A Māori perspective on the localized relevance of museums and their community relationships

Introduction
As I write, I express my close aroha and affiliation to te iwi o Tūhoe, to whom I whakapapa. This research is dedicated to our whānau in Te Urewera, situated in the eastern Bay of Plenty. May you remain steadfast to our beliefs of traditionalism and passive resistance. Te Mana Motuhake o Tūhoe! As I travel through my journey, I remember those who have passed on from our Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Awa and Te Arawa whakapapa. Ko taku iwituaroa tēnā.

In this article, I explore the importance of kaitiakitana, wāhi, mātaurana and mahi to museums throughout Aotearoa, from a tikana Māori perspective. Furthermore, I examine the relevance of biculturalism at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand in Wellington and the Auckland War Memorial Museum, as examples of museums that present a rich cultural experience.

It is important to acknowledge that museums provide communities with a unique interactive experience where the public can engage with culture through exhibitions, events and more. Museums are uniquely placed to cater to the needs of the individual, regardless of race, gender, class, sexuality or ability. They provide people with a sense of
place and collective heritage and are a great way of learning about local and global history. Importantly, they also offer opportunities to develop societal understanding of biculturalism within Aotearoa.

Tikana

Tikana (or tikanga), as described by Ranginui Walker (2004), are a customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in a Māori social context. The word ‘tikana’ derives from ‘tika’, which translates to correct, appropriate, just or accurate: tikana are therefore the correct ways to practise Māori customs.

Leading professor and academic Sir Mason Durie suggests tikana are habit, lore, methods and rules (Walker, 2004, p. 67). Though an essential element of Te Ao Māori, every hapū, iwi and Māori organisation approaches tikana differently. Many iwi have particular worldviews and bodies of knowledge. For example, the Whanganui iwi are ‘river people’ and the Ngāti Porou iwi are the ‘coasties’. Their tikana is based on and is particular to their surroundings and history, and this diversity within Māoridom needs to be reflected in museums.

Understanding tikana assists museums to develop relationships with iwi, hapū and other communities, and to care for and manage taona in more culturally appropriate and collaborative ways. Many museums have begun to involve aspects of tikana in their work processes, which is more respectful to our culture. For example, new staff or special guests are often welcomed with a pōwhiri, wai is made available for ceremonial cleansing purposes, and food is restricted near taona.

For many decades, Māori and Pākehā, both within and beyond the museum


“Museums provide communities with a unique interactive experience”
context, have faced differences of opinion and cultural misunderstandings. Along with developing bicultural practices and improving the recognition of tikana, museums have welcomed Māori into roles as curators, trust members, museum guides, science communicators, editors, marketers, and more. However, many museums within Aotearoa still have a small percentage of Māori employees, especially in executive positions, which shows that there is still a way to go in the pursuit of biculturalism.

Kaitiakitana
Professor Māori Marsden and Maui Pomare both describe a kaitiaki as a guardian or custodian, and kaitiakitana to mean guardianship, protection or preservation (Royal, 2012). Kaitiakitana is a way of managing an environment based on a traditional Māori worldview. For example, it encompasses many concepts and practices of sustainability, so by implementing kaitiakitana, Māori are able to protect these environments for future generations and pay homage to tūpuna.

Museums practise kaitiakitana in many different ways, from the care of taona to the transmission of knowledge. This also encompasses an awareness of particular protocols and customs around museum collections. It is possible for museums to further their practices relating to kaitiakitana by involving kaumātua to provide advice and guide museum staff and groups as they have in the past (McCarthy, 2011, p. 2).

It is vital that museums establish reciprocal relationships with a broad range of communities in order to meet the needs of visitors, stakeholders and staff, as well as the communities themselves. Involvement with Māori can come at many levels, including with iwi, hapū, schools, clubs and more. These communal groups provide unique ideas that can help in the practice of cultural harmony. Locally, these groups come together and share or express opinions and matters related to kaitiakitana. Community involvement is necessary in inclusive procedures to ensure all perspectives are taken into account and cultural factors are understood and acknowledged.

Māori who have epitomised kaitiakitana in a museum context include Apirana Ngata, a prominent politician and lawyer. He was the first Māori person to become involved in museum relations and communities when he joined the board of the Dominion Museum in Wellington in 1930. This saw a shift towards the acceptance of Māori in such fields, creating a ripple effect through the future of Māori in museums (Tapsell, 2014). Many have followed in his footsteps, including Ngahuia Te Awekoti, who became Waikato Museum’s first Māori curator in 1987, and Paora Tapsell, curator at the Rotorua Museum of Art and History in 1990 (Tapsell, 2014). These academics are kaitiaki who ignite the ahi kā within their rohe.
Wāhi
Wāhi is a noun that means place, location or allocation. It suggests the customary systems of values and practices that are embedded into specific locations. We as museums must take into account differing ideas of particular iwi and hapū based on locale. These differences could involve tension in inter-tribal communities; however, it is important that museum employees are aware of each place’s individual beliefs, customs and practices so we can honour and treat them with care.

Mahi
Mahi is the nucleus of most things. Within museums, mahi is focused, thorough and continual and must exemplify the highest standards of professionalism. Relationships are formed at a macro and micro level within the work environment.

Mahi involves groundwork and understanding the requirements needed to maintain sound relationships with visitors and the community. These may include the acknowledgement to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, a code of ethics and iwi representation. It is important to help clarify mandatory museum consent systems, including to whānau, kaumātua or marae communities who may be asked to permit rights of particular taona and disclosed information.

Biculturalism in museums involves an understanding of differences in work ethics and cultural beliefs. For example, in a Māori context this includes women not working near certain areas or preparing plant matter or kai during her menstrual cycle. Many Māori consider this cycle a tapu time, with wahine taking into consideration the suitable times that they are able to

A selection of taona pūoro from the collection of Horomona Horo.
get close to taona or sacred sites like urupā. Everything must be taken into account, as a show of respect to tikana and Māori culture.

Mātaurana
The importance of mātaurana is embodied by a Māori whakataukī which says, “Te manu kai i te miro, nōna te nahere. Te manu kai i te mātaurana, nōna te ao” or “The bird that feeds on the miro (a type of berry), theirs is the forest. The bird that feeds from the tree of knowledge, theirs is the world.” This acknowledges the idea that, when used correctly, mātaurana can assist with wisdom and collective thought, which provides us with many more opportunities than if it is not applied.

Working with local iwi or hapū is reciprocal, and can strengthen relationships and share knowledge, forming partnerships that can, in return, assist in the development of accurate, innovative and interesting exhibitions applying mātaurana and tikana to local stories.

The importance of taona is a central concept of mātaurana. Many Māori believe that taona held by museums are asleep until they have some connection with iwi, and that these iwi members can awaken and revitalise taona.

Museums and Mātaurana
Te Papa Tongarewa is an example that emphasises the richness and vitality of Māori culture. It is a bicultural museum where the management structure, spatial layout, architectural design and exhibition topics are equally divided between Māori and Pākehā (Te Papa National Services Te Paerangi, 2006). Te Papa provides opportunities for visitors to gain an understanding and appreciation of Te Ao Māori as a living and vibrant culture.

Arapata Hakiwai is Kaihautū (Māori Co-Leader) at Te Papa. His role shares the strategic leadership of Te Papa alongside the museum’s director, and Hakiwai practises bicultural leadership and tautoko whilst developing wider networks and relationships with iwi and hapū. As part of his role, he oversees Te Papa’s Iwi Relationship Programme, and their Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme. The New Zealand Government established the repatriation programme in 2003, giving Te Papa the mandate to develop an official process for the repatriation of Kōiwi and Koimi Tanata (Māori and Moriori skeletal remains) from international institutions to local iwi. Hakiwai is also responsible for Rongomaraeroa Marae and the museum’s tribal group in residence.

Looking North, the Auckland War Memorial Act 1996 includes a provision for Taumata-ā-Iwi, a committee that represents the interests of Māori. It is founded upon the principle of mana whenua (customary authority of ancestral land) with members from three iwi: Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Pāoa and Tainui. Taumata-ā-Iwi’s governance principles are much like those of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and they epitomise the concepts of mātaurana and tikana. The five principles cover the following: the right to advice, partnership, Māori
expectations, active protection and redress for past misunderstandings. Existing and proposed museum policies are reviewed by Taumata-ā-Iwi, who then make their recommendations to the Auckland Museum Trust Board (Auckland War Memorial Museum, 2016).

The Auckland War Memorial Museum executive team includes the position of Tumuaki Director, Māori Projects and Development. Linnae Pohatu is the Tumuaki of the team and her role includes enhancing the museum’s relations with localised Māori, who can assist in broadening the range of services that the museum offers to the community.

Other museums throughout Aotearoa cater to their communities and meet local needs in many ways. At the Otago Museum, where I work, the recently closed Hākui: Women of Kāi Tahu told the stories of wāhine from local Kāi Tahu iwi. The Tāngata Whenua gallery includes a southern section, which splits the gallery right down the centre from the north. Here, visitors can see idealised pounamu ornamentations, local stories and dioramas displaying examples of local Kāi Tahu practices.

**Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Wai 262**

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the founding document of modern Aotearoa. Although some museums do not publically display Te Tiriti documentation or information on its history, it is the backbone of encouraging the spirit of partnership and good will. Te Tiriti governs relations between cultures and ensures the rights of both Māori and Pākehā are protected (Orange, 1987, p. 5). Many years after the signing of Te Tiriti, the evolution of the Waitangi Tribunal led to claims from iwi and hapū throughout Aotearoa, which addressed Māori concerns about land or property issues. The biggest claim put to the tribunal was the Wai 262 Flora Fauna and Intellectual Property Rights Act.

The act provided protection for the historical preservation of objects and knowledge.

Extremely relevant in a museum context, the intellectual property rights act ensured the protection of taona. Having an awareness of the Wai 262 is vital to the care of our taona. It ensures no one is copying or reproducing artefacts for profit. The act provided protection for the historical preservation of objects and knowledge, and was necessary in supporting Māori and their cultural belongings.

Mātaurana is necessary in understanding the importance of such legalities, giving those within museums a better understanding of what may have happened if this claim had not been addressed.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, the main themes kaitiakitana, wāhi, mātaurana and mahi are all fundamental in understanding tikana Māori within museums. They provide a framework that acknowledges the practice of biculturalism and how it makes for a better communal environment for the people of Aotearoa.
Furthermore, the bicultural practice and appreciation at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum and the Auckland War Memorial Museum characterise institutions that present a rich cultural experience. They are able to uphold tikana and the outlined thematics to enhance the services they provide. By continuing such practices, museums can provide the public with high quality museum experiences and engage more fully with their communities.

Tē tōia, tē haumatia.

Nothing can be achieved without a plan, workforce or way of doing things.

Bibliography


