

# KEY NOTES

## Fossil Free Acceleration Tour with Bill McKibben.

### Key takeaways

- Climate change is the first time limited test humans have ever come up against -gradual, individual, evolutionary change will not cut it in the time we have.
- The barrier is the fossil fuel industry -who not only hold the money and the power, but seek to maintain their destructive business model, perpetuating climate change.
- This is a social justice issue, those already marginalised are the most affected by climate change. This is why we must centre the voices of indigenous peoples and women in our climate movement.
- History proves social movements work. Our climate movement is big, beautiful, and inspiring but it needs everyone engaged, and quickly.

*“The great hero of my country, Dr King, would always say at the end of his talks, “the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice” -this may take a while but we’re going to win. **The arc of the physical universe is short and it bends towards heat. And if we don’t win soon, we won’t win**” -Bill McKibben.*

## Fossil Free Movement

The three demands:

- **A fast + just transition to 100% renewable energy for all**
  - It is now the cheapest way around the world to generate power.
  - The cost curve for the price per watt of PVs has dropped dramatically. Now we see millions of people are getting their first electricity, and it’s coming from the sun. E.g. Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

- We have a real, tangible solution to the climate problem Renewable energy will inevitably power our world in the long run, but we need it faster if we are to avoid a broken planet and runaway climate change.

- **No new fossil fuel projects anywhere**

- The carbon that is in the ground needs to stay in the ground. In order to meet the UN's 2 degree target, we cannot afford to burn 80% of the reserves the fossil fuel industry has already identified.
- The New Zealand government's announcement to end any new offshore oil and gas exploration was important symbolically and practically. **These decisions are powerful and they happen because movements tell them to.**
- Resistance works; The Keystone Pipeline was predicted, by almost 300 energy insiders, to have its permit by 2011. After 5 years of grassroots activism, President Obama declined the permit. President Trump regressed on that decision but the pipeline has not been built because the movement is strong and widespread.

*"We somehow have to stop the Keystone-isation of everything we are trying to do"*  
-Head of the American Petroleum Institute.

- Naomi Klein: "We may not be able to pass a carbon tax through congress but we can impose a defacto carbon tax with our bodies" -we can slow down each project by years, increase carrying costs and make them less willing to go ahead.

- **Not a penny more for dirty energy**

- The divestment campaign is the biggest corporate campaign of its kind in history. So far six trillion dollars worth of endowments and portfolios have divested in part or in whole.
- In November, the Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund, which is the biggest single pool of investment capital worldwide, divested from fossil fuels. This is significant because Norway's main income came from oil drilling.

- In January, New York City divested two hundred billion dollars in the city's pension funds from fossil fuels. They made a motion to sue five biggest energy companies for damages from climate change.
- Last year, AXA, the biggest insurer in Europe, divested from fossil fuels.
- **ANZ and our major banks still have investments in fossil fuels and are funding fossil fuel projects here and overseas.**

## State of the planet/ the science.

**Rate of change is like nothing like we have ever seen before.** We need to pay attention and bear witness to climate change.

*'Planets are not supposed to change like that, in time frames like that.'* -Bill McKibben

- Over the last 30 years, half the sea ice in the arctic has melted and thinned.
- Humans contribute the heat equivalent of ~400,000 Hiroshima explosions of CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> into atmosphere every day.
- Increased warming means more drought -resulting in famines (like in Syria) and fire storms.
- More water evaporated also means forceful floods when the water is released.
- Huge portions of the Great Barrier Reef have become lifeless in less than 3 years.
- All of the above is the result of 1 degree warming and we're headed to a planet 3.5 degrees warming than pre-industrial levels.

*"If raising the temperature 1 degree, which was what we've done so far melts the Arctic, we're actually fools to find out what two degrees will do"* -Bill McKibben

## Social/political situation

We have lost a lot of time. But **we have the tools, the network and the people now to be the biggest movement on the planet.**

- The rate of CO<sub>2</sub> has gone up more steeply in the last 30 years despite our education and promotion of climate change. Simply providing information hasn't worked.

“If only they knew about 350, they would do the best thing for people and for the planet” -Erica Finnie, speaking on the failures of previous UN COP meetings.

- We won the argument the scientific argument in the 1990s. But we were losing the fight because the fight is not about stats and figures -it's about the money and power held by the fossil fuel industry.
- Exxon knew about climate change -they spent billions of dollars building the architecture of deceit, denial and disinformation. Keeping us in a sterile debate about whether climate change is real or not, for a costly 30 years.
- In order to counter this power, **we need the currency of movements. We need activists.**
- Everyone is affected by climate change and every community has a reason to be involved. It is not reserved for environmentalists.
- There is a lot of power in the intersection of social justice movements (e.g. indigenous movements)

“there's something powerful, very powerful about the moment when when the most ancient wisdom traditions on the planet are syncing up with pretty nicely with the most modern wisdom traditions. That is when the kind of message that is coming out of sacred sites and ceremonial sites, is the same message that's coming out of supercomputers and satellites” -Bill McKibben

## Local Speakers

### Mahina-a-rangi Baker

(Ngāti Raukawa ki te tonga, Te Atiawa ki Whakarongotai, Ngati Toarangatira)

- Specific area of interest for Māori are the **implications of sea-level rise and increased flood events.**
  - Many of our marae are in flood-prone areas
  - We have climate refugees in our own country; there are still people homeless after Edgecombe floods in April 2017
- Understanding of the climate system from a **mana whenua perspective**

- Whakapapa - genealogy of the natural world, processes and relationships.
  - Make space for and support the use of indigenous, traditional and local knowledges and the strength of their understanding.
  - Māori concept of gender: we all have feminine and masculine attributes. Climate change is the result of a masculine, patriarchal society.
  - Affirm our own relationship to nature and our understanding of it
    - making a regular concerted effort to be within nature each day.
- Climate change is a component of the **experience of colonisation**, and imperial economics being enforced upon us and our resources violently and against our will.
    - Need to make hidden economies transparent, we have to expose where the money our iwi hold are being used to fund fossil fuel extraction.
    - Driving change has to be as much about creating the good alternatives, as it is about stopping the pollution. Making well-informed choices, for example, dismantling the claim that the gas sector can help us cut carbon emissions.
    - Understand the colonial context and economics, and promote new(old) economic models that value nature and that understand the closed system we live in.

## Rosemary Penwarden

In 2011, three factors spurred her into becoming a climate activist: Dr James Hansen came to New Zealand, her grandson Arlo was born, and she went to a talk by Jeanette Fitzsimons.

Rosemary describes her activism at three levels,

- **Individually:** she doesn't fly, she has reduced her belongings and buys second hand, she has reduced her waste and composts, she eats vegetarian, uses solar panels and an electric bicycle.
  - Individual choices are feel good actions. But a lot require certain privileges, and on their own they are not enough to save the world.

- **As a community**, with others: she is converting cars to electric and works on community gardens. Building a model of the society and economics she would like to see.
- **As a campaigner, (she sees this as the most important part)** in organised groups -like 350 Aotearoa. Working together, influencing change, to make sure coal, oil and gas stay in the ground.
  - **This work is the most important and there is nothing more urgent.**
  - We cannot do this work as individuals Working together as a committed group we learn and grow together; we become better at organising, more skilled, and more empowered.
  - Her dream: we can organise into a movement big and bolshy enough to save us. We are close to a tipping point here in New Zealand.
  - Everyone has the skill set to be a part of the movement. All are useful; we find our niche in this new cooperative world and just go for it. Self-confidence comes from standing, and working with others.
- Some of the campaigns she's been involved with in Dunedin include;
  - Had an elephant invited into Shell's first (and only) Dunedin "Community Engagement" Workshop.
  - Successful divestment campaign -Dunedin City Council became the first New Zealand City to divest from fossil fuels.
  - "Block the Offer" campaign in Otago.
  - Successful campaign on ANZ to pull funding from the Petroleum conference.
  - Successful divestment campaign at University of Otago.
  - Continued campaign on ANZ to divest from fossil fuels.

## Teanau Tuiono

- Climate change has happened quicker and with more force than expected.
  - It's like having an argument about how bad it would be to fall out a window, when you're already free falling.
- **Climate change requires everyone;** farmers, teachers, parents, lawyers...
  - Economists -who recognise and value more than GDP. Solutions that work for people and the environment.

- Workers and Unions -to find a just transition to the renewable energy sector.
- Planners and local government -understanding climate adaptation and preparation for floods.
- **Most of all we need activists -to speak truth to power.**
  - Work with NGO's who have specific campaigns to focus our thinking and work.
  - Grassroots movements build community and engage citizens in conversations.
- Need to take into account the **social processes and historical context** in which we live, and from which we build our activism from.
  - Important if we are to connect we need to better understand the cultural and political background on which we stand.
  - "The struggle against power, is the struggle of remembering against forgetting"
  - New Zealand is a part of the Pacific. Need a Pacific, Oceanic notion of solidarity. The Pacific has a complex and interesting history of borders and lines.
  - How we treat the lines and the bureaucracy of immigration etc. History of colonisation and how the movement of people is affected by that. Ground ourselves in our history.

*"We know that corporations and their capital can cross over borders, like nothing. But people cannot." -Teanu Tuiono*

## Erica Finnie

- **How change happens:**we used to believe giving enough information would evoke change. We also held a lot of faith in our governments to make change. If they knew, they would do the right thing.
  - This did not work and there was a sense of failure from COP15 especially.
  - There has been confusion around what we can really DO to help; Climate change is this big complex issue and it seems hard to know how to influence forums, governments, and corporations.
- The 'Fossil Free' campaign has changed the energy in the climate movement.

# X FOSSIL FREE ▶

- The ask is clear: to cut ties with the fossil fuel industry by taking investments, and their social license to operate away.
- **The Fossil free campaign is accessible and relevant to everyone because it operates at a local scale.**
- It's positive which keeps people engaged and motivated. Be proud of your institutions and stand on the right side of history.
- **Movement is strong because it is built on people power** - especially the everyday heroes who persevere, balance their commitments, who care and have courage to participate.
- Working together means there are resources to share and people to learn from.
- Erica has been involved with 350 Aotearoa for 10 years. At university she joined the Fossil Free University of Auckland campaign for divestment. Their actions and journey include:
  - Letter signed by over 200 staff calling for divestment,
  - Disrupted graduation ceremonies with oiled degrees.
  - Peacefully occupying the Vice-Chancellor's office.
  - And was awarded the 'general club of the year award' by the university itself.

The university is still yet to divest, but the students are mobilised and the presence on campus is overwhelming.