

2.0 A MĀORI PERSPECTIVE ON SUSTAINABILITY

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**THE OUTLOOK  
FOR SOMEDAY**

The Sustainability Film Challenge for Young People

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# Introduction Kupu Whakataki

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## BEGINNING FROM NOTHING

For Māori everything is connected. People, plants, air, birds, water, fish, animals and land all have a special life-force of their own, interwoven together like one huge flax mat.

In the beginning there was no sky, no sea and no earth. There was only darkness and nothing much else. Then from nothing came Earth Mother, her name Papatūānuku, and Ranginui, Sky Father.

They lovingly embraced, producing many children born into darkness. Because Papa and Rangi were so special, all their children were born with important responsibilities to steward different parts of the environment, the world as we know it today.

Papa and Rangi were very much in love, holding on tight to one another for a very long time. Until one day their children, who had grown tired of living in a world of nothingness and darkness, decided they needed light to grow and develop themselves away from their parents' embrace.

The children came together to work out what they should do.

Tūmatauenga, who had a fierce warrior heart, wanted Rangi and Papa gone. But Tānemāhuta, the guardian of humankind and the forests, thought Rangi and Papa could be separated yet still have the whole family remain together. Tāne thought long and hard and came up with the idea that Ranginui could go up above to create the sky and Papatūānuku could go below to form the earth. After many

discussions the children finally agreed with their brother Tānemāhuta to separate their parents.

One by one the children tried to part their parents. Rongomātāne, the watcher of cultivated foods, tried with no success. Haumia Tiketike, the steward of uncultivated food, tried – but no luck. Then it was the turn of Tangaroa, the keeper of the sea, but even he couldn't part them. For all their efforts the children could not prize their parents apart.

After some consideration Tānemāhuta came up with another solution. Making himself strong and tall like a mighty kauri tree, he placed his shoulders against his mother and his feet against his father. He pushed and pushed. Finally Rangi and Papa started to move in opposite directions, crying with sadness as they let go of one another.

Tāne kept pushing and heaving with all his strength until Rangi became the sky above and Papa the earth below. The children felt the warmth of the first day, filled with hope of the times ahead. And one brother, Tāwhirimātea, chose to join Ranginui in the sky making air currents, wind and storms.

Now that Mother Earth and Sky Father were in place, Tāne got thinking again and decided the world needed people to enjoy the beauty of the earth he helped make. So he took some clay, cleverly moulded it into the shape of a woman and breathed life into her. The earth maiden, Hine Ahu One, came to life. And so the human race was born.

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# Māori Concepts

Kaupapa Māori

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MĀORI PRINCIPLES  
CAN HELP US DEEPEN  
OUR APPRECIATION OF  
THE ENVIRONMENT,  
SOUND SOCIAL  
STRUCTURES AND A  
CONNECTIVE VIEW  
OF SUSTAINABILITY.

The Māori creation myth reminds us in the modern world to tread lightly on the earth. She is our mother, deserving of preservation and our utmost respect and care. Ranginui is the shield through which we receive light, the sun and energy for all living things. Their children are still very much a part of our existence: the forests, oceans, air and the food we eat. They are still strongly connected to each other and to their parents.

This is the family of life going all the way back to the beginning of nothingness.

Here are some Māori perspectives to keep in the foreground as you work through your film project.

## MAURI

### CORE ESSENCE AND LIFE FORCE

Māori regard all natural resources and the environment as one and the same thing. This involves unique spiritual concepts, the most important of which is mauri: the idea that all of life has its own life-force. In Māori thought all things are believed to have mauri, kindled all the way back at the beginning of time. Natural resources are classified according to the state of their mauri. All mauri comes from atua, custodians, who provide all things with mauri.

The key to the Māori world view towards environmental issues is the importance of not altering mauri to the extent that it is no longer recognisable.

## WHĀNAUNGATANGA

### PARTICIPATION AND MEMBERSHIP

In the Māori world land was not viewed as something that could be owned or traded. Māori did not seek to own or possess anything, but to belong. Māori belonged to a family, who belonged to an extended family, who belonged to a larger tribe. One did not own land. One belonged to the land.

With this in focus, land is considered the source of identity for Māori. Being directly descended from Papatūānuku and Ranginui, Māori see themselves as not only **of** the land, but also **as** the land.

## WHAKAPAPA

### RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS

Whakapapa, or lineage, connects Māori to every aspect of the universe and each other. The first-born of Papatūānuku and Ranginui was Tānemāhuta, the keeper of the forest domain and humankind. The succession of life started with plants, followed by birds, then by fish, insects and then animals. The last-born were humans.

Identification and connectedness of people to people, and people to place, was traditionally maintained through marriage, occupation and the use of traditional resources. Marriage preserved and sealed social alliances and connections between families and tribes. These relationships played an important role in times of conflict as well as securing access to, use of and rights to specialised resources.

## MĀTAURANGA

### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

The role of history, genealogy, mythology and cultural traditions plays an important part in shaping Māori attitudes towards environmental management.

Māori culture is based on strong oral traditions, accounts, and descriptions. Māori perceive and treat knowledge differently to western concepts of knowledge. Knowledge and understanding are keys to building a local community identity. This identity is based on local history. It promotes the underlying cultural heritage values that relate to particular areas and significant resources.

## KAITIAKITANGA

### CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION

Kaitiakitanga is a valuable cultural sustainable management mechanism. Conserving and protecting the natural environment promotes community awareness of inherent values within the environment.

The use of natural resources was traditionally governed and regulated through cultural lore and traditions. Important natural resources were identified and protected as taonga – gifts or treasure – for current and future generations.