

Integrating mātauranga Māori into freshwater management and planning: he kōrero whakatūpato

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He mihi tēnei ki ngā mana whenua no ngā tōpito o te motu nei, ki a koutou ngā kaitiaki o ngā taonga tuku iho i hōmai e te Atua, mo ngā uri whakatipu, na reira tena koutou katoa.

The focus of my comments is on mitigating the risk from integrating mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) into council science programmes and the challenges of co-opting Māori values into science-based monitoring.

Quantitative tools are designed to provide explicit and standardised methods. Potentially codifying Māori values within a reductionist framework, packaging one aspect of the indigenous perspective and potentially presenting it as representative of all things indigenous is both appealing for planners and appalling for kaitiaki. In effect this type of process has decontextualised the indigenous perspective.

The limitation of science-based monitoring is that while easily identifiable, tangible attributes such as the presence or absence of taonga species can be readily assigned a metric, it is with great difficulty that one would attempt to measure more holistic, metaphysical and spiritual values such as wairua, mana, tapu and mauri.

Therefore, the key question for me is: what priority is given to science-based monitoring amongst a suite of monitoring tools that include what for me are qualitative/narrative kōrero such as whakatauki (proverbs) that give priority and significance for a waterway on the basis of whakaaro (ideology) of kaitiaki (empowered sustainable resource managers).

In terms of setting priorities for freshwater management and monitoring progress towards long-term aspirations, the following whakatauki certainly lets me know that the Kaipara Moana (Kaipara Harbour) is a significant taonga for Ngāti Whātua and that the whole system – not parts, but the entire system and its well-being – is linked to the well-being of the iwi:

Te kete kai o Ngāti Whātua, Te Wahapū Moana o Kaipara e ngūngūru tonu nei, ko ngā ngaru o te moana e pāpaki ana ki te takutai moana.

The vibrant Kaipara Harbour with waves crashing on its shores is the food basket of Ngāti Whātua

Koina te mauri o te iwi nei, te aroha hoki hei wairua mo te rohe nei.

That signifies the life force of the iwi and the respect they have for their taonga, and

spiritual well-being for the region

[my translation]

Another potential pitfall regarding monitoring is that a one-size-fits-all approach towards monitoring is limited by the reliance on all iwi/hapū within the catchment agreeing that science-based monitoring method(s) are relevant for them. In that way, trade-offs can be made of one river system over another. But, who are we to say that one hapū's awa is more significant than another hapū's awa?

Consider the following whakatauki: *Mo rātau ano rātau e korero.*

This proverb recognises that each hapū or iwi has its own distinct customs, practices and values. It embraces the philosophy of subjectivity, which is so much a part of matauranga Māori. So, aggregation of values across catchments, even subcatchments, will be an issue.

But, just because something is hard to measure doesn't mean it doesn't matter.

Hence it is appropriate that other approaches like collaborative planning be utilised in freshwater management. Ethical, social, and cultural considerations should be examined equally alongside metrics in freshwater management. There is no harm in using underlying moral considerations to guide decision making on resource allocation. There is no fundamental rule of decision making that requires the mauri or the wairua of a proposed resource allocation to be measured, quantified or traded off. In conjunction with science-based models and monitoring, resource managers and policy analysts ought to engage with kaitiaki directly to get a better understanding of iwi/hapū whakaaro with regard to freshwater management in order to enhance their (planners and analysts) capability to comprehend Māori values. This is most pertinent for Māori, who place great importance on developing long-term relationships with resource managers and who value concerted efforts at co-planning, co-governance and collaborative processes.

The challenge for all of us going forward is, how do we recognise Māori values, particularly the metaphysical and spiritual; wairua, mauri, mana and tapu along with Pākehā ethics within collaborative processes and planning for freshwater management?

Glossary of Māori words

awa	waterway (river, stream, creek)
hapu	subtribe
iwi	tribe
kaitiaki	empowered sustainable resource manager
korero	narrative, story, account
mana	prestige
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
mauri	life force
Ngāti Whātua	tribal group of the area from Kaipara to Tāmaki-makau-rau
Pākehā	non-indigenous New Zealanders
taonga	treasured possession

tapu
wairua
whakatauki
whakaaro

sacred
spirit
proverbs
ideology