

Voice of the Wild

from the Deep Green Bush-School
to provoke deep green thinking

March 2017

*Manaaki whenua
Manaaki tangata
Haere whakamua*

*Care for the land
Care for the people
Go forward*

Kia ora! The Deep Green Bush-School is here to raise young people the way they evolved to be raised. To understand how deprived our current generations of youth are, we have to put it in context of two million years of human existence on the planet. So we ask the two questions no other schools ask:

**How did humans actually evolve to learn?
How did humans actually evolve to live?**

A combination of anthropology, archaeology, history and indigenous oral traditions help to answer these questions. First, humans have been on the planet for about two million years. During more than 99% of that time, humans lived as semi-nomadic gatherers and hunters. The anthropologists Irvan Devore and Richard Lee characterised that way of life as “the most successful adaptation humans have ever achieved.” But since most of us are taught to regard our gatherer-hunter ancestors as living lives that were “nasty, brutish and short” - a phrase made up by Thomas Hobbes 400 years ago – a bit of time must be taken to correct these taken-for-granted assumptions about our ancestors. That’s one part of what this newsletter will focus on.

What we find when we look at how humans lived for two million years is that children learned all they need to know *through play, observation and imitation*. That is, they were given the freedom to play and explore the natural world for the entirety of their youth. They then learned all they needed to know, not by sitting in a classroom, but by learning from the wild and from the adults around them and imitating. That's how we evolved to learn.

Since most people assume that our current way of living is “advanced” or an improvement, we will also explore just what a “civilisation” actually is. The word is often used, but most people would be

unable to define what a civilisation is. Civilisations have only existed for a scant 6000 years.

Western Civilisation, like all civilisations, has been defined by domination: never-ending war, slavery, genocide, patriarchy, degradation of women and the burning of millions of “witches” in Christianised Europe to deliberately erase elder knowledge. Its economic system is based on the oppression of most humans and the complete destruction of the wild. 450 nuclear reactors are in operation, poisoning the planet. The oceans are dying as they are filled with toxic chemicals, rubbish and radiation. 90% of all the big fish in the oceans are gone. On land, 80% of all old-growth forests have been cut down. Europeans cut down 99% of all kauri trees. The vast majority of all deforestation in the last 6000 years has been committed by our current civilisation. Agriculture has destroyed most topsoil. Bees are disappearing. 150-200 species go extinct each day. Haven't even gotten yet to climate change. On top of all that, thousands of nuclear weapons are standing by, ready to be launched by our “leaders”.

So how exactly are we advanced? Or superior? Or sane? Or even intelligent? Just as elders have always used the past – used what was proven over generations and generations – to guide their communities to live with health and vigor, so too must we learn from our past. As this newsletter will make clear, many of our current interests are, in fact, subconsciously based on how we evolved – which means our gatherer-hunter past. We may not realise it, but genetically we're still gatherers and hunters.

What our elders would teach us is that humans evolved to live lives of participation with all of existence, immersed in the natural world, full of meaning and full of leisure – the healthiest lives humans have ever known. The real question is, what kind of world do we want to leave to our children?

for Two Million Years...

- We lived as semi-nomadic gatherers and hunters
- Peaceful lives – warfare was the “rare exception”
- All of life was play – only 15-25 hours per week on necessities (food, shelter, etc.)
- Abundant food
- Healthy and strong, few diseases
- Controlled population size to live within the limits of the land
- We lived long lives. The most common ages of death for adults was between 68-78 years old. (There was high infant mortality - which is actually *nature's way of ensuring the vitality of a species.*)
- No inequality, no poverty, no hierarchy, no patriarchy, no government, no schools, no police, no armies and no organised religions.
- Our lives were full of joyful participation



What Can Our Two-Million Year History Teach Us?

You may not realise it, but many common interests and recent trends are inspired by our gatherer-hunter ancestors and how we evolved:

- **Natural parenting: Natural childbirth, breastfeeding, attachment parenting and alloparenting**
- **Herbal medicine and holistic healing**
- **Paleo eating**
- **Barefoot running (or any running)**
- **Tramping & camping**
- **Hunting & fishing**
- **Going to the beach & swimming**
- **Keeping pets**
- **Voluntary simplicity & minimalist living**
- **Mindfulness**
- **Embracing diversity**
- **Child-led learning, Sudbury Valley Schools & Forest Schools**

These are all attempts to re-introduce lost aspects of human living that are healthier. Then there's the fact that nature improves mental health, that medical patients heal faster and better with nature around them, that exposure to nature improves cognition and intellectual development, that access to nature reduces stress, that children who grow up with access to the outdoors suffer from fewer allergies and that we need direct sunlight to have healthy bodies.

Why does nature have such a powerful positive effect on us? Because we lived - for two million years – totally immersed in the natural world. We evolved to live in nature. It's our only home.

Civilisation: The Last 6000 Years

- Civilisations are agriculture-based where people live in cities. (Agriculture began around 10,000 years ago)
- Inferior diets based on grains & widespread disease
- The *average human height and brain size* decreased with agriculture
- No control over population – there are now one million times the number of people than there were 50,000 years ago
- Creation of inequality – the rich and poor. Institutions arose which were needed by the rich to make sure the poor never threaten their wealth and power: governments, armies, slavery, organised religion and prisons.
- Constant and never-ending warfare
- Starvation, near-starvation or malnutrition for the majority of people in every civilisation
- *Every civilisation brings about its own collapse* – through deforestation and destruction of all surrounding wild nature



Let's Compare:

Full Humans

(the way we lived for two million years)

Domesticated, civilised humans

(the last 6000 years)

Participates in conversations between all living things, all spirits and ancestors	Spends the majority of time staring at screens and sitting behind walls
Develops many different senses in order to participate fully	Develops only 5 senses (and not very well)
Confident	Disoriented and confused
Self-reliant & with inner freedom	Helplessly dependent on institutions. Easily manipulated, deceived and controlled
Simple lives, with few needs	Enslaved to money and consumerism – never satisfied
Full of humour and vigor	Under constant stress, often with mental illness and depression
Mature, wise and responsible	Infantilised, foolish and destructive
Lives with reverence for all of existence. Views the natural world as family	Views nature as a dead “resource” to be used in any way. Thinks humans are superior to nature
Learns how to live well with others based on freedom, oral tradition, the wisdom of elders and lack of coercion	Needs laws – needs to be told what to do and how to live with threat of violence and eternal damnation
Resilient	Dependent on pharmaceutical companies, alcohol, drugs, therapists, self-help books and gurus
Comfortable in the world	Fearful

So how does this help our youth in the *current* world?

When we consider that our children's future will be characterised by:

- High unemployment (due to artificial intelligence, robotics and outsourcing to Third World countries)
- Economic and political instability
- Academic inflation and the worthlessness of degrees
- Climate change and ecological devastation
- Exponentially rising population – heading to 10-12 billion people

Their best chance is to grow to become:

- mature
- wise
- responsible
- humble
- creative
- resilient
- empathetic
- cooperative
- confident
- self-reliant
- healthy & strong

And that will only come through:

- free play in nature
- elders with wisdom
- observation
- imitation

If this doesn't make sense to you then you've got to turn off your screens and go outside. You've got to go out into wild nature. The wild will teach you.

the Deep Green Bush-School
based on two million years of human evolution

www.deepgreenbushschool.org
09 292 9439
021 060 7890

