

IPAN speech Sunday 4 August 2019 DARWIN
Liz Remmerswaal, World Beyond War Aotearoa New Zealand.

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou.
Nga mihi nui ki a koutou (Warm greetings to everyone).
Ko Liz Remmerswaal taku ingoa.
Ko Tukutuki te awa, ko Te Mata O Rongokoko te maunga,
ko Heretaunga te whenua.

Greetings, my name is Liz Remmerswaal, I live in an empty nest with my husband Ton in Haumoana Hawke's Bay, Aotearoa New Zealand, on the east coast of the north island, surrounded by many great vineyards, Te Mata o Rongokoko is my mountain and the Tukituki is my river.

I acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their continuing connection to land and as custodians of stories for millennia.

I bring greetings from tangata whenua (people of the land) in Aotearoa New Zealand in particular my WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) colleague Pauline Tangiora, esteemed peace maker and ambassador for the International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers, from Mahia.

I also bring greetings from my local tribe, Ngati Kahungunu and from Whakatu kaumatua (elder), Des Ratima, a leading Maori activist and a former peace making soldier who features in the film 'Soldiers Without Guns'(*1.) about the end of civil war Bougainville.

I honour the people of this land who have lived here for thousands of years before the colonists, our ancestors, sailed here for a better future for their children. And just want to say I prepared this talk for an evening session last night, after a big day of lots of listening, so I haven't listed a lot of facts or a slide show, which I would have if I had prepared this talk for today now. If you want to know anything, please just ask and I will get the info for you.

Colonialisation! The elephant in the room. I'm issuing a challenge to all of us here who have benefited from colonisation to get to grips with it, recognise its power, acknowledge who we are and at least start talking openly about its reality. That's a start. It's also not so hard for some of us to remember as a descendant of Irish leaders who for generations struggled with their land being stolen by the English and given to Trinity College, Dublin.

And on that note I acknowledge the struggle that is going on in my own homeland at Ihumatao as the community is once again split and divided against itself. Our children have been standing at Ihumatao to say yes to preserving this sacred site and to say no to continuing our country's colonial status quo and to stand for a future of awareness and equality. 'Ka tu tenei wahi tapu mo ake tonu'- this holy place will last forever.

As a New Zealander, I share many links with you all in this big country, especially a healthy rivalry on the netball court! bad luck about the world cup, one goal is not very much...

My connection to your country goes back as far as 1841, when my great-great-great Aunt, Sarah Martin, was pregnant when the 'Lady Nugent' docked in Sydney in 1841 on the way from Ireland to New Zealand. She was so sick of the terrible 5 month journey she left her family forever to settle here.

Like many Aussies, my grandfather Jackie Hughes fought for the English in both the Boer War in South Africa and also at Gallipoli. Anzac day - Australian New Zealand Army Corps - was to him always a day of sombre and sober remembrance. As a Commander he carried a deep responsibility for the men under him, wrote letters to the families of those who were killed, and always kept in touch with his men.

Meanwhile my Mum's dad, Gus Bergh, far too young to join the NZ army in 1914 quietly disappeared to Adelaide, where he joined the Australian army. He returned three years later with lifelong injuries from head injuries and being gassed in the Somme.

And more recent connections - our daughter Suzanna (proud mother alert) has lived in Sydney and Canberra since she graduated. In 2015 she was named the Australian Young Environmental Engineer of the Year. And just today I got the news that my a new baby was born in Melbourne to my kiwi nephew and his partner, named Isla Ishara Hughes.

It is such a pleasure to see many of you here again since coming to my first IPAN conference in Alice Springs 3 years ago. That's when I joined the 30 hour convoy from Melbourne to Alice Springs to attend the peace convergence protesting 50 years of Pine Gap.

Since then I spend most of my time working with World BEYOND War (WBW) Aotearoa in New Zealand and serving on its international committee where we focus on Peace Education, Divestment from Weapons and Closing Military Bases. There are around 900 members of WBW in Australia, who have all signed our peace pledge, which says:

"I UNDERSTAND THAT WARS AND MILITARISM MAKE US LESS SAFE RATHER THAN PROTECT US, THAT THEY KILL, INJURE AND TRAUMATISE ADULTS, CHILDREN AND INFANTS, SEVERELY DAMAGE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, ERODE CIVIL LIBERTIES, AND DRAIN OUR ECONOMIES, SIPHONING RESOURCES FROM LIFE-AFFIRMING ACTIVITIES.

I COMMIT TO ENGAGE IN AND SUPPORT NONVIOLENT EFFORTS TO END ALL WAR AND PREPARATIONS FOR WAR AND TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE AND JUST PEACE."

Now let's look at the topics we are looking at during this conference, including New Zealand foreign policy, at our foreign military facilities, at the impact of militarism on the environment and the cost to our taxpayers.

Despite us having our fabulous PM Jacinda Ardern with her modern ideas and humane approach to governing (and apparently runs her own social media); despite her coalition government made up of Labour and Greens, but dominated by NZ First's Winston Peters who is deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Disarmament, and whose right wing nationalist party also provides our ex-army Minister for Defence.

Despite being the first country to give women the vote, and despite boasting over 30 years of our Nuclear Free Policy, we are, sadly, still wrapped up in the ANZUS alliance. Our military spending is shamefully increasing at an alarming rate up from three billion to five billion dollars at last budget and projected to rise an extra 20 billion in the next 10 years.

At a time when social services are stretched, people are homeless, and our health system is struggling, the latest military spending spree is being billed as helping climate change and being supported by the green party. In fact the military emits carbon, like no other group on earth! Meanwhile up in Rockhampton North Queensland, at Talisman Sabre, our armies and navies are playing war-games with your troops, as well as ones from the United States, Japan, Canada and England ... 35,000 troops!

Back at home we are still hosting the Waihopai spy base, similar to Pine Gap, funded by our taxpayers, where we spy on foreign powers and our own people for the benefit of the President of the USA. And every year our Anti-Bases Campaign hosts a camp and do actions calling for our government to close it down.

But I want to be solutions focused, so the question to me is what can we, collectively, do?

As a former environmental activist and local government politician, and with a social conscience that makes me acutely aware of all the carbon I am burning flying up here, this is a vital question. And while we don't have all the answers, and we aren't perfect, let's at least recognise that we are all working hard and are determined to make a difference.

First let's sign our peace pledge and join World Beyond War, bringing a global perspective to our work and supporting each other. And by the way we are putting on a conference in Limerick, Ireland, in early October, chosen because of its proximity to the Shannon airport and in support of the American breaches of national sovereignty. If you want to come, please join us, or follow us via live streaming.

Another upcoming global event is 'Count the Nuclear Weapons Money' (*2.) happening at the end of October. And another good divestment organisation is Mindful Money which helps people find a fund that is ethical, good for society and good for the environment. (*3.)

Secondly, keep working with your own and with the people you know. Look after each other. Enjoy the company, and have fun, like we're doing today. Make people want to join up and become peace activists. Let's see how we all can work together more effectively.

And let's create a global campaign to end military spending!! And create partnerships with those organisations in the environmental movement.

For example our earlier speaker this morning, Robin Taubenfeld from Friends of The Earth, and film-maker Treena Lenthall who both went to Talisman Sabre. These brave people put their lives on the line for their beliefs, facing all sorts of criticism, abuse, and unpleasantness and deserve our full support, praise, and encouragement. Pass the hat round for them! They can't work when they are up at Talisman!

Back at home, we need to keep writing letters, talking to politicians, running and attending meetings. making posters, petitions, and using social media, educating those around us. We need to keep going and keep inspired. This is a massive job, it's going to take a lifetime, and we simply need to be successful for the sake of our children and the planet.

We need to get better organised, make space to talk and connect with each other, make plans and arrange support. We need to be smarter and more strategic. We know the planet is going down the tube and it's time to do more about it. With a bit of military precision. And we need to be resilient and thick skinned, with endless goodwill. Deal with that feeling of 'OVERWHELM'.

The peace movement has its divisions, but we need to rise about that, work together and move forward with good support all round. And let's do everything in love, for love, with love and always be gentle and kind, and to ourselves especially! Resources like 'Creating Peaceful Communities' by Nadine Hoover can help>(*4.)

Finally I give you the traditional ending to a speech in our country- a song or waiata, part of the Maori tradition where every speaker finishes with a song. I have asked my friend and fellow Quaker Christine Venner-Westaway from Brisbane to lead us in a rendition of Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind" so please join in.

Finally thank you all, particularly those who organised this conference, everyone who has come, and those keeping the home fires burning.

No reira, tena koutou tena koutou tena koutou katoa.

FOOTNOTES:

*1. 'Soldiers Without Guns' <https://www.tmipictures.co.nz/soldierswithoutguns>

After 20 years of civil war in Bougainville over a foreign copper mine, the NZ Army led a successful peace initiative using maori cultural practices and music.

*2. <http://www.abolition2000.org/event/count-the-nuclear-weapons-money/>

*3. Mindful Money Mindful Money- 'helps people find a fund that suits your values, is good for society and good for the environment.

To feel good, do good and earn good returns.'

www.mindfulmoney.nz

*4. 'Creating Peaceful Communities.' Available through www.ConscienceStudio.com A tool box of ideas and practices for citizen leaders creating loving conscientious, peaceful homes, communities and societies.

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