Best Practice Mana Whenua Engagement Methodologies

A PRESENTATION BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF THE MASTERS THESIS, NGĀ KŌRERO A NGĀ POUPOU O TE WHARE: HOW TO IMPROVE CROWN AND LOCAL AUTHORITY-INITIATED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING ENGAGEMENT, FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF NGAI TAHU ENVIRONMENTAL KAITIAKI

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Ko Wai Au? Who Am I?

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Six years planning experience

Iwi Authority, hapū level, academic faculty

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Speaking as a researcher with industry experience – not as an expert

Only mana whenua can be experts in their own experiences, culture, and values
Ngā Kōrero a Ngā Poupou o te Whare

- Masters thesis completed in 2020
- Inspired by experience as a planner working alongside Ngāi Tahu
- Interviewed ten environmental kaitiaki from throughout the Ngāi Tahu takiwā (tribal area)
  - Ko wai koe (who are you) and how did you become involved with environmental issues on behalf of your whānau/hapū/rūnanga/iwi?
  - What are some examples of good and bad Crown or Council engagement processes you have been a part of?
  - If you could design your own engagement process what would it look like?
How Current Mana Whenua Engagement Processes are Perceived by Ngāi Tahu Environmental Kaitiaki

“My view is the best place to have meetings is on a marae…. The tikanga there… ensure[s] a good starting point for any forum of engagement”

“I remember [my sister] used to say “I do not karakia to a cucumber sandwich”

“Well I personally believe that they don’t give a shit about us. End of story.”

“They still perceive that our mātauranga Māori – our science – is not real”

“We have had to compromise an awful lot. What have [Crown/Council] compromised?”

“They want the mātauranga, they want it… but they don’t quite know what to do with it”

“There is a litany of [cultural faux-pas committed by Crown/Council staff members] and it becomes second nature of you anticipating and correcting.”

“Some days I might do 15 hours [at work] so that I can have 8 hours free the next day [to attend Council meetings]”

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“[They] expect [mana whenua] to give that [cultural] information freely, but will pay that ecologist and pay that landscape architect. [They] will pay them a couple of hundred dollars, but expect us to write a cultural values assessment for nothing…[and] bring along a rūnanga member who is not getting paid either”

“[The Crown/Council] staff that work well with whānau] are generally the ones out in the field that have put the time in to spend with local whānau in different areas. They visit the marae and they hear the stories and they actually get it”

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According to Ngāi Tahu environmental kaitiaki, best practice engagement is:

...run and attended by planning practitioners & elected officials that have a sound understanding of Ngāi Tahu and Te Tiriti matters prior to a process commencing.

...a process that provides for matauranga and tikanga Māori to be genuine guiding and decision-making elements.

...centered on equal and authentic teamwork between mana whenua & their Treaty Partner.
Embodying Best Practice Themes in Practice

- Five focus areas
  - Proactive research
  - Early & on-going engagement
  - Resourcing
  - Mana whenua as experts
  - Hui protocol

- They are all compulsory & there is no hierarchy

(Bennett, 2020)
Underlying Issues in Planning Profession

**Humility**
- Underestimating the importance of humility in Māori culture
- Respect does not come from titles – it comes from contribution
- “Ko te whakaiti te whare o te whakaaro nui” – Te Wharehuia Milroy

**Awareness**
- Many planners are largely unaware of Māori values, histories, and realities
- For Pākehā planning practitioners, getting informed on these issues can be complex. Do it anyway

**Commitment**
- Engaging with mana whenua often seen as a hassle – not a way to add value to a project
- Apathy toward mana whenua engagement is an example of systemic racism
- Does your process reflect an equal partnership? Would you like to be on the other side?
Both compulsion & capacity must be addressed to make planning practitioners capable of best practice mana whenua engagement practices.

Compulsion is the driver/requirement to do something:
- Space for Resource Management Reform
- National Policy Statements
- Natural & Built Environments Act

Capacity is the ability/skills to do something:
- Space or New Zealand Planning Institute
- Influencing degree curriculums
- Providing upskilling for practitioners
Final Comments

- You will never be an expert in someone else’s culture... but you can be an expert listener
  - “There are three things every person should be: humble, humble, & humble” – Dr. Ngāpō Wehi
- Don’t be afraid or too proud to ask questions
- Constantly critique your assumptions
- Legislative reform can only go so far to address capability in this area – NZPI has a role too