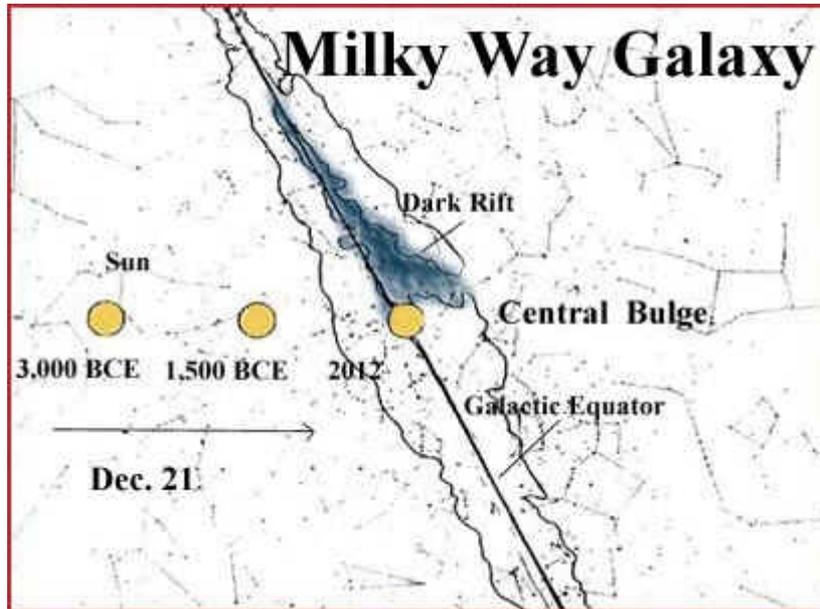


## 2012 and the Milky Way World Tree by Brian Keats October 2009

Of late the year 2012 is oft mentioned, reams have been written about it and a blockbuster film is being made on the theme. The ending of the Mayan calendar in 2012 has triggered a lot of conjecture as well as a considerable amount of research. What did the Mayans really mean with their enigmatic symbol rich drawings; were they anticipating the end of the world in December 2012; is there going to be a big leap in consciousness at this time?

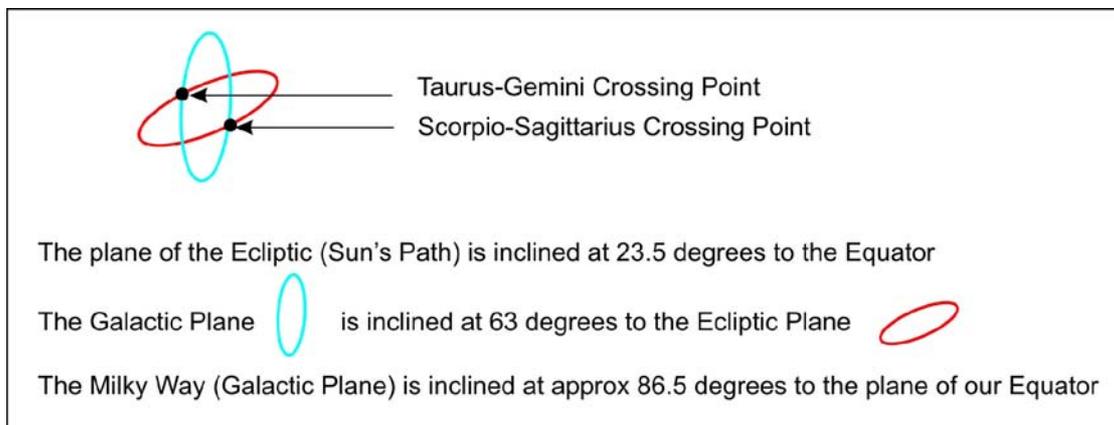
Whatever the case may be it has also drawn attention to the centre of our Milky Way Galaxy and the Sun's proximity to it at the December Solstice of 2012.



How does one find a context amongst these varied opinions?

I find it helpful to get to know the Milky Way through my senses as a start - phenomenology has a lot to offer. Living in the southern hemisphere, where there is not as much light pollution, we have all seen this heavenly river at some time or the other and marveled at its beauty.

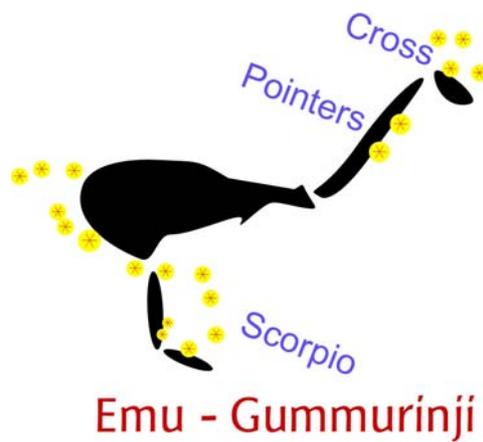
Looking at its form more consciously, we can get to know its shape and its mysterious dark zones. This great big band crosses/intersects the lesser band of the zodiacal constellations in two places. One intersection area is between Taurus and Gemini and the other between Scorpio and Sagittarius.



Looking up at the sky at night when the Scorpion and Centaur Archer (Sagittarius) are visible, we can notice a huge bulge in the Milky Way. When you observe the Milky Way you are sighting along the plane of our galaxy and the bulge is the region in which the centre of our Galaxy lies.



When you have the opportunity, notice the dark patches between Scorpio and the Cross. There is the small dark area by the cross (which is known as the Coal Sack) in popular western astronomy); the long thin streak adjacent to the pointers, and the huge region alongside the Scorpion. Put them together and you have a magnificent form that spans some  $90^{\circ}$  of the sky. It is known to indigenous peoples as Emu in Australia, Ostrich in Africa and Rhea (or Llama) in South America. At times the emu is standing with its feet on the south western horizon, then it might be sitting, and on another occasion plunging head downwards. For some cultures these dark forms are more important / potent than the star lights, shadows of mighty spiritual presences.



Looking up at the night sky has a way of drawing you out of your normal consciousness and is quite evocative. If you have got this far with the observations you will be getting a feel for the Milky Way, things are becoming more experiential.

We have looked at aspects in the form of our Galaxy as seen from our Earth abode but what about its movement?

If you are not familiar with the night sky or your compass directions, a compass might be handy for this exercise. Go out in the evening and note where the Milky Way intersects with the horizon. In most cases it will be at two places. There will be an arc above the horizon. It is half of a band girdling our earth and solar system. We can visualize the other half of the band out of sight below our horizon.

As the evening progresses you will notice that the Milky Way arch is gradually rotating anti-clockwise around the horizon. You will also observe that the Galactic Plane is arching ever higher, or ever lower, depending on which part of the cycle you begin your observations.

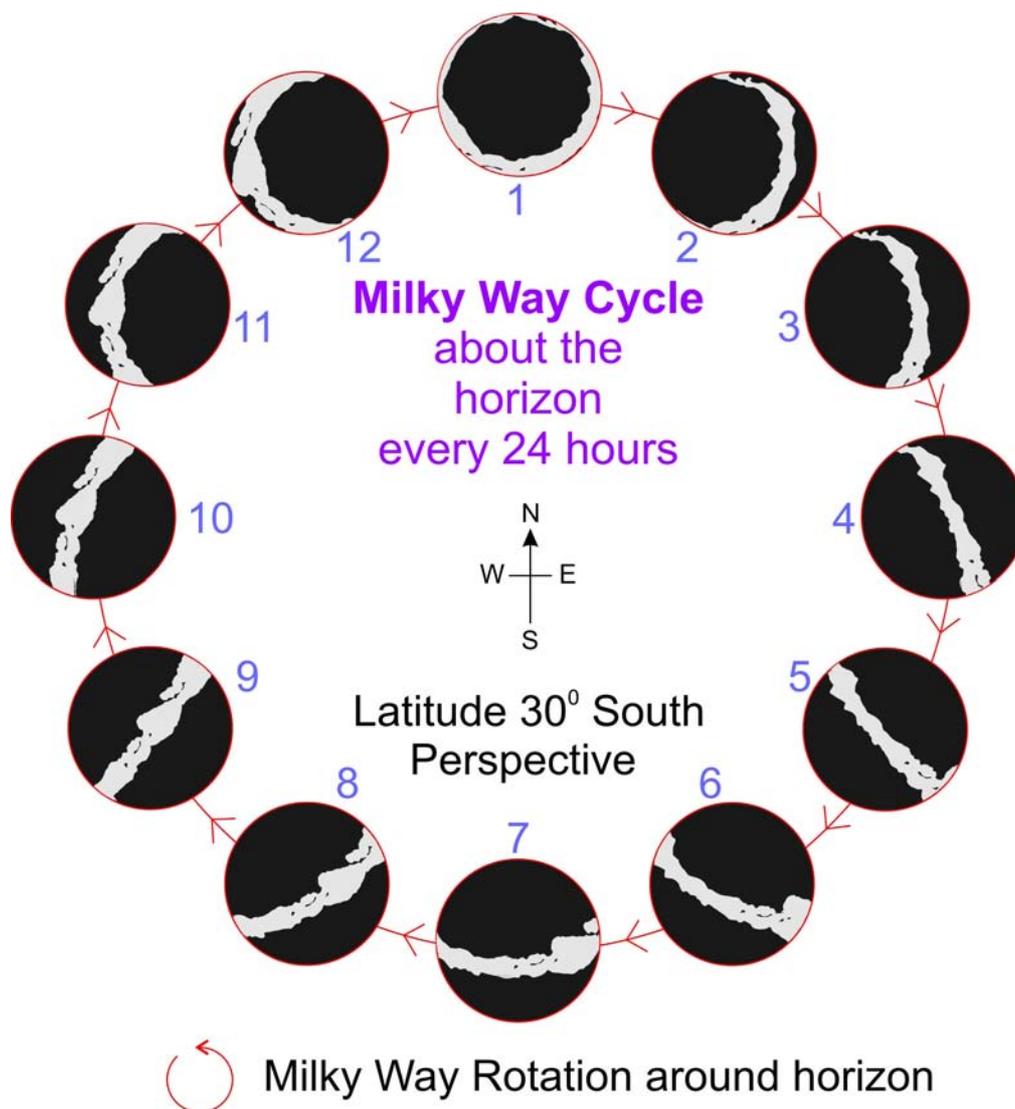
For me this is watching the dance of the Milky Way, she whirls, gyrates, majestically rises and gracefully bows. Her dance routine is performed over 24 hours and each night she begins it a little later. After one year on the dance circuit she again dances the same part of the routine that she was on at that same season the year before. On any night you see, on average, only half the routine – and then the Sun's spotlight comes on and the show is over. The parts we miss on one occasion because of the daylight, we have to wait patiently for the polar season to arrive to enjoy the scenes from those acts, which will now be at night.

Her routine begins with her poised meditatively, circle touching the whole horizon (sequence 1). Then gracefully she moves, tiara/arch rising in the east (sequence 2) and reaching a first culmination (4), and then a second culmination with the Galactic Centre overhead (9) before descending westward (11) and skirting the whole horizon once again.

I feel this is a very special moment when the Milky Way is no longer arching above, but sitting right around the horizon like a hen setting on her eggs. A brooding moment when she is at one-ment with earth humanity.

There is a pregnant pause and the cycle starts again.

Later on in this article I will refer back to this moment of magic.



- 1 The **Milky Way** is skirting around the horizon. **Galactic Centre** is below the horizon. Bull's eye of Taurus and Orion rising in the north east.
- 2 World Tree canopy is rising / resurrecting along with Gemini. Milky Way pivoting anti-clockwise.
- 3 World Tree canopy rising higher. Cancer is also rising.
- 4 World Tree Canopy culminates overhead NW to SE with Sirius high. Virgo rising in the east. Galactic Centre World Tree trunk is still below horizon.
- 5 Tree still pivoting around horizon but also rocking South to North as **GC** starts to rise.
- 6 **MW** bulge is rising in SE. Dark Emu is standing tall. Canoe is sailing westward.
- 7 **MW** flowing from East to West and dipping/bowing to the South. Canoe is sailing westward.
- 8 **MW** Bulge climbing higher as Tree ascends again. Canoe starting to tip downwards.
- 9 Tree stands tall with its trunk straight at this 2nd Culmination. GC overhead. **MW** now starts rocking North to South as Cygnus rises
- 10 Tree starts setting. Southern Cross visible in South AND Northern Cross (Cygnus) visible in North.
- 11 Tree continues to set as both crosses lower and Scorpio sets.
- 12 Tree has fallen and Galactic Centre sets.

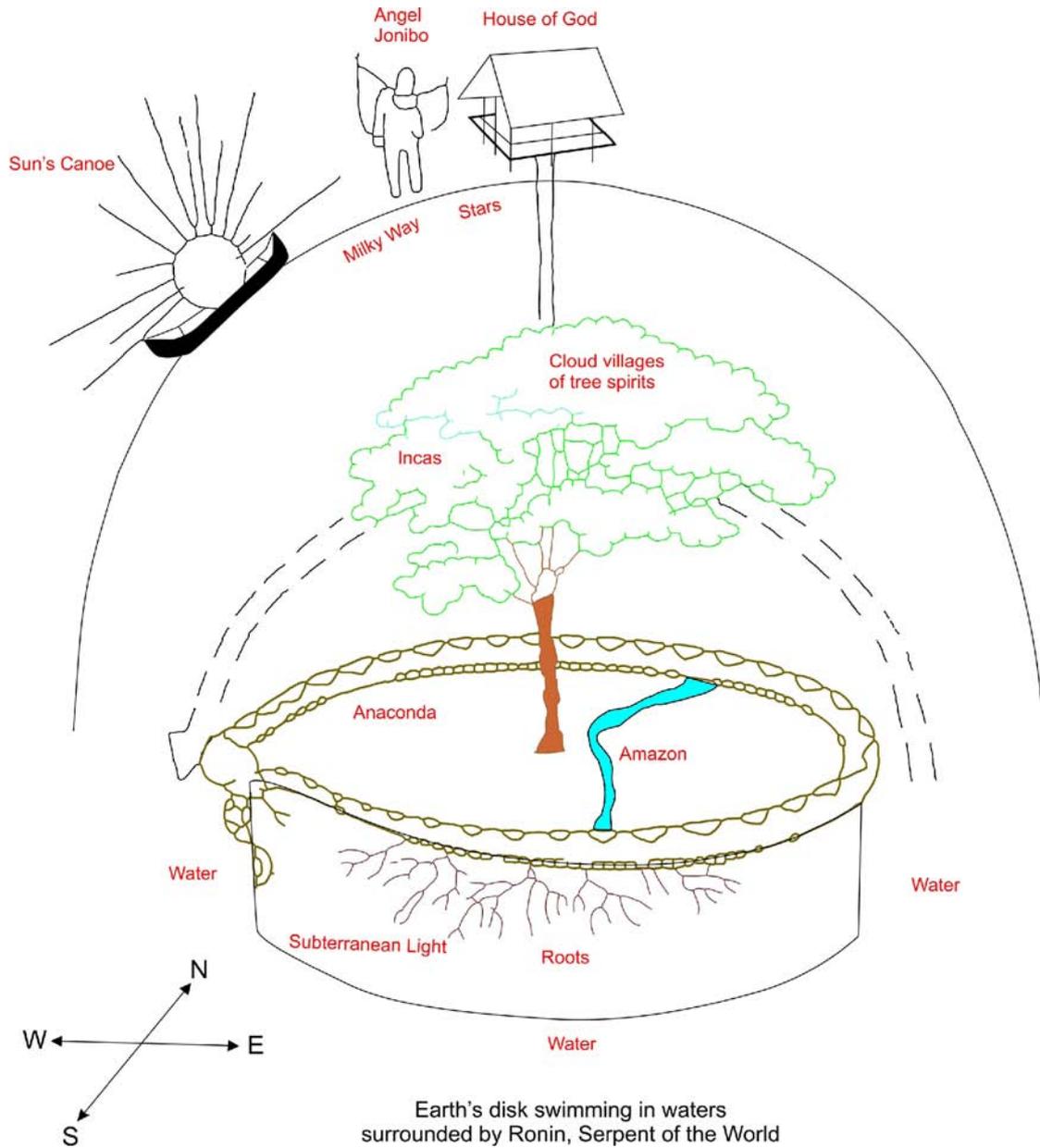
The observing and experiencing have given us some awareness and it can now be helpful to have some recollections gathered by various cultures about the Milky Way.

When we watch the Milky Way rising in the east we can see with the aid of our mind's eye / I the canopy of a tree climbing up (or being resurrected to its rightful position).

At the Milky Way's north-east to south-west culmination we have the Galactic Center bulge overhead where the trunk of this tree meets the crown. Where are the roots of this tree?

Then the tree falls and we see the Milky Way setting in the west.

Trees have been an object of worship in many ancient cultures as has been the mythic Tree of Life. For the Mayans of Central America the Milky Way represents the World Tree and its rising and falling are an important part of their ceremonies. This Great Tree has its crown in the upper worlds of the gods and its roots in the nether worlds. The trunk in the middle is our earthly dwelling place and is also the axis that joins the three worlds.



Perhaps a more familiar tree in western cultures is Yggdrasil from the Norse Legends. It has many parallels to the Mayan World Tree. Odin resides in the upper world crown with the gods and the roots lead to the frost giants and to Hel. Both trees have a huge serpent coiled around the base of their trunks.



In researching mythic stories on the Milky Way, I came across an old Maori prayer to Pourangahua which mentions 'a peaceful resting place'. These words bring to my soul the image of our Galaxy sitting around the horizon – that magic moment I referred to earlier. Pourangahua flew from Hawaiki (can be translated as from the Milky Way) to New Zealand.

I come,  
and an unknown earth  
lies below my feet.  
I come  
and a new heaven turns above me.  
I come  
on to this earth and it is  
a peaceful resting-place for me.  
O spirit of the planets!  
The stranger humbly offers you  
his heart as nourishment.



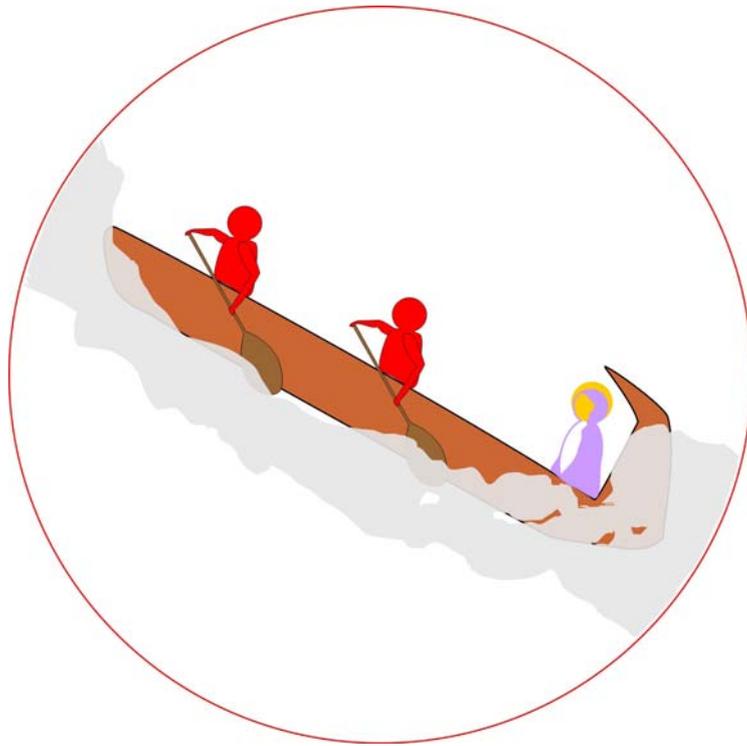
I could not find any Maori stories where the Milky Way is directly featured as a cosmic tree although Tāne, who separated his sky father Rangi from his earth mother Papa, is depicted as the kauri tree overseeing the forests in his care. An earthly representative symbol of Tāne is the magnificent kauri tree 'Tāne Mahuta' (Lord of the Forest) in Northland, New Zealand.



However, in one Maori story, the Milky Way is the giant waka (canoe) of Tama-rereti (younger brother to Tane) who had the creation task of placing the Sun, Moon and other luminaries in the sky. The front and back of the canoe are Orion and Scorpius, while the Southern Cross and the Pointers are the anchor and rope.

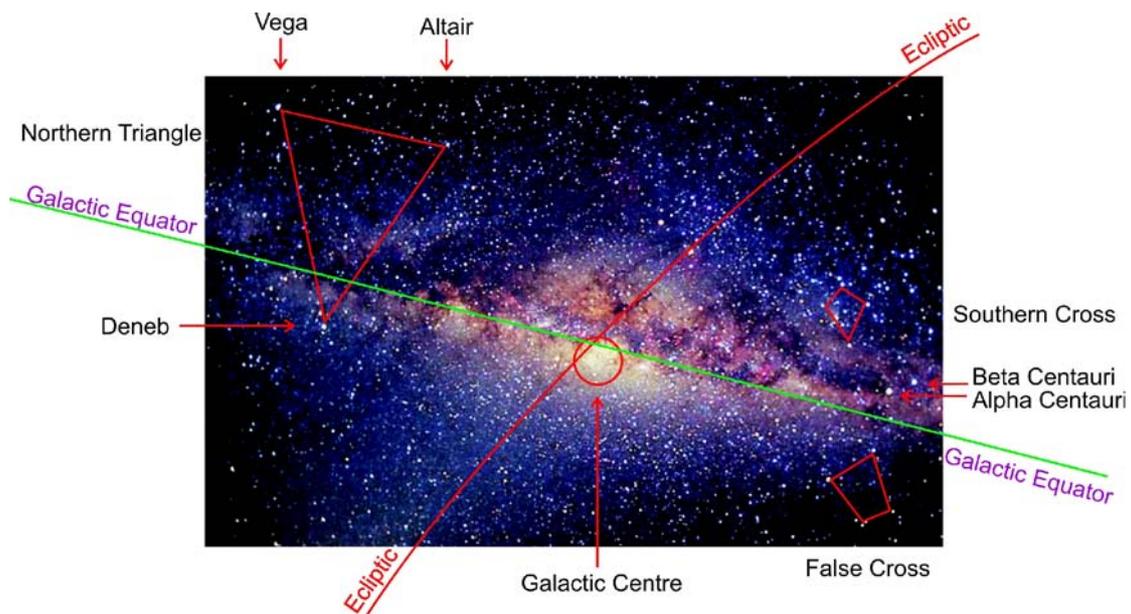
Now such a canoe appears in some Torres Strait Island stories as well as featuring in Mayan imaginations. For the latter culture the canoe featured when the Milky Way is seen with an east to west orientation in the sky (see sequences 6-8 in Milky Way Cycle). The maize god is in the canoe and is being transported from the underworld to the hearth of creation in Orion where he will be resurrected. When this sacrificial deed for life renewal is accomplished, the Milky Way turns upright and the canoe sinks.

When I look at this canoe it seems to me that the back of the canoe is the bulge of the Milky Way near Scorpio, whilst the prow is at the Orion end of the River of Heaven. The canoe travels from east to west and then its prow dives down into the south west horizon as Orion sets in the north-west.



We have experienced something of the present, reflected on the past, and are now ready to wonder about the future.

On the December Solstice of 2012 a cycle (12<sup>th</sup> Baktun) of the Mayan Long Count calendar comes to an end and a new cycle begins. After 20 Baktun a Piktun round is completed and it is said the world is destroyed and then recreated again. At this solstice the Sun will be at the crossing point of the Milky Way and the Zodiac - the Galactic Plane and the Ecliptic. The Sun has been crossing the Galactic Plane at the Solstice since around 1980 and, given this slow precession, will do so for some 36 years at least. In this cycle of time the Galactic Centre is close to, but not at, this crossing point. At the December Solstice the Sun will be at its closest distance to our Galactic Centre in 25,000 years.



What exactly is going to happen I do not know, but by looking into the past and experiencing the present we can get a sense of the trend towards the future. We live in exciting and dangerous consciousness shifting times, this millenia already bears testimony to that. It is alluring to be sucked solely into the facts and enticing to lifted into fantastic visions. And yet we need to work with facts, ensouling them, and with imaginations, grounding them. Working with and digesting the nutrition

from Spiritual Science helps us to find the balancing Michael-Christ path, enliven our thoughts, generate loving warmth and deepen our will to help shape the future.

The Milky Way in its various aspects rises to the heights, sinks to the depths, spans the widths – is all embracing. It is an experience for the physical senses and yet, in its ethereal almost rainbow like way, it seems to evoke subtle memory yearnings in the soul.

More cross cultural seeds of stories and maps of Milky Way in my 2010 Antipodean Astro Calendar and Northern Hemisphere Astro Calendar .

## Sources

Milky Way Galaxy diagram

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Yggdrasil painting by Oluf Olufsen Bagge - Public Domain Copyright expired

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[www.janeresture.com/newzealand\\_home/main.htm](http://www.janeresture.com/newzealand_home/main.htm)

Tāne Mahuta

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Other drawings and diagrams

Brian Keats

<http://astronomyinyourhands.com/index.html> is a good kiwi astronomy site

<http://www.stargazing.net/astropc> free software to view the night sky and Milky Way

*“This belt formation is a general Cosmic law. This law — which rests on an accumulation in the form of an equator or belt — you can see exemplified in the Cosmos, as far as your sight can reach, in the Milky Way, which owes its existence to that law. When you look at the Milky Way, stretching like an external belt around the heavens, with the stars shining sparsely in between, you must think of its being the result of that law which causes things to draw together into a belt as soon as a rotatory process begins. Our world system, as we have it, has really the form of a bean; it is not round, as is usually accepted, and the belt is drawn around as a distant equator.”*

Rudolf Steiner

Lecture 9, The Spiritual Hierarchies April 18, 1909,

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