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Diverse Women for Diversity

Subject:Genetic Modification - In our part of the planet - Aotearoa, colonially known as New Zealand

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(see the end for rough translations of some of the indigenous terms used)

"It's our culture, its our land, its our food, its our children, its our tipuna" Jessica Hutchings advised the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification (GM) at a recent hui held in Wellington. A lecturer in the Science Faculty at Victoria University and also a member of Nga Wahine Tiaki o Te Ao, Hutchings gave evidence on behalf of Maori women guardians of the World.

Between juggling her life as a lecturer, a solo mum and an advocator of environmental justice, Hutchings gave us time to interview her. We arrived at her home, armed with pen, paper and koha -her piece of paradise, surrounded by the industrial choke of urban Wellington.

True to a busy schedule, her phone rang constantly while we were there. Yet, she gave us time.

What are some of your concerns regarding Genetic Modification (GM)? I have several. GM is one trait of globalisation. The problem is people are segmenting it into one issue. However, globally it can be traced as a profiteering tool for multinationals to assist in their desire to corner the global food market. Presently there are five multinationals that control the majority of the world's food source. It is these companies, not governments of countries, which are accelerating the experimentation and production of GM foods, food sources (seeds etc.) and transgenic animals - usually deliberately disguised to gain uninformed public opinion - but only where public opinion is required.

People seem to think it is a recent issue. Yet this debate has been happening in Aotearoa for around three decades. Within Government the discussions on GM in New Zealand have been around since at least the 1970's. Within Maoridom, in the late 1980's a hui was held in Kawhia recommending all experimentation be halted to allow for discussions.

Men from within a western reductionist paradigm have led the GM debate. Resulting in the exclusion of indigenous peoples knowledge. More importantly, this has excluded indigenous women globally.

Also, Maori have not been given the opportunity to properly discuss this issue within their respective Iwi and hapu. Consequently some that accept money from multinationals to purport false messages, spread mistruths. This deliberate misleading results in miseducation.

GM, a trait of globalisation, its part of the whole process to extinguish other peoples whakaaro, enforcing their own. Indigenous people globally are leading the fight against the globalisation of GM. Maori are failing to link the debate on GM as a characteristic of globalisation. GM stems from a science that is derived from a western reductionist paradigm, this form of knowing excludes and tramples upon a Maori worldview.

Monsanto (voted 2nd worst pro - GM manufacturer in Australia) has got patents on hundreds of organisms -novel inventions based on the cultural and intellectual property of indigenous people. Monsanto essentially steals traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and patents it within the global arena - requiring Indigenous people to pay for the use through loss of livelihood, markets and practices. Monsanto uses the corporate philosophy of theft and patent - biopiracy. Profits from these are sent overseas, to offshore multinational investors.

Some Maori have been dismal at rejecting globalisation. It seems to be too difficult for some. Those that have been given tokenistic standing are being used to further fuel the globalisation train. If the recent issues regarding GM happened in 1970- and 1980, this would had been at the top of the pile. That was the height of Maori awareness and protest - what has happened to our critical analysis of these events?

I understand the EU has banned all GM food/products from America. What is that all about?

America is finding it increasingly harder to export GM foods. Greece has had a total freeze since April 1999. Simply, it's no longer acceptable. People do not want GM foods.

Parts of the European Union have emphatically rejected GM food from America. Consequently America has re-routed the GM foods to third world, under developed countries - disguised as Food Aid. GM Soymilk infant formula is being purposively sent to Africa. This has caused the decline in breastfeeding. Mothers, are instead, feeding their children GM soya formula. An African doctor, who recently visited Aotearoa advised Africans do not want the GM foods disguised as food aid. Neither do they want the seeds produced through GM experimentation. They are calling for resources to reclaim their

traditional methods of land sustenance - repairing the soil, growing planting traditional crops.

It's like when they try to qualify their argument by asking 'why does your mauri object to transgenic cows?' is pathetic. They are imposing a western worldview to make us explain why we disagree with GM. Fundamentally, they do not understand mauri, its context, its concept. Their imposition in trying to justify my mauri within a western paradigm is derogatory, inappropriate and incorrect.

What has been the role of Maori in this debate? There has been no equitable participation of Maori involvement in this debate. Maori have been speaking a long time - but people are not making the link between the korero. Deliberately segregating the korero instead of understanding the holistic framework in which it has been undertaken. This is a trait of colonisation. That is, to separate and segmentate . You cannot separate out mauri, wairua, tapu - they are all part of each other.

However, there also has been a lack of debate within ourselves. Some Maori men appear to have deliberately segregated the korero excluding issues from each other. Maori men purport this segmentation by enforcing notions of tapu, taboo and called cultural protocol. We need to speak our views, have open debate. Hui without deliberate cultural taboos being used to inhibit korero.

It seems that Maori society works within a dualist framework. An example being, if you speak te reo or you don't speak te reo, urban or rural, anti globalisation or pro globalisation determines whether you are Maori. This binary opposition is at the detriment of Maori women. It detaches Maori women's interaction with the environment. It has been disappointing that some Maori men purport the binary opposition of western reductionist science, promoting the false statement that we need GM.

Last year the Brazilian Government announced that by 2020, the Amazon will have 80% of its forest destroyed. It is irreversible damage. Every day, in karakia and on the paepae, we pay homage to Papatuanuku yet this is a contradiction in terms of what we support and how we behave. They miss the point. Essentially our culture has been removed from our kaitiakitanga of Papatuanuku through colonisation and we must reclaim it.

Others see Maori as an emancipated culture. Yet within the GM debate some Maori supporting this technology are supporting the recolonisation of other indigenous peoples through advocating GM by life science companies who are the thieves of intellectual and culture property of other indigenous peoples. We need to stop and listen to the korero and not allow others to determine a timeframe for the debate.

I believe that this science is reluctant to give credibility to indigenous women participation. The colonisation of Maori mythology. Hine Nui te Po is seen as a scorned

woman. We need to decolonise the mythology.

So who are the Maori in this debate?

Nga Kaihautu Tikanga Taiao (is an advisory committee appointed by the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) under clause 42 of the first schedule to the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act)

is seen as the large voice in public arena on Maori and GM issues. However it's powers is recommendation only. It has no binding jurisdiction. Recommendations on applications are only sought when ERMA rules that it is needed. (re: Agresearch of Ruakura Cows. Nga Kaihautu had a split decision - equal for and equal against).

There is a push for more Maori scientists. The government has set up scholarship funding specifically targeted to Maori for science learning.

Ngai Tahu has set up a research arm. The challenge is, what type of scientists do they want to produce. Western science is based on reductionism - in which scientists leading the pro GM research are taught and creating from. We need to create our own scientists from within a Maturanga Maori paradigm. Therefore we will be able to arrive at our own analysis from a Maori worldview. Not a western reductionist paradigm. That is, Maori have our own different realities, our own cultural taboos.

GM has a huge impact on the environment - impacts include that of discriminating others forms of knowing such as holistic science, organic agriculture, food aid, development issues - these are all indigenous issues.

The patriarchal framework also stems from colonisation. Where are the Maori men in this debate?

Most Maori submissions to the Royal Commission appear to come from Maori men. This furthers the sexist ideology. This makes it harder for Maori women with learnings to have a say in the debate.

So, why do Maori men let this happen?

Maori men are unwilling to relinquish power - threat to personal power. This is a result of colonisation (pedagogy of the oppressed). The colonisation of the Tino Rangatiratanga movement. Crown establishes positions that perpetuate mana munching - it doesn't create experts, it provides positions of manipulation by the government. They use brown faces to show support in western science. The colony deciding where Maori should be within science.

What has been the role of wahine in this debate? Women, we have a particular role in the GM debate. Our connection with the whenua (hapu, whanau). It tenents deeply connected to the land and environment. We have children. It's the same properties globally. We are kaitiaki and our role is guided through that responsibility, we must fight to retain this role.

Globally we are participating in the debate. We are asking the hard questions, looking for answers to problems we know will impact our children. Indigenous women have been leading the calls against biodiversity and the erosion of their respective cultures. Yet, we are not visible in the debate.

Why is that?

It has been set up to exclude women. Male scientists have led the debate, research and experimentation of GM in New Zealand. These scientist purport a learning from within a colonial paradigm. This deliberately excludes indigenous people's worldviews. It also deliberately excludes indigenous women worldviews. Consequently the framework is fundamentally flawed.

Women are the kaitiaki. We have been marginalised in the debate. Women have been asking questions which others have not been asking. Questions include : who owns the work completed through GM? Who gets the profits?

The work being undertaken through GM is erosive, irreversible and it effects those who are of the lowest socio-economic decile.

But what about those that use GM medicines for cures? Scientist claim GM is contributing to the advancement of human kind. Majority of the evidence available on GM does not support this claim. We have choices. The present western orthodox medicine excludes homeopathy, rongoa and holistic medicine. At least with these we know implications - GM medicines, the implications are not known. It's about choices, instead of imposing something GM without knowing the potential damage, which is irreversible.

It appears New Zealand is heading the race to undertake GM experimentation. The Ruakura Cows, injected with genetically engineered synthetic human DNA, this research could not be carried out in Europe. Whereas New Zealand approved the experimental research.

Agresearch advising that MS sufferers will suffer from the high court decision to halt all experiments regarding the Ruakura cows. Cures for MS are currently being developed over seas. This research was rejected overseas. The only reason it is here, is because New Zealand said yes.

In 2000, you participated in a forum of scientific understanding at Schumacher College in the UK. What was that like? The learning's advised western science needed to move away from the controlling paradigm it exists within into a holistic form of understanding and participation. For example, presently science undertakes experimentation on organisms by first isolating the exact area of the organism it will use. it is argued the segmentation cannot undertake value free experimentation because the organism is a whole, therefore it operates as a whole. You cannot isolate one area of an organism and successfully

analyse experimentation undertaken because the organism is only partly being monitored. You need the whole organism to document total change. Without which, it renders the research invalid. Everything is interconnected. To isolate one area, breaks the connection. Therefore any analysis would not be truly accurate.

Personally, I believe our science is inextricably linked to spirituality. It pulses everywhere, but we don't see it. We need to reclaim our spirituality. Religion is too restricting. Only 9% of New Zealanders attend conventional church. We need to challenge our assumptions, which are usually underpinned by canons of western framework. We need to look outside and move in the bush and remember who we are and where we are from - Papatuanuku is a divine source.

Mind you we need to take responsibility ourselves. We can't wait for the government to accept responsibility. They won't fix it. So we need to do something about it.

But, isn't it healthy to have debate? It provides for equitable discussion. People have the right to say there is benefits - as an individual. Maori men purport a pro-GM stance because they have accepted money. It is morally wrong to accept money, then purport a message as being Maori when it is the message and intent of the individual making the pro-GM statement.

The Royal Commission is due to release their findings on 27th July. How do you think they will fare?

From a Maori perspective, the findings will be null and void because it is a breach of Te Tiriti O Waitangi. It was undertaken without full consultation with Maori; also it is in direct breach of article 2 of the Treaty of Waitangi.

I find it infuriating that Maori concerns are being pigeon holed into spiritual concerns, therefore having no western scientific validity. Western science was created from the crash of the dark ages. The period of enlightenment challenged assumptions. A quantum leap in knowledge. That's why the commission will fail to understand the Maori worldview - because it is seen as spiritual as opposed to fundamental.

In the late 1980's a hui was organised to primarily discuss the patenting of indigenous flora and fauna by multinationals. This was held in Kawhia. It was at this hui, the call to halt genetic modification experimentation was sought. How do you think the GM issue falls within the Waitangi 262 claim?

The GM decision in Aoteaora should be based on the wai 262 findings. Without doing so makes a farce of the Waitangi Tribunal treaty process. It is a tragedy the commissioners did not attend submissions made by the Wai 262 Maori claimants - allowing themselves to learn from stories, which tell what they feel. Instead they asked for a half-hour brief from the tribunal, advising what Maori thought.

Ma te whakama e patu (Let Shame Be Extracted)

Maori and the Royal Commission

NZ has an interesting legal system and I use the term interesting loosely because it's intriguing that a system that purports to serve justice has a known history of injustice among Maori. This past history leads Maori to expect that a fair and just representation of Maori opinion within a non-Maori system is ludicrous which was affirmed in the Royal Commission hearings on GM.

This for Maori is a reality, as clinical as many of the western trained scientists who appeared before the Royal Commission. The Royal Commission itself descends from the same genealogy as NZ's legal system and it identified its' affinity by refusing Maori legal practices to occur in its proceedings (namely the hearing of evidence upon marae) claiming equality was to be provided to all parties which it was able to grant from its downtown Wellington location. So Maori scepticism of the Royal Commission hearings were justified as our own traditional governing practices were rejected.

Te Ao Maori (The Maori World View)

All peoples had governing systems reflecting the cultural, spiritual and physical needs of those communities. This is supported by the fact that without these systems that society would cease to exist. Prior to colonisation Maori were no different. Maori governance or legal systems were robust and proven to represent the needs of our society (refer to He Whaipanga Hou: Jackson M: 1986). These systems included the practice of rigorous open debate often conducted upon the marae known as kanohi ki te kanohi literally face to face or open debate.

Kanohi ki te kanohi is the basic litmus test of evidence in te ao Maori. Evidence is presented and scrutinised by the collective ensuring honesty and transparency. This in turn was overseen by the practice of whakama (shame). Honesty was duly maintained for fear of attracting whakama upon oneself or ones family. These age old practices were usurped when the Royal Commission was established and in turn denied Maori the right to present evidence on marae allowing the hearings to be subjected to dubious proof.

The Royal Commission and Maori

Sadly in environments far removed from our own the appearance of untested Maori evidence increases of which was seen when Maori consultants were handsomely rewarded for pro GM evidence. It is necessary to say the majority of this evidence is openly available to those with the knowledge of its whereabouts and those with internet access. Conversely for the majority of Maori awareness and internet access act as barriers. These barriers in turn provide protection to unaccountable consultants who provide information (however dubious) to satisfy their contractual obligations while denigrating cultural responsibilities.

Another issue of concern regarding Maori submissions to the Royal Commission was the absence of the wahine Maori voice. Out of approximately 12 submissions presented by

Maori only one submission, Nga Wahine Tiaki o Te Ao had a specific wahine Maori perspective. Granted women's opinions were canvassed (and abused) by various submissions but they were not presented nor subjected to debate by women, which makes a mockery of the belief Ko te wahine te kaitiaki o te whare tangata (women are the guardians of the house of mankind). One would surmise that as guardians of life wahine Maori would be granted the time and space to participate fully in issues which allegedly enhance quality of life and mirror our role as guardians of life.

Ki te Ao Marama (Into the world of light) Examples of evidence that went before the Royal Commission that were not presented before Maori was The Separation of Earth & Sky Theory (Royal Commission on GM: Witness Brief: NZ Life Sciences Network (Inc): Paora Ammunson & Tamati Cairns). In this evidence it is claimed that the separation of Rangi and Papa was " a lesson about the need for Tane and his descendants to sometimes take control of the world around them for the betterment of the people." (sc13: L3) and goes on to say "In a sense it is also the first significant genetic modification" (sc14: L1)

In response to these claims by Ammunson & Cairns, Angeline Greensill of Nga Wahine Tiaki o Te Ao states

"That is an inappropriate explanation because what you are seeing is like all pregnancies, the off spring must come out sometime. Women are a whare tangata I think it is appropriate that women look at this from their angle .. If anything it was probably the first separation or divorce caused by the children of Ranginui and Papatuanuku." (Royal Commission on GM: Transcript Nga Wahine Tiaki o Te Ao oral evidence, A Greensill: 04177 L12 - 19)

Greensill also refutes the Ammunson & Cairns claim that . Tane and his descendants . needed to take control of the world around them with the statement in relation to mankind,

=20

"We were the last born, we were the youngest. By what right do we have to tell our parents what to do" (Nga Wahine Tiaki o Te Ao, 04178 L 2)

Ma te whakama (Let shame be extracted)

The Ammunson & Cairns Separation theory and similar evidence went untested. Its developers did not test its validity according to tikanga Maori at the National Hui on GM, Turangawaewae Marae, April 01. If such evidence had been presented to the National Maori Hui it may have been granted a position within the debate (it was rejected by the Hui) however failure to do so supports the criticisms expressed by Greensill and others. After 2 days of debate the Hui passed 16 various = resolutions soundly rejecting GM including:

That a moratorium be placed upon all activities related to GM and GMO's immediately. That we outlaw the patenting of any lifeforms. That the crown stop free trade negotiations and stop biotechnology multi-nationals from entering Aotearoa to conduct GM experiments.

Kei hea tatou e ahu ana? (Where to now)

Aside from the atrocities of GM and the harm caused by the Royal Commission process, the denigration of traditional knowledge for monetary compensation is a further harm that requires immediate attention. Restorative processes such as exposure and discussion must be enacted to negate the harm caused by the creation of inaccurate knowledge. This will be possible at a National Maori Hui on GM, 7 - 9 Sept, Taiporohenui Marae, Hawera. Will those Maori who were paid to give evidence on behalf of pro GM supporters appear before the people kanohi ki te kanohi? Time will tell.

For National Maori Hui Resolutions on GM: <http://aotearoa.wellington.net.nz/he/gm.html>

For all GM submissions, witness briefs and oral evidence transcripts:
www.gmcommission.govt.co.nz

Indigenous vocabulary used

(Please note: some Maori concepts and vocabulary are very difficult to explain in a colonial language, for some concepts the colonial language is inadequate in explaining the relevant concept so these translations are a rough guide only)

Maori : Indigenous people of Aotearoa / New Zealand Nga Wahine Tiaki o Te Ao : Maori women guardians of the World. =20 whakaaro : thoughts, opinions

Papatuanuku : Earth mother an ancestor of all people, according to Maori = belief

korero: talk, discussion

mauri: life force

wahine: women

whare tangata: the house of people, the womb wairua: spirit

tapu: sacred, taboo=20

karakia: prayers, blessings=20

whenua: land, placenta

hapu: subtribe, to become pregnant

iwi: tribe, bones

Ngai Tahu: a southern tribe

kaitiaki : guardian

kaitiakitanga: guardianship

marae: traditional gathering places for Maori Rangi : Skyfather an ancestor of all people

according to Maori belief. Tiriti o Waitangi : Treaty of Waitangi see =
<http://aotearoa.wellington.net.nz/back/quick.htm> for more info Tino Rangatiratanga :
see
<http://aotearoa.wellington.net.nz/back/intro.htm>

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