

# 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 NGĀI TAHU ENVIRONMENTAL KAITIAKI*

Courtney Bennett  
Msci(dist), Bplan(hons),BMPA, Int.NZPI  
@Plangirl\_chch





# Ko Wai Au? Who Am I?

- ▶ Courtney Bennett
- ▶ Pākehā, from Auckland, based in Christchurch
  - ▶ MSci (dist), UC
  - ▶ BPlan(hons), UoA
  - ▶ BMPA, TWWo Awanuiārangi
  - ▶ Int.NZPI
  - ▶ Six years planning experience
  - ▶ Iwi Authority, hapū level, academic faculty
  - ▶ Kete Planning Consultancy
- ▶ 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 you own engagement process what would it look like?





# How Current Mana Whenua Engagement Processes are Perceived by Ngāi Tahu Environmental Kaitiaki

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

“I often think that native trees don't grow on their own, they grow in a cluster and work that way, and we [mana whenua] are similar”

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

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

“[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”

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

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

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

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

“[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”

“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”

“They wanted to consult us to death – which they did. But they wanted to consult us in a way that we were backing up what they wanted to do”



# Themes

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 mātauranga 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)



- 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

Humility



- 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

Awareness



- 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?

Commitment



# Underlying Issues in Planning Profession



# Compulsion vs Capacity

- ▶ 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