

CLOUD SOUTH FILMS  
PRESENTS



**THIS WAY OF LIFE**

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## ABOUT THE FILM

A film about a family. Mum, dad, six kids and 50 horses, a beach, a mountain and a burnt down house.

In their early 30's Peter and Colleen Karena have six kids and 50 horses. Against the backdrop of a remote New Zealand mountain range and a hidden beach camp we explore the Karena's connection to nature, their survival skills and intimacy with each other and their horses as they attempt to navigate the discord between Peter and his father.

Despite hardships, the family cultivates the magic in the everyday. Untamed and unafraid, the idea of risk is alien to the Karena children. Uniting philosophy with circumstance, *This Way of Life* is a modern parable of how to live well with little.



## INSIDE *THIS WAY OF LIFE*

Just for a moment imagine a small child, barreling along a path on a tricycle, over-anxious parent running behind, or even pushing him on a little stick attached behind the bike, helmet bobbing heavily on his head. Hold that image and cut to a 6-year-old on a 16-hand stallion, galloping along a deserted road: no saddle, no bridle, no shoes and no helmet, just a pink skirt and a rope halter. She's laughing, her long hair whipped by the wind. She's flying. She is free.

*This Way of Life* is a film about freedom. It is about risk and wilderness and how one family chooses to live more connected to wild nature than the shiny life of the mall.

*This Way of Life* captures a way of life and a consciousness that has almost disappeared, a life where self-sufficiency is central, where time is not money. *This Way of Life* encompasses an understanding of a tangible relationship with nature and natural morality - unframed by regulation or compromise.

Peter and Colleen Karena are in their early 30's. They have six children and 50 horses. Masterful in the saddle, Peter is an outsider. He is a horse whisperer, a farrier, butcher, saddle maker, hunter and builder, philosopher, husband and father. Old-Hollywood handsome, supremely confident in the natural world, he is complex and conflicted in contemporary society.

Colleen Karena (Ngati Maniapoto) is a parent in the old-fashioned sense, her children are the central reason for her life. She is the keeper of her family's taonga tuku iho (heritage) and tipuna (ancestors), binding her husband and children within her vision of what family really is.

Narrated by the eldest son, eleven-year-old Llewelyn, the film explores the lives of the six Karena kids and their parents over a four-year period.

The family has little in the way of material possession but they possess a physicality most of us can only dream off. The children are supremely confident, as if risk is an alien concept. The parents allow the kids to be exposed to risk, but only after careful instruction in the function and operation of the 'dangerous' thing (horse riding, bow & arrow, rifle, climbing on rocks, unsupervised ocean & river swimming) and then instill a sense of responsibility in the child, both for him/herself and their siblings. A child riding bareback without a safety helmet is considered abuse in our world because it reaches deep into our left-brain, insisting we can and must control all things. And yet these kids have never broken a bone or been injured as they ride, hunt and play in the wild.

And it's as if their physical prowess informs their emotional lives. They're articulate and conscious of the world and their impact on it. The word 'awake' springs to mind. This family, these kids are wide-awake: to the physical, spiritual and emotional world around them.

To Llewelyn and his brothers and sisters life could not be more perfect. When their house burns down, their lives turn into an adventure when they must live in a tent by the sea.

The narrative arch of the film is defined by the dysfunctional relationship between Peter and his father. How Peter traverses this emotional minefield and his own relationship with his eldest son frames the universal story of father and son.

Set against the mountains and beaches in an isolated part of New Zealand, *This Way of Life* is an intimate portrait of a Maori family and their relationship to nature, adversity, their horses and society at large.

*This Way of Life* is a story of heartfelt parenting, where the kids are totally connected to their parents, where 'quality time' is not a function of scheduling but a constant way of being.

*This Way of Life* is a story of survival. From the outside the Karena's may look like some 'Little House on the Prairie' family. But beneath that self-

assured competency they are real people; flawed, articulate, profound and emotional. When they lose a baby, when Peter's father rejects him and steals all his horses, when their beloved home burns down they show remarkable resilience, turning their desperate circumstances into gold.



*The Ruahine Ranges*

### **Director's Comments**

It is rare to be given intimate access to the inner lives of such an articulate and maverick family. The Karena family is always onboard for the journey and we are never disappointed by the insights we gain.

At heart this is a film about the struggle to hold on to a consciousness that is almost lost in our present-day reality. In many ways the Karena's lives exist in a dreamscape, where Peter is not so much responding to circumstances as he is bending our world to fit his ideals.

Narrated by 11 year-old Llewelyn (Wellie), we see the world through his eyes, enabling us to view the way he and his family see themselves: proud, capable, strong and committed in the face of a life many would describe as poverty-stricken.

The Karena family is a portrait of a consciousness we are forgetting. Peter is forced into battle just to maintain the simplicity he so strongly desires for himself and his family. It is a struggle with implications for us all. If we lose our connection to the authenticity embedded in nature, do we lose our humanity? Peter's example is a wake up call for the world.



*Tom filming TWOL in the Ruahines*

## Cloud South Films Ltd

Cloud South Films is the midlife lovechild of Canadian cinematographer Tom Burstyn and journalist Barbara Sumner Burstyn. They describe themselves as escapees from the fantasy world of feature filmmaking and corporate media. "We believe in factual storytelling. Our documentaries are personal, well researched, visually compelling and socially relevant. For us, this is the only medium worth investing in."

**On release:** *One Man, One Cow, One Planet:* a multi-award winning documentary about the biodynamic revolution sweeping India, the fight of subsistence farmers for food sovereignty in the face of corporate bio-colonialism and one New Zealander's efforts to save the world.

[www.howtosavetheworld.co.nz](http://www.howtosavetheworld.co.nz) This film is on worldwide Broadcast release with OTF: <http://www.offthefence.com/>



## Key Creative

Director and cinematographer **Tom Burstyn** CSC, FRSA is a multi-award winning, Emmy nominated filmmaker with 30 plus years experience as a cinematographer. Tom trained at the National Film Board of Canada as a documentary maker, before enjoying great success in the feature film industry. Tom directed the multi-award winning documentary *One Man, One Cow, One Planet*. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and has dual New Zealand / Canadian citizenship.



Producer, researcher and writer **Barbara Sumner Burstyn** is a Qantas Award winning columnist and now award winning documentary producer for *One Man, One Cow, One Planet*. She is widely published in New Zealand.

**Cushla Dillon** –Film Editor

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