



NGĀ PAE O TE **MĀRAMATANGA**

Kaupapa Māori Methods: Sharing our Experiences

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Kaupapa Maori Methods

This paper describes a process of undertaking research on the significance of traditional walkways by tangata whenua. This paper arises out of pilot research completed within the rohe of Ngati Apa, to research pre-colonial walking tracks. Hopefully the lessons we learnt may be helpful for others undertaking similar research¹.

In this paper we have prepared an outline of methods by posing a number of critical questions, which we needed to answer throughout the development of the project through to the completion and evaluation. How Maori community researchers answer these questions will vary depending on the project and the rohe. We have then given examples of how we answered these questions from the perspective of the Walkways research project.

Question One: The Moana Jackson question²: Why Do We Need to Know?

Why do we need to know about old walkways in Ngati Apa? Our whanau and hapu are like many others. We are struggling to retain our reo, our tikanga, our knowledge of the whenua, our knowledge of the pa, all mana whenua knowledge. It is an enormous challenge to try to revive our tupuna knowledge. Most of our people have learnt the reo outside our rohe. Finding ways to revive knowledge and connections to the whenua is one of the main reasons that this project was envisaged.

Old walkways were sites of significance for tangata whenua. They allow access to food sources, to other hapu, to waahi tapu and numerous other areas. The ways we lived were quite unique and totally reliant on the type of environments that we lived in, in the past. Walkways were integral to survival.

We need to know this knowledge because the disconnection from the whenua is a growing gap that takes us further away from our traditional knowledge base. A depth of knowledge of te reo, rongoa, raranga, mahi a toi all stem back to a knowledge of the environment and the mana whenua of each hapu.

Question Two: How do you know that this research project is important?

We spent eighteen months talking about it with whanau and key people within the rohe to gauge whether others thought it was important. For any research project among tangata whenua, the ways in which tangata whenua themselves gather and make decisions needs to be understood.

Within our rohe we have marae committees, hapu working groups and a Runanga, which constitutes the formal structures that exist. There was a lot of discussion over a period of about 18 months with many whanau within the rohe about the idea. We were lucky that we had people working on this project who already have existing iwi credibility and who are seen and heard within the iwi.

¹ Please note that this paper is not being written to instruct but more to share our experiences in the hope that there may be aspects that are useful to others.

² Moana Jackson has posed this question a number of times when discussing researchers and their work. Her comments that it is not good enough to be doing research just for curiosity, but that we need to ask a more fundamental question; why do we need to know? Refer to the paper by Jackson M (2001) An Exquisite Politeness <http://www.apc.org.nz/pma/redefi.htm>

Preliminary discussions were held with a list of key whanau who are daily involved in land/water-based activities such as hunting, fishing and farming. Discussions were held with another local researcher who had undertaken a project to redevelop wetlands at a school site. He confirmed the importance of gathering multiple stakeholders and bringing them together to get agreement locally in order to ensure that environmental conservation could happen.

The other reason that we knew that this was important was because it excited a range of age groups for different reasons. Rangatahi were interested in the active outdoors aspect of the project. Kuia and kaumatua were interested in learning the names of sites that they had not known and sharing what they did know.

We also knew the project was important because very little has been able to be done locally by tangata whenua on environmental restoration. Also local pakeha stakeholders have little to no idea about the Maori history of the area or some of the significant waahi tapu in the area requiring archaeological identification and protection.

Question Three: What is the general context within which you are about to undertake research on your whenua?

Our approach was to undertake this study as tangata whenua. Tangata whenua research is research that is undertaken by whanau who can whakapapa to the geopolitical landscape that is being researched.

The context of the research is important to understand. Whanau and hapu based around marae are generally having to deal with serious issues. There is the growing impact of environmental degradation affecting waterways, air quality and lands. There is the increasing privatisation and commodification of traditional lands/foreshore and seabed. Both locally/nationally and internationally, there is an upsurge in the incidence of commodification of rongoa and other natural resources. Non-sustainable methods of farming, plants, animals and fish are part of the problem. Part of the movement toward commodification relates to policy such as the quota management system that allows commercial fishing of traditional fishing grounds in waterways generally. There are small numbers of whanau sustaining marae and hapu organizations, which means that the response to environmental decision making by local bodies and government agencies is often lacking. Some hapu and iwi are lucky to have a skilled person in place to be able to respond.

The lack of hapu and iwi capacity to fully deal with resource management and conservation issues is difficult. The contribution that people do make is usually voluntary and the costs sustained by the person.

Treaty Claims are also affecting most hapu and iwi throughout the country. New research is being undertaken which in some areas is providing valuable mana whenua research. Many whanau are doing their own whanau research, tracking whakapapa, putting together photos, gathering old documents, maps and photos, running wananga, etc. Within many rohe very little of that research has given an overview of the state of the environment and health impacts for tangata whenua.

Question Five: What Benefits Will Come Out of the Research?

It's important to be realistic at the beginning about what we can do and can't do. One of the biggest aims of this project was the revival and transmission of traditional knowledge to whanau and hapu groupings. However we wanted to do more than just transfer knowledge, we wanted to re-create more awareness of being active kaitiaki. To do that we created a presentation about kaitiakitanga for people to view and discuss.

This project also required talking to a variety of groups and organisations who were in some way all connected to the whenua. This required networking and bringing groups together that normally do not meet but have overlapping interests in land, including talking to representatives from the Department of Conservation, Whanganui District Council, Horizons Regional Council, Runanga, Whanau, Hapu, Iwi, local farmers, Historian/ Archivist, Ministry of Heritage and Culture archaeologist, Museum, tourist operators, etc.

Another clear benefit was the training of two local researchers. In order to increase the research capacity of whanau, hapu and iwi to conduct their own research, it was important to be able to identify, mentor and train fledging researchers. Some of the benefits of doing this included encouraging interest in gathering and researching local knowledge, and learning skills in kaupapa Maori research. Also, because we had successfully completed two earlier whanau/hapu projects, it had illustrated for people the different types of research that could be carried out. This resulted in whanau/hapu and iwi getting a clearer understanding of what research is – that it is something that many of them are already doing.

Along the way we found that there were unexpected benefits in the revival of local, traditional knowledge. For example, we were able to gather archival records, photos and maps, which have formed an important archive and are now available to iwi members through the research team³.

Question Six: What Are The Steps Needed to Complete the Research?

The research plan and actions and timetable were completed next. A core research team was formed of three, one senior and two fledglings.

Consultation was an ongoing process, before the project, during and after the project. Consultation happened with not only whanau and hapu but also within our own organisational structure e.g with the staff and Whanau Board.

For this project the following steps were needed:

1. Wide consultation at least one year in advance.
2. Gaining informal consent from whanau and hapu.
3. Setting up a research team.
4. Starting to prepare timelines and a work plan.
5. Training of two fledgling researchers.
6. Key hui held with stakeholders including farmer, iwi historians, archives and museum workers, Runanga workers, archaeologist, other community researchers etc. These hui were ongoing throughout the project.

³ At this time there is no iwi archive to deposit that material into but that is a possible development by the iwi in the future.

7. Ongoing updates and supervision by Whanau Board (the Board that oversees the kaupapa of Te Atawhai o te Ao)
8. Gathering of data, which included library and internet searches, visits to key government agencies, iwi archives, Maori Land Court archives and also interviews. Site visits were also completed with an archaeologist over a period of three days identifying significant archaeological sites. Over 200 photos were taken to create a record of those sites.
9. Hui and wananga held with whanau and hapu to pass on what we were learning. This was iwi-specific information that was not included in this report but is knowledge that pertains to the local areas e.g location of pa sites, waahi tapu, names of kainga, tupuna attached to those areas and general korero o mua. We were able to take people to specific sites and korero at those sites.
10. Completion of research report.
11. Evaluation of the project.

Question Seven: What happens when you try to put the plan into action?

It's important to be aware of changes in the plan, to be constantly reviewing not only the plan but also the way the research is going. Hui were held weekly of the research team, and hui also occurred with the Te Atawhai o te Ao Whanau Board. The review of the project happened through the life of the project through these two groups.

A number of issues arose that required careful consideration, and sometimes revision, of the plan.

- The initial plan was based on a fully funded research project but funding was only obtained for a pilot project. At key points such as this we had to re-think and re-order the plan. A big part of the project that we undertook involved up-skilling community workers in the area of research skills. Because we had originally intended to work with whanau groupings to undertake the research, we instead chose to upskill two fledgling researchers from different hapu, which was better suited to a pilot project. As part of completing the project and plan, we also had to identify who would complete the different roles in the project and also sometimes modify ways to complete the required tasks because of the capacity which existed within the research team.
- We found that we had to be flexible and attend hui and meetings that we hadn't scheduled but where key people were available.
- Trust in the researchers is also important for a plan to work. Some issues were easier for us because we had established a previous research relationship. We had undertaken two small projects with hapu and whanau. From those two projects, which involved the gathering of oral histories, trust had already been developed. We were known to complete projects and to get results from those projects that people had seen. A momentum developed from there showing how research could very much benefit the communities when it was developed for our own needs.
- We know that one thing that would have inhibited this research was if there had been a requirement to give hapu korero to the funder, as it is likely that there would be reluctance to participate. It's important to be clear about contractual requirements and what the aims are for hapu and whanau. These two areas can differ. In negotiating the contract we found that the funders

understood and did not require specific detailed local korero but did require detailed reporting on outcomes and methods.

Question Seven: How are you going to know if the research and the way you did it was a success?

We monitored the project throughout by having regular weekly meetings. Knowledge transfer was one of our key aims so the results of the hui and the uptake of the knowledge at those hui were key.

There were also a number of other ways that we monitored success:

- we were able to build research capacity,
- we were able to gather and disseminate a lot of information,
- we were able to create an archive of material for future use,
- and we were able to raise awareness of the importance and location of walking tracks, pa sites, and waahi tapu in general.

A great deal of learning came out of the project, both intended and unintended. There was a huge desire by whanau and hapu to learn about our knowledge and ourselves. There is a great deal of information that exists that can be retrieved even if the oral memory is no longer available to the whanau and hapu.

Unintended learning happened when we realised part-way through the project that a more logical approach to studying walking trails was to base the study around the rivers as the majority of pa sites were situated along the rivers. We had initially picked a coastal walkway but the coastal path was really a travel path and utilised mainly for seasonal food gathering. It did not reveal the way our people actually occupied and used the land in an everyday sense.

Concluding Remarks

There is no end to this particular project because history of hapu and whenua is a vast area to research.

If other Maori community groups are considering undertaking similar projects we would be quite happy to assist by talking to interested groups.

For more information about this paper, you can contact us at:

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