

Mana whenua engagement in Crown and Local Authority-initiated environmental planning processes: A critique based on the perspectives of Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki

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Abstract

In New Zealand, the Crown and Local Authorities are required to engage with iwi in resource management matters, yet iwi engagement is a widely recognised weakness in many resource management professionals' skillsets. Coloniality permeates many interactions with iwi, and reflects a profession where practitioners' skillsets have not kept pace with developments in resource management legislation that better recognise the rights and interests of mana whenua. This article explores the real-life impacts of this skill paucity on Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki, and, through a Braided River methodological approach comprised of Kaupapa Māori research and Narrative Inquiry, offers recommendations for best practice mana whenua engagement. The article concludes by discussing the coloniality of planning, and how this impacts practitioners' ability to implement these best practice recommendations.

KEYWORDS

consultation, environmental planning, iwi engagement, mana whenua engagement, Ngāi Tahu, resource management

1 | INTRODUCTION

In New Zealand, the Crown and Local Authorities are legally required to engage with mana whenua—their Treaty Partner—on resource management matters. In turn, mana whenua are morally and legally bound to participate in this engagement.¹ Unfortunately, coloniality permeates these engagement processes and often creates frustration and dissatisfaction on both sides, but especially for mana whenua.² This difficulty,

however, is not a reflection of the earnestness of individual Crown and Local Authority planning practitioners. Rather, it is a systemic issue within a profession where the legal context has evolved faster than practitioners' skillsets. This has created practitioners who are committed to engage with mana whenua via legislation, but who have not yet developed the capacity necessary to do so successfully (Awatere, Harmsworth, Rolleston, & Pauling, 2013; Bennett, 2020; Jeffries et al., 2002).

Here, we examine what best practice *mana whenua* engagement should entail from the place-based perspectives of Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki. Our discussion begins by considering the position of *mana whenua* engagement within the New Zealand resource management system. This includes the historical, cultural, and legislative contexts that bind planning practitioners and Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki together when considering resource management within the Ngāi Tahu *takiwā* (region of authority). We then describe our research methodology, which involved an He Awa Whiria/Braided Rivers approach that incorporated adaptations of Kaupapa Māori research and Narrative Inquiry. This approach informed a series of semi-structured interviews that explored the experiences and aspirations of Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki. The research findings identify both themes of best practice engagement, and a selection of areas that planning practitioners could focus on to embody these themes in their own *mana whenua* engagement practices. Based on these findings, we then critically examine the New Zealand planning profession, identifying coloniality as a barrier that hinders the profession from maturing alongside New Zealand's maturing legal systems (Williams, 2013).

2 | MANA WHENUA ENGAGEMENT AND THE NEW ZEALAND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

While holding an awareness of New Zealand's resource management system as a whole, here we focus on the experiences of one specific group as they engage with this system: Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki. Ngāi Tahu are the *iwi* who hold *mana whenua* status across large tracts of Te Waipounamu (the South Island), from Te Parinui o Whiti (White Bluffs) and Kahurangi Point in the north through to Rakiura (Stewart Island), the Tītī Islands, and a selection of other sub-Antarctic islands in the south (Figure 1). The environmental kaitiaki interviewed for this research have contributed to environmental planning processes alongside Crown and Local Authorities on behalf of *mana whenua* over an extended period, across the entirety of their *takiwā*.

The term '*mana whenua*' refers to a specific Māori kinship group who have customary authority over, and a responsibility to, a particular geographic area and its resources (Tau, 2003). In the context of this research, Ngāi Tahu hold this geographically situated sovereignty. *Mana whenua* have a deep relationship with their natural environment, considering local rivers and mountains

as ancestors (Tau, 2003; Tiramōrehu, Van Bellekom, & Harlow, 1987). It is this familial relationship which contributes to the moral responsibility *mana whenua* often feel to advocate for and protect their natural environment (Stokes, 2013). Sometimes, specific individuals are chosen to take a more active role in engaging with the environment within their *whānau*, *hapū*, or *iwi*. These people, known as environmental kaitiaki, have an in-depth understanding of specific places or species in their *takiwā*. They take up a societal role of speaking on behalf of nature, so as to educate others about how to conduct themselves in a sustainable way. The aim is to protect the natural environment's *mana* and *mauri* for future generations (Dick, Stephenson, Kirikiri, Moller, & Turner, 2012).

As part of the colonisation process in New Zealand, Matunga (2013) attests that Māori environmental management practices have been usurped by colonial concepts of resource management. A critical shift occurred, with a transition from a system in which *mana whenua* managed the environment in accordance with *kaitiakitanga* values and the advice of environmental kaitiaki to one controlled by Crown legislation that prioritised colonial ideals, such as private property rights, order, productivity, and economic growth (Bennett, 2020; Stokes, 2013; Wheen, 2013). In the last 50 years, however, New Zealand's legal system—particularly its environmental legislation—has matured, and elements such as Te Tiriti o Waitangi ('Te Tiriti') and the rights of indigenous communities have been incorporated into various Acts and National Policy Statements (Ruru, 2002; Williams, 2013). In many ways this maturation can be attributed to the Māori Renaissance of the 1960 and 1970s: a time of mass protest and political action against land sales, breaches of Te Tiriti, and racial inequality in New Zealand (Maxwell, 1997). This period spurred significant changes in government legislation, the most influential being the creation in 1975 of the Waitangi Tribunal ('the Tribunal') (Wheen, 2013).

The Tribunal initially addressed only modern breaches of Te Tiriti, and was quickly used by Māori to oppose the environmental effects of new infrastructure projects (Awatere et al., 2013; Love, 2001). The resulting flurry of cases had a profound effect on resource management in New Zealand. Major environmental legislation reform followed, with the introduction of concepts such as *kaitiakitanga*, the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the duty to engage with *mana whenua* in decision-making added into legislation (Awatere et al., 2013; Hudson & Russell, 2009; Love, 2001). When its powers were made retrospective, the Tribunal also provided an avenue for *iwi* to seek redress for historic Treaty breaches. This was an opportunity taken up by Ngāi Tahu, resulting in

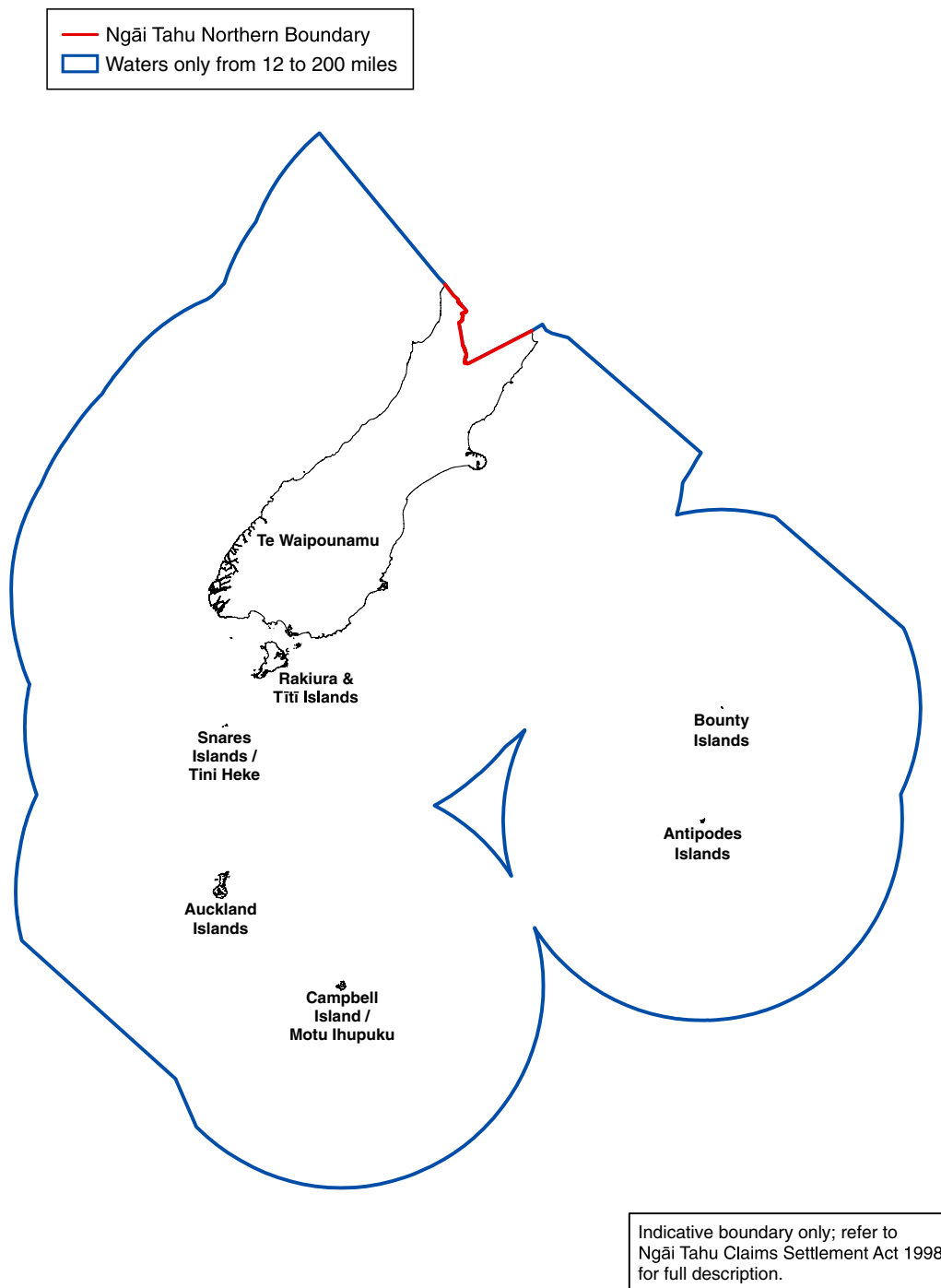


FIGURE 1 The extent of the Ngāi Tahu takiwā.
Source: Author

redress that legislated their mandatory involvement in various environmental planning processes going forward (Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, 1997).

Today, resource management within the Ngāi Tahu takiwā is guided by the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 (NTCSA 1998), and legislation which requires mana whenua and their values to be recognised (Awatere

et al., 2013; Ruru, 2002). These engagement requirements are explicit within key environmental legislation, such as the Conservation Act 1987, Resource Management Act 1991 and Local Government Act 2002. These three Acts and the NTCSA 1998 require Local Authorities and relevant Crown departments to engage with Ngāi Tahu as part of environmental planning processes. Sitting alongside this domestic legislation is the United Nations

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—a document by which New Zealand is bound, by virtue of being a member of the United Nations. Literature from recent decades, however, suggests that these legislative changes and international agreements have not translated into planning practitioners growing their capability to engage with *mana whenua* (Backhurst et al., 2004; Bennett, 2020; Henry & Reeves, 2018; Neill, 2003; Roberts, Norman, Minhinnick, Wihongi, & Kirkwood, 1995).

Jeffries et al. (2002) define capability as being a combination of commitment (the desire to do something) and capacity (having the skill set to achieve it). Both aspects need to be addressed to build capability in any area. Unfortunately, this dual development does not seem to have occurred within the New Zealand resource management system. International agreements such as the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the aforementioned domestic legislation commit Crown and Local Authorities in New Zealand to engage with *mana whenua* and with Māori as a whole, as part of environmental planning processes. The capacity of Crown and Local Authorities to undertake this engagement, however, still appears to be lacking, with many studies noting the poor-quality engagement that Māori experience (Backhurst et al., 2004; Henry & Reeves, 2018; Neill, 2003; Roberts et al., 1995). Currently, environmental kaitiaki report unskilled, frustrating, and culturally offensive interactions with Crown and Local Authorities in these processes (Backhurst et al., 2004; Bennett, 2020; Henry & Reeves, 2018; Jeffries et al., 2002; Roberts et al., 1995). Unless Crown and Local Authorities increase their capacity in this area, their capability for engaging with Māori will not improve, and environmental kaitiaki will continue to endure these negative experiences.

Roberts et al. (1995) pinpoint planning practitioner ignorance as a critical reason for this lack of capacity. This article seeks to mitigate this ignorance by providing guidance for practitioners on what best practice *mana whenua* engagement consists of from the perspectives of Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki, thus helping fill this knowledge gap for practitioners working within the Ngāi Tahu takiwā.

3 | METHODOLOGY

The research on which this article is based examined the experiences and perspectives of 10 Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki, geographically located across the Ngāi Tahu takiwā. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with these participants, drawing on Smith's (1999) Kaupapa Māori Research (KMR) approach and Qualitative Research (QR) principles (MacDonald, 2012). The aim was to understand how participants' experiences related to

existing literature, and to understand what best practice engagement might look like from their perspectives.

The research adopted a bicultural methodology, adapted from the He Awa Whiria/Braided Rivers approach (Macfarlane, Macfarlane, & Gillon, 2015). As depicted in Figure 2, the two 'braids' of this approach were QR and KMR. For this research, this approach was contextualised by 'filtering' these two braids through the concept of *manaakitanga*. *Manaakitanga* (the ethic of showing care) was chosen in recognition of the personal nature of this research for participants, and in view of the potential for discussions to touch on sensitive topics.³ This filtering and contextualisation process resulted in the selection of Narrative Inquiry as the preferred QR method, and created a bespoke set of *mātāpono* or guiding principles for the research, inspired by KMR.

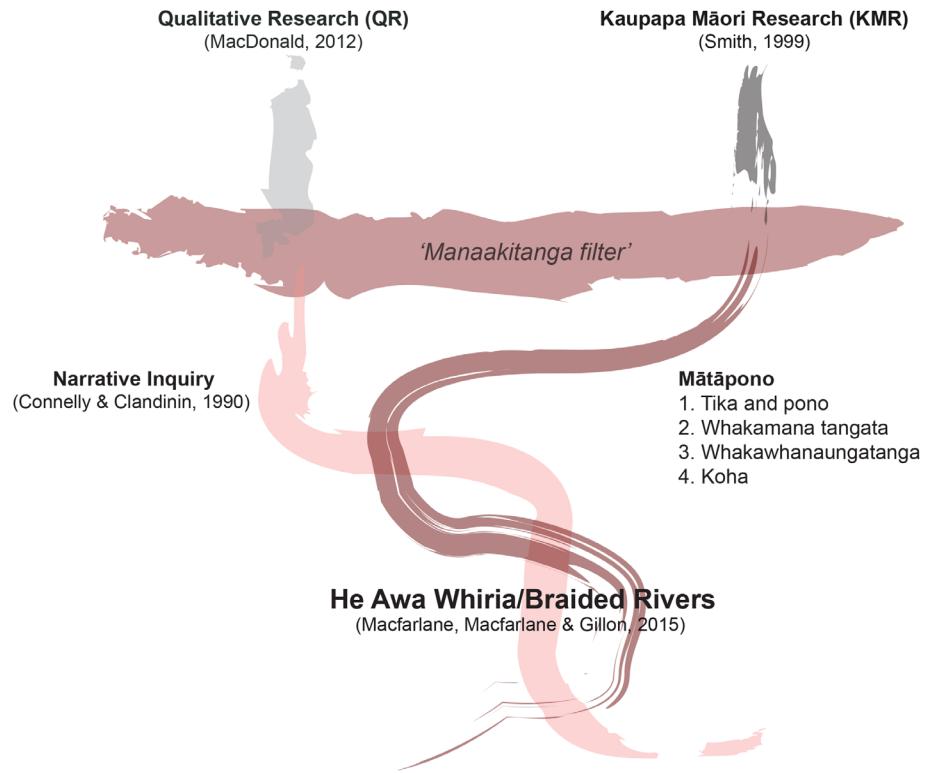
The first *mātāpono* used in this methodological approach was 'tika and pono'. This concept can be translated as 'correct and honest', which are two values considered vital when conducting oneself within Māori society (Jones, 2014). This *mātāpono* involved regular reflection on methodological decisions, including asking whether they were respectful and considerate of the participants, other parties discussed, and traditional knowledge sources. Tika and pono also shaped the way interviews were conducted, with the incorporation of *tikanga* elements such as sharing food and interview structures based on Māori cultural norms.

The second *mātāpono* was 'whakamana tangata'. *Whakamana tangata* actively directs the researcher to find ways to uphold and emphasise the *mana* of participants, the people and organisations mentioned by participants in their interviews, authors and their literature, Ngāi Tahu whānui, and the ideas and histories discussed. This *mātāpono* was particularly influential in the choice of Narrative Inquiry as a research method. It also influenced the decision to protect the confidentiality of specific Crown departments, Local Authorities, and staff members so as to uphold their *mana*, particularly when they were described as examples of poor engagement practice. Finally, *whakamana tangata* influenced the decision to prioritise the work of Ngāi Tahu scholars and knowledge repositories, thus upholding the *mana* of these sources as the morally and culturally appropriate experts on Ngāi Tahu-related content.

The third *mātāpono* was 'whakawhanaungatanga', referring to processes of establishing, building and nurturing relationships. *Whakawhanaungatanga* is considered a foundational value of Māori culture, and as Hapuku (2019) and Jones, Davies, Ingham, and Cram (2010) explain, *whakawhanaungatanga* is vital in research for fostering trust-based relationships between researchers and communities. This *mātāpono* influenced

FIGURE 2 Methodology, adapted from He Awa Whiria/Braided Rivers approach.

Source: Author (adapted from Macfarlane et al., 2015)



the choice of participants, and also the selection of semi-structured interviews as a research method due to their informal and conversational nature.

The final *mātāpono* was 'koha'. This refers to the gifting of something of value to another, to acknowledge them and/or their contribution in the spirit of reciprocity (Hapuku, 2019). Hapuku (2019) and Jones et al. (2010) explain that although money is a common koha, food or other resources such as gifts of time, skills or ideas are equally valid. For this research, koha took multiple forms. Refreshments were supplied during interview sessions, and each participant was given a grocery voucher, a copy of the completed research, and a piece of artwork. An offer was also made to present the findings in any fora participants deemed relevant.

Narrative Inquiry was considered the qualitative research method most appropriate for this research, as it allowed semi-structured, face-to-face interviews to be used to record participants' experiences. This method allowed participants to talk freely, while the researcher worked to understand the meanings and commonalities within and between participants' experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This method reflected the *mātāpono* of whakawhanaunagatanga and whakamana tangata due to its natural, informal nature, as well as the way it affirmed participants as the experts on their own experiences.

Participants were chosen for the interviews on the basis of their experience of engaging in Crown or Local Authority-initiated environmental planning processes, their

location (to ensure a spread across the Ngāi Tahu takiwā), and their existing relationship with the leading researcher. This latter criterion was based on the *mātāpono* of tika and pono, and whakawhanaungatanga. It recognised that the timespan of this research was insufficient to build meaningful, trust-based relationships with new participants before conducting interviews. Therefore, the leading researcher recruited participants from pre-existing networks, based on previous professional relationships.

After conducting the interviews, a thematic analysis was undertaken to identify commonalities across the contributions of all participants. This analysis involved grouping participant experiences by keywords, and then aggregating these groups under broader headings that represented common topics across the interviews. These topics were then analysed in the context of the overall research question, which led to the identification of three themes of best practice mana whenua engagement from the perspectives of Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki. These themes are discussed in the next section.

4 | NGĀ KŌRERO A NGĀ POUPOU O TE WHARE⁴

Using Taonga species-themed monikers, this section presents the views of 10 Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki (henceforth referred to as 'kaitiaki'), each of whom shared their experiences of engaging with Crown

and Local Authorities in environmental planning processes.⁵ Titi, Kārearea, Kākāpō, Tōtara, Matamata, Tipere, Tio, Miro, Kanakana, and Kawakawa all had unique stories which reflected their diverse experiences of national, regional, and local environmental planning processes.⁶ Whilst some Kaitiaki discussed Treaty Partners working together in an equal, trust-based relationship, such accounts were overwhelmingly in the minority. Experiences of belittlement, dismissal, ignorance, and paternalism instead permeated the interviews, confirming that Ngāi Tahu realities mirror other research on indigenous engagement with resource management systems in colonised nations.

For Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki, best practice mana whenua engagement involved:

- Equal and authentic teamwork
- Recognition, incorporation, and resourcing of tikanga and mātauranga Māori
- Informed staff members

While each Kaitiaki had different experiences, these three themes arose consistently, whether in terms of their presence being praised or their absence lamented. If these themes were to be embodied in Crown and Local Authority engagement processes, it was implied that Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki would regard them as being closer to best practice. In the following sections, each theme is elaborated, with an initial statement of the key insight derived from the interviews.

4.1 | Equal and authentic teamwork

Best practice engagement is centred on equal and authentic teamwork between mana whenua and their Treaty Partner, the Crown (or their relevant delegated authority).

Kaitiaki universally recommended improving the equity, transparency, and sincerity of working relationships as a way of improving engagement processes. Many Kaitiaki recounted the way mana whenua were treated as subordinate to Crown and Local Authorities, despite being a Treaty Partner. Miro specifically said that they had never heard Local Authorities refer to mana whenua as a ‘partner’. Moreover, Kaitiaki also reported being told they were irrelevant to engagement processes. Kanakana shared the following anecdote:

“[A Senior Crown official] had a triangle diagram up on the whiteboard, and at the top he had [name of government department]. Then in the second tier he had [businesses], and then down in the third tier he had iwi and some other [community groups], and I was so horrified. I was like, ‘why have you got iwi down the bottom of that

triangle when we are a Treaty Partner?’, and he said, ‘you should be happy that you are even in the picture’.”

Kārearea echoed this, saying they have never felt like an equal when engaging with Crown and Local Authorities. Other Kaitiaki also reported experiencing paternalistic rhetoric, and being made to feel less capable or valuable than other technical specialists.

Kaitiaki also felt that their involvement in engagement processes was often tokenistic in nature, with Matamata saying:

“They [Crown and Local Authorities] will hold a hui with you purely for the fact of ‘we met them’. Whether or not we have agreed [is beside the point].”

Kaitiaki also described having to engage in processes tailored exclusively to the needs of others, such as for the sake of practitioner convenience. Examples included holding meetings during the workday (which, as volunteers, often clashed with the employment commitments of kaitiaki); expecting kaitiaki to be able to respond to or complete tasks in timeframes more aligned with the capacity of a full-time staff member; and practitioner assumptions around the level of delegated authority that Kaitiaki had on behalf of their Papatipu Rūnanga or iwi. Kaitiaki discussed the way these arrangements impacted their ability to meet their own employment commitments, with Kārearea going as far as to say that they were “unemployable” due to the time it takes to engage Crown and Local Authority-initiated processes. This was a sentiment echoed by both Tio and Tipere, respectively.

Kaitiaki said that, at times, they are made to feel like Eurocentric world views and values were more important than their own, or that Eurocentric perspectives were the only world views and values which existed within New Zealand society. Matamata, Tio, and Kawakawa all referred to the Eurocentrism they perceived throughout the New Zealand resource management system.

According to Kaitiaki, best practice engagement should instead be built on a bicultural understanding of New Zealand, and this should be reflected throughout environmental planning processes. This would require planning practitioners to reflect on their own unconscious biases and assumptions, and to understand how these influence their decision-making, and attitudes toward mana whenua.

4.2 | Recognition, incorporation and resourcing of mātauranga and tikanga Māori

Best practice engagement provides for mātauranga and tikanga Māori to be genuine guiding elements within processes.

Mātauranga Māori is at the core of many of the positions kaitiaki hold on environmental matters. However, most Kaitiaki reported feeling that these knowledge bases were discriminated against in environmental planning processes. Some felt that Crown and Local Authorities did not see mātauranga Māori as ‘real’, which resulted in its dismissal, thus dismissing the role of kaitiaki, their intergenerational knowledge, and their culture as a whole. As Matamata explained:

“[Currently] they [Crown and Local Authorities] still perceive that our mātauranga Māori—our science—is not real.”

When projects did attempt to recognise mātauranga and tikanga Māori, however, Crown and Local Authorities often did not provide adequate resourcing to do so in a meaningful way. This was an issue noted by multiple Kaitiaki. Project timeframes were often compressed, limiting tikanga-based decision-making and relationship-building. Budgets were also not designed to accommodate site visits, or to enable tikanga Māori-based ways of working.

Conversely, many of the examples Kaitiaki gave of best practice were linked to appropriate resourcing, recognition, and the incorporation of mātauranga and tikanga Māori. Kawakawa and Titi highlighted this, recounting the way some Crown and Local Authorities allocated resourcing internally to create iwi liaison positions. When an appropriate person was hired into the role, this improved engagement processes. Tio and Kanakana also gave examples of processes where tikanga such as marae-based hui, and site visits were incorporated into planning processes, making them more culturally appropriate. Finally, Kea and Matamata shared a desire to see planning practitioners be open and receptive to decisions based on mātauranga and tikanga Māori, thus recognising the value of this knowledge.

4.3 | Informed staff

Best practice mana whenua engagement is run and attended by planning practitioners (and elected officials) who have a sound understanding of Ngāi Tahu and Te Tiriti matters prior to a process commencing.

Many of the best practice engagement experiences Kaitiaki mentioned included planning practitioners and elected officials who were humble and knowledgeable. Tōtara spoke favourably about processes where staff were familiar with Ngāi Tahu values and concepts, understood Crown responsibilities under Te Tiriti and legislation, and had an awareness of both historic issues and previous mana whenua engagement:

“You look at their [officials'] backgrounds... [an official had spent] ten years on the Waitangi Tribunal

so she knew about Māori, she got it ... They were receptive to the wants of Ngāi Tahu ... they understood their statutory obligations.”

These examples, unfortunately, were in the minority. More commonly, Kaitiaki expressed frustration at the lack of knowledge of most planning practitioners and elected officials. Tio gave the following assessment of practitioners:

“[They often] aren't aware in their own minds of our Treaty position, or the need to keep our customary traditions alive and all of those sorts of things. To be charitable, I think it is just an element of ignorance.”

Kanakana agreed, and explained how some kaitiaki feel responsible for educating ignorant practitioners on basic and easily accessible aspects of Ngāi Tahu culture, history and values. Not only was this time-consuming and frustrating for kaitiaki who, in most cases, were volunteering their already limited time to these processes, it could also be upsetting, triggering, or “heavy”, to use Kanakana's words. These conversations could often touch on painful topics such as the loss of land and culture, impacts of colonisation, and intergenerational injustices. In addition to assisting with this cultural education, some Kaitiaki also found themselves having to explain their legal rights to planning practitioners or elected officials who seemed unaware of their own responsibilities under legislation. This was frustrating, demoralising, and a waste of kaitiaki time.

Lastly, Kaitiaki appreciated staff who went to the effort to ask them about their local or personal preferences around tikanga and mātauranga Māori. Inaccurate assumptions were often made around the definition of Māori terms, appropriate ways to apply tikanga, or mana whenua positions on matters. This was evident in the diverse perspectives Kaitiaki had regarding the use of karakia in corporate settings. As the following comments illustrate, there was no one position on this matter:

“[Using karakia is] great, but get some of these other ones [Crown and Local Authority staff] around the table to actually bring their skills up, so that they can stand up themselves and do it too [lead karakia].” - Kanakana

“One of the biggest insults for me is [being asked to do] a karakia for a sandwich. I remember [my sister] used to say ‘I do not karakia to a cucumber sandwich’.” - Tōtara

“We do karakia at our Board meetings ... [which is great because] ... it helps people learn even more about our values.” - Titi

“My Reo is not that strong and I do not like the feeling it puts on me when they say ‘oh, can you open the meeting and do a karakia?’” - Miro

“The propensity to have Christian [karakia]—that gets me up [frustrated, due to the assumption that this is the religion they follow].” - Tōtara

More importantly, no Kaitiaki reported having Crown or Local Authority staff ask them about their preferences on this tikanga. Rather, staff seemed to assume that there was a universal Māori position on karakia use, which is not the case. This was representative of the way Crown and Local Authorities at times made blanket assumptions around the interpretation of Māori words and concepts, and the implementation of other tikanga. Overall, practitioners who engaged with mana whenua with an open mind, and asked for guidance on cultural matters were perceived more favourably, and were less likely to cause offence. This provided a better engagement experience for mana whenua.

5 | KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR DEVELOPING BEST PRACTICE

Five Key Focus Areas ('KFAs') have been identified to support planning practitioners toward best practice engagement with mana whenua in environmental planning processes. These emerge from the intersection of the three best practice themes introduced above and wider conversations with Kaitiaki. They are presented in Figure 3, which uses a weaving analogy to illustrate the interconnectivity between the themes and the KFAs.

Figure 3 represents the five KFAs as five strands in various shades of green, blue, and purple; and the three best practice themes as black, white, and red strands. Like any woven taonga, each aho (weft) intersects with every whenu (warp), and every strand plays a vital role in holding the entire structure together.⁷ To remove one

strand would render the entire structure unstable and unusable for its purpose. The KFAs and themes are woven together to illustrate this relationship too. Figure 3 shows that each KFA intersects with every theme, with each being a vital part of embodying best practice mana whenua engagement from the perspectives of Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki. The five KFAs are discussed in what follows, with more detail available in Bennett (2020).

5.1 | Proactive research

Planning practitioners should conduct relevant background research before engaging with mana whenua on environmental planning matters. This research should focus on hapū or iwi-specific environmental policy documents (where these exist), previous correspondence with mana whenua on similar matters, mana whenua background and context, and place-based cultural competency. Familiarity with this information shows respect for the time kaitiaki contribute to engagement processes, and the time that they—or other members of their Papatipu Rūnanga or iwi—have previously contributed. The latter point is particularly important, as Kaitiaki expressed frustration at having to not only educate planning practitioners on these matters, but also at having to re-educate them on recurring topics. Upskilling in these areas would reduce the likelihood of practitioners unwittingly committing cultural faux pas, which was something all Kaitiaki witnessed regularly during engagement processes.

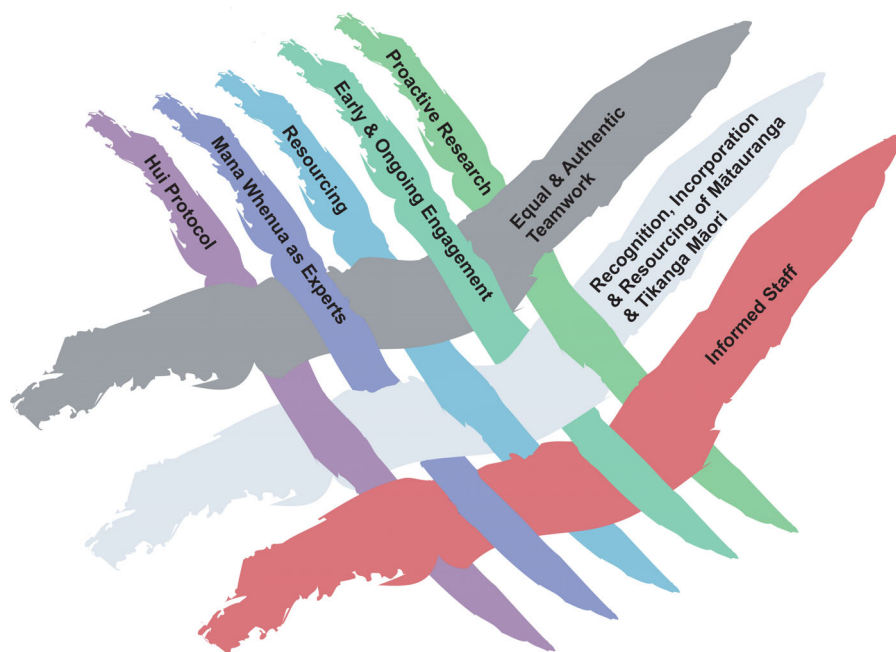


FIGURE 3 The relationship between best practice themes and key focus areas.

Source: Author

While this research encourages the use of cultural competency training, the purpose of such training—and therefore its application—is often misunderstood. The purpose of cultural competency training is not to make planning practitioners experts or leaders in Māori culture. Unless it is vital to their role, practitioners are not expected to become fluent Māori language speakers (although a rudimentary level of language proficiency is encouraged), whaikōrero or karanga exponents, or experts in haka and waiata. As Ramsden (1990, p. 4) states, turning non-Māori staff into cultural experts is “an extension of the colonial process”, as it exposes practitioners to cultural knowledge that some Māori may not yet have themselves, because of the impacts of colonisation. Mana whenua should remain the leaders in these areas, with cultural competency training serving as an avenue for practitioners to gain a better working understanding of cultural histories, contexts, and relevant cultural practices, as opposed to being performative in nature (Ramsden, 1990).

5.2 | Early and on-going engagement

Engagement with mana whenua should not be on a project-by-project basis, but rather part of a cohesive and enduring relationship. This means that relationships should be maintained between projects so that engagement is one on-going conversation, as opposed to multiple discrete interactions. Establishing consistent contact people, pre-agreed engagement processes and pathways, and creating continuous space for mana whenua to make meaningful decisions are ways to address this Key Focus Area.

A person's standing within Māori communities is typically earned through service and attendance (Te Aika & Te Aika-Puanaki, 2018). Therefore the best way to build meaningful, trust-based relationships with mana whenua is often to offer to attend their significant events and volunteer one's time, even if that means helping do dishes at the marae. This process is colloquially referred to by some as the ‘tea towel tax’. Through such acts individuals become known, trusted, and respected by mana whenua, and this then supports more open dialogue when resource management issues arise.

Equally important is the insight that such interactions give planning practitioners. By being present at iwi or Papatipu Rūnanga events in a background role, practitioners begin to experience the world within which kaitiaki function. This gives them practical experience with relevant tikanga, as well as adding context to mana whenua worldviews and priorities. This practical experience can then be drawn upon during engagement processes in ways that assist planning practitioners to understand mana whenua

positions, and which can help them to conduct themselves in culturally appropriate ways.

5.3 | Resourcing

Planning practitioners need to be able to allocate more resources to mana whenua engagement if Crown and Local Authorities want more meaningful mana whenua involvement, and tikanga and mātauranga Māori integration in environmental planning processes. Resourcing should be focused on addressing equity issues in planning processes, and the chronic skill shortage practitioners have with respect to mana whenua engagement and cultural competency. Current resourcing levels mean that the cultural needs of kaitiaki often cannot be met, and tikanga is disrespected during engagement processes. Resourcing also reflects prioritisation, with under-resourcing reflecting the lack of importance mana whenua engagement is currently afforded in comparison to other aspects of resource management. This is most obvious in the remuneration inequities between cultural experts and other technical experts, such as lawyers or engineers. All are experts in their field; however, it is typical that some technical experts are well paid, and technical experts on cultural matters are expected to contribute voluntarily. There is no logical reason for this, and this practice should not continue.

Resourcing is not always a matter of remuneration and funding. It also includes time and representation. For example, allocating extra time to respond to the procedural and capacity requirements of mana whenua is particularly important, especially when extended timeframes are already a well-documented aspect of best practice mana whenua engagement (Henry & Reeves, 2018; Neill, 2003; Te Arawhiti, 2018). Equitable representation is also important. Multiple mana whenua representatives should always be included in engagement processes, with a goal of 50/50 representation between Crown representatives and mana whenua. Lastly, funds should be made available to enable kaitiaki to participate in engagement processes, including through culturally appropriate avenues such as marae-based hui and site visits.

5.4 | Acknowledging mana whenua as experts

Mana whenua are experts when it comes to their values and mātauranga Māori, and they should be treated as such. With this expertise, mana whenua can contribute to environmental planning processes in ways which others cannot. Many Kaitiaki, however, felt that planning

practitioners (and other Crown and Local Authority staff) did not view them as capable, or as bringing value to engagement processes. To combat this, practitioners should actively examine their assumptions about mana whenua expertise and capability, and challenge their preconceived or unconscious biases. Mana whenua should, by default, be regarded as competent, capable, and as people with views worthy of being heard and considered. Some ways this expertise can be recognised in practice include respecting and supporting mana whenua belief systems, remunerating kaitiaki at a level akin to other technical experts, and ensuring mana whenua have control over the use and interpretation of cultural knowledge and values in resource management.

All Crown and Local Authorities should also strongly consider establishing iwi liaison roles. These staff members can work alongside kaitiaki to support organisations internally on matters of cultural competency. It is unreasonable to expect planning practitioners to fully grasp all aspects of the Māori world, including the nuances of iwi and Papatipu Rūnanga history and politics. Dedicated staff members who have been endorsed by mana whenua can instead provide internal expertise and guidance for planning practitioners, taking this educational responsibility off already busy kaitiaki, while still keeping it in the hands of mana whenua. It is important, however, that the right people are hired for these roles, as hiring iwi liaison staff who are not suited to the role can be more detrimental than not having them at all (Bennett, 2020). For this reason, it is important that mana whenua are granted significant influence in the hiring process. It is also important to note that hiring iwi liaison staff should not be seen to lessen the responsibility of planning practitioners to be culturally competent. Practitioners should always have a basic level of cultural competency. The function of iwi liaison roles is to help planning practitioners and other staff grow this competency, and to provide more nuanced understanding of cultural matters when necessary. They are not to be solely responsible for all matters relating to Māori.

5.5 | Hui protocol

Planning practitioners should be competent and comfortable engaging in relevant Māori spaces and protocols, such as marae and pōwhiri (or mihi whakatau). These are important decision-making spaces for mana whenua, and practitioners should expect and be prepared to work within them as part of engagement processes. There are multiple ways practitioners can ensure they are prepared. These include planning for place-based discussions, expecting whakawhanaungatanga discussions to initially

be prioritised over technical ones, practitioners upskilling in place-based tikanga (such as fluency with, and preparedness for, pōwhiri processes), and valuing kanohi ki te kanohi engagement.

The importance of whakawhanaungatanga and kanohi ki te kanohi should not be underestimated. Kanohi ki te kanohi, or face-to-face interaction, was mentioned by many Kaitiaki as their preferred form of engagement. This is because it is considered a sign of respect, and allows for more transparent discussions. Wherever possible, practitioners should use this as their primary form of engagement, despite the extra resource this may require. Practitioners are also encouraged to see the time around formal hui such as breaks, shared travel time, and the space before and after hui as valuable opportunities to build relationships with mana whenua. Such unstructured times are equally important as formal hui time, as they provide opportunities to foster whakawhanaungatanga. Kaitiaki spoke of the importance they found in having strong relationships with the people they were working with, which in turn supported better engagement processes.

6 | UNDERLYING ISSUES WITHIN THE NEW ZEALAND PLANNING PROFESSION

The findings and best practice guidance offered above align closely with existing research in this area, including the work of Roberts et al. (1995), Neill (2003), Flemmer and Schilling-Vacaflor (2016), Henry and Reeves (2018), and Larsen and Raitio (2019). This research suggests that the experiences of Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki are not dissimilar to the documented experiences of other indigenous groups. Our recommendations for best practice also closely mirror the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and matters addressed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These should be expected baselines for engaging with mana whenua, not aspirational elements of best practice. This raises questions around why best practice mana whenua engagement methodologies have not yet been adopted by planning practitioners working in the Ngāi Tahu takiwā, when guidance on these matters already exists. Instead, planning practitioners clearly continue to struggle with best practice mana whenua engagement. Roberts et al. (1995) and Behrendt (2019) view these struggles as a symptom of the Eurocentric mindset of planning practitioners.

This Eurocentricity reflects the coloniality of New Zealand's resource management system. The concept of coloniality relates to continuing experiences of the

colonial project, and recurring patterns of power that have become established over time as a result of colonisation (Borell, 2015). Such patterns influence culture, labour, inter-subjective relations and knowledge through the formation, consolidation, and expansion of Western ideals throughout colonised nations (Mignolo, 2009). As discussed above, the New Zealand resource management system has its foundations in the colonisation of New Zealand, and the Western ideas that were imported as part of the colonial project (Matunga, 2013). The coloniality of the resource management system is therefore the contemporary and lived continuation of colonisation perpetuated by this system.

The Eurocentric nature of the planning profession is one form of this coloniality in action. Through the continued prioritisation and subsequent normalisation of Eurocentric practices within the profession, there is an underlying systemic disregard for indigenous values and needs. This seems to undermine the ability of many practitioners to engage with *mana whenua* in a best practice manner, sometimes despite their best efforts. Roberts et al. (1995), Cox and Elmquist (1993), and Behrendt (2019) also comment on the impact of coloniality in the planning profession. They note that *mana whenua* input in environmental planning processes is often only incorporated when it can be done so without challenging Eurocentric values. This, they propose, is because indigenous views are unconsciously perceived as being of less importance due to the prioritisation of Eurocentric knowledge, values, and norms within the resource management system.

Humility is a highly regarded quality within Māori culture. It is considered an essential personal attribute, particularly for those holding positions of power or influence (Te Aika & Te Aika-Puanaki, 2018). This is further illustrated in the *whakatauākī* of Dr Te Wharehuia Milroy, and Dr Ngāpō Wehi (respectively): ‘*ko te whakaiti te whare o te whakaaro nui*’ (humility is the citadel of wisdom); and ‘*there are three things a person should be—humble, humble and humble*’ (Pihama, 2011; Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2019). There are ongoing theoretical debates over how exactly humility is to be defined, but this research suggests that planning practitioners often exhibit certain universally acknowledged traits opposed to humility, namely pride, arrogance, and presumptuousness. We do not, however, suggest that these are moral faults of the practitioner. Rather, we consider them to be born from a perfect storm where these opposing traits are unconsciously encouraged through the current resource management system, whilst the cultural context and elevated importance of humility in the Māori world is often underestimated or unrecognised by practitioners. This perceived lack of

humility therefore creates friction in *mana whenua* engagement processes as these two ways of working collide.

There are clear links between this lack of humility and the coloniality of the resource management system. Jones (2017), Borell (2016) and Gordon (2013) argue that coloniality influences Pākehā to assume that their perceptions of the world are universal, with all other knowledge and experiences being alternative or fringe, and therefore optional to understand or accommodate. In a bicultural nation such as New Zealand, especially considering the legislative standing Māori perspectives now have in resource management matters, this assumption cannot be maintained in good faith.

As noted in Bennett (2020), the coloniality of the resource management system in New Zealand requires further research and discussion. This work would be timely, as we are in the midst of major resource management reform, making this an opportune moment to critique and remove elements of the current system that perpetuate coloniality. Planning practitioners have inherited power through the process of colonisation, and it is now time for them to become agents of decolonisation. This can only happen, however, if their desire to be agents of change is supported by enabling resource management reform, and the dissemination of quality research that knits decolonisation theory together with practical actions.

7 | CONCLUSION

This article has discussed the views of Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki regarding best practice *mana whenua* engagement in Crown and Local Authority-initiated environmental planning processes. In short, what best practice looks like is already required of planning practitioners under the Treaty Principles of participation, protection, and partnership, and by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Hudson & Russell, 2009). Moreover, guidance on how to implement best practice is already in existence though the work of those such as Henry and Reeves (2018), Flemmer and Schilling-Vacaflor (2016) and Te Arawhiti (2018). The fact that clear direction for best practice already exists points to the enduring coloniality of our resource management system and the planning profession. This coloniality presents itself in a variety of ways, which deserve to be further researched as part of wider work to decolonise the way environmental planning is undertaken. This is a key issue that needs to be addressed if the planning profession is to mature in the same way that New Zealand's legal system has begun to, in terms of acknowledging the Te Tiriti-based foundations of our country.

If poor practice in this area endures, despite the growing number of resources highlighting how to achieve best practice, then planning practitioners—and the resource management system as a whole—may do well to reflect more deeply on the values and attributes being prioritised in their work. Are humility and good faith guiding Crown and Local Authority interactions with mana whenua, or are the undercurrents of coloniality still shaping their mindsets?


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ENDNOTES

- ¹ This dual-binding is due to mana whenua being both environmental kaitiaki under a te ao Māori worldview, and statutory consultees under New Zealand legislation.
- ² An initial definition of coloniality is the recurring patterns of colonisation. The concept is explored further in the article.
- ³ This potential is assumed on the basis of existing literature in this area (e.g. Roberts et al., 1995), where Māori speak of the emotional and cultural harms that poor engagement experiences may cause, and the close connections this topic has with the impacts of colonisation on Māori communities.
- ⁴ This title is taken from the Ngāi Tahu accounts of the life of the deity, Hinetitama. She famously sought answers from the poupu (carvings) within her whare due to their ever-watching eyes and longstanding presence (Tikao & Beattie, 1939). Here, we listen to the poupu of a different whare—the whare of Ngāi Tahu.
- ⁵ When referring to individuals who fulfil a kaitiaki role within their communities, we use 'kaitiaki' (with a lowercase 'k'). When referring specifically to participants in this research, we use 'Kaitiaki' (with an uppercase 'K'). We also use the pronoun 'they' to refer to these individuals, to disguise their gender.
- ⁶ For a fuller presentation and discussion of these Kaitiaki experiences, please see Bennett (2020).
- ⁷ Aho/weft and whenu/warp are the weaving terms for the vertical and horizontal strands of fibre.

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