilities. A newfound sense of resilience took seed and I began to take the day to day challenges of farm life in my stride.

My next challenge arrived when the farm hand invited me to go hunting with him. I'll never forget the first rabbit I shot and how clumsily I took it's life. As I watched the life fade from it eyes, I knew I needed to do it better. The next time I was much quicker to act and it felt better. I learned how to skin, butcher, and cook rabbit. It was surprisingly delicious. On top of that, I began to see an instant result in the vege garden - the carrot seedlings the rabbits had been eating began to thrive. I felt a profound connection to my food that I had never experienced before.

I consider myself a relatively mentally resilient person, but more and more I'm developing a newfound sense of food resilience. The land feels like an extension of me, its ebbs and flows are akin to breathing, and I can find everything I need right here.



LAND, WATER, & KAI

Whether things work out with this whenua, our time here has been an honour and privilege. As we work the land on a daily basis, tend crops and orchards, herd sheep, hunt, and maintain infrastructure, we are developing a deep relationship with this place.

As the whole Learning Environment crew spends time here, and as we invite friends and family to join us, we are again witnesses to the grounding transformation that can take place in a short space of time when people begin to commune with land, water and kai. As people sink into the methodical, seasonal work of farming, there is both a spoken learning - as we share skills and knowledge - and an unspoken, tacit learning happening at all times.

The land shares its abundant gift. When we eat food that has been sourced entirely from this land, we are offered ancient knowledge that reminds people where they have come from and where they may be going.

This may be the place we sow this seed. Even if it's not, being here makes it easier to imagine the kind of Learning Environment that will grow with land and community, and the impact that it will have on all who interact with it.



GRATITUDE

We offer our deepest gratitude to Murray and Lindy for enabling this opportunity, and for so joyfully supporting the Socio-Ecological Learning Environment.

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:



Overstory
Richard Powers

Forest 404
BBC Radio

Kaupapa Māori
Ecovillage Hui
Eco Māori

Annual
Permaculture Hui
Permaculture in NZ

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. If you are particularly interested in funding the initial purchase of land, then please get in touch. Now is the time.