

Submission evidence in support of Urs Signer

Marie Doorbar

Kia ora koutou, Tena koe Commissioner,

I am a mokopuna of maunga Taranaki and whakapapa to Nga Mahanga and Ngati Tairi. I was born and raised on Pitt Island in the Chatham Islands as did my father and 6 generations of his whanau before him.

My passion and first love is the ngahere (forest) of which I am blessed to say has become my trade or service to others through knowledge of Rongoa Maori – traditional maori medicine/ healing.

This knowledge was firstly installed in me through living in such an environment as Pitt Island as a child where the bush was our playground. When I moved to Taranaki in the 90's to reconnect with whanaunga , here began a more formalised journey in Rongoa maori through a mentor in this field.

Rongoa maori is the view in which I see the natural world hence why I see its relevance regarding this consent in the Mangapepeke valley.

I met Tony and Debbie Pascoe in February 2018. Since, I have had the privilege of walking into the back of his home valley on several occasions.

What I saw in the valley is vastly different from what many of the experts have spoken of in this hearing over the past two weeks. Not because what they are saying is false or incorrect but because my view through a Rongoa Maori lense sees this valley in a somewhat different light.

For example, if I wanted to harvest medicine I need a clean environment, preferrably away from human habitat, free from sprays, fertilisers, and in its natural virgin state. This valley provides all these qualities.

Futhermore I look for tohu. These can be described as signs, symbols, or warnings both physical or supernatural – a wairua. Tohu for me can be seen heard or more often felt.

In this valley I saw, heard and felt many tohu. These were indicators to me of a healthy environment, perfect for harvesting rongoa. Tohu such as native birds in abundance, water/ springs that were safe to drink from, mature trees that provide shade for the undergrowth, kai for the birds, and bark fit to harvest for medicine. The tohu I felt was the sense of peace in that valley.

One tohu we have seen in Taranaki as well as around Aotearoa of recent is the

stranding of the whales. What does this tohu mean? One could say that the imbalance of human impact on the environment is starting to take a strong hold or perhaps its a warning for of us to take more care in our role as kaitiaki and make those changes now.

The types of trees growing in the wetland of mangapepeke such as Kahikatea and Pukatea are keys to indicate the type of medicinal properties they possess. They both like wet feet and can tolerate a lot of water, so these trees are used as rongoa to combat fungal infections such as athletes foot. Medicine in the ngahere is not only made up of what the tree is but also where the tree naturally grows best.

Some trees such as manuka, mahoe or raurekau maybe valued of less importance to an ecologist but through a Rongoa Maori lense all these trees are of importance as the smaller trees are often used for wai rakau – an infusion of leaves to be used both internally and externally. The older bigger trees are used for harvesting bark for dying flax or making balms. Like people, it takes allsorts to make up a community and the same applies for the forest.

The underlying philosophy of Rongoa Maori is Kaitiakitanga.

This has been modeled to me in this way : " First heal the ngahere so then it can heal you."

For me this means only taking what is needed, treating all aspects of the ngahere as equal and valued as eachother. Each tree,stream, bird, lizard, bat and fish all play a role as rongoa in this environment – one cannot be seperated from the other. A 500 yearold tree is as significant as a rushland grass. Each ones role cannot be played by the other so each is vitally important.

The impact rongoa maori has on the taha hinengaro (emotional well being) of a person is a very powerful one.

I saw this firsthand with Tony Pascoe. I had arrived at his and Debbie's home after he had had a "trying" morning on the phone. Tony was visibly distressed as well as physically unwell from this phonecall. We decided to walk back into the valley to take some photos, after maybe 20 minutes into the walk Tony's whole demeanour had changed. The pain had eased from his body and and he seemed somewhat lighter. We talked about the joy he got from being in that environment listening to the streams trickling and seeing a kereru fly overhead.

This aspect of rongoa is so vitally important in our country today with a huge rise in mental illness – and coincidentally a huge disconnection from our natural world with urban lifestyles and continued deforestation.

So... how will this proposed bypass effect rongoa maori?

To me this valley is a taonga (treasure) to our region and Aotearoa.

What gifts lie in that valley cannot be replaced, reworked, or even replanted.

A 500 yearold tree felled before its time is unheard of. Water that is pristine and lifegiving should not be altered or drained into a culvert for the benefit of the minority.

What lies in that valley is the sustenance for the mokopuna of tomorrow. Who are we to borrow and alter from what isnt really ours?

The cost of \$250 million for the 4-5 minutes ease in travel time is pittance in comparison to the taonga that we are giving up, destroyng and taking from tomorrow.

Is this road worth bat extinction, habitat loss, species replaced, virgin bush felled and mulched?

Is this road worth yet another wetland habitat to be down graded to a mere swamp and then drained and altered altogether?

Can all of the mitigation, compensation, restoration truly be a justification?

I ask Mr Commissioner that you make this decision looking well into the future, beyond your time and mine, to say NO to this consent, so Taranaki can be known for more than the Barrett brothers but instead for the rohe/region that protect what belongs to its mokopuna.

Kia ora koutou.