



A case study of Pūniu River Care

HE ORANGA WAI, HE ORANGA WHAKAPAPA

Critical change in the health of the awa through
Kaupapa Māori-led kaitiakitanga practices

A report prepared for the Adaptive Governance and Policy Project,
Biological Heritage National Science Challenge

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NEW ZEALAND'S
BIOLOGICAL
HERITAGE

Ngā Koiora
Tuku Iho

National
SCIENCE
Challenges





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Introduction

After generations of harmful exploitative environmental practices that have resulted from large scale land confiscations by the Crown (Baker, 2013; Waitangi Tribunal, 2011), the health of our awa in the Waikato has substantially deteriorated. Ngāti Maniapoto kaumātua indicate that the mauri of the awa is directly related to the oranga of the iwi. *Ko te wai te toto o te whenua, water is the blood of the land. The land is the mauri of the people, keeps the people alive. If the water goes bad, the land goes... bad, the people die.* (Iwi representative, Parsons, Fisher, & Crease, 2021). As tangata whenua, our waterways are interconnected with our oranga in a multiplicity of ways. Pūniu River Care Inc. (PRC) is an incorporated society that is contributing to the restoration of the Pūniu awa. During the time that this report was written, the commercial arm of the organisation was still in the development phase. Therefore, this review has not explored the commercial aspects that PRC has since developed. This study explores some of PRC's practices with the aim of demonstrating how this kaupapa Māori-led organisation has been successful in improving the health of the awa, and achieving the cultural aspirations of the organisation, which include supporting the wellbeing of the marae and hapū that PRC are derived from.

Pūniu River Care indicates that their kaupapa (purpose) "is to enable local hapū to be involved in improving the water quality and replenishing taonga within the Pūniu River catchment" (PRC website, 2022). Māori have been excluded from water management by successive colonial

governments (Parsons, et al., 2021); PRC's kaupapa of increasing hapū involvement seeks to mitigate the exclusion of tangata whenua from management of natural resources. This report explores some of the practices that enhance the lives of the kaimahi of Pūniu River Care, while achieving their goals to restore the health of the Pūniu awa and managing third party relationships. Pūniu River Care has brought together multiple third parties to create positive environmental outcomes for the Pūniu awa and the descendants of the awa, and have helped to support the health and life of the marae associated with PRC. Through applying kaupapa Māori values and principles, PRC has illustrated that they can achieve positive environmental outcomes, while uplifting the the oranga of kaitiaki¹ who belong to the awa.

Pūniu is the largest tributary to the Waipā River (Kukutai, 2020), and falls under Ngā Wai o Maniapoto (Waipā River) Act 2012, which lays the foundation for co-management of the awa. Within this Act, there is an intention to maintain "the quality and integrity of the waters that flow into and form part of the Waipā River for present and future generations and the care and protections of the mana tuku iho o Waiwaia". Waiwaia is the tupuna kaitiaki of the Waipā River and has significance to the descendants of Ngāti Maniapoto, including Ngāti Paretekawa.

Pūniu River Care has a native plant nursery based at Mangatoatoa, and most staff are based at the nursery for part of their usual working day. This report focuses on some of the findings from interviews with 54

¹ Employees that work to restore the Pūniu awa are referred to as kaitiaki o te Kāhui a Hiwa. Within

the report, those who are employed by PRC are referred to as kaitiaki.

individuals who are either employees of, or have a third party relationship with, Pūniu River Care. At the time of the interviews, Pūniu River Care held 41 full time equivalent staff members.

The co-management of the awa is supported by the Te Mana o te Wai document, which is part of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM 2020). Within the overview document of Te Mana o te Wai, it is stipulated that there is a “national direction to protect and improve our rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands” (Ministry for the Environment, 2020). The directives outlined within Te Mana o Te Wai contributes to an intention to promote healthy waterways for future generations, which is a primary goal of Pūniu River Care.

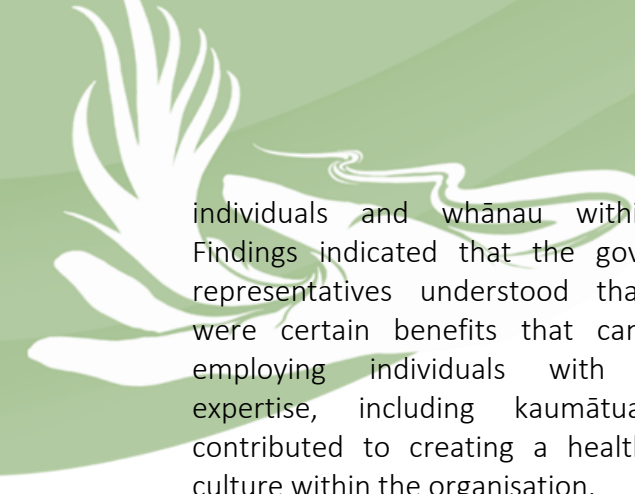
The purpose of this report is to explore some of the ways in which Pūniu River Care successfully demonstrates kaitiakitanga within a co-management arrangement. This research report is part of a wider research project that is primarily concerned with the health and wellbeing of those who have been employed as kaitiaki (planters, and nursery kaimahi) by PRC. This wider study focuses on some of the contributions that PRC makes to the oranga of the marae that PRC interacts with, including Rāwhitiroa, Aotearoa, Whakamārama and Mangatoatoa. There is a primary focus in the wider study on the relationship that PRC has with Mangatoatoa pā (marae), as the nursery is based at Mangatoatoa. In contrast, this report focuses on the discussions that we had with the governance board, the Waipā Regional Council, and the landowners.

Key findings from this research report include positive outcomes that can be achieved through healthy co-management relationships; the benefits to local

government; and the environmental improvements that can be made on privately owned land through a Treaty-led, collaborative approach.

This research demonstrates that Kaupapa Māori-centred employment environments foster healthy interpersonal relationships and cultural identity, including an increased familiarity with language and culture. Such employment environments also help to enhance relationships that individuals have with their environment, especially when descendants of the awa are part of the process of restoring the wellbeing of the waterways. Kaupapa Māori-centred environmental employment can create the following benefits: positive health and wellbeing outcomes for employees; an improvement of familiarity that whānau have with marae, and whenua tupuna; an increase in the use of marae (reducing the likelihood of marae becoming marae puehu); and positive changes to whenua and awa. As access to marae becomes more difficult for many Māori (Te Kupenga, 2013), employment opportunities that are based at ancestral marae provide multiple benefits to those who wish to increase their familiarity with cultural practices, and improve relationships with those whom they share familial bonds with.

The governance board of PRC has a range of skills that are helpful in overseeing the direction of the organisation. Furthermore, nearly all board members have a whakapapa connection to marae associated with PRC, and the Pūniu awa. Outlined within with report, our findings indicated that the governance board were actively aware of the cultural importance of decolonisation and cultural reclamation that was taking place through the policies and practices of PRC. There was an intentional process of resourcing skills that contribute to the cultural wealth of the



individuals and whānau within PRC. Findings indicated that the governance representatives understood that there were certain benefits that came with employing individuals with cultural expertise, including kaumātua, who contributed to creating a healthy work culture within the organisation.

Kaumātua were meaningfully integrated into the organisation, resourced appropriately, and allowed the time and opportunity to share their knowledge in ways that considerably helped shape the types of cultural growth that was possible within the organisation. Kaumātua were central to the development of the organisational culture of PRC due to their ability to bring individuals together, teach cultural skills, hold space for wairua across a range of practices, and encourage interpersonal relationships amongst staff that were conducive to the health of interpersonal communications. The pou tikanga regularly held sessions to discuss matters of importance to kaimahi in an open way that made room for expressing vulnerabilities that individuals were experiencing. As PRC is based at Mangatoatoa marae, which is in close proximity to Tokanui Psychiatric Hospital, many of the older employees of PRC have a history of working with those who have lived experience with mental illness. Durie (2018) recognised the unique approach that the Whaiora unit at Tokanui utilises to achieve positive Māori-centred health practices for those suffering from psychiatric conditions. The skills of those who were part of Tokanui were valuable in helping to facilitate holistic models of practice at PRC.

Kaumātua who were employed at PRC also have long standing relationships with members from other hapū within the

region, which help to reinforce the cross collaboration of restoration projects. For instance, PRC kaimahi take part in seed collection from a range of locally based ngahere. This sometimes means going outside of hapū boundaries into other territories. As part of the tikanga at Pūniu River Care, kaumātua request hui with other marae prior to collecting seeds on their whenua. There were two primary reasons that were given for this practice. Firstly, it ensured that kaimahi are not going into other hapū lands *pokanoa*, or without appropriate approval. Secondly, it helps Pūniu River Care to include other marae and hapū into the restoration of our tribal waterways, which all marae along the awa are impacted by and will benefit from if restoration is achieved. Individuals who hold culturally specific roles, including the role of pou tikanga, contribute to the governance board's effectiveness. The pou tikanga is able to help create a safe space for challenging conversations in ways that produce constructive outcomes.

The governance board indicated that their strategic approach was understand the cultural and environmental needs of their stakeholders. Financial models they utilise allow them to know how many plants are needed in order to cover their financial costs. The governance board intentionally include cultural and social growth into their financial models. Effective financial modelling allowed for effective forecasting, including how many plants they needed in order to hold a substantial workforce. The governance representatives indicated that they carried a workforce larger than was necessary if they were solely focused on environmental outcomes, as they recognised the value that service type roles (such as the marae maintenance roles, or pou tikanga) brought to the health of the marae, and organisation.

Methods and methodology

This report was designed and developed with the understanding that relationships with participants would be enduring. Kaupapa Māori methodology was the most appropriate methodology for this study. There were two studies that were conducted as part of this research. These included a qualitative component, and a quantitative study, which included 31 participants: 16 male, 8 female, and 7 who did not disclose their gender. Over 80% of participants in this study identified as Māori, and 66% have a whakapapa relationship to the awa Pūniu.

Table 1: A breakdown of survey respondents' ethnicity and age by total number and percentage of total.

Ethnicity	N	%	Age range	N	%
Māori	25	80.6	19-24	7	29.2
Pākehā/NZ European	2	6.5	25-29	4	16.7
Other	3	9.7	30-34	4	16.7
Undisclosed	1	3.2	35-40	5	20.8
Total	31	100	40+	4	16.7
			Undisclosed	7	-

The quantitative study drew on items from Te Kupenga (2014) that focused on kaitiakitanga, te reo Māori, and connection to marae/tūrangawaewae. It was important that we had a baseline set of data that we could use to compare our responses from PRC participants. The Te Kupenga data set is a substantially larger data set (including approximately 8,500 Māori adult responses) compared with the PRC data. However, we were able to use percentages from both data sets to demonstrate differences and similarities between response sets. Some survey questions differed from those in Te Kupenga as this survey was designed specifically for PRC kaimahi to answer, to explore the impact of working at PRC on cultural identity, wellbeing, te reo, and connection to taiao.

Table 2. Description of individuals represented in the qualitative aspects of this study.

Group or groups represented	Individuals from within the group
Marae committee representatives	Mangatoatoa, Rāwhitiroa Ruruhi/Mangatoatoa marae manager Co-chairs of the Mangatoatoa marae committee
PRC	Management: CEO, Board representatives, current and former chair, HR, administration Cultural advisor Pou tikanga Relationship manager Kaitiaki o te kāhui a Hiwa Kaitiaki whenua marae Marae maintenance Education advisor
Kaumātua	Ngāti Raukawa kaumātua representatives
Te Wānanga o Aotearoa	Audio-visual services
Waikato River Authority	Policy Advisor
Waipā District Council	Long-term council member
Landowners	Third generation landowners Newer landowner within the Waipā

Demographic information for interviewee participants was not collected in the same way as Te Kupenga for privacy reasons. However, an indication about the types of individuals who were interviewed for the wider study are outlined in Table 2 above.

Findings

Relationships with Marae

Almost all PRC respondents knew their marae tupuna, in comparison to only 66.4% of Te Kupenga respondents. Kaimahi at PRC came with a range of prior cultural exposure, including those who were in the process of re-connecting with their whakapapa relationships. The results below indicate that PRC prioritises cultural knowledge and exploration. Most PRC respondents who knew their marae tupuna had visited in the last 12 months (80.8%), with a large percentage of respondents (76.9%) reporting wanting to go more often. Kaimahi have whakapapa that extends outside of the Waipā region and this is perhaps reflected in this finding.

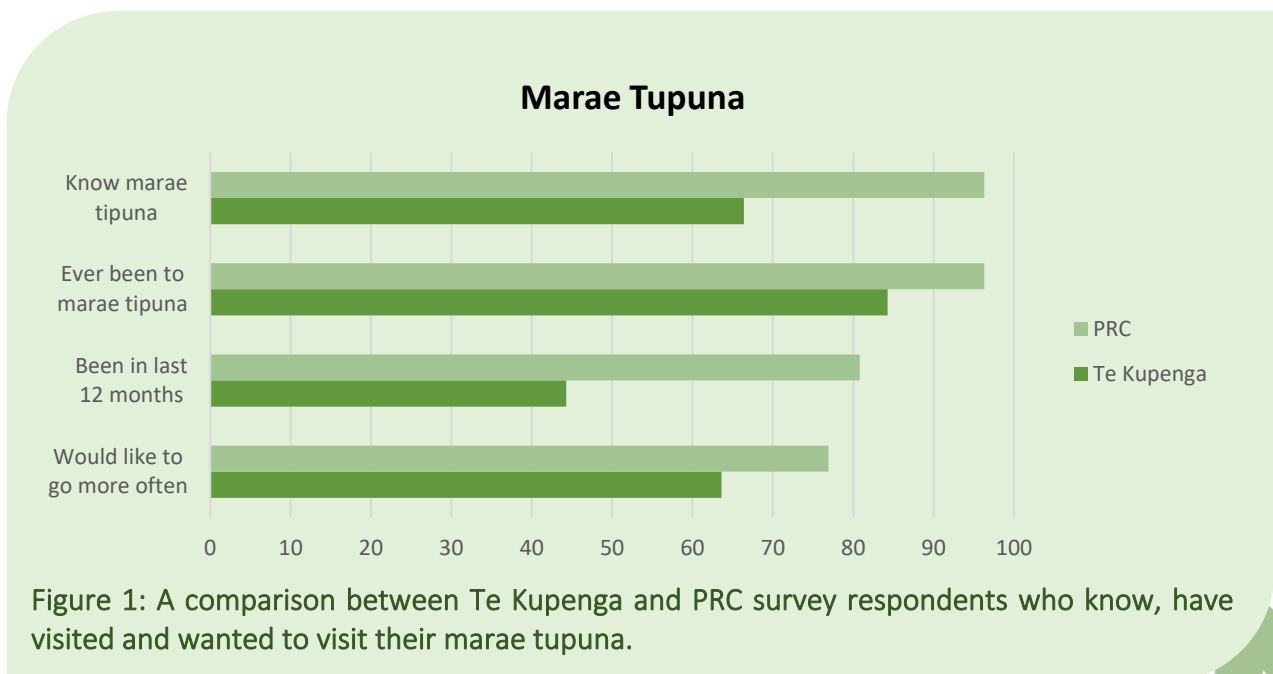


Figure 1: A comparison between Te Kupenga and PRC survey respondents who know, have visited and wanted to visit their marae tupuna.

Whakapapa and relationships with other marae

While PRC as an incorporated society was formed in 2015 (Pūniu River Care, 2022), the premise for the organisation was set up generations ago. Intergenerational relationships were crucial to PRC developing at the rate that it has, with elders supporting younger kaimahi to develop skills and knowledge in awa restoration. Being marae-based also assists the organisation to develop and maintain relationships with other marae within the region.

Derek: Well they're all connected to the Pūniu. That was the draw card. And being all within easy reach has made it feasible. And a lot of whānau here are connected through whakapapa to our marae. So that's important. (HR Manager of PRC and Co-chair of the Mangatoatoa marae committee)



Cultural growth

We asked participants about the types of practices that took place at PRC that were conducive to their cultural growth. Common themes included an integrated organisational culture of support for cultural identity exploration and development, daily karakia practices, and 'tikanga days' that occurred monthly. Tikanga days included a time and place for kaimahi to learn about their whakapapa, cultural histories, tribal knowledge, te reo Māori, rongoā, and harakeke, to name a few activities discussed during interviews. Our survey indicated that over 90% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that 'tikanga days' contributed to their cultural confidence, cultural growth and wellbeing. Slightly over 90% of respondents also indicated that their work is culturally fulfilling.

Our findings demonstrated that PRC respondents participated in cultural practices at a far greater rate than the overall population. For instance, PRC respondents were considerably more likely to gather kaimoana (77.4%) compared with Te Kupenga respondents (40.7%). PRC respondents were also far more likely to take care of sites of importance (64.5%) compared with Te Kupenga respondents (23.9%). PRC respondents indicated that taking care of sites of importance was primarily done with whānau (70%), or with PRC (45%).

Our qualitative findings reiterated the survey responses, indicating that tikanga were well integrated into the daily practices and overall governance and managerial decisions.

Derek: The whole kaupapa is based on the tikanga side of things. So without that we don't have a kaupapa. You know, that's central to everything. And so that's live and breathing that every day. And then being marae-based of course, it helps reinforce that. I think it would be difficult to actually do this away from a marae. I really do. I don't think it would capture the same value or essence of tikanga. (HR Manager of PRC and Co-chair of the Mangatoatoa marae committee)

Some of the cultural practices that were embedded into the organisation were heavily influenced by the support that the organisation gained from strategic appointments. Having kaumātua who were able to hold space for challenging but constructive discussions was especially helpful for the organisation. Those in governance roles as well as kaitiaki benefited from the board's decision to hire Pou tikanga based on the cultural and emotional health and wellbeing of its staff. This point is reiterated by the chair of the governance board.

Craig: [Person in the Pou tikanga position] slows it down and then he gets some history and then you get some other information and slowly he's feeding you information about yourself, about your whānau, about this marae, about your problem, and he's just feeding it to you, slowly and slowly, and then you start eating it, and then you start to go, actually I'm starting to get really, really clear on this, you know? I think that there is kind of capturing that cultural element of PRC and what that brings. (Governance Chair of Pūniu River Care)

Shannon: What Uncle Hone [Pou tikanga] brings is huge really. I remember when he was running our [wānanga]. [...] I want him down here teaching people 'cause

that's what he loves to do, so having him, that's been a massive resource for us, and so having people exposed to Uncle Hone is kind of a big thing that heaps of organisations [would benefit from], and he doesn't have a work programme, he doesn't have KPIs, he's just Uncle Hone, you're passionate about what you do, do it, and that's what I think makes PRC different. (CEO of Pūniu River Care)

Although both of the above points centre around the skills of a single individual, the impact that this individual has had on the organisational culture, and access to cultural knowledge within PRC, has been considerable. Pūniu River Care is different from other organisations in that they recognise the inherent talents of their staff, and provide individuals with support to thrive in a way that is benefits those they interact with.

Environment

Most PRC respondents indicated having cared for the health of the natural environment (77.4%) compared with Te Kupenga participants (31.8%). When caring for the natural environment, 83.3% of respondents did so with PRC, followed by caring for the environment with whānau, or alone, closely followed by with iwi, hapū, marae, and lastly with friends, neighbours, or community groups.

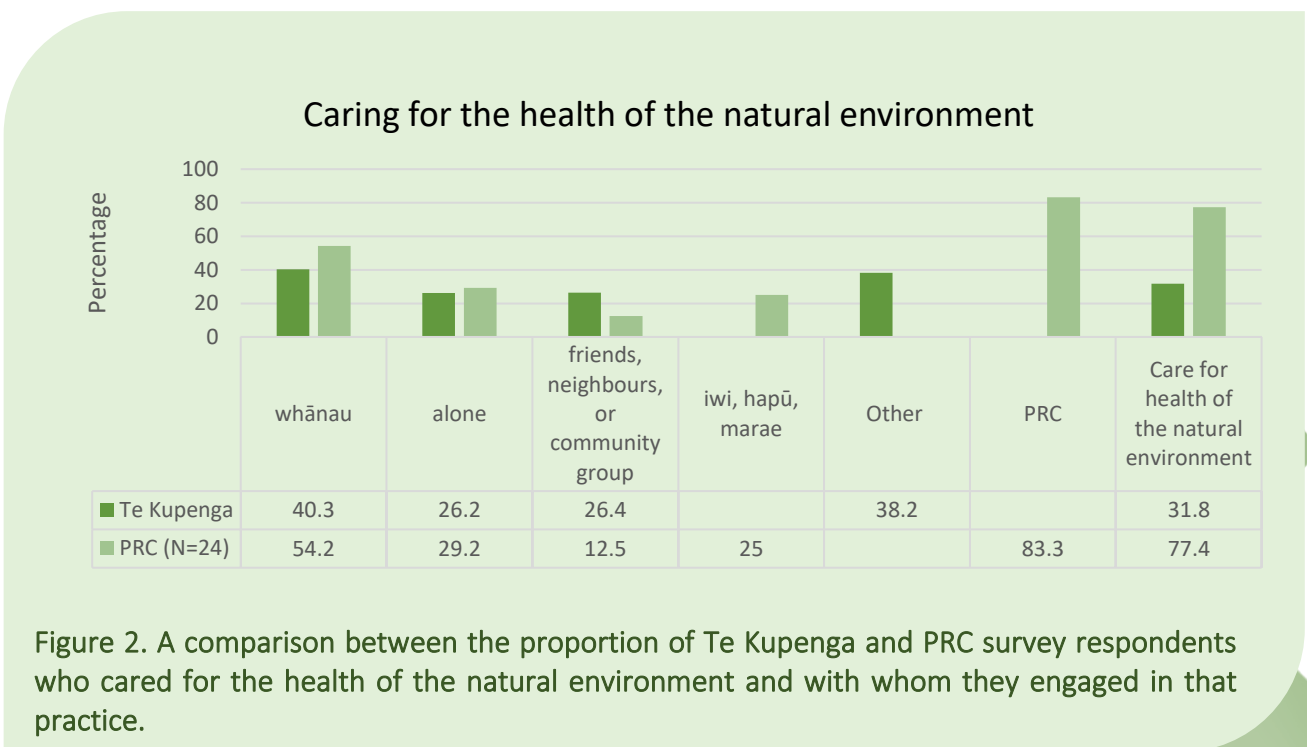
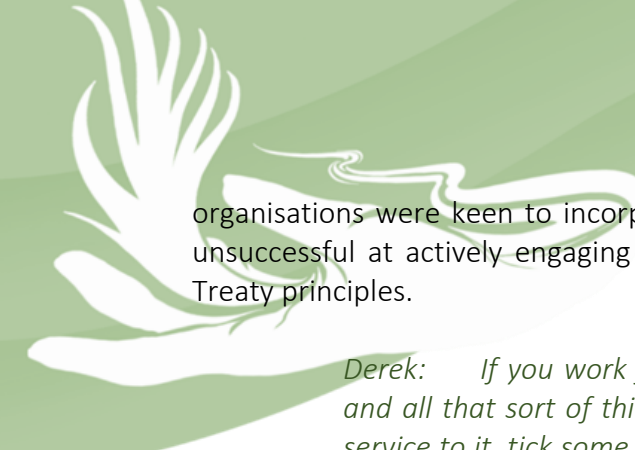


Figure 2. A comparison between the proportion of Te Kupenga and PRC survey respondents who cared for the health of the natural environment and with whom they engaged in that practice.

Treaty-led partnerships

As part of this study, we were interested in understanding how Treaty relationships were enacted in organisations that kaimahi had previously worked for, compared to their experiences at PRC. Kaimahi who had worked in health organisations, including Māori-centred organisations where the main client base was Māori service users, indicated that there was often a disconnect between the organisations' values and their practices. A number of



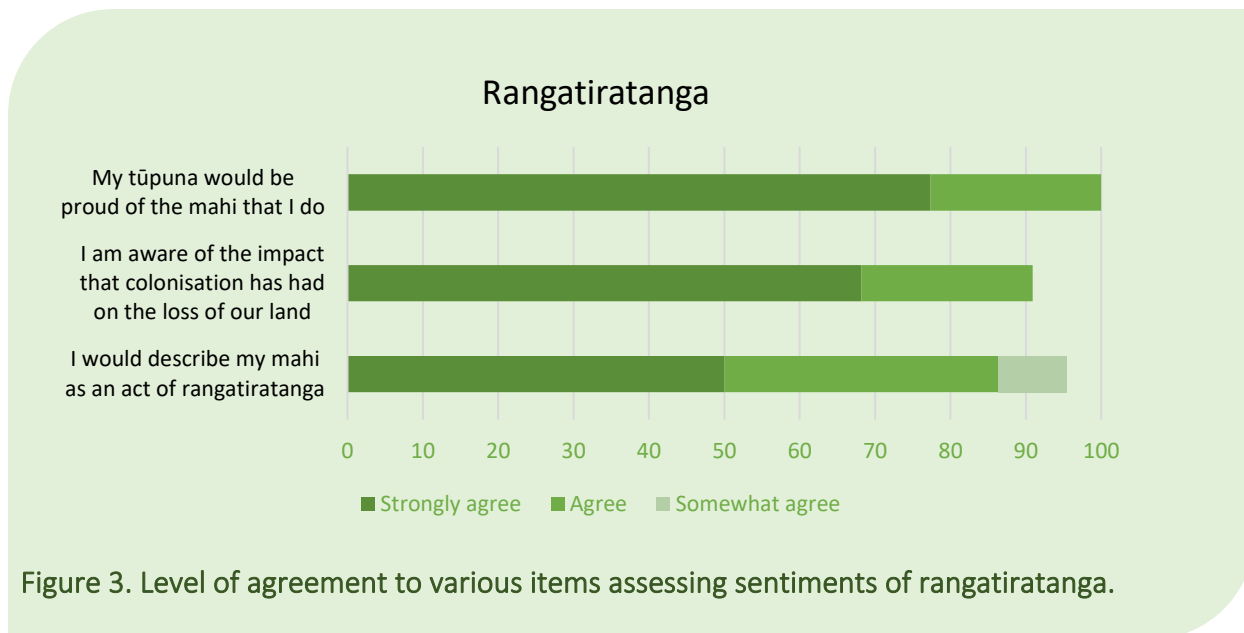
organisations were keen to incorporate concepts that they viewed as Treaty-led, but were unsuccessful at actively engaging with their kaimahi in mana-enhancing ways, or enacting Treaty principles.

Derek: If you work for a mainstream kaupapa and they talk about the Treaty and all that sort of thing. And from my experience they talk about it and pay lip service to it, tick some boxes and say you know we participated in the partnership but it's only on paper. The PRC, it's actually 'doing the do'. You know? It's really in partnership with its landowners, with its funders... (HR Manager and Co-chair of the Mangatoatoa marae committee)

At PRC, there were clear ways in which staff were able to improve their remuneration based on their increase in *self-professed* cultural competencies. For instance, kaitiaki at PRC are entitled to pay increases based on their knowledge of the lyrics to particular waiata of significance and the ability to recite their pepehā, along with other cultural competencies that the organisation has defined as priority areas. Part of having a monetary value attached to learning these cultural competencies demonstrates to kaitiaki the importance that the organisation places on these skills.

Staff at PRC are supported financially and in other ways during times of bereavement. Being based at the marae where many kaitiaki whakapapa to also means that during tangihanga, they can participate in tangihanga in meaningful ways. The decision to have multiple staff available to support tangihanga at the marae both in front and back of house, so to speak, also helped kaitiaki by exposing individuals to cultural practices in meaningful ways. PRC were supportive of kaitiaki taking part in other events that are culturally significant to the iwi, hapū and marae, which also come at a financial cost. These costs were factored into the financial modelling that the governance committee deals with.

Authentic Treaty-based partnerships also include the recognition of harm and violence that iwi, hapū and whānau have incurred intergenerationally. Over 90% of respondents either agreed (22.7%) or strongly agreed (68.2%) that they were aware of the impact of colonisation on the loss of land within the Waipā. All respondents either agreed (22.7%) or strongly agreed (77.3%) that their tūpuna would be proud of the mahi that they do. However, respondents seemed reluctant to strongly assert that their mahi is an act of rangatiratanga, likely perpetuated by at least some uncertainty regarding the cultural concept.




Institutional racism is something that prevents authentic Treaty-based relationships from being achieved in Aotearoa. For authentic Treaty-led partnerships to take place, organisations and corporations who are seeking iwi/Māori guidance need to recognise the unique skills and knowledge sets that these individuals bring with them.

PRC Governance rep: In my profession, we'll go through the RMA process when we deal with people and then straight away you're looked at that you don't have value. So whenever you're expected to turn up for hui, you're the only one that's expected to turn up there for nothing, I mean Uncle Harrold [kaumātua] and all that had to deal with that for years, and I think well hoping that we'll be the last generation that will see that and then we start to normalise, you know, "If you're engaging with our people, they get treated and their value is just the same as your um you know whoever else you got there to work with or consult with." So yeah definitely, I have seen institutionalised racism but it's weird because it's not intended, it's just normal for them to think that way.

Breaking down institutional racism is part of providing the foundations that are necessary for working Treaty-led co-management relationships. The unpacking of racism in all its forms is useful for creating transformation in these corporate spaces. In order to create meaningful bicultural practices, willingness is merely a precursor, rather than an indication that change is taking place.

Derek: Although there was a willingness [in previous organisations that I've worked for] there was sort of an expectation there would be that bi-cultural approach to this. Yeah, you could always feel that was just lip-service, token gestures, it wasn't going anywhere. Whereas being in this [at PRC] you can see it happening. You really can. It's not just ticking boxes for your annual report or anything like that. (HR Manager and Co-chair of the Mangatoatoa marae committee)



PRC have ensured that their understanding of values-based practice is actualised within their own organisation, which perhaps helps them in their interactions with (and expectations of) their third-party relationships.

Being a Māori values-led organisation helps others to see the benefits of this approach

Interviews with the governance board and those that PRC shared third party relationships with demonstrated the importance of having clear organisational goals and values that were based on tikanga principles and practices. Part of the values that drive PRC include the view that te taiao and people are inextricably linked. When people are in a perpetual state of unwellness, the environment suffers. Part of caring for the wellbeing of people includes providing whānau and communities with opportunities to participate meaningfully in the labour market through kaitiakitanga roles. Furthermore, ensuring that kaimahi are paid equitably - for instance, having kaitiaki salaries start on the living wage as opposed the minimum wage recognises the ideology of 'caring for employees' through equitable remuneration.

Tākena: There's been a huge progression [...] I think the testament to how good PRC is, is the people that want to be involved or want to have the same thing that we have here, um which is really kaitiaki whenua, kaitiaki awa, jobs for our people, and a happy community, and I think a lot of other, a lot of other entities and iwi, hapū, they want to emulate the same and I think that PRC have pretty much got it right. I think that's probably the testament of the progression from where it started to where it's at now. (Governance board member of PRC, lawyer).

Having attended the PRC open day in May 2021, it was clear that there is an interest from external groups, including iwi outside of Ngāti Maniapoto, wider community members, and environmental groups, in the work being progressed at PRC. Furthermore, there is a clear indication from kaimahi who whakapapa to external iwi that they are learning what they can about PRC as an organisation and will implement the operational model within their own iwi. One kaitiaki who managed staff at PRC was in the process of returning to her iwi of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, and was actively encouraged to take what she had learned from PRC with her. Other kaitiaki spoke about how they were also encouraged to learn what they could from PRC and leave when they felt that it was appropriate for them to continue elsewhere in their learning journey. This approach encourages cross collaboration within organisations and across iwi, which increases the sharing of mātauranga Māori.

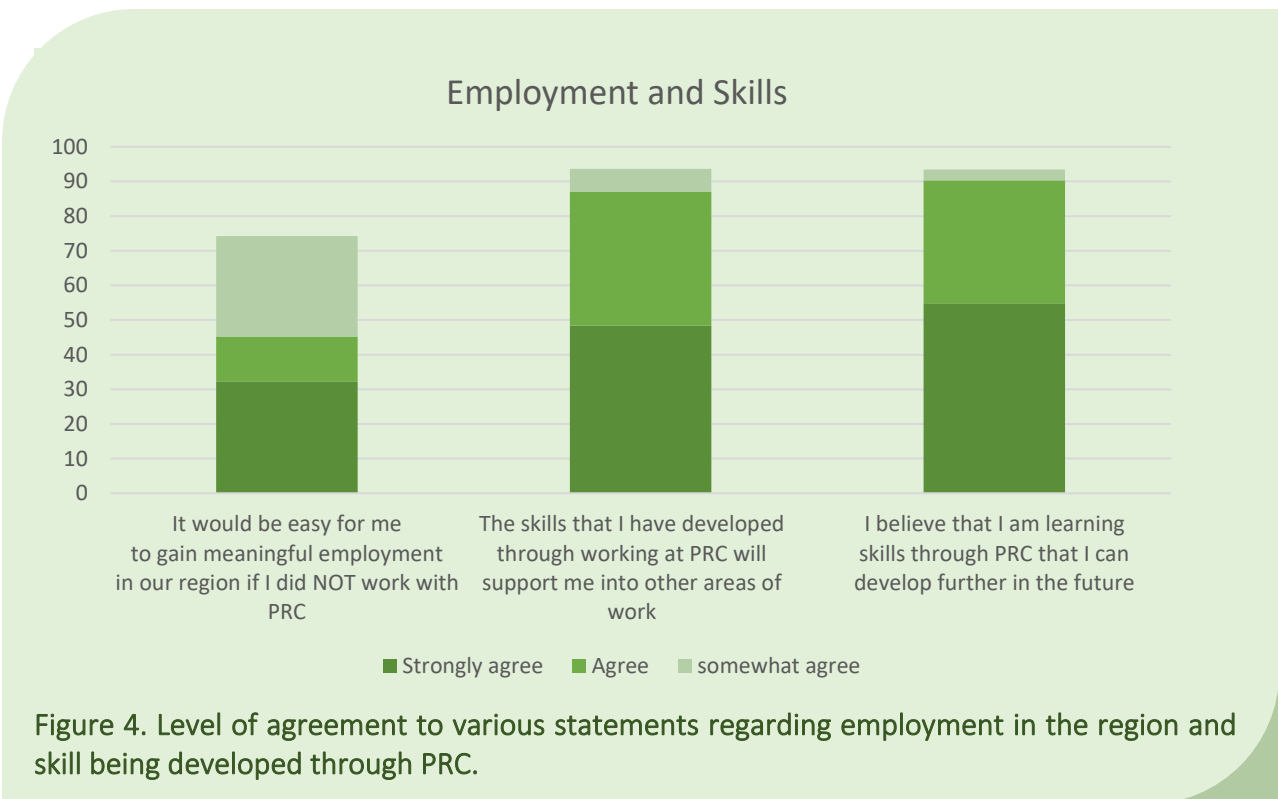
An interview with a Waipā Council member, Grant Blakey, reiterates the benefits of having kaupapa-led work that is run with Māori values at the centre. He reiterates the points above about the demonstrations that took place during the 2021 PRC open day.

Grant: I went to the open day where they, the best part of the open day to me was where they had the younger rangatahi talking to the crowd which was a few hundred people and these people had not spoken publicly, I would not have thought much before, and they were standing up and talking about their journeys and their projects and I thought that was really inspirational as to what you can actually do not just in terms of um environmental restoration but in terms of restoring people essentially, or um taking people down a path, a totally different path than they may


have ended up if they had gone off and done something else or they might have started another job or whatever they might have done and so it's changing lives and rebuilding the connection with the awa and the land and just the whole thing, it's just so positive, like it's great, yeah I just think the whole thing is such a good story, it's amazing. (Long-term Waipā Regional Council member)

In combination with the qualitative results above, the quantitative findings confirm that kaitiaki develop their vocational skills through their work at PRC. Survey findings displayed in Figure 4 below indicated that over 90% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that through their work at PRC they are learning skills that they can develop in the future. Close to half (48.4%) of respondents strongly agreed, and a further 38.7% agreed (combined 87.1%) that the skills they are developing through PRC will help them into other areas of employment. Fewer than half of respondents (46.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that it would be easy for them to gain meaningful employment in the Waipā region if they did not work for PRC.

Overall, these findings indicate that PRC is a source of meaningful employment for people who would be unlikely to find meaningful employment elsewhere in the area. Furthermore, PRC is actively supporting their staff to develop skills that will help them in other areas of work. Developing skills in this employment setting allows employees to continue their careers outside of PRC should they wish to leave in the future.



From within PRC, there was a clear vision about the ways in which the organisation could progress in the future. Being a kaupapa-led organisation is attractive to external funders and third parties who see the value that comes from their unique approach.



Derek: I guess it's... There's always gonna be opportunities come up. I guess the opportunities are quite limitless in regards to where it can go in the future. There's no doubt that we're gonna be building up our level of expertise within as opposed to relying on imported from outside. So we're very lucky that we've got access to some of the best Māori ecologists in New Zealand for advice and things like. So that's been critical in getting to where we are today. I guess that's PRC brand, it's the draw card, you want to be part of it. (HR Manager and Co-chair of the Mangatoatoa marae committee)

An interview with a representative from the Waikato River Authority indicated that PRC is recognised externally as both a kaupapa-led kaitiakitanga organisation and a sustainable model of employment. The social, cultural, and environmental benefits that can occur from a business model like the one developed by PRC are obvious to external parties, including the Waikato River Authority.

Julian: I think the thing is, they've got a good model, that shows people that you can help our environment and still get an income for your whānau, and a lot of people are like, "Oh it's only 10 hours a week, it's not gonna be enough, no wage." So, but [PRC] can show that you can run a successful kaitiaki business and it will affect your whānau, and actually spend time with your whānau, and repeat some stories, those are gains for me that we don't see. What we see is: how many plants did you do? How tall are those plants now? How many birds have come back? But it's all those other things, that transition of knowledge, transfer of knowledge, the teachings, the gathering of whānau kōrero, and encouraging your kids to follow on, those social benefits, those are the sort of things that we don't record so well, that's why I'm happy you're doing this, cause it's gonna show that there are far more benefits to um to being a kaitiaki then just um planting a few trees and seeing things, we're listing those stories above the ground now, they used to be pushed under by development, but now we're able to bring them up and express them through our mahi, and Pūniu is a really good example of that. (Waikato River Authority, Policy Advisor)

External parties, including the Waipā Regional Council and Waikato River Authority representatives, observed an unusual availability of financial resources set aside by government that have been contributed to the restoration of our waterways which are available to PRC and to other organisations who are working to restore the quality of waterways. Julian, who works for Waipā Regional Council, discusses how iwi need to be supported financially to ensure that iwi can be resourced to engage in strategic kaitiakitanga practices. The model of practice being developed at PRC could be helpful for other kaupapa-led organisations to engage in this space.

Julian: One thing that's missing is still capability. We've got Pūniu River Care, and we've got Ngāti Awa Mahi Trust, all of the planters over our Waikare and lower Waikato River Care. The groups that are leading the way have almost got enough work for the next five years, if you know what I mean. So we need that, it's the next group of leadership, so there's this cool article, it said plant a tree, grow a person. [...] There hasn't been, I can't remember a time there's been as much money

available to support restoration, and that'll be the main thing for me, is just growing the people around him, which I was gonna say Shannon, but which Pūniu's already doing because we've got, we've identified over 400 million dollars' worth of projects that would really help, we believe will really help the river, but we've got no one beyond these four major groups delivering them, and stay on, you know at a good scale, um rather than just picking up a few um watercress projects or atomic bombs, we need big, we need bold. (Waikato River Authority, Policy).


The perspectives that Julian provided demonstrate that the Waikato River Authority have taken notice of the approach being developed and utilised at PRC. Pūniu River Care's concept of "Grow a tree and grow a person" speaks to the underlying assumptions that are maintained and subsequently nurtured through their approach.

Pūniu River Care provide a full wrap around service in terms of planting on sites, they are responsible for the upkeep of the plants to ensure that they reach maturity. These acts of kaitiakitanga require a consistent managing of time to ensure that the native plants that have been sown are not suffocated by noxious weeds or hindered in their growth. Shifting to views provided from landowners, they shared some of the gains that they had seen through their involvement with PRC. Landowners commented on about working with PRC was the knowledge that PRC kaitiaki had about plants that would thrive alongside the awa, as well as the continuation of care for the plants alongside the awa on landowners' properties. A third-generation landowner indicated that they had received help from Council in the past to clear some of their willows that were obstructing the flow of the awa but there was no follow through beyond the initial work. PRC works with landowners to ensure that the plants have a high chance of survival through fencing and follow-up care.

Alan: I totally agree [with other landowner interviewee], the [impact on the reduction of] flooding is probably the biggest benefit that we've had. But then, that's come from cleaning out the river, but that's only part of it and Waipā Council did that years ago. Didn't replant, had no back up and it just all grew back and when the stump rotted out they fell out so it left holes in the banks, water ripped in, so planting in behind the clean out is the right thing to do and having the right species of plants and knowing how to plant them properly, and then the follow up afterwards like just maintaining them, like keeping the weeds down. Keeping them healthy is great and then you've got the fish life and the bird life. It's all going to be enhanced, so for New Zealand it looks good, I know it's good. (Landowner)

One of the realities that was highlighted in interviews with landowners was that due to the associated costs, restoration of waterways was not a priority for many farm owners. If changes are to be made to the health quality of our awa, without the support of PRC, it would be difficult to see landowners making the changes that are required.

Alan: I said to [other landowner interviewee] when he came and we first got involved [with PRC] and we had these trees falling in on, well they were actually falling in from the other side of the river, it was easier to get them out on our side and I said [to another landowner], "I don't mind if you pull them out on our side" and that was all fine but I said, "That one there, that one there, that one there and



a bit further down that one there,” I said “in two, three, four years you’re going to be getting another call from me because they’re going to all be in the river.” I said, “Let’s take them out now” and he goes, “Oh it’s, it’s the money.” They’ve got the money there but they’re not causing any problems at the moment. But in five years’ time they’re going to be that much bigger, harder, when they’re bigger you need bigger gear. (Landowner)

Treaty-led co-management at a regional council level

The directives outlined in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM 2020) incentivise all councils to work alongside hapū and iwi. Alongside the NPS-FM 2020, Te Mana o Te Wai sets out the framework for council engagement with tangata whenua.

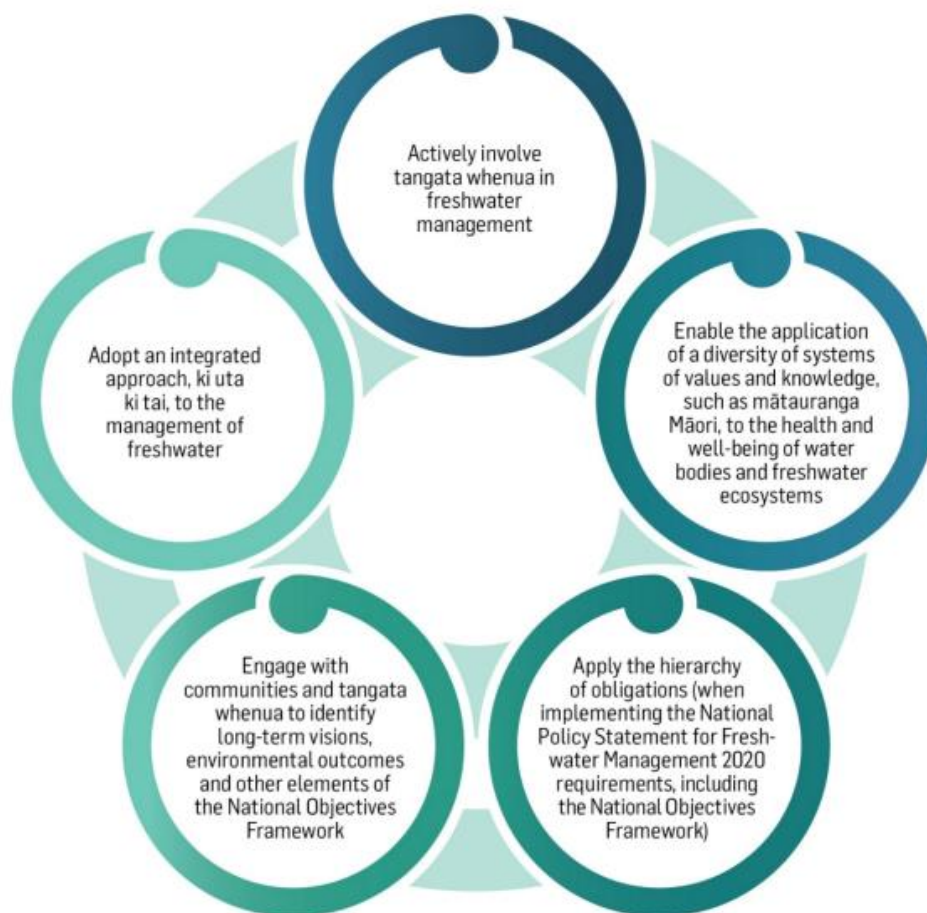


Figure 5. Framework for how regional councils must give effect to Te Mana o te Wai (image taken from Ministry for the Environment & Ministry for Primary Industries, 2020).

Six principles are incorporated as part of Te Mana o te Wai and include mana whakahaere, kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga, governance, stewardship, and care and respect. Mana whakahaere is a central priority when implementing the NPS-FM 2020, and is described therein as “the power, authority, and obligation of tangata whenua to make decisions that maintain, protect, and sustain the health and well-being of, and their relationship with, freshwater” (p. 2).

An interview with a long-term Waipā Regional Council member indicated that pressures have been placed on councils to engage in Treaty-led partnerships. In part, these policy changes could have encouraged Waipā Regional Council's increase in engagement with iwi.

Grant: It would've been unusual a few years ago, but it's increasingly common in our region now, and part of that has been driven by um the obligations on the Council, part of it's been driven by what the big funding partners require us to do. So there's multiple things pushing us in that direction, um yeah. I don't know, I think it's just a nice evolving space at the moment, and it's been a bit of a renaissance in terms of funding because I've been working for the Council for a long time and the funding for this sort of work completely dried up and went away for like a good 20 years, it has really only just come back um either through the government or the Waikato River Authority or even our own Council in the last 5-10 years or so, yeah so we used to be operating at such a low level in this space and now we are flying through the roof sort of thing.

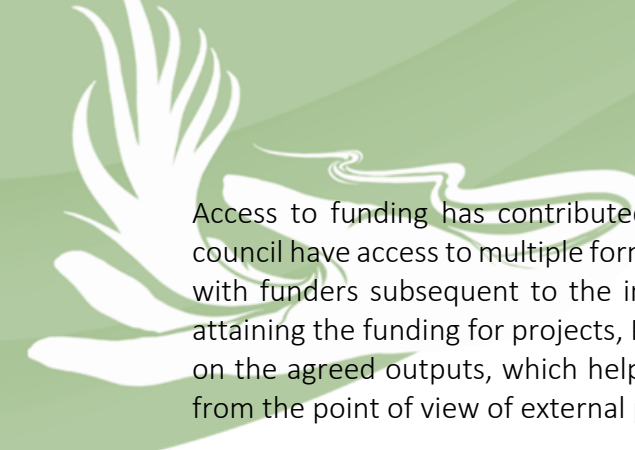
The excerpt above provides information about the types of conditions that are necessary in order to make meaningful changes in the environmental restoration space. Some of the conditions that have contributed to a change in dealing with water restoration in the Pūniu Awa include significant financial investment from national and local government, national directives which reinforce the need for Treaty-led co-management partnerships, and a collaborative approach across agencies towards Māori-led initiatives.

As tangata whenua who are making significant contributions to the protections, health and ora of freshwater in the Waipā district, PRC is supporting council to achieve the goals outlined in the NPS-FM 2020. A representative who has worked with PRC for five to six years shared how their relationship was formed.

Grant: Initially five years ago or probably six years ago now, I would've met Shannon um right at the early stages of PRC forming and at that stage they were finding their way, they had a little nursery up behind the marae, about twice the size of my office and we had a bunch of meetings with Shannon and others and helped them with some of the initial direction I suppose and funding applications.

He continued to indicate how the Council were able to support the aspirations of PRC during its initial phase:

Grant: Because the Council has quite a lot of funding of its own, so often we were able to put together reasonable size deals, between half a million and a million dollars, where the Council is putting in a certain amount of money, the Waikato River Authority will put in a certain amount of money and the other money might come from MFE, or it might come from the landowner or someone else, so Shannon and I worked on different deals over the years and they grew and grew like mushrooms.



Access to funding has contributed to PRC's growth. As indicated in the statement above, council have access to multiple forms of funding. PRC were able to form their own relationships with funders subsequent to the introductions that were made to these third parties. After attaining the funding for projects, PRC demonstrated to funders that they were able to deliver on the agreed outputs, which helped to grow confidence in PRC as an organisation business from the point of view of external parties.

Many of the landowners in the Waipā district are Pākehā, many of whom have gained lands as a result of Crown land confiscations from tangata whenua. As PRC is a tangata whenua-led organisation, there is potential for landowners to be hesitant about engaging with PRC. Racism against Māori that exists in the Waipā community meant that on occasion, Pākehā landowners may not have been receptive to meeting with a Māori organisation who they were unfamiliar with. In instances where Council had a pre-existing relationship with a hesitant landowner, Council were occasionally able to support PRC to develop relationships with Pākehā landowners.

Grant: Some of PRC work um would've been on the back of our relationships with landowners, so we might have, you know, I can think of some of the jobs we might've organised the landowners to clear the willows and then PRC have organised the fencing and the planting and so we've sort of pushed those projects along based on our relationship with landowners and PRC have come in behind and developed them, subsequently, um there's been some of that, other times PRC would just approach landowners directly, so there's a mixture of things, but yeah. Different things, I mean I don't think that the Council, the Council is certainly not taking credit for what PRC have achieved, they have done amazing, they've done an amazing job. We might have helped them along the way but we're not taking credit for where they are now.

Interviews with landowners indicated that even those whom PRC had direct working relationships with sometimes had reservations about awa restoration due to the land that was needed for planting. This land would no longer be able to be used for grazing farm animals.

Alan: At the beginning I wasn't that keen, because I was going to be giving up a couple of hectares of land. And my son was with me and he said nah we've got to do this, this is um a real good thing. So we entered in it and it's the best thing, one of the best things I've done. (Landowner)

The point above suggests that relationships – in the case above, the relationship that the landowner had with his son – were central to bringing landowners onboard with the work being progressed through PRC.

Examples of Treaty-led co-management

Councils are increasingly incentivised to work with iwi to achieve the goals set out in the NPS-FM 2020. Council representatives spoke about co-management agreements that council has with iwi within the Waikato region, and how there was an emphasis on creating outcomes within these co-management agreements.

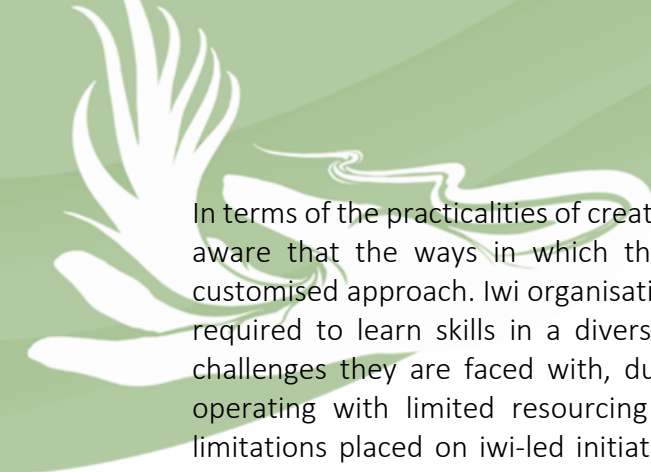
Grant: We have management agreements with the five river iwi, Waikato-Tainui, Maniapoto, Te Arawa, Raukawa and Tūwharetoa and we have obligations to move faster in that direction to be working more collaboratively with iwi on a range of different things, and this is a practical expression of that obligation and so um there can be a lot of sitting around and talking but actually getting on and doing stuff which is what I like and um it has a real purpose to it so yeah lots of benefits, lots of benefits.

Comparing the relationships that council have with iwi, Grant notes that PRC has grown considerably over a short period of time.

Grant: I think PRC has probably done the most and grown the fastest in that area of any of the iwi sort of environment groups that we deal with. They probably yeah, they would be the biggest now I would say. So they have gone further and faster than other groups that we deal with, a lot of the other groups sort of start-up and they get to a certain size and they don't really kick along or grow any bigger, they get to a comfortable size which suits them and then the nursery stays at a certain size and you know they are quite happy with that, they don't push on and grow and grow and grow, like PRC have done, are doing, so it is a wee bit scary in some ways, the rate of growth.

Council recognised that Treaty-led partnerships could be mutually beneficial to both parties. The Council representative acknowledged that tangata whenua led initiatives are more likely to be supported or acknowledged by their communities because of the relationship that tangata whenua have as kaitiaki, as opposed to Council, who have a different set of relationships and expectations placed on them within their communities.

Grant: Because Councils have a bit of negativity and a certain type of stereotype attached to them, and the whole thing works so much better when you're in a partnership that is working properly, and other people can tell the story rather than the Council saying, "Oh look what we did, we went and planted you know, the Council went and planted 100,000 trees", well people go, "Well whoop dee doo, you guys get paid to do that, that's part of your job." We have big programmes right across the region, I think last year we were involved in the planting of like a million trees, but no one really wants to know what the Council is doing, they want to know what landowners are doing, what iwi groups are doing, killing rats and possums is quite interesting also, so yeah it's, in some ways it's not a simple thing.



In terms of the practicalities of creating Treaty-led co-management partnerships, Council were aware that the ways in which they engaged with iwi-led organisations needed a more customised approach. Iwi organisations are coping with many demands on their time, and are required to learn skills in a diverse range of contexts in order to attend to the multiple challenges they are faced with, due to the colonial context that we live in. Some iwi are operating with limited resourcing compared to the resources available to Council. The limitations placed on iwi-led initiatives mean that a Treaty-led approach needs to take the colonial context into consideration when contemplating engaging in a co-management relationship.

Grant: When we are working with iwi we need to change how we, sometimes we need to change our expectations as to how quickly they would get back to us, how structured their responses or how unstructured their responses might be and, for say, we always know when we are going into a project with an iwi group that it's probably going to take a bit longer, it's probably going to be, more meetings required, we need to bring them up to speed on more stuff 'cause they're not familiar with it, we might need to train them in something or other and so we just need to appreciate that, if we are serious with working with iwi groups, then we just need to take that on board and get on with it and work through those things and not, you know things might not happen as fast as they might otherwise but you are gonna get a better result ultimately and you just need to, Council needs to change how they work to go at the pace that is suitable for the group that you're working with. And that might involve you know a lot more talking and a lot more meetings and so forth, and that's just how we need to do business.

A point of note in the excerpt above was the need for multiple meetings. Given the limited bicultural capacity across many government agencies, the need to reduce opportunities for miscommunications is important. Hui can help to reduce the gaps in communication and lead to a more productive outcome.


Overall discussion

The combined findings from this research indicate that there is an urgent need for kaupapa Māori designed organisations to be leaders in awa restoration. Having organisations such as PRC that are kaupapa-led enables the organisation to operate in ways that allow for Tiriti-based co-management. The ways in which this goal is achieved can be considerably beneficial to the health of the awa. Awa restoration that includes a model of practice that recognises the role of mana whenua in kaitiakitanga operations is likely to have a longer-term impact than if the restoration solely focuses on the natural environment. When kaitiakitanga models of practice are Māori values-based, some of the impacts of colonial practices, both historical and ongoing, are mitigated. Marae-based organisations, like PRC, are able to increase whānau access to cultural knowledge, connection to marae-based practices, whenua tūpuna, as well as the social impacts that occur through kaitiakitanga-based employment. Furthermore, PRC's model demonstrates that kaitiakitanga roles can provide meaningful employment that is well-resourced, which means that individuals do not need to gain supplementary incomes to support their kaitiakitanga activities.

Treaty partners who are unfamiliar with working with Māori urgently need to upskill themselves to work more effectively with Māori. Māori organisations are demonstrating that they can create considerable progress towards water restoration when barriers that prevent participation in this space are removed. Equitable resourcing for Māori organisations and power-sharing are necessary and fundamental to Treaty-led co-management systems. When Māori-led organisations are in authentic partnership arrangements with Treaty partners, benefits can occur for both groups, and the environmental goals are more achievable. Challenges continue to occur for Māori-led organisations which actively combat racism directed toward tangata whenua on a regular basis. For authentic Treaty-led co-managements to reach their potential, Treaty partners must actively seek ways to improve their practices to act in ways that are aligned with their obligations as stated in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

We are aware that through processes of colonisation, land alienation has occurred. Alienation from our lands “not only destroyed the economic basis of Māori communities but also undermined the tribal collective identity and belonging which were intrinsically linked to land” (Terruhn, 2019, p. 5). What PRC are working towards is the reinstatement of a collective identity that is connected to whenua through acts of kaitiakitanga, which are supported by marae and cultural mentors. This goal is made easier when Treaty partners recognise the strengths of this culturally centred approach and resource the organisation appropriately.

As tangata whenua, we have an inherent interconnectedness with our physical and spiritual environment. As Mikaere (2011) highlights, “It is entirely logical that those who play a key role in our physical preservation should also be central to the struggle for cultural endurance” (p. 301). PRC demonstrates that when actions are taken to preserve our physical environment while allowing for the cultural enrichment of the lives of those kaitiaki engaging in acts of preservation, the outcomes of those actions are considerably more significant to the lives of tangata whenua. Furthermore, organisations like PRC are likely to help with the vitality of marae while also enriching the cultural and economic prosperity of those who whakapapa to



marae. When social and cultural goals of revitalisation are achieved alongside the environmental goals of kaitiakitanga, the outcomes have multiple benefits.

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