



# RESEARCH ENGAGING MĀORI: A BICULTURAL APPROACH

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# INTRODUCTION

Development of short course at Unitec on ‘Research Engaging Māori’: a PD course designed primarily for non-Māori staff.

Focus today on the consultation and planning process leading up to this development

(Project has been handed over now; originally was going to discuss the course itself and its blended design...)

# INTRODUCTION

The preparation and the course itself share an underpinning philosophy:

- A bicultural framework
- Accounting for postcolonial politics within New Zealand (Smith, 2012).
- Accounting for a range of cultural consultation practices that may be appropriate for a given research project, depending on the level of engagement with and potential impact on Māori (Tolich & Smith, 2015).

# BACKGROUND

As a Pākehā (European) immigrant to New Zealand, and project initiator, important for me to consult very widely and thoroughly, particularly with Māori.

Initial goal: a PD workshop for research leaders at Unitec on how best to nurture Māori social and cultural responsiveness in research at Unitec – whether or not Māori participants, methodologies, or researchers are involved.

# BACKGROUND

Context for my interest: in my 6 years on UREC, witnessing repeated 'tick box' approaches to Māori engagement – too little, too late, and/or tokenistic. Working with Kaihautū (Māori leaders) for some time on addressing this problem.

# INITIAL CONSULTATION AND PREPARATION

Began with consultation with Unitec's Dean Teaching and Learning Mātauranga Māori (MM: Māori knowledge and ways of knowing).

Led to a pre-meeting with our Māori Research Partner and with the instructor for Unitec's Kaupapa Māori research course (KM research: a specifically Māori research framework/methodology).

At pre-meeting, discovered a need for a lengthy and 'layered' process:

# INITIAL CONSULTATION AND PREPARATION

Two points here:

- Among staff, even some research leaders, too much blindness about postcolonial power relations to bring together folks who have a range of exposure and commitment to processes engaging Māori. Instead, start with ‘the converted’: effort is needed within this group to tackle how best to address the problem.
- Don’t rush the process. Decided another ‘pre’-meeting was needed with a core group to identify workshop scope and processes.

# FURTHER PLANNING AND CONSULTATION

The next 'pre'-meeting well-resourced: external facilitation, good food.

Eight key people: 5 Māori and 3 tauwiwi (non-Māori).

Explored the themes of how best to centre Māori in the research space, acknowledged as a socio-political issue.

# FURTHER PLANNING AND CONSULTATION

Here is where it was decided: goal of workshop to create an outline of a PD course. Key points:

- Clarity needed for staff around what engagement might look like for different ‘levels’ of Māori engagement in research: e.g. within ‘mainstream’ research, Māori-centred research, and Kaupapa Māori research. In other words:
- ‘What are the range of options for, and key considerations around, Māori engagement in research at Unitec, a non-Māori institute?’

# FURTHER PLANNING AND CONSULTATION

Also:

Engagement is richer and deeper than 'consultation'. We need a philosophy of engagement in order to support partnerships with Māori that are meaningful and timely.

We also discussed the importance of fact that increasingly the funding of research requires Mātauranga Māori to be woven throughout a project, including its design. Importance here of the nature of the research question (Tolich & Smith, 2015).

# FURTHER PLANNING AND CONSULTATION

Finally, ask workshop participants to reflect on the following: ‘*Why is engaging Māori in research important for the health of Unitec?*’ Robust responses to this question will help ensure best practice and follow-through, rather than stopping with the idea that we ‘should’ do this (tokenism).

# THE MAIN PLANNING/CONSULTATION EVENT

The workshop itself: 25 key research leaders across Unitec.

Also externally facilitated, with myself as chair. The idea was to 'de-centre' the facilitator's input – he was offering advice, not 'expertise'. Privileging local knowledge, particularly Māori knowledge.

# THE MAIN PLANNING/CONSULTATION EVENT

As chair, my agenda, assumptions, and role were also decentred. I had to let go of key goal of outlining course (left to a later phase). The prompt: *'Why is engaging Māori in research important for the health of Unitec'* elicited very rich accounts and stories, never before shared in a group setting.

My decentring particularly important as a Pākehā chair.

The workshop was recorded and written up as the consultation document for the course. That became my key role: that of scribe, or 'keeper of the records' (Scheper-Hughes, 1992). This consultation document was widely embraced as legitimate and authoritative.

# KEY PROCESSES AND FINDINGS

## Underpinning philosophy:

**Bicultural.** Participants as well as scope/content.

**Accounting for postcolonial politics.** Expanding on the idea that ‘engagement’ is deeper than ‘consultation’, there was agreement that the ‘garden’ we want to create is larger than the ‘plants’ we would like to see thrive within it.

# KEY PROCESSES AND FINDINGS

In other words, a larger context of change is needed to grow high-quality research involving Māori that is ethical and that benefits Māori and Māori communities: change involving politics, relationships, equity and social justice, and partnerships extending beyond specific projects and protocols (Smith, 2012).

# KEY PROCESSES AND FINDINGS

Specific suggestion: at minimum an annual gathering calling together representatives of iwi organisations as well as Māori organisations generally, where different groups present their kaupapa (plans/purpose). This idea is that research projects can emerge from this engagement process.

Finally, **accounting for a range of partnership practices.**

Acknowledgement that although excellent projects will engage Māori, not all projects will do so to the same extent.

# KEY PROCESSES AND FINDINGS

Agreement that any research project must give serious consideration to Mātauranga Māori (including consultation when needed). At the same time, several people emphasised that Māori should not be consulted about every project: risks tokenism, in the guise of comprehensive inclusion. As one key Māori participant put it, ‘Māori get hoha with that’ (tired, annoyed).

Projects that do meaningfully engage Māori can then receive full, rigorous scrutiny and attention in these terms (e.g. in proposal and ethics review, dissemination efforts, impact assessments).

# REFERENCES

Scheper-Hughes, N. (1992). *Death without weeping: The violence of everyday life in Brazil*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. London & New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Tolich, M. & Smith, B. (2015). *The politicisation of ethics review in New Zealand*. Auckland, New Zealand: Dunmore Publishing Ltd.