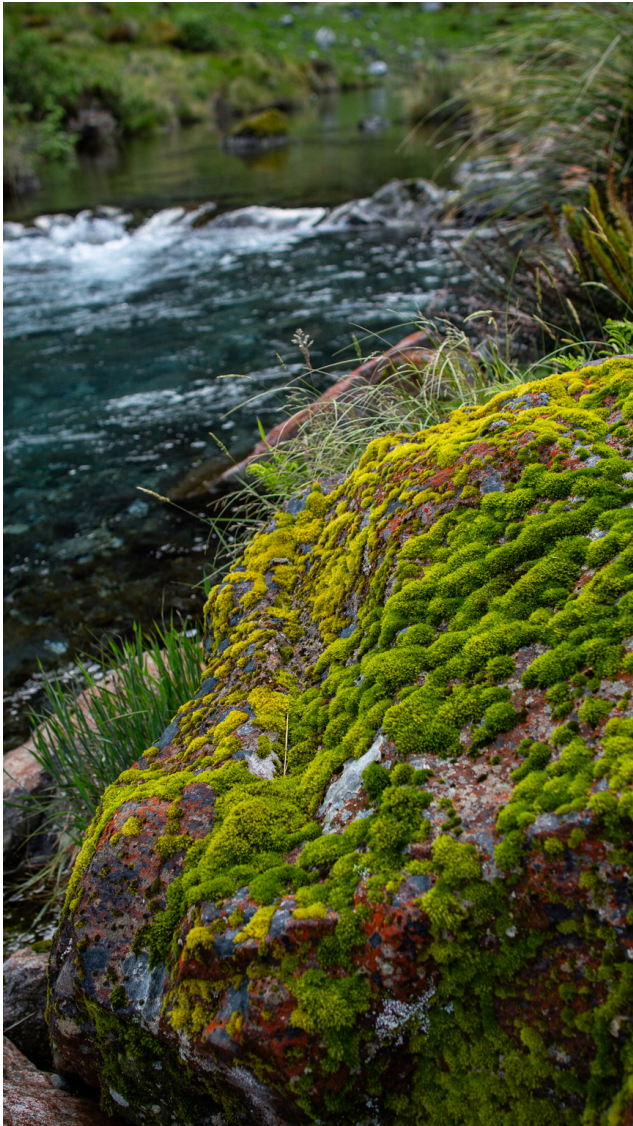


Once upon a time.....



"We have been given us this day. We can do good or we can do bad with it. But what ever we do, we will leave it for our children and grandchildren to carry into the future"

Matua Tohe Ashby

The People's Playground PART ONE

Once upon a time while out exploring, a group children came across a beautiful island playground. Lush with beautiful shades of green, bird song, crystal clear waterways, with strange and wonderful foods upon the land, in the streams and in the oceans. The children in this place were full of laughter, song and games. They were busy, curious and connected in an unusual and mystifying kind of way. But they appeared to some, as a strange and Godless people.

Despite some initial trepidation the home children invited the visitors to come play with them. They played together for a while sharing their many differences and respective knowledge together.

After a while and engrossed in all the new and wonderful taonga the visitors had shared, the home people started to forget about their magical fairy friends the Patupaiarehe, who eventually retreated to a remote corner of the playground continuing to quietly go about their magic as they had always done.

But over time the magic of the playground started to fade and a mamae/ache started to slowly creep into the spirits of the children. They didn't understand what was happening or from where this ache had come.

So together the children thought, perhaps if they had *MORE* the ache would go away. So they busily set about accumulating more baubles, playthings and inventions. But once they had more they began to worry about what might happen to them if they had less.....So together they agreed that some rules were necessary to protect what they had accumulated in case others came.

But the ache didn't go away with *MORE*. Instead it continued to grow. The children were less vibrant, the playground had lost some of its magic and the children were becoming unwell.

One day some of the children spied the Patupaiarehe going about their games in the corner of the now fenced off playground. They noticed that the mamae had not effected them as much as the children. And it felt good to start playing with their old friends again. The sunshine was starting to poke tiny holes in the clouds that hung over the playground and the clouds looked as if they were slowly starting to lift. Others became more curious about what magic the Patupaiarehe had managed to retain, that they themselves had, over time, started to lose.

They asked the Patupaiarehe to help them restore the sunshine in the their playground and overcome the clouds that were starting to consume them ever so slowly. The Patupaiarehe agreed and it felt good to once again be included by their old friends and new ones too. The Patupaiarehe shared with their old friends how to bring forward the memories within them to restore the vibrancy they were seeking. They explained to their new friends that it might take a little longer for them to get to that place as they didn't share the same memories of that land but that they would help them create their own new connections to the land and the vibrancy they sought.

Some of the children became fearful that they would get left behind and that some of the things they treasured might be lost to them. They reminded the rest of their friends that they had made some rules about how they would play together as equals and that none should have advantage over the other in their now shared playground. They welcomed the reintroduction of the Patupaiarehe into the fold because they could see the Patupaiarehe had a gift that eluded the children. Carefully and kindly the children explained to the Patupaiarehe that the world had moved on and that things were different now.

If the Patupaiarehe wanted to play with everyone else they would have to start wearing clothes. It was no longer appropriate to flit around the playground naked. The Patupaiarehe tried to explain that clothes would bare down heavily on their light frame and prevent them from being able to move freely like the children around the playground. The children also explained to the Patupaiarehe that their wings gave the Patupaiarehe unfair advantage in the playground so they would need to be clipped in order that everyone be equal in the games that had now become commonplace in the playground.

The Patupaiarehe tried in earnest to explain to the children how their wings could be an advantage to everyone in the playground but the children would not listen. Instead the children presented the Patupaiarehe with a contract decreeing how they must curb their flying and start wearing cloths in order to make everyone feel comfortable, safe and the same.

Aching to be included and to be protected by the rules of the new world some Patupaiarehe reluctantly opted to let go of their wings and freedom to appease the fear in their friends. Others chose to once again retreat to their small corner of the garden.

However, after the initial joy of reconciliation, the mamae continued to spread at an increasing rate. The children became dismissive of the Patupaiarehe's magic and asked those who had joined them to work harder and faster than everyone else at restoring the mauri of the playground. So once again the Patupaiarehe asked the children to remove the shackles of their rules on them in order that Patupaiarehe magic might be shared with everyone. . . .

PART 2 –

- *Will the children eventually learn to embrace the gifts the Patupaiarehe can bring to their world?*
- *Will the Patupaiarehe continue to share their gifts with those who seek their help?*
- *Will the playground ultimately become a desert void of vibrancy and eventually life?*
- *Will the Patupaiarehe remember there is no higher mandate than the responsibility given to them by the ancestors' to carry and protect the gift of rongoā for all of humanity, now and into the future?*

This story is ours to write e te whanau

