

Mātauranga as evidence – Te Mana Rauhi Taiao Mātauranga framework

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What counts as evidence to ensure our coasts, waters, forests and lands are healthy and thriving ecosystems providing a sustainable basis for Indigenous aspirations? This question is often asked in the resource management sector, but very rarely answered. Furthermore, considerable indigenous knowledge is often provided during resource management decision-making processes such as environment court, that is at best acknowledged but misunderstood, and at worst ignored. Greater solutions for Indigenous peoples to respond to environmental challenges at local, regional, national and global levels are urgently required. Broadly speaking the current system has scientific evidence at its core and is underpinned by fundamentally biased views on what counts as evidence.

In 2016 Ngā Kaihautū Tikanga Taiao (Statutory Māori Advisory Committee to the Environmental Protection Authority) produced a protocol 'Incorporating Māori perspectives into decision making'. As a decision-making authority, the EPA uses several protocols to aid decision makers in producing consistent, high-quality decisions. The protocol is used by decision makers as a tool to incorporate Māori perspectives into any decision making. The protocol is also used by iwi, Māori and applicants to understand how a Māori perspective is considered in decision making. But critically perspective is not a key criteria upon which decisions are made, the chief of which is evidence.

In a continued effort to ensure equitable outcomes for Māori a move was made to weave Māori perspectives and mātauranga into all aspects of the EPA's work. A three-year Mātauranga work programme commenced in 2017 with a focus on ways of weaving Mātauranga into decision-making processes at the operational level as well as more broadly across the organisation.

In July 2020 the EPA launched its Mātauranga framework – a tool to help EPA decision-makers test and probe Mātauranga when presented in evidence –the first of its kind to be developed in the natural resources sector. To be confident in its decisions, the EPA must be rigorous in the process of reaching them.

The development of the Mātauranga framework has truly been partnership in action – it is the culmination of an evolving discussion over many years on incorporating Māori perspectives and now knowledge, culture, values and worldview into EPA decision-making and daily work between the EPA (and its predecessor, the Environmental Risk Management Authority), Ngā Kaihautū Tikanga Taiao, Te Herenga (EPA network of Māori environmental practitioners centred in the regions), and Ngā Parirau o te Mātauranga (kaumātua group drawn from within Te Herenga, who have tirelessly shared their wisdom and expertise with the EPA for many years).

The Mātauranga framework is founded on the recognition that Mātauranga can be accurate and precise, and is a testament to the shared vision and strong

leadership across the EPA about the importance of weaving Mātauranga – and the rich cultural knowledge and practices embodied therein – into EPA decision-making and work.

In this presentation we will present the Mātauranga framework, briefly outlining its whakapapa, talking through the accompanying guide and walking through how it is used by decision-makers.

Biography of co-presenting author/s

Dan Hikuroa

Dan Hikuroa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato-Tainui), Senior Lecturer, Earth Systems, Te Wānanga o Waipapa, University of Auckland. He is an established world expert on weaving indigenous knowledge and science to realise the dreams and aspirations of the communities he works with. He is UNESCO NZ Commissioner for Culture, Tumuaki of Ngā Kaihautū Tikanga Taiao (Chair of the Statutory Māori Advisory to the Environmental Protection Authority) has key roles within New Zealand's National Centres of Research Excellence and National Science Challenges. Dan is spearheading alternative ways of assessing sustainability, including weaving indigenous knowledge and epistemologies into legislation, assessment frameworks and decision-support tools.

Erica Gregory

Erica Gregory (Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Maniapoto), Principal Advisor, Kaupapa Kura Taiao, Environmental Protection Authority. She has an extensive background in public sector policy development and implementation, with over 15 years of experience in facilitating Māori engagement in intellectual property policy development, New Zealand's biosecurity system, regional economic development and environmental decision-making. She has led the EPA's mātauranga programme from its inception in 2017. Following the launch of the EPA's mātauranga framework, her focus is on the successful implementation of the framework.