



When the Crown controls mātauranga Māori

“... there are some Crown agencies for which mātauranga Māori is very much core business. Working in education, the arts, culture, heritage, broadcasting, science, and archives and libraries, these agencies engage with mātauranga Māori in a variety of ways. Some are its custodians, some its owners; others fund it, while others again are responsible for transmitting it. As such the Crown is practically in the seat of kaitiaki [cultural guardians].”

– *Ko Aotearoa Tēnei: Taumata Tuarua*, Chapter 6.

Ko Aotearoa Tēnei is the Waitangi Tribunal’s report into the claim known as Wai 262, which concerns the place of Māori culture, identity and traditional knowledge in contemporary New Zealand law, and government policy and practice. Chapter 6 relates to Crown agencies that have core responsibilities for New Zealand’s (including Māori) culture, heritage, education, and science. This factsheet provides a brief overview of that chapter.

Key points

Māori have primary responsibility for the preservation and transmission of their culture, identity, and knowledge. But for a number of reasons the Crown shares in that responsibility.

This shared responsibility amounts to a partnership in which decisions about priorities and objectives should be shared between the Crown and Māori.

Māori culture is integral to national culture and identity, so strengthening Māori culture is in the national interest.

What is ‘mātauranga Māori’ and why is it important to Māori?

Mātauranga Māori is Māori knowledge. This includes Māori language, science and tech-

nology, laws, history, systems of property and value exchange, and rituals and ceremonies. It also includes forms of expression such as art forms like weaving, carving, tā moko, haka, whaikōrero, and so on.

But, more fundamentally, it incorporates core Māori cultural values. Of these, the defining principle of mātauranga Māori is whanaungatanga, or kinship – the philosophy that explains the intimate relationships between iwi and hapū and the natural world. Another core value is that of kaitiakitanga, or cultural guardianship – the system of law through which iwi and hapū are obliged to nurture and care for taonga (treasured things).

Mātauranga Māori, in other words, encompasses all that is distinctive about Māori culture and identity.

What is the Crown’s role in relation to mātauranga Māori?

The entire Wai 262 claim concerns all aspects of mātauranga Māori. This factsheet is specifically concerned with Crown agencies that have core responsibilities for knowledge, culture and heritage on behalf of all New Zealanders including Māori.

This includes the state-funded education and science sectors; Te Papa; the National Library; Archives New Zealand; state-funded broadcasting; Creative New Zealand; and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage. As national custodians of knowledge, culture and heritage, these agencies have core responsibilities for the preservation and transmission of mātauranga Māori. They are, for all practical purposes, in the seat of kaitiaki (cultural guardians) in relation to mātauranga Māori.

What the Treaty requires

The Treaty established a partnership, through which the Crown won the right to govern, but in return is required to protect the tino rangatiratanga (full authority) of iwi and hapū in relation to their 'taonga katoa' (all that they treasure). These taonga include the mātauranga Māori of iwi and hapū, and the products of that mātauranga such as artistic and cultural works.

Even if the Treaty did not require the Crown to support mātauranga Māori, there are several other reasons for it to do so. One is that mātauranga Māori is important to national identity. For example, New Zealanders turn to haka such as *Ka Mate* and waiata such as *Pokarekare Ana* to express their identity overseas. Strengthening mātauranga Māori has the potential to strengthen national identity, and also to improve Māori performance in education.

It is a role of a modern state to educate its citizens and to sustain their culture and heritage. This applies as much to mātauranga Māori as to any other aspect of culture and knowledge, and is another reason for the Crown to play a role in sustaining mātauranga Māori. Furthermore, Māori are becoming an increasingly significant proportion of New Zealand's population. These demographic changes mean that the Crown can no longer regard Māori as 'other', but rather must embrace mātauranga Māori as a core part of national culture.

Yet another reason is that the Crown has in the past been hostile to mātauranga Māori and contributed to its decline, for example through land purchase policies that have cut iwi and hapū off from the environment they rely on to sustain their culture, and past education and health policies have sought to suppress key cultural practices.

What the Tribunal has found

Though Māori have primary responsibility for preserving and transmitting mātauranga, they cannot achieve this task alone. The responsibility must be shared with the Crown. This shared responsibility amounts to a partnership.

Many Crown agencies have core responsibilities for preserving and transmitting mātauranga Māori. Some of these agencies have made significant steps towards the establishment of Treaty partnerships in relation to mātauranga Māori and related taonga. But there is inconsistency both in statutory responsibilities and in the agencies' actions and policies.

As examples, current laws allow the use of mātauranga Māori stored in public archives without kaitiaki acknowledgement or consent; commercial considerations invariably win out over promotion of Māori culture in TVNZ scheduling; despite attempts to accommodate mātauranga Māori in science funding decisions, it remains marginalised; and although there is a degree of partnership over Māori-medium education that partnership approach does not extend to the education of young Māori in mainstream English-medium education.

The Tribunal has made a range of recommendations relating to the education and science sectors, arts and culture, broadcasting, museums, and libraries and archives. But its core recommendation is for the establishment of viable partnerships to support mātauranga Māori. New forms of partnership should be established for the education, science, and culture and heritage sectors. These partnerships should provide for shared decision-making about objectives for mātauranga Māori and, wherever possible, shared action. They should ensure (among other things) that appropriate priority is accorded to mātauranga Māori when balanced alongside other Crown priorities, and that Crown agencies act in a coordinated fashion in developing mātauranga policies.

See *Ko Aotearoa Tēnei* chapter 6 for full details of the Tribunal's findings and recommendations.