

LOVE FOR THE LAND — edited by Anahera Herbert-Grave

¹Whenever people spoke with the Matike Mai o Aotearoa Working Group they invariably began by naming their mountains and rivers and Iwi, as we always do. They linked themselves to Papatūānuku and in that simple poetic identification they also stressed the importance of the whenua and their relationship to it. Through their whakapapa they actually illustrated why the whenua value was so fundamental to this constitutional kōrero.



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“It’s not a green or conservation issue or whether the Resource Management Act is any good or not ...it’s about the much more basic relationship in whakapapa between ourselves and Papatūānuku, between the whenua we bury when we are born and the whenua that is our land...I can’t think of a value that’s any more basic than that”.

The kōrero about the value of the whenua also frequently included a discussion about economic policy. Many participants, including a number of rangatahi, were especially concerned about the effects on land retention and protection of the pervasive influence of neo-liberal ideologies and what they perceived as the shift from a market economy serving society to a society now serving the market.

“I think that Papatūānuku should be in the constitution for survival reasons if nothing else. There’s all the tikanga of course but if we don’t look after Papatūānuku there’ll be no tikanga left...a constitution by itself won’t do it but it would certainly help”.

“Rangatiratanga was never just about money and I know for sure that kaitiakitanga wasn’t either – it was about looking after each other and the whenua...but with all this New Right stuff even the whenua gets talked about by some of our people like it’s just a resource...I’d like to see a constitution get back to rights and looking after Papatūānuku and maybe that would help get some economic balance as well”.

People also indicated in their kōrero that the value of place was something which others were entitled to and which many Pākehā have developed over time. It does not make them tangata whenua as the

¹ Thirty-sixth edited extract from pp. 83 – 84 of [He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu Mō Aotearoa – The Report of Matike Mai o Aotearoa](#)

term is defined by Māori through a discrete and unique whakapapa relationship and it does not make them indigenous as defined internationally. However it does give a special meaning to being tangata Tiriti and therefore belonging to this land. The constitutional recognition of that shared value would reaffirm that fact.