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TOWARDS SACRED SOCIETY

The Life of Tui Community, Aotearoa/New Zealand

by Robena McCurdy

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INTRODUCTION

In this article I share from my own perspective about the character and qualities of Tui, and the forms we as a group use to deal with conflict: 'preventive' in the way of social design, and 'emergency' in the way of crises management strategies. The strongest emphasis is on preventive measures. By sharing my experience, I hope to help minimise certain negative aspects of community development by other intentional community villages. It also offers inspiration and guidance, hopefully giving new projects the confidence to begin, and flagging communities the encouragement to change and move forward. Were other members of Tui to write on the theme of this chapter, each would come up with their own quite different expression of it. The uniqueness of each individual enriches our community. In my observation a group follows the same life stages as a living being:

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| <i>Conception</i> | ideals, ideas, spiritual impulse; |
| <i>Pregnancy</i> | nurturing the vision; |
| <i>Birth</i> | launching into unknown territory, and the need for commitment via material means to sustain the newly born (e.g. money, labour, goods); |

<i>Walking</i>	venturing forth, putting down roots, physical expression;
<i>Childhood</i>	unfoldment of original seed, modified by environmental influences;
<i>Teenage years</i>	exploration, testing models, challenging structure, rebellion against established forms;
<i>Adulthood</i>	re-evaluation, refinement, full responsibility, managing the initiative you have undertaken.

Adulthood has several maturing stages. I do not know how many years each stage takes. Although a cat, a dog or an elephant have similar stages of development, they all have different timing to reach maturity. In my observation, Tui has after 11 years, reached a stage of adulthood. We have stumbled our way through these stages, and learned so much along the way about how to live with each other with caring, honour, honesty and respect. Often our learning was painful, taking us down to granite bedrock and through molten fire. The outcome of our commitment to 'stay with the process' has meant that Tui has evolved into a healthy community organism respecting individual freedom; to nurturing relationships, maximising co-operation and minimising conflict.

ORIGINS

Tui Community is situated in Wainui Bay, adjacent to Abel Tasman National Park, in Golden Bay, Nelson Province, Aotearoa/New Zealand. This coastal land totals 150 acres, with a mix of rolling hills and flat arable land; clear, year-round streams of drinking water quality; and a valley of regenerating native forest. In 1996, Tui consisted of 22 adults and 18 children, from 6 nationalities. Tui arose out of an holistic gathering in Nelson province in 1984, when a few of the 300 people present committed to continue the spirit of the gathering by forming an intentional community. A year from conception, and after three major meetings, several people rented a large farmhouse and moved house-trucks, housebuses and caravans onto the surrounding land. There we lived for a 'trial time' together, discussing community ideals, experimenting with financial systems, co-operative business ventures and collective childcare.

'Tui Land Trust', our legal entity, was formed during this phase. We used a specific participatory process to create and consolidate the aims and management method, which constitutes our legal commitment. Tui Land Trust is legally classified as a charitable trust for the broad purposes of landcare, holistic education and healing. The land is held in perpetuity for the purposes stated in the Trust deed, for future generations. There are no shares that can be bought and sold, and no individual land titles. This system of legal ownership and governance has saved us many times from the kinds of conflict we have seen arise in other communities which have a co-operative or a company legal entity. Such things as the fierce debating of the price of shares for new members, or having to quickly raise money at a high interest rate to

pay out a member, can jeopardise the survival of a community. 'Unit Title', at the other end of the ownership scale, does not encounter this problem.

After nine months, when we felt ready to purchase land together and build a permanent community, we went through a visioning and commitment process, making written pledges of how much money each of us would personally contribute towards land purchase, and defining our requirements for quality and characteristics of land by drawing up a group mandala of essential and preferred features. We then wrote up our requirements, together with potential available purchase amount, and 'cast the net' for land within the Tasman Bays area. Three months later we had purchased land which met our criteria, and moved our mobile accommodations on.

SETTLEMENT AND LAND

Soon afterwards we drew up a broad zoning of the land for house sites, waterlines, waste disposal, food gardens and forest preserve, and submitted a 'Specified Landuse Departure' planning application to the local council for multiple dwelling status, within our District Scheme. During this time we launched a deliberate public relations campaign with local residents and business people to make ourselves known and visible, with the intention of countering any unsubstantiated resistance and alleviating phantom fears. Our first practical steps were to begin a large communal vegetable garden and to establish a kindergarten for our young children.

At this stage there was a lack of support from within the community for a holistic and integrated design of the land. Had we attempted a collective permaculture design, using participatory methodology, the very different underlying values held by members of our group with regard to land use, would have become glaringly obvious. Instead they surfaced in emotionally clouded ways through tasks and issues as they arose through time. We were in the roles of guardians and developers of this remarkable property, and we discovered that we had fundamentally different approaches to land management.

This varied from 'let the land take care of itself', from those whose motive was to live less stressfully in a beautiful natural environment, to 'let's plan a long term land management strategy', from those who were committed to actively manage the land for the purposes of food and timber self sufficiency. These issues had not arisen before we actually moved on to the land. The outcome of this division was a strong tendency towards an anarchistic style of land management, typified by someone planting trees in places that would in the long term block sunlight from future house sites, and other people transplanting them; some people pulling out wildling pine seedlings because they were viewed as a weed encroaching on native forest, and some people banding together as a 'save the pine tree' group.

My perception is that at the core of the value conflict was 'my value system is right and yours is wrong'. The 'land managers' were considered synonymous with land developers = land rapers. The 'conservationists purists' were considered as unrealistic dreamers, who could hold their 'leave nature

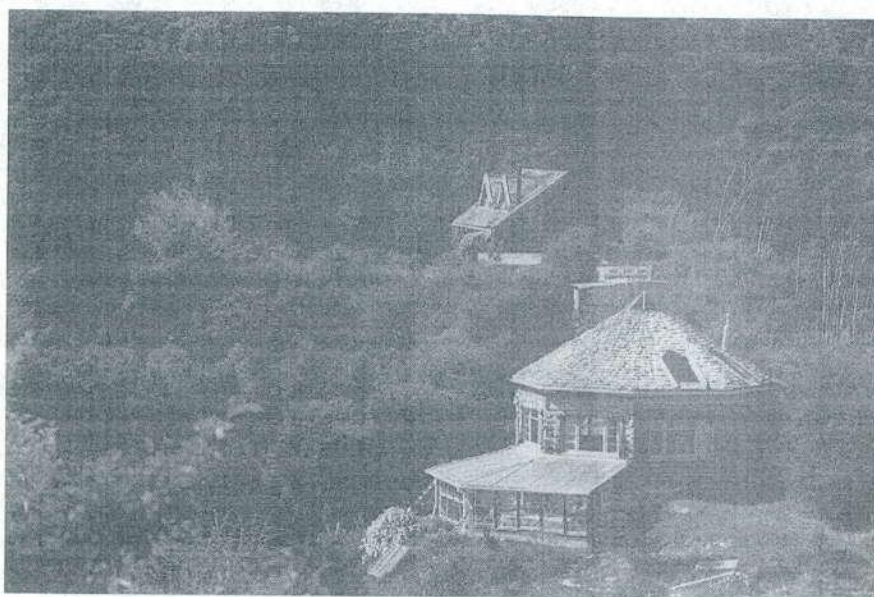
unto itself' philosophy because they had the privilege of shopping at the supermarket and purchasing building timber from the timber merchants. This was in the early days, when we had little experience with conflict resolution and we were struggling to find our way together. Yet we sensed that unless we got down to the 'root', we could not manage to carry on living together. You could feel the fear. A few of us had experienced a form of open, honest and reflective group communication used by the Maori (indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand) called *whaikorero*, which makes it possible for people with even vehemently opposing points of view to hear and accept each other to love and forgive. We decided to adapt this sacred protocol to our emerging Tui culture, and the 'Tuki' (outlined further on) was born.

We held a 'Tuki' around the issue of land use and relationship with the land, and soon got down to the deep, underlying emotional issues. One of the issues I strongly remember coming up was the feeling of guilt and responsibility some carried from their colonial forefathers who basically stole land, branded it 'my property', then exploited and raped it. This, together with the contemporary image of the typical subdivision land developer who scapes off flora and fauna, then reshapes natural terrain into characterless soulless landscape, all for the goal of money. People expressed abhorrence to these attitudes to the land, and their current caretaking responsibility to do it right, to play a tiny part in redressing the balance, weighed heavily. Models were few and far between, and it was inevitable that we would become a model ourselves.

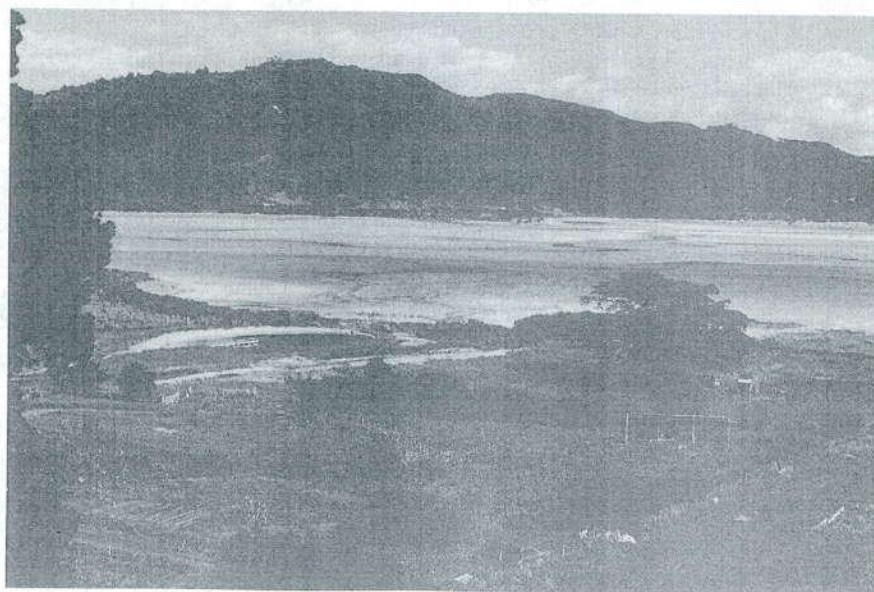
I share this detail as a caution not to judge too harshly nor to react too fast – to take the care and time to discover what underlies people's attitudes. What I have described is the kind of typical polarisation that a group of people, particularly from very diverse backgrounds might strike. It is wise to address attitudes to land use before purchasing land together. Although most of us have now spent eleven years on the land, to a much lesser degree, this difference still lives with us at Tui today. We came from predominantly city backgrounds, and many of our members were relatively new settlers from other countries. Consequently, our collective experience in farming, and particularly within the ecological conditions of this country, was very limited.

We managed to work within the initial zonings we planned for our council application, and adapted as we learned more about microclimates and other environmental behaviour patterns. We have made mistakes aplenty, and learned a lot through time, from living and working closely with the land. We are now reasonably attuned. Commonly managed land is now the responsibility of the 'land group' to administer.

This group is composed of people who are actively engaged in specific areas of land management – such as shelter belts, woodlot, nursery, stream and sea wall maintenance, roads and tracks, lease arrangements and farm machinery. They are autonomous, but guided by community policy, and require community consensus for major developments. Individual households are responsible for designing and implementing of the 'caretaking areas' around their own homes.



Two of the owner-built energy efficient houses at Tui.



View of Tui's vegetable garden.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Currently there are 16 permanent owner-designed-and-built dwellings and 2 mobile homes. Other major structures on the land are: a multipurpose community house, a craft workshop, barn, tool and implement sheds, two visitors' accommodations, a small counselling retreat and massage hut, and a community cultural/spiritual/education centre.

Energy sources are a combination of mains electricity, primarily for communal buildings and heavy machinery, and some solar energy for lighting, water heating and light appliances. The Tui Stream is our source for domestic water supply and gardens irrigation. Sewerage is taken care of via a centralised settling pond with wind, sun and micro-organisms as catalysts to break down the sludge. The liquid nutrient is sprayed onto a coppicing woodlot in a nearby field. It functions well, though some would prefer composting toilets, complemented with a reedbed greywater system, but too little was known or officially documented about these systems at the time of our sewerage application, and so they were not acceptable to our council health inspectors.

SOME PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE KEYS

I uphold that for a community to become close socially, it is essential to have a reasonably central community house and a real plus to have communal washing facilities. In the Western world, if you want to retain individuality, I would caution against living in a communal housing setup – even sleepouts with shared facilities such as kitchen and washroom, are likely to engage people in a lot of group process.

Another area of caution, from our experience at Tui, is communal ownership of tools and machinery. People have such different standards of use and maintenance, and different attitudes and knowledge about machinery. A co-ordinator who sets and monitors the standards is essential if you are going to do this. A special caution is chainsaws and vehicles. These are best to be personally owned, unless they are consistently checked and maintained by an experienced person, and the users have to pass a test to show that they are competent.

SOCIAL ORGANISATION

Tui has a steady stream of visitors, coming to experience community life for a short period of time. Most people are primarily interested in the social aspects of community living.

Of all the questions asked, by far the most common are around issues of human relationships within a close living context. As a reflection of 'Western' society today, people are most concerned about individual versus communal – rights, freedoms and responsibilities, and communication, conflict resolution, decision-making and leadership. Behind these concerns is the fear of losing ones individuality within the group, coupled with the realisation that group interaction and involvement is important for personal wellbeing.

These issues are at the forefront of our lives at Tui. We have worked continually on them over the years, both philosophically, and in experimenting with appropriate structures and guidelines to facilitate quality relating. I believe this area of endeavour to be Tui's greatest strength. The Tui Community Mission Statement, written in 1991, captures the essence of why we choose to live in community, "As a community living together, we are seeking wholeness through fulfilling relationships with ourselves, others and our planet."

MEMBERSHIP

In order to assume full rights and responsibilities for living at Tui, one needs to become a member of the Tui Land Trust, requiring a trial period as a resident in the Tui Community. Membership follows the following steps: short term visitor (up to 1 month); long term visitor (6 months); prospective member (up to 18 months); full member (after official election, for the duration of living on the land). Each applicant requires individual consideration. The procedure is common for all, but the conditions are flexible in order to meet individual needs. When a person applies to become a prospective member, they choose a 'facilitator', who guides them through the more formal aspects of living at Tui, whilst providing personal support where needed.

The staged membership process provides a way whereby members and non members have time to find out if living together works for them. Non members have the opportunity to discover if the culture, customs and philosophy of Tui are sufficiently aligned with their own, in order to invest their future with that group of people. Tui has specific requirements for moving through the various stages towards membership.

LEADERSHIP

Tui's leadership is non hierarchical, and there is no specific leader, neither political nor spiritual. Overall there is a respect for each other's skills and personal qualities, as we entrust each other with guiding the group in particular arenas of decision-making and action plans. As we encourage development of the whole person and mobility of roles, each person takes a turn at meeting facilitation, and people are encouraged to change roles of responsibility at least once a year. There is an overlap period for training of skills and learning of systems, as one person phases out and another phases in.

In recent years the role of the Trust Chairperson has expanded to include keeping an overview of the community wellbeing and Trust affairs on a regular basis, and bringing attention to any areas which are neglected, not respected, nor followed up. This has been an important development. It has noticeably improved Tui's functioning and inter-relationships and generally the community runs more smoothly.

For those of us being raised in the 'Western World', our conditioning towards fending for ourselves as individuals has been so strong, that it needs vigilance to counter that conditioning if one chooses a co-operative lifestyle. Unless it is implanted through upbringing, the pull to be separate and

competitive can be so persuasive and unconscious, that it can destroy even the most well-intentioned of communities. I have seen many communities who began as idealistic co-operatives, gradually 'degenerate' into subdivision style nuclear households, where it has become difficult to live as neighbours because of unresolved differences causing bitterness.

LABOUR

In the early days there was more informal labour pooling for communal tasks. We were at an excited, idealist, pioneering stage, and the economic support system gave many of us the time to put our energies into building up Tui. We were living in temporary accommodations, and the children were still very young. Input was based on trust and collective dedication of 'the pioneers', with individual choice as to how much time you put in. The style was fairly anarchistic. In the longer term, this approach led to a wide difference in labour input. This became a contentious community issue, which gave rise to a 'Tuki' on the theme of labour input and community organisation.

As a result of this, we established a fairly efficiently organised system of specific roles and tasks needed to keep the place running smoothly, with teams or individuals for all areas of community and land maintenance. Now each person gives a similar amount of time input per week, a minimum of one day.

Each area has a job description put together by those workers and endorsed by the community. Jobs are: land maintenance, machinery maintenance, orchard, vegetable garden, food/kitchen/shop, services (water, power etc.), visitor co-ordinator, house co-ordinator/maintenance, other community buildings, administration (finance, secretarial), Tui T'mala building, sewerage pond and spray-field woodlot area. All teams are empowered by the rest of the community to make decisions, act, and run their finances as they see fit in the interests of us all. Freedom with responsibility and accountability is the keynote.

Development projects are done by everyone, working-bee style, under a co-ordinator. Additionally, we each take our turn at cooking the daily community meal, via a cooking roster, (one's turn comes around about one every three weeks). Each person has a specific house-cleaning job, which rotates every few months.

With our individual and group income earning activities, housebuilding or maintaining of caretaking area, plus family and personal interests, this is about all we can manage to give voluntarily to the community.

FINANCES

I believe that the greatest test of a community's spiritual alignment is how they deal with the financial realm. In my experiences of community work and life, this is where the most energy gets stuck, and the atmosphere in which a discussion takes place can easily become 'leaden'.

Already Tui had come far along the track to consensus around financial matters by deciding to purchase land under a Trust rather than Company

structure, and declaring that the amount a person pledged to the Trust for land purchase be voluntary. This later changed to a guideline amount and proportion of an incoming members assets. Individual circumstances are taken into account when the incoming member meets with the finance group to discuss their contribution.

On a daily level, income earning is an individual's responsibility. Each month we all contribute a small amount to community and land management overheads and development, as well as for bulk food such as grains, which we do not grow on the land. Members earn their income in a diversity of ways, including outside wage-working, small businesses, government benefits, consultancies and products.

Our only business co-operative is 'The Tui Bee Balme Co-operative', a very successful community business which makes natural skin care and healing products, sold by mail order and direct marketing throughout the country. By lifestyle choice, most Tui people devote only half of the week to income earning. This allows time for family, community work and other pursuits. This is made possible by Tui members having lower financial overheads than individual property owners, primarily because the cost of land is shared, as well as facilities, machinery, rates, county services, and bulk food. Labour is voluntarily provided by community residents, and food is primarily home grown.

It is my opinion that for a community to function holistically on all levels, an essential ingredient is to have a form of income earning that ties people together. Of necessity this keeps people having to move forward as a group, as their 'food source' is bound in with evolving sustainable relationships.

MANAGEMENT AND MEETING

Each week we hold a two hour business and sharing meeting. It has rotating facilitation (generally one person will facilitate four to six meetings), and decision-making is by consensus. Diverse and creative methods are used as appropriate, to arrive at decisions efficiently and yet sensitively.

If a block to decision-making happens, the facilitator may call a time of silent reflection, or challenge the person or people who are holding on the agreement to share in depth what is behind their decision, and after that there may be further discussion as new information is brought to light, or the person may be asked if they are prepared to stand aside so that the matter can be actioned, although they may not agree with the decision. At times it is obvious that it is too premature to make a decision, in which case items are brought forward to a future meeting, allowing more time for digestion and/or further research. Items passed are recorded and usually empowered with a "ho!".

Similarly, if a person assumes a new position of responsibility they are actively empowered. At times we have used a specific technique: people rub together their palms, then hold up their hands, with palms facing towards

the person to be empowered. This little ritual, which consciously focuses positive energy towards the one taking on the responsibility, is powerful, unifying and actively felt by the person. I believe that this act anchors the memory of support in all concerned if the going gets rough.

Small management groups are also empowered in a similar manner. Empowerment means that the person or group is actively given the trust to make decisions and act on behalf of the community. Only people practically involved in that area of work on behalf of the community, serve on these management groups. The groups are: finance, land, garden, technical development, building, community facilities, festivities. Before a group needs to work on an issue, broad policy has already been formed and endorsed by the community as a body. If it is an entirely new area, the group will bring it forward to the community for a policy decision, often with a proposal already formulated for discussion. Since we have adopted the small group and empowerment system, our community meetings are less unwieldy, less frustrating, not overloaded, more efficient, lighter and more fun.

Meetings typically begin with a circle of silence for 'getting ourselves present', at times taking the form of a brief guided meditation, followed by acknowledging each other's presence. Meetings traditionally end with a circle of silence, for reflection, completion, and possibly a song which often captures the mood of the meeting. Each meeting reserves a personal 'sharing spot', which is booked in advance on the agenda sheet. This is a space for a person to openly share about things that are happening for them which they want the whole community to know about, often to do with a shift in life direction. Usually there is no decision-making component, rather an atmosphere of support. Sharing topics cover such themes as children, relationships, work, health, finances. A person may request, or be offered, support outside the meeting time in a particular way. This can either take the form of quiet 'in principle' support from the community for a major life direction shift, or input/suggestions as to how to tackle a problem they aren't able to manage alone (such as a difficulty arising with parenting).

Once a month a part of the meeting is devoted to issues which concern Tui children, and all children, from the youngest to the oldest, are present. This is an opportunity for children or adults to bring forward proposals or problems which need total community input, or to report on particular progress or events. Typical items would be outings, funding for a children's item, serious behavioural difficulties, community sports events. At times it can be overwhelming for children to speak out in a big group. In these instances one or two adults of the children's choice would meet separately with the group of children, and report back to the meeting.

We have formally elected officers of the Land Trust, but as all members of Tui are Trustees, our Trust meetings happen within our community meetings, one precedes the other, and separate minutes are kept. It is easy to determine which is Trust and which is community business, although this was not the case in the early days. Our only separate Trust meeting these

days is an SGM to elect a new member, or an AGM to do financial review and planning, and to elect officers. The AGM is also a celebration of the completion of another year together.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict resolution per se is a process needed 'at the end of the line'. Conflict does and will happen in any group, so learning ways to deal with it is vital to the life of a group. It arises because of lack of honesty, differences in habits, lifestyle and values, projections and reflections, and inappropriate structures to meet the needs of a particular group. Providing ways to deal with these areas significantly minimises conflict. If the group does not have agreed mechanisms to deal with conflict, the tension that builds up, spoken or unspoken, inevitably brings about distancing. The imploded energy created by denial is likely to destroy the group eventually.

In my observations and experience, groups which have not upheld personal growth as a prerequisite for group growth and prosperity, have ultimately destroyed themselves. Conversely, if the group's members have a self-centred approach to personal growth, the group's growth will be seriously stunted, although it may have the illusion of appearing healthy upon initial contact.

There is a strong caution here for the New Age movement, where the right jargon can make it look as if people are being accepting, understanding, adaptable and responsible, whereas underneath another personal agenda is going on. e.g. making 'I' own/accept statements when the underlying tone is 'you' are to blame. The privileged society has become so sophisticated at using the communication styles learned through higher education and transpersonal workshops, that these 'underground streams' are often unconscious. At Tui we are not absolved from this tendency. Our collective commitment to giving feedback and 'speaking our truth', helps to minimise the exercising of this somersault psychology.

Personal growth is an important aim of all of us at Tui, and because of this, the approaches outlined here work for us. If personal growth is not one of your group's common aims, you may need quite different approaches. For instance, ones which deal with issues purely at a structural level in order to function. However, with singularly structural approaches, the issues will still be there – instead they can be side-stepped and repressed, and may fester then take another form. If your group is determined to avoid intimacy (getting below the surface), the 'structural solution' will probably be your approach. The result will tend to be a hierarchical, inflexible power structure, and rigidly defined roles.

All prospective members and members of Tui make a commitment not to walk away from conflict. If requested, a member, small group, or, if necessary, the whole community, can be supportive in conflict resolution. We have learnt, and continue to learn useful communication skills to help us move and grow through these times. We expect children, as well as adults, to deal with conflict constructively.

The following is our agreement around conflict:

"If a major conflict arises between two members, or between one member and the rest of the community, and they are unwilling or unable to resolve it, the situation is unacceptable to Tui. A community meeting shall be called by any resident member in order to work towards resolution. It is required that both members attend. More than one meeting may be necessary. If no satisfactory progress is made, an outside facilitator, acceptable to the members in conflict, will be invited, and a further attempt made."

COMMON AGREEMENTS FOR DAILY LIVING

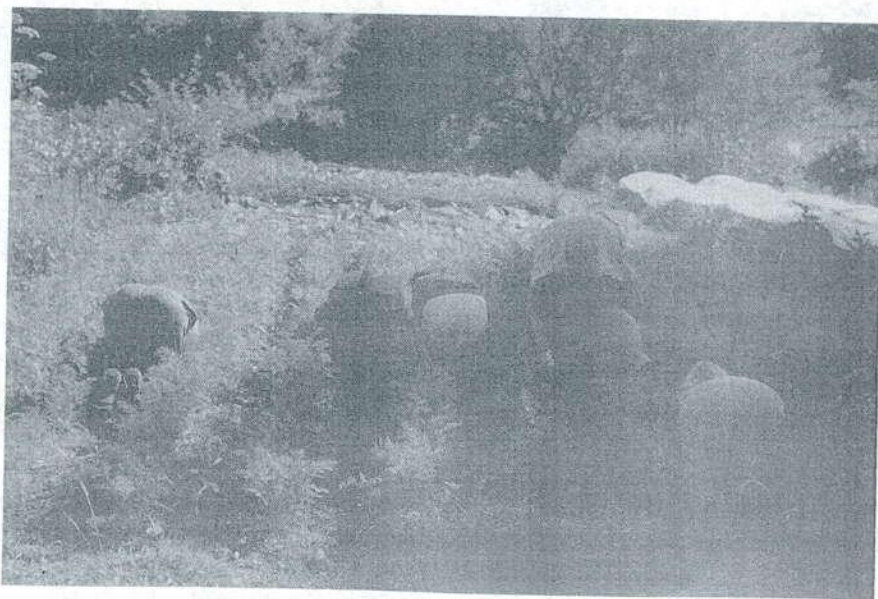
At the beginning of our time on Tui land, after a year of our experiences of living together, the Common Agreements document was drawn up. Although it is useful as a reference, as a community we generally felt that the discussion and decision-making about the issues raised is more vital than the document itself. However, I would strongly recommend for any group coming together to get clear on boundaries around behaviours which affect their daily lives. It is surprising how different seemingly insignificant personal attitudes and behaviours can have a major impact on people who share territory. It is useful to have these things out in the open early on, to avoid 'battles' or imploded resentments. It is also a useful guideline as to whether or not you can live together.

Common Agreement themes are different to those which appear in a legal document for land ownership or caretaker-ship, although some may overlap. The following headings constitute our Common Agreements document: meetings (procedures and rules), organisational and administrative responsibilities, personal growth and relationships, work (community workload, gender roles in work), visitors, children, employment, religion, medicine/healing, trees, animals, tools and machinery, vehicles, media (radio, hi-fi, television), noise level, food, drugs, chemical sprays, nudity, violence, conflict resolution. A few diverse examples are:

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|---------------------------------|---|
| <i>Religion</i> | the community provides for freedom of choice of religion or spiritual path. |
| <i>Vehicles</i> | are to be kept in allocated vehicle parking areas.
Internal roads to be used for utility purposes only
(i.e. to drop off and pick up goods). |
| <i>Gender Roles
in Work</i> | we encourage the sharing and teaching of work skills not previously learned because of our backgrounds of role stereotypes and gender inequality in the workplace.
Note: In reality this transference has mostly been one way – with the men teaching the women skills such as building and tractor driving. |



Consecrating the land around the spiritual centre of the community with flower essences.



Carrot weeding in the community garden – a great way to share stories!

At Tui, new agreements are made and written up as issues arise which need some clear and committed position from the group. These common agreements set a standard for members. They govern communal areas only, where they are taken seriously, honoured, and strictly adhered to. It is important to note that these rules are not 'top-down' dictated, they are decided and agreed upon by all of us, for the sake of minimising stress and optimising harmony. Nowadays it seems that protocol is sufficiently established in Tui daily life for visitors and intending members to pick it up by observation and osmosis. Tui is not about oppressing individual freedom, depriving people of their needs, or forcing personal growth. People's homes are their own domain where they freely determine their own standards. Generally, there seems to be little variance between individual standards and communal standards.

EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT

Tui's mode tended towards crisis management before we faced the fact that, as individuals and as a community, we needed to do something major about taking responsibility for our own realities. This has meant learning to own our mental attitudes and emotional states of being rather than attributing cause or blame to others. Ultimately it amounts to taking 100% responsibility for our inner and outer worlds – creations and reflections, responses and reactions. There is a lot to say on this, and I would refer anyone wanting to investigate deeper, to search in personal growth and healing literature.

When, through various teachers and workshops, we increasingly began to take full responsibility for our belief systems and strengthened commitment to actively bring about change, the way we related to each other and dealt with differences, shifted remarkably. Instead of arguing, backbiting, repressing, 'putting each other down', or 'dumping' on each other, we listened, considered and valued each other's perspective. This was not and is not always so. Taking full responsibility requires vigilance and constant practice and behoves feedback to keep on track. The more support and positive feedback from life itself there is, the less effort it takes, and this way of seeing the world and relating with others becomes natural. The learning never stops.

In my experience, as I unravel the immediate and gross level makeup of my belief system, space is created for the more subtle beliefs to come to light. These seem to be carried intergenerationally and are culturally embedded. In an international community, these culturally ingrained unconscious attitudes will play into how we interact with each other, and will colour our viewpoints.

The introduction of Domain Shift philosophy and technologies to some of our members (via workshops) had a significant influence on our community's growth. Domain Shift is about quantum leaps rather than incremental change, and aims for nothing less than personal and societal transformation – the creation of Sacred Society – bringing sacredness into the most profane activities and the most superficial relationships.

Whereas many transpersonal psychotherapies focus on the mental and spiritual levels, or depend on other people to stimulate and support an

individual in the process of change, Domain Shift focuses on the physical and emotional, through to the mental and spiritual. It begins with the information that our neurology hold the keys to our makeup, and one needs to 'rewire' unbeneficial connections, initially by creating a lot of energetic space through movement and emotional release. Space is then opened up for looking clearly at belief systems which cripple us in activating our potential as humans, and changing these into beneficial beliefs through an affirmation process. I have stated the approach of Domain Shift simplistically and in my own understanding. There are many strings to its bow, resulting from intensive research into, and integration of the best of personal growth tools, backed by the evidence of contemporary psychology and science.

By individuals in their own right practising the techniques for emotional management and transformation, it has become acceptable and supported as a part of everyday life, for people at Tui generally to release an 'emotional charge' they may have around an issue, in open space with minimum effect on others. No-one need ever know what it was about or become involved in that person's process at all. This makes our relating so much freer, and opens up space for quality, rather than being bogged down with each other's dramas.

A couple at Tui now teach this technology, and have added to it a process they call 'Quality Circle', a more still and reflective process of training to become fully present in the moment. Tui has greatly benefited from Quality Circle also. More recently, Tantra has been introduced to most people at Tui, and three people now run workshops in this throughout the country. Although the expression of Tantra which is the transmutation of sexual to spiritual energy, thus far happens within monogamous partnerships at Tui, I experience the personal growth that has occurred through Tantra, enhancing the quality of intimacy between all of us, in a sacred and respectful way.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR GROUP CLARITY WITHIN A MEETING **Hand Gauging**

The use of the hand as an indicator, on a gradient of one to ten, about where a person stands on an issue. People stay where they are, and the facilitator asks for a hand gauge, with 0 being the ground level and 10 being as far as the arm can stretch. People can also indicate with their hands where they are on a feeling level around an issue, by showing a steady hand for firm and clear, to a wobbly hand for unsure. Hand gauging gives an instant readout of where a group is at. It shortcuts a lot of discussion or guides the discussion in the necessary direction. It is a useful tool for us.

Sociogram

A sociogram is a more sophisticated version of hand gauging. It is useful to find out about the range of behaviours, values and attitudes within a group. The facilitator lays out written or verbally indicated numbers from 1 to 10 along the floor in a straight line. People then assemble themselves along that line, depending on where they stand on a particular issue. For example, on an issue

of diet, vegans might stand at one end, and carnivores at another, with others placing themselves along the continuum. From then on there are a lot of options – for everyone simply to note the pattern, for people at various places along the continuum to talk with each other about their position etc. A most interesting aspect is the finding of one's position, by finding out where and why others have placed themselves where they have. Again, the position of the group is made clear, and areas in need of discussion become focused.

Role Reversal

If two people are attached to their different points of view, and their attitudes are holding the group up from moving forward, the facilitator may suggest that they come into the centre of the circle and reverse roles several times, to 'stand in the other person's shoes' and have a better understanding of their position. In our experience this frees people up from being locked in their standpoint, and enables people to shift, usually closer to each other.

Contemplation

Going into introspective silence is an appropriate thing to do when there is an issue which is at a deadlock, or when a debate has become sufficiently heated that the group can no longer function effectively. After the silence, usually for only a few minutes, people will share any insights they have with the group, and they are taken as an important contribution. Silence for this purpose has always proved invaluable to us at Tui. It is not uncommon for people to have similar or complementary insights, which are a completely different angle on what has been discussed beforehand, and for a decision to arise clearly and swiftly after a contemplative silence.

Visual Aids

Specially charts and graphs are invaluable for keeping track of a meeting, recording the thread and thrust or simply group decisions. The forms they can take are only limited by the imagination, and can be designed to meet the need of the particular issue. We use all sorts, from straight recording on large newsprint paper in mindmap or list form, to bar graphs done on computer, to coloured counters placed on the ground, as indicators of group progress.

Biographies

A biography is a life story of key people and events which have influenced who a person is today. It is, to me, a very important technique in bringing about intimacy. Learning about people's backgrounds helps us to understand why we have such individual differences. A common outcome of biography sharings is acceptance and appreciation. They require time, genuine interest and listening patience of a group to make the commitment worthwhile. At Tui we have begun to use this tool, but did not follow through, because we were unable to honour the time it took to be of high value. In Anthroposophical (Rudolf Steiner) initiatives, biographies are considered an

important tool as a forerunner for staff to begin working together. They have a particular approach, and I would recommend getting a facilitator from this movement to at least start a group off with biography sessions.

Tuki

Tuki stands for Tui Community Integration – a word coined by a Tui wordsmith. A 'Tuki' is an oratory 'heart sharing circle' process, which we have adopted and adapted from the Maori *whaikorero* and American Indian tribal council. Its purpose for us is to go deeper into the family, cultural and historical conditioning and values which underlie emotional and attitudinal blocks, to us as a group, making aligned decisions and defining collective direction. It also serves to renew inspiration and therefore commitment. Tuki are usually held when we get stuck in a way which hinders our positive progress as a group. This is when mistrust and misunderstandings build, when differences create separation, when we lose sight of loving over divisive community issues.

Tuki often facilitate major structural and organisational changes, which realistically reflect and update where we are at as a group. The result is that the structure serves us, rather than us being servants of the structure. To me Tuki is a fundamental cornerstone of Tui's social system. Without them we could be living with a lot of misunderstandings, mistrust and alienation. Tuki is one of the most powerful methods of conflict resolution. This tends to happen indirectly, within the Tuki process, and as an outcome of it. A Tuki can take place with any size group. Limiting factors to be aware of, are the audibility of people's voices, and how long people can sit without going for a pee!

At Tui, our Tukis centre around a theme or issue which is 'up' for us, sometimes stated as a question. We are aware of the theme for several weeks in advance, and we have time to reflect about it, take it into our dreams, research it, talk about it with others. A Tuki generally happens for two days, including the evening in between. It can happen for longer, but it is inadvisable to plan for shorter, because there is insufficient time to reach and sustain the depth as a whole group. In the 'old times', when the children were small, we used to all bring our sleeping bags and sleep overnight in one room. The children still fondly remember those times when they were bathed in the essence of community.

It is important that everyone is present, as it is almost unavoidable that the group will have a 'paradigm shift', and it is difficult for a person being left behind to be integrated later. A consequence is that the absent person may be holding on to old stuff and be thinking in outmoded ways, that no longer fit with the evolved group.

A Tuki works like this: two facilitators, usually one male and one female, guide the process, and 'hold' and monitor the group energy as it proceeds. They are like pillars of a building, who uphold the physical and energetic structure to provide a space for sacred ritual. There is a 'talking stick' which is picked up from and returns to the centre of the circle by the person who speaks. A person only speaks once, and everyone is strongly encouraged to speak.

If time has been created for it, there may be a second 'round'. People are free to communicate in their own way, so long as they respect the circle, and do not 'dump' on another person, or respond directly to another. This is a time for sharing what matters to you personally, however it may come. This may include few words and a span of silence, vocally expressing emotions, sharing gems of spiritual wisdom, or addressing the 'nuts and bolts' of an issue.

The Tuki offers us spiritual inspiration and a strong sense of the pulse of the whole community around an issue, at the deepest level. It is important not to leave it there. To bring what we have learned into the realm of active change, we use a different process. It requires prepared facilitation and a rational, clear thinking mind. At the completion of the Tuki, the facilitators may get together and, based on what they have heard and felt, formulate a proposal, strategy or items, to take through a formal consensus style community meeting. This is done reasonably close to the completion of the Tuki, so as not to lose momentum. The focus is on action plan, followed by implementation.

This approach has never failed us. It has brought about monumental changes at Tui, always for the good of the whole. For example, our labour and financial structures at Tui have radically changed as the result of a Tuki, and now reflect our 1996 group composition rather than adhering to structures which did not serve the majority of current members.

Note: It is not appropriate for other groups to use the word 'Tuki', as it is specifically coined for the needs of our group. The international generic form, as used in 'Heart Politics' gatherings, is called a 'Heart Sharing Circle'. I would advise other groups to modify the form according to their culture and customs.

SOME SOCIAL KEYS

Amongst many of the major areas to discuss openly and honestly in order to form community policy and practice on, I believe that the most important are: financial input, labour for communal projects, collective income earning, population growth, childraising, diet and communal cooking, sexuality, and the use of social drugs and alcohol. Of course, the reality is often different from the theory, and one's stance today can change tomorrow, but it is important to have accord initially, to know that it is worth investing in living together. (Check other categories under 'Common Agreements for Daily Living'.)

Clarity is also needed to determine how intimately your group wants to live and become intertwined. The goal-setting process mentioned in the following section covers this. Basically there are a cross-section of village models, globally, ranging from kibbutzim (most communal) to strata title or company subdivision-style (least communal). It entirely depends on how the village is designed physically and socially. The need to communicate and co-operate can be built in or not in the way the village functions. For example, it is possible to have a land manager paid by the village, so that people do not need to work together on the land but this choice will inevitable have its own effect on the local environment and the community who lives there. Materially, choice will primarily depend upon the level of financial

involvement, and style of land and home ownership that people want, and the size of land each household desires.

Were I to begin afresh with what I know now from experience, I would do four things as a group before committing to land purchase:

1. A training in conflict resolution, meeting facilitation and consensus decision-making.
2. Holistic participatory goal setting (*see below*).
3. A course in permaculture design – to provide common principles and methodology from which to observe, and subsequently design, the land in order to meet group needs, with sensitivity to the local environment.
4. A trial project (such as the creation of a permaculture design supported by the local council and its implementation of school or hospital grounds) in which no one in the group had a vested interest. This would be for the purpose of testing, in microcosm and telescoped time, how the group works together, involving such things as leadership hierarchy, group decision-making ability, financial management and the practical application of ideals.

Participatory Goal Setting

Through our experiences of working with permaculture in Africa, a colleague and myself have developed a simple participatory process of group decision-making, inspired by a process called 'Holistic Goal Setting', an aspect of 'Holistic Resource Management' researched and taught by Alan Savory. Our approach also draws from Participatory Rural (or Rapid) Appraisal. I only want to mention it briefly here, because it is a step by step process in its own right, and it is not yet something we have used at Tui.

This process begins with values. It offers an effective way of guiding and recording group processes and focuses on what members of a group have in common, yet differences quickly show up. It has the potential for lots of fun and is strongly action oriented. If we had had tools like this available to us in our initial stages at Tui, I believe that we would have shortcut our unwieldy development or maybe we would have split or some people would have left? Another member's viewpoint is that a group can only set goals when it has worked through its 'stuff' to become aligned.

Parenting

To me, growing up in an extended family is the biggest plus of all aspects of community life. The children are surrounded by many role models and styles of parenting. At Tui a child is ultimately under the care of his or her blood parents in all respects, and yet every single adult in the community develops their own form of relationship with each child, including

discipline and guidance. They form natural affinities with different adults besides their parents, to whom they go to for nurturing and support. The importance of this is evident at Tui as our children enter teenage years. Children grow up with others of all ages, who become like brothers and sisters, just as in a bloodline extended family.

Community life is extremely supportive of parents. They are not isolated in the home; the environment is safe for small children to roam and explore without supervision; there is the emotional and physical support of other parents. There is the opportunity to work co-operatively with other adults, pursue your interests, and still be in close contact with your children. As is the case at Tui, community living provides scope for parents whose relationships change, and who choose to part ways, to live separately on the same property and co-parent – with a minimum impact on the child emotionally or physically.

I want to outline what for me is a healthy progression from dependence to independence of children to their parents. This true scenario is made possible because of the unique nature of community life. Kaj and Zora are twins who live at Tui. They came to live at Tui when they were three years old. Their parents had already separated, but decided to live on the same land for the sake of the children, and because they wanted to keep in contact and desired the same lifestyle. When the twins were young they lived with their mother, and saw their father every day. At primary school age, they spent three months living in each parent's house. At early teens they each had a caravan, and lived nearby their parents houses, one girl near each parent. Every three months, they swapped location with each other, the tractor towing their caravans from one location to the other. Now they are in their mid teens, their caravans are close together, near the community house, and away from their parents. They are autonomous in every sense, managing their own budget, cooking and washing for themselves. They have amiable relationships and plenty of contact for both parents. I consider them to be reasonably well adjusted teenagers.

Seasonal Celebrations and Rituals

As we live close with the land and choose to deepen our relationship with nature, we come together to celebrate and honour the change of the seasons, at solstice and equinox. A few people prepare an appropriate ritual, with inclusion of the children where appropriate. We customarily begin our gardening working bees with some form of attunement and thanksgiving to the land. Our daily community meal begins with a circle and blessing song.

Men's and Women's Gatherings

The women (regularly) and the men (occasionally) meet in their own groups separately to share in sacred ways on the full moons. We hold men's and women's gatherings concurrently as a national event during the summer. These take various forms, and are held for the purpose of sharing and support



Autumn Equinox and Harvest Festival.

for each other in ways which we simply can not get from members of the opposite sex. I can only really speak for the women. Our gatherings range in nature from cultural events, to sharing life stories, to honouring life stages, to sharing about sexuality, to participating in a Goddess-focused ritual, to opening the space for emotional support, to massaging each others feet. To me they are a very important aspect of life at Tui. The bonding with my sisters is precious to me.

A core group of men and a core group of women, host men's and women's national gatherings annually, for around 35 people per group for up to one week. They are held at the same time, on Tui and neighbouring land. There is a 'runner' from the men's and from the women's core group to update daily about intended programme locations, so that the groups do not intersect. We view this as important, as we do not want the growth process we are experiencing as men and women, to be distracted by chance encounters with the opposite sex. We are embarking on a deep healing and sacred journey into knowing ourselves as men and as women, of having the support of those of the same sex to look at, process and resolve issues that are unique to each sex, and what it means to relate to each other beyond all the conditioned facades, pseudo-self and games that we have learnt in order to avoid intimacy and being real.

On the last two days we come together as men and women, in what we warmly call, 'the merge'. During these two days we spend times together and apart as one group, yet always staying at our own camps. We initially come together in silence, showing each other who we are in our vulnerability while at the same time in our power. The first meeting has been a very sacred moment, and an honouring of the universal man and the universal woman.

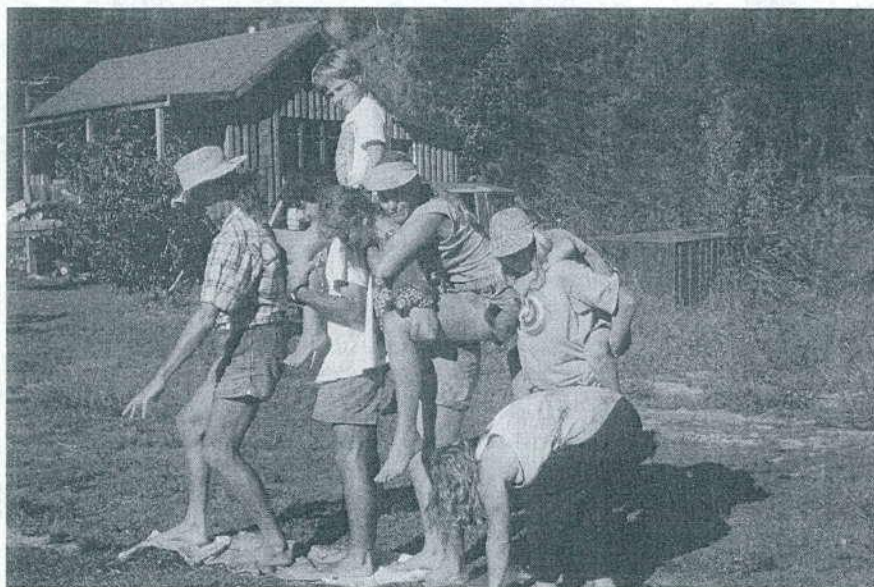
The oratory *waikoreero* (essence of heart circle sharing process) that follows is insightful for both sexes to understand, appreciate and accept each other on a new level.

I believe that these gatherings play their small part in creating a new paradigm of men and women to relate with each other, and I believe that the healing is inter-generational. I have been beneficially changed by them and it is a deep and lasting change. It is worthwhile to write an entire chapter, maybe book, on these gatherings! I hope that some day someone will. The healing of relationships between men and women is essential for world peace.

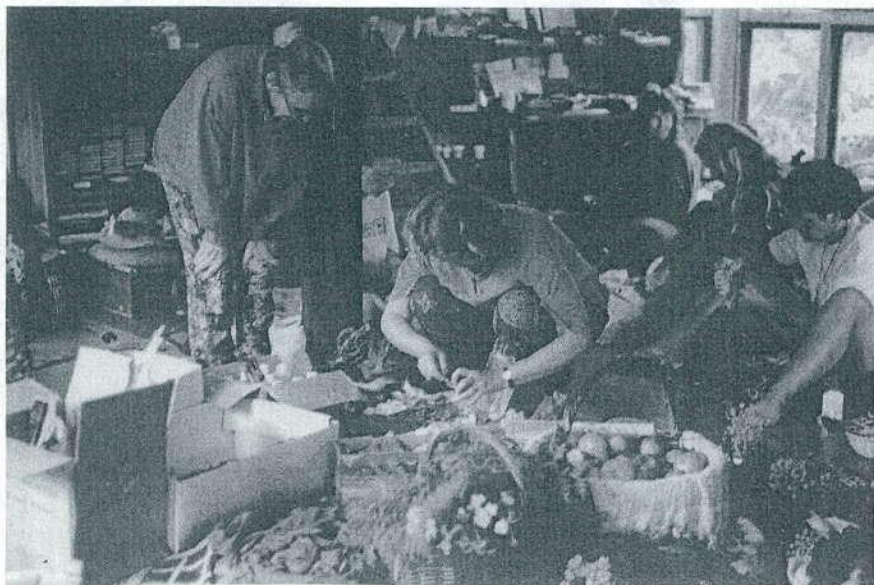
SPIRITUAL BASIS

It is difficult to define our spiritual basis because it is so interwoven in how we live our lives, our relationships with each other, the land we are guardians for, and our planet generally. The closest names may be Deep Ecology or Earth-Centred Spirituality. We do not adhere to any dogma or religion. We embody New Age, but could not be defined as that, as we acknowledge all chakras as sacred and valid, not just the 'higher' ones.

We bring spirituality into physicality in a tangible way through our relationship with each other, the earth, and our work. We encourage humour,



Co-operative games: 'Crossing the river without setting foot in the water'.



Women's gathering: A craft-making session.

passion for life, and dropping addictions, both substance and behavioural. As a community we encourage a vegetarian diet, and strongly discourage drugs. A vital part of our spiritual growth is that we commit to clear, honest communication and feedback, and taking responsibility for our emotional energy (e.g. anger) rather than 'dumping' on each other.

We are by no means holier than those who have not made conscious choices to do these things in their lives. It is just that by choice we are willing to heal our wounds and become more whole. Collectively, we believe that this is fundamental to the creation of a sustainable society, and we want no less. Community life accelerates this opportunity many-fold.

Be honest with yourself about whether you are ready for this challenge before you embark on any community venture! Well known author, Scott Peck, has defined that to get in touch with true community we go through the stages of pseudo-community and then chaos. We at Tui have surely done that – and we are richly rewarded. I encourage you to hang in there should you take the plunge!

PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

Personally I find living in community fulfilling and stimulating, sustaining. I have sometimes heard intentional community referred to as 'a social experiment'. Yet for me it is 'the norm', with the current Western-lifestyle norm of the socially isolated nuclear family being the social experiment! Through life at Tui I am rediscovering what I believe to be a natural social pattern encoded within the genes, as basic as an animal's instinct. I believe that in us this pattern is overlaid by conditioning generated from fear of intimacy, and separation from our Earth Mother. I am fascinated that as I discover about other land-based intentional communities around the planet that have been operating for some time, I find that they have developed similar customs to ourselves, even down to some fine details. There are essential patterns in leaves and water-flow, so it is feasible there are God-given blueprints for human settlement, regardless of how sophisticated we think we have become. It is simply a matter of uncovering the clutter.