

Traditional Knowledge

Some Comment

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A Report prepared by
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for Te Puni Kōkiri-Ministry of Māori Development



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1.0 Introduction

This report was written by Dr Charles Royal of Mauriora-ki-te-Ao/Living Universe Ltd for Te Puni Kōkiri-Ministry of Māori Development. Dr Royal was invited to provide to the Ministry comment and responses (4-5000 words) to the following questions:

1. What is traditional knowledge, and what is the value for Māori arising from the use of traditional knowledge;
2. Which term do you prefer to use for this type of knowledge and why? (What is your understanding/preference of the terms used for this type of knowledge? E.g. Customary knowledge, traditional knowledge, Mātauranga Māori, indigenous knowledge, Māori knowledge?)
3. How is traditional knowledge expressed, acquired, transferred, protected and maintained for future generations; (From your own observations and experience, what processes are important and what must be in place in order for this knowledge to be expressed, acquired, transferred, protected and maintained successfully?)
4. What are the roles of iwi, hapū and whānau in the expression, acquisition, transfer, protection and maintenance of traditional knowledge; (What are these collectives' roles and responsibilities?)
5. Does the government have a role in supporting the expression, acquisition, transfer, protection and maintenance of traditional knowledge, and if so, why and what is this role?

The report contains responses to each of these questions. It should be noted that this report has not been examined by peer review and remains unedited. The views expressed in this report are entirely those of the author.

With respect to the content of the report, the questions posed by the Ministry are large in scope and can be discussed in a variety of ways. As the report is intended to be brief (4-5000 words), the ideas contained here are introductory. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the report will be of assistance to the Ministry.

Acknowledgements to Sarah Pohatu and Patsy Karauria of Te Puni Kōkiri-Ministry of Māori Development.

2.0 Traditional Knowledge – definition and value

What is traditional knowledge, and what is the value for Māori arising from the use of traditional knowledge?

This question contains two parts as follows:

- A definition of the terms ‘traditional knowledge’
- The value of traditional knowledge to Māori people yielded through its usage

The first part of the question, concerning definition, arises (probably) from the variety of definitions that can be found for ‘traditional knowledge’. Further, a number of other terms – such as customary knowledge, indigenous knowledge, mātauranga Māori and so on – are also widely used despite variations and sometimes a lack of clarity in meaning. On the whole, it is advisable to achieve as much clarity as possible before settling upon a set of terms for use in policy prescriptions and settings. The report presents a view of traditional knowledge, however, as explained later, my preference is for the terms ‘indigenous knowledge’ and ‘mātauranga Māori’.

The second part of the question is substantial and can be responded to in a variety of ways. The question does not qualify its meaning of ‘value’. This is significant as value can be approached from a variety of perspectives, namely economic value, spiritual value, heritage value and so on. The question, however, does include the idea of the ‘use’ of traditional knowledge and, hence, one can contrast this perspective on value with, for example, the notion of ‘intrinsic’ value. This is the idea that something is of value in and of itself, its value is not dependent upon its use.

With respect to questions of the value of traditional knowledge, I have taken the view that the intent of the question is to catalyse a discussion about the general value of traditional knowledge to Māori (it is understood that traditional knowledge here means traditional knowledge held by Māori, typically traditional Māori knowledge or mātauranga Māori). The response below appears in two parts – namely definition and value – which as the previous paragraph suggests concern quite different issues and concerns.

2.1 Definition

The term ‘traditional knowledge’ has been used in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes. On the whole, however, it has been generally used to refer to knowledge with these sociological features:

- Knowledge created, maintained and applied by ‘indigenous peoples’ around the world
- Knowledge that is distinctive to these peoples and has been ‘traditionally’ associated with these peoples
- Knowledge that has been endangered in some way, usually through experiences of colonisation by (usually) European peoples in the past 500 years or so
- Knowledge that is considered to be central to the survival of these peoples as a distinctive community of people, a distinctive culture
- Knowledge which is generally heritage inspired, considered to be an ‘inheritance’
- Knowledge in which can be found a distinctive ‘indigenous worldview’
- Knowledge that gives rise to and inspires distinctive and ‘traditional’ behaviours and customs (confer *tikanga*) which can be contrasted to the behaviours and customs of western culture

This is not an exhaustive list of the features of ‘traditional knowledge’; however, it captures some of the major aspects claimed for traditional knowledge.

The Endangered aspect of traditional knowledge

A singularly defining aspect of the contemporary use of the terms ‘traditional knowledge’ has been its association with the endangered dimension of traditional knowledge. That is to say, in many situations, the term ‘traditional knowledge’ is used as a contemporary tool to highlight and to advance various projects and programmes designed to ameliorate the effects of colonisation and particularly to respond to the endangered aspects of traditional knowledge. On some occasions, it is fair to say that the term ‘traditional knowledge’ are used as code for ‘endangered knowledge’ and it is done so as to elicit some kind of response to assist in its support, protection and retention. This is a socio-political phenomenon which can be contrasted with an epistemological perspective.

From an epistemological perspective

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and knowing. Its primary interest lies with how we come to know the world around us and upon what basis can we make statements about existence. A key question lying at the heart of epistemology is the question which states, ‘what are the grounds for valid belief?’ Similarly, we might ask, ‘what do we believe to be true about the world and how did we come to form these views of the world?’ It is here that epistemology explores ideas about how we engage the world and how we create our responses and explanations (knowledge) of our experiences. Empiricism, a corner stone of science, argues that we must construct our knowledge only upon what our senses tell us about the world. All other ways of encountering the world

(if there are other ways) are unreliable and are not sustainable grounds for building our beliefs about the world.

From this perspective, we can see that the terms 'traditional knowledge' were not developed and applied from an epistemological perspective but rather from a socio-political-cultural perspective¹. That is to say, the terms have arisen and are used to 'refer' to a body of knowledge and not to reflect a philosophy or a theory of existence and our encounter with it (what ever the nature of that encounter might be). It is this aspect, I suggest, that is the weakest feature of the term 'traditional knowledge'. Because this term is not based upon a theory of human encounter with the world – and its response in the form of knowledge – it will always require a socio-cultural identifier to distinguish it. That is, on the whole, the terms 'traditional knowledge' has to be qualified through association with descriptors such as 'indigenous people' in order for the terms to hold meaning. (This matter is revisited later.)

Whilst the terms may be of use to various policy discussions (see WIPO below), on the whole the terms do not reflect an epistemological perspective. It is my view that what lies at the heart of 'indigenous worldviews' is a distinctive way of being and experiencing the world and it is this experience which gives rise to 'indigenous knowledge' as a distinctive epistemology (see Section 2.1 below).

Tradition and Traditional

One aspect of the term 'traditional knowledge', however, that we may wish to examine are the notions of tradition and traditional. I do not have space to discuss this at length here; however, it may be helpful to offer a few comments. The use of the term 'traditional' may reflect the nature of traditional knowledge as a 'heritage' inspired knowledge system. That is, indigenous peoples place an emphasis upon inherited knowledge (confer, *taonga tuku iho*) and speak often about the 'wisdom of the ancestors'. Consequently, traditional knowledge does not possess the same level of scepticism about pre-existing knowledge as science, for example. To be doubtful about existing explanations of the world is one of the hallmarks of science.

The situation with traditional knowledge *viz a viz* indigenous knowledge is different in that the attitude is to be respectful of existing knowledge, fashioned as it has been by important ancestors of the past. The prevailing orthodoxy in traditional knowledge is to uplift and cherish knowledge created by the 'ancestors' and for it to find expression in the lives of contemporary generations. This does not mean that traditional knowledge is incapable of change nor does it mean that contemporary generations must slavishly adhere to pre-existing 'ancestral' knowledge. Rather, we should note that traditional knowledge did and

¹ I am happy to be shown otherwise, however, I have yet to see an epistemological definition of traditional knowledge in the manner suggested.

does indeed change and that contests over land and resources (which appear frequently in iwi history) also represent contests over tradition, orthodoxies and knowledge.²

The processes of change in traditional knowledge are generally slower than science, for example, and entail a building upon, a layering (confer *whakapapa*) of new understandings upon pre-existent knowledge. On the whole, a mana diminishing act of contest and overcoming of pre-existing knowledge was considered very seriously indeed. Traditional communities were and are interested in mana enhancing activities, especially those that enhance the mana of all, both past and present.

Use by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)

The World Intellectual Property Organisation convenes a standing committee entitled 'The Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore'. This committee has been meeting in Geneva for some years and is deliberating on a range of matters significant to the life of traditional knowledge throughout the world. WIPO is a good example where the terms 'traditional knowledge' are used and have some influence upon policy. WIPO note that it is difficult to define traditional knowledge:

What is traditional knowledge? Can the astonishing diversity of indigenous and local intellectual traditions and cultural heritage be bundled together into one single definition, without losing the diversity that is its lifeblood? Is it feasible or even desirable to find one form of international protection for TK? For that matter, what is it to "protect" TK: what is to be protected, and what is it to be protected from, for what purpose, and for whose benefit? These questions, important in themselves, lead to some deeper questions. What is valuable and distinctive about TK: what makes it "traditional"? How can those qualities gain greater recognition and legal protection beyond the traditional circle, indeed worldwide, but in a way that remains appropriate, useful and beneficial for the communities that maintain TK systems? No single definition would fully do justice to the diverse forms of knowledge that are held by traditional communities...³

The tension between pre-existent knowledge from history (suggested by the terms 'tradition' and 'traditional') and the idea that this knowledge is

² My namesake, Te Ahukaramū, makes his entry into Ngāti Raukawa history when, in the late 1810s, he deliberately burnt pā at Maungatautari (near Cambridge, Waikato). This act was designed to get his people to move, to catalyse them in a different direction, namely to migrate to the southern reaches of the North Island. 'Departure' is a feature of iwi history from Polynesian times right through to today. Urban migrations commence with a 'departure'.

³ See http://www.wipo.int/freepublications/en/tk/920/wipo_pub_920.pdf

contemporary and exists in a 'living community' is inferred in this comment from the World Intellectual Property Organisation:

The "tradition" in TK

What makes knowledge "traditional" is not its antiquity: much TK is not ancient or inert, but is a vital, dynamic part of the contemporary lives of many communities today. It is a form of knowledge which has a traditional link with a certain community:

WIPO, however, goes on to note the heritage aspect of 'traditional', this sense of the passage of knowledge through generations:

(traditional knowledge) is knowledge which is developed, sustained and passed on within a traditional community, and is passed between generations, sometimes through specific customary systems of knowledge transmission. A community might see TK as part of their cultural or spiritual identity.

Finally, WIPO draws a distinct connection between traditional knowledge and community:

So it is the relationship with the community that makes it "traditional". TK is being created every day, and evolves as individuals and communities respond to the challenges posed by their social environment.⁴

Through the Ministry of Economic Development, New Zealand participates in this standing committee and representatives attend committee meetings. Consequently, the terms 'traditional knowledge' appear in the work of New Zealand's Ministry of Economic Development.

2.2 Value

The value of 'traditional knowledge' arises from a number of aspects and, as our question suggests, one of the best ways of assessing value is by considering its utility and usefulness. In my view, the key benefit of traditional knowledge to Māori centres upon the notion of 'distinctiveness'. This distinctiveness can be expressed (and is expressed) in a variety of ways:

- Distinctive inheritance and heritage giving rise to a distinctive cultural identity
- Distinctive cultural activities, customs, behaviours
- Distinctive cultural institutions and organisations

⁴ See http://www.wipo.int/freepublications/en/tk/920/wipo_pub_920.pdf

In my view distinctiveness does not mean separateness. Māori are a population that are already highly integrated into the wider New Zealand population. Hence, distinctiveness means that certain distinctive activities, enterprises and identities can be constructed which at the same time are connected, nested and reside in wider contexts. For example, a *whare rūnanga* is a distinctive iwi organisation with a distinctive identity, distinctive *tikanga* and distinctive resources. It also serves a distinctive community. However, a *whare rūnanga* is also a legal entity (usually a trust) which resides within the wider local, regional and national economy. As a legal entity it interacts with other legal entities (a local shop, for example, a Government department, other trusts and so on) as it is through legal entities that resources and capital flow in a market economy.

Similarly, a Māori person is a unique individual arising from a distinctive family tree inheriting various distinctive aspects as a result of that person's background. These distinctive aspects could include an inheritance of language, culture, worldview, values, stories, knowledge and so on. It could also include access to distinctive resources (e.g. land, whānau trusts) and to distinctive institutions (e.g. marae) and organisations (e.g. the King Movement). However, a Māori person is also a New Zealander, a person who participates in the wider New Zealand economy. A Māori person speaks English, will often go to state schools and other education institutions, belong to churches, play sport with other New Zealanders, travel overseas and flat with Kiwis in London (for example) and much more.

...distinctiveness is not a separating out of Māori – either physically or psychologically – from our fellow New Zealanders on the basis of 'Māori' identity culture and heritage. Rather it is about yielding the creative potential of one's Māori heritage in new and innovative ways that are sensitive to the lived reality of Māori as New Zealanders in a 21st century democracy. 'Traditional knowledge' has much to contribute to this scenario...

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Another way of looking at the value of traditional knowledge *viz a viz* mātauranga Māori to Māori is presented in a project entitled *Vision Mātauranga: Unlocking the Innovation Potential of Māori knowledge, resources and people* convened by the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology. Much can be said about this project; however, it is useful to note that *Vision Mātauranga* suggests that

distinctive contributions can be made to national economic, environmental and social goals through traditional Māori knowledge. The document reads:

We want our research to discover:

- *distinctive products, processes, systems and services* arising from Māori knowledge, resources and people
- *distinctive and successful approaches to environmental sustainability* through an exploration of iwi and hapū relationships with land and sea and *Kaitiakitanga* – an emerging approach to environmental management
- *successful, including distinctive, approaches and solutions* to Māori health and social needs, issues and priorities
- *and develop a distinctive body of knowledge* at the interface between indigenous knowledge and RS&T, which is applied within RS&T.

As outcomes of these research activities, we wish to see:

- R&D activities assisting Māori businesses and other enterprises to uplift productivity and performance, enabling them to *make real and sustainable contributions to national economic growth*
- increased understanding of how the New Zealand land and seascape is distinctively experienced and explained in iwi and hapū, and of the contribution this can make to *achieving sustainable environmental outcomes and healthy communities*
- *real gains in health and social well-being* for Māori from investments in a range of researchers and scientists, including Māori
- a deep exploration of indigenous knowledge – both its traditional applications and its epistemology – in order to understand how *indigenous knowledge can add value to RS&T*.⁵

Vision Mātauranga contains a certain way of thinking about the potential value of mātauranga Māori not only to Māori but to New Zealander as a whole. There are many other ways of thinking about the potential value of mātauranga Māori to Māori, however, we do not have space to cover them all here. However, let me conclude by offering a brief list of potential other benefits. Traditional Māori knowledge-mātauranga Māori contains:

- models for certain behaviours and processes e.g. ritual activities designed to optimise gardening, fishing, processes for educating the young, forest lore and much more
- models for the use of indigenous flora and fauna giving rise to traditional technologies and technological applications

⁵ See www.morst.govt.nz

- a wealth of stories and storytelling models replete with vast application potential in the creative industries
- ways of thinking about health and wellbeing
- perspectives on the nature of the environment and natural world and ideas about how we might interact with our environments

3.0 Preferred Terms

Which term do you prefer to use for this type of knowledge and why? (What is your understanding/preference of the terms used for this type of knowledge? E.g. Customary knowledge, traditional knowledge, Mātauranga Māori, indigenous knowledge, Māori knowledge?)

The terms I prefer to use are 'indigenous knowledge' and 'mātauranga Māori'. The reason is chiefly socio-political (again) rather than epistemological. A key problem with the term 'traditional knowledge' is that because it is used for socio-cultural-political purposes, it requires a socio-political-cultural explanation to qualify and clarify its meaning. That is, the terms traditional knowledge have to be qualified by an additional explanation concerning their association with indigenous peoples. This is because it could be used to stand for other kinds of 'traditional knowledge'. For example, knowledge created and traditionally applied by the Catholic Church in its rituals represents an application of the traditional knowledge of that community of people. Similarly knowledge traditionally used in the universities in their graduation ceremonies could be argued to be 'traditional knowledge'. Consequently, 'traditional knowledge' requires a socio-cultural qualifier (e.g. knowledge held by indigenous peoples) to ensure that we understand what we mean when we use the term.

I prefer to use the terms 'indigenous knowledge' as I believe that the terms can be used to relate to a particular and distinctive way of being and experiencing the world – a way of being that we call 'indigenuity'. I think that there is much to be considered in the idea that a person and/or a community becomes indigenous to a particular place (environment) and what this idea means for the future of our planet and humankind in general. It is clear that humanity has come to a challenging point in our relationships with one another and particularly in our relationship with the natural world and its ecosystems. My interest is to explore the possibility of an 'indigenuity' of the future where 'indigenous knowledge' is a product of and reinforces this way of way of being in the world. I look to 'indigenous knowledge' of the past as an inspiration for this contemporary and ongoing quest for a fundamentally better relationship with our planet.

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My research centres upon the notion of the creative potential of indigenous knowledge/mātauranga Māori. To this end, much of my work is ‘forward looking’ and the terms ‘traditional knowledge’ don’t communicate these ideas of creativity and future possibilities. Whilst the knowledge to which the terms ‘traditional knowledge’ refer may indeed retain creative potential, the terms themselves suggest that all that we are considering is knowledge that is ‘traditional’ , is pre-existent, a *taonga* from history. My view of indigenous knowledge and mātauranga Māori are outlined below.

3.1 Indigenous Knowledge

I have used the terms ‘indigenous knowledge’ for some time, however, my approach to these terms, particularly indigenous, is somewhat different to that popularly used. Like traditional knowledge, the terms ‘indigenous knowledge’ are usually used to refer to a body of knowledge traditionally associated with ‘indigenous peoples’. My interest, however lies with the epistemological implications of the term ‘indigenous’ rather than its sociological uses. In a paper written in 2005, I outline what I think are the three key features of indigenous knowledge in the world today. They are as follows:

In my view, the international and cross-cultural body of knowledge entitled ‘indigenous knowledge’ contains three major themes which simultaneously inspires it and defines it. I suggest that these themes when woven together constitute the major features of indigenous knowledge in the world today.

The Search for better relationships between human communities and the natural world

The first theme concerns the search for better relationships between human communities and the natural world environments in which we live. This theme arises from the deep ‘call’ within indigenous knowledge which sees humankind as part of the natural order rather than superior to it. From this idea arises much of the substance of indigenous knowledge such as the notion of the natural world as the embodiment of knowledge, the natural world as a teacher for the human person and that life reaches its fullness when the natural world seems to ‘live in’ and ‘speak into’ the consciousness of the human being and their community. This idea influences the very idea of knowledge itself and presents knowledge as an energy rather than a finite product, and knowledge as equivalent to the world rather than as representation of it. This theme is also deepened by the lived heritage of indigenous communities, in particular land and seascapes.

Knowledge weaving: Cross-disciplinary, cross-boundary thought, discussion and knowledge

The second key theme within indigenous knowledge concerns the weaving of knowledge and experience across domains of knowledge and the boundaries articulated for disciplines. This theme arises from the notion that indigenous knowledge is 'holistic' in the sense that knowledge is interconnected and relational in the same way that all life is interconnected and relational. We dwell within the web or weave of life – in Māori we use *tātai* or genealogies for all creation as a metaphor for this aspect of existence – and so our knowledge reflects this reality.

Some see this theme as an attempt to undermine and compromise disciplines. Some might even suggest that this idea is anti-methodological. (One will note how this theme is deeply relevant to notions of power and its expression through knowledge.) However, the idea of weaving across boundaries can not take place without the boundaries themselves existing. Just as the world contains natural borders – as between the sea and land, as between mountains and flatland, as between knowing and ignorance – so there are natural borders within knowledge and they exist for substantial reasons. A 'holistic' view of the world and of knowledge is not blind to parts, boundaries, borders and thresholds but rather sees these parts both as 'wholes' in themselves as well as parts of larger wholes (confer 'holon'). Life is a complex and multidimensional whole and the quest to see the 'whole' is to render disciplines as part of a complex set of pathways leading to wholeness rather fragmentation. In this way of viewing the world, understanding *relationship* is the key to understanding the world.

The Revitalisation and rejuvenation of the traditional knowledge bases of indigenous communities

A third and important theme within indigenous knowledge is the desire to revitalise and rejuvenate the traditional knowledge bases of indigenous peoples, particularly knowledge that has been in decline through colonisation. This theme is deeply aligned to the desire by indigenous peoples to overcome their experience of colonisation and to build futures upon deep and indigenous foundations. That is, in rearranging indigenous communities and preparing them for the future, this task is not merely concerned with acquiring general knowledge and resources which enable them to participate in a national or regional economy – it is also concerned with understanding ourselves as a distinctive people and what we can distinctively contribute to a wide range of activities within the nation's in which we live. Contrary to what some critics may say about the rejuvenation of traditional knowledge ('going backwards'), the revitalisation of traditional knowledge is as much about understanding our future as it is about our past.

In my view, these three themes *woven together* – searching for better relationships with the natural world, cross-boundary styles of thought and knowledge and the revitalisation of traditional indigenous knowledge – are the key ideas within international indigenous knowledge today. There may be other themes – such as the use of traditional knowledge to improve the harvesting of indigenous flora and fauna – however, I would like to present these three as a starting point for discussion when we think about indigenous knowledge in world terms.⁶

Of particular interest is the idea of the natural world ‘speaking into’ human creativity. This is what I mean by ‘indigenous knowledge’ – knowledge which arises out of an intimate relationship with the natural world. Here is another quote from a paper I prepared for the National Oral History Association:

An indigenous culture would argue that humans are the progeny of the land and we must take our place alongside all the other things that are birthed from the land such as trees, flora and fauna and so on. In Māori culture, for example, the first human is said to be Hine-ahu-one whose name reflects the idea of the ‘woman-arising-from-earth’. Hine is said to be the progenitor of humankind.

This perspective on the birth and nature of human kind impacts upon our understanding of knowledge as well. Just as Tāne was born from the earth to separate earth and sky, so the human person is born from Papatuanuku. However, a physical birth is then followed by an intellectual birth (for want of a better term) and a spiritual birth.

What this means is that the human person walks the land having been born from it while the land continues to bequeath its gifts to him or her in the form of thought. As the physical body arises from the land, so thought arises from within the person. This is why the adjective for the appearance of thought within a person is *hua* as in the expression ‘ka hua te whakaaro’. (Also *puta*, *toko* and others) The sense here is that the interior of the individual is an organic ‘arising’ (this is the meaning of the terms ‘toko’ and ‘tikanga’) by which thought ‘arises’ within the person. Thought is a fruit that blooms within the person. This idea gives rise to expression:

Ka hua te whakaaro
Ka hua te kōrero

Meaning:

⁶ ‘Exploring Indigenous Knowledge’, a paper delivered to a conference entitled ‘The Indigenous Knowledges Conference - Reconciling Academic Priorities with Indigenous Realities’, Victoria University, Wellington, 25 June 2005.

Thought blooms Spoken Words bloom

Hence, an indigenous concept of knowledge is based upon the notion that the entire being of the human person is the fruit of the earth. This includes human cognition, consciousness, thought and more. Life in these terms is understood to be the nature of the flow of earth consciousness and knowledge into the person where the person becomes the living embodiment and 'fruit' of the earth and its progeny. The land and the person becomes one as in the well known term, 'tangata whenua'. The person is the earth, the earth is the person. In this worldview, knowledge is indigenous to the human person who is indigenous to the earth, dwelling in a symbiotic organic relationship. Certainly knowledge is externalised as a 'fruit', a 'nourishment', however, in the first instance knowledge is internal to the body and the earth.

This is an 'indigenous' knowledge tradition in the sense that human beings respond spontaneously to the environments in which they dwell. Thought may, in some traditions, be considered to be the spontaneous production of the mind, but in an indigenous tradition, thought is the product of the environment, of the land and so on. It is a very deliberate 'bequeathing' of that environment into the consciousness of the individual.⁷

3.2 Mātauranga Māori

On many occasions, particularly where Māori is the language of discussion and discourse⁸, I have used the terms 'mātauranga Māori'. My working definition is as follows:

'Mātauranga Māori' is a modern term for a body of knowledge that was brought to these islands by Polynesian ancestors of present-day Māori. Here this body of knowledge grew according to life in Aotearoa and Te Wai Pounamu. Despite an initial period of change and growth, the arrival of European populations in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries brought major impacts to the life of this knowledge, endangering it many and substantial ways. All, however, was not lost as new knowledge was created through the encounter with the European and through the experience of the creation of the new nation called New Zealand. Important fragments and portions – notably the Māori language - remain today. These fragments

⁷ A paper delivered to the Ōtaki Oral History Forum, Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa, Ōtaki, 16 November 2002. For further discussion on 'perceptual phenomenology' see 'Philosophy of Native Science' by Gregory Cajete in *American Indian Thought*, edited by Anne Waters, pp.45-57. Blackwell Publishing 2004

⁸ I have recently completed a new book called 'Te Kaimānga: He Wānanga i te mātauranga'. It presents a discussion in Māori of the key features of knowledge generally including mātauranga Māori.

and portions are catalysing a new creative period in Māori history and culture and in the life of the New Zealand nation.

This working definition is akin to the meanings inferred in Sir Apirana Ngata's use of the terms 'mātauranga Māori' in a letter he wrote in 1900.

I pēnei ake ai te whakamārama kia ea ai tēnei pātai, ki hea tuku ai te kupenga, ki hea hao ai te rangatahi? Ko te whakautu, hei waenganui, kua hei ngā taunga tawhito i te wā o te Māoritanga, kua hei ngā taunga hou rawa o te Pākehā, engari hei waenganui, kei reira te mano o te ika e pōrangirangi noa ana. Ko ngā tohunga hei hao i taua waenganui nā, ko te rōpū i whakatapurua tahitia i roto i te mātauranga Pākehā, i te mātauranga Māori. Kei runga i a rātou te kupu nei, 'E hao rā e te rangatahi.'...⁹

Our explanation is like this so that we may answer the question, where shall we set our net? The answer is, let it be set between. Let it not be set in the ancient themes of the Māoritanga of old, nor should it be set solely in the thoroughly modern aspects of the European, but rather between the two. The experts who shall fish there are those who are dedicated to both European knowledge and Māori knowledge. The expression which 'says the net go fishing...' is for these people.

For a more substantial discussion of the definition of 'mātauranga Māori', please see 'Mātauranga Māori and Museum Practice: A Discussion' written by myself for Te Papa National Services. (A version of this report is available on-line at <http://www.mkta.co.nz/default.aspx?Page=81>)

Other reports in which discussion of mātauranga Māori can be found include 'The Purpose of Education: Perspectives Arising from Mātauranga Māori', written in 2005 for the Ministry of Education (available from <http://www.mkta.co.nz/default.aspx?Page=81>) and 'Creativity and Mātauranga Māori: Towards Tools for Innovation', written in 2006 for the Hui Taumata Action Taskforce.

⁹ *Pipiwharauoa*, , nama 35, Hanuere 1900, whārangi 6. Tirohia hoki, http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-TeoNgak-_N88678.html

4.0 Use of Traditional Knowledge

How is traditional knowledge expressed, acquired, transferred, protected and maintained for future generations; (From your own observations and experience, what processes are important and what must be in place in order for this knowledge to be expressed, acquired, transferred, protected and maintained successfully?)

This question is truly large in scope and can be responded to in a variety of ways. Overall, the intent of this question is to come to an understanding of the general circumstances by which ‘traditional knowledge’ can be a living presence in the lives of the individuals and the communities to whom traditional knowledge is important. A key matter to note is that the processes and circumstances of the past are not those in place today. For example, one can note the huge differences between the traditional *whare wānanga* and its processes and those of the contemporary *whare wānanga*. What is required is a substantial examination:

- of the traditional processes and institutions
- of our contemporary processes and institutions

The following passages contain some introductory remarks. Each response concerns ‘mātauranga Māori’ rather than traditional knowledge.

4.1 Expressed

There are a number of conditions that need to be in place for the successful expression of mātauranga Māori. A list is as follows:

- individuals with significant general knowledge of mātauranga Māori – creating a critical mass of people who use and apply mātauranga Māori in their professional and private lives
- individuals with specialist knowledge of specific applications of mātauranga Māori (e.g. *tohunga whakairo*)– of particular urgency is the development of the new *tohunga*, the new experts in the mātauranga Māori tradition, with all the kinds of standards setting and quality measurements that this requires
- individuals with a significant philosophical overview of mātauranga Māori, its overall features, its specific applications and usages, its relationship with other bodies of knowledge – these are individuals with real skill in exploring the nature of knowledge itself
- institutions and organisations who use and apply mātauranga Māori in their day to day activities (e.g. *whare rūnanga*, *whare wānanga*, *marae*)

etc.) – of particular interest is the maturation of iwi/Māori organisations so that they are not only competent performers in New Zealand's economy but also make use of relevant portions of mātauranga Māori enabling to become distinctive organisations replete with distinctive and successful *tikanga*

- institutions and organisations dedicated as repositories of materials significant in the life of mātauranga Māori (e.g. libraries, archives, whare taonga)
- 'flagship' projects and enterprises which typify or are iconic of mātauranga Māori

4.2 Acquired and Transferred

Like many bodies of knowledge, the acquisition and transfer of mātauranga Māori takes place in a variety of ways. Some aspects or portions of mātauranga Māori are acquired easily through public channels such as through public broadcasting. Other aspects and portions are acquired and/or transferred through formalised channels where access is limited. For example, to gain mastery in *whakairo* or *raranga* requires specialised training over some years with a reputable teacher(s). Hence, on the whole, the acquisition and transfer of mātauranga takes place via a mixture of formal and informal pathways.

It is important to note that the pathways and processes by which individuals gain both general and specific knowledge within the mātauranga Māori tradition is in a state of reorganisation. Some might say that in some instances it is in a state of disarray.

Let us comment briefly upon the formal and informal processes for the acquisition and transfer of mātauranga Māori in our contemporary setting. Following this we will discuss briefly this matter of the reorganisation of these processes.

Formal processes for the acquisition of mātauranga Māori include:

- schooling and tertiary education, particularly through *kōhanga reo*, *kura Kaupapa Māori*, *whare kura* and *whare wānanga*
- specialist training opportunities in which a high level of mātauranga Māori is applied e.g. *whakairo* training at carving schools such as that located at Whakarewarewa, Rotorua
- *marae* based or *marae* relevant training opportunities, e.g. *whareniui* construction projects
- research projects utilising documents and other resources found in libraries and archives

Informal processes for the acquisition of mātauranga Māori include:

- whānau and hapū located learning in which elders and other experts impart portions of mātauranga Māori to others in an informally structured manner, e.g. learning during *tangihanga*
- public broadcasting avenues in which portions and extracts of mātauranga Māori are used e.g. Māori television and radio, films such as *The Whale Rider*
- interactions between individuals and groups conducting various activities

Concerning the matter of reorganisation, it is important to note the current difficulties relating to the intergenerational transfer of mātauranga Māori. For example, most marae have been struck by this problem as well as institutions such as the King Movement. The intergenerational succession of individuals to assume roles in these institutions is now at a very difficult stage. The establishment of *Te Arataki Manu Kōrero o Tainui* at Te Wānanga-o-Aotearoa took place as a response to this issue facing the Kīngitanga specifically and the Tainui peoples generally. However, these processes are fraught with numerous difficulties.

4.3 Protected and Maintained

The protection and maintenance of mātauranga Māori requires a number of things, including:

- a substantial number of people who are active in the mātauranga Māori tradition – using, exploring, creating mātauranga Māori
- certain institutional and organisational arrangements, particularly iwi located and relevant organisation who use and apply mātauranga Māori in their work
- a certain amount of *sui generis* and generally relevant IP law and regulation which enables both the protection of pre-existing mātauranga Māori and the creation of new mātauranga Māori

Like any knowledge tradition, the best way to maintain mātauranga Māori is through its use. Using and applying mātauranga Māori in a variety of situations – formal and informal, individual and collective, for-profit and charitable and so on – is the best way to maintain and further the life of this body of knowledge. Clarity is also achieved over who maintain interests in the life of this body of knowledge.

However, the very best way to maintain and *protect* mātauranga Māori is through its creation for it is through creative activities that the knowledge lives, roles are

defined and maintained, standards are set and interests protected. Much of the tension in intellectual property debates concerning mātauranga Māori *viz a viz* traditional knowledge arises in the context of a concern to protect pre-existing traditional knowledge. For many indigenous peoples (if not all), this is an abiding and ongoing concern and rightfully so. In some situations, the indigenous community has become so impoverished that their traditional knowledge is the only asset they have.

This is not the situation in New Zealand. Although there are numerous examples of Māori families living in depressed circumstances, the level of poverty in New Zealand is not comparable with that seen on the African continent, for example. Further, those Māori families and communities who do live in depressed circumstances are often those with least knowledge of their own Māori backgrounds. That is to say, on many occasions Māori families are not only impoverished financially but also culturally. And so the situation is not comparable with, again, African communities who might live in a subsistence economy. In these situations, sometimes the only way families are able to live is by applications of their traditional knowledge such as, for example, water maintenance practices in desert environments.

In the New Zealand situation our cultural and economic circumstances are such that families are able to receive support from the state and, hence, reliance upon applications of traditional mātauranga Māori for subsistence purposes is not present. It might be argued, therefore, that this could be a contributing factor for the fragmentary state of contemporary mātauranga Māori in that our communities have not needed to rely on traditional knowledge for food gathering purposes, for example. Traditional fishing, gardening, fowling practices have not been maintained over the years as forest environments have diminished, access to existing forests has been limited and Māori families have been able to secure food resources from elsewhere.

The key point is that because of a variety of historical circumstances, our contemporary knowledge of mātauranga Māori is fragmentary and incomplete. Whilst the continuum of mātauranga Māori has never been entirely severed, it is nonetheless fragmentary. Hence, what is required now is a fundamental reworking of mātauranga Māori imbued primarily with a creative ethos. This is the idea of a 'mātauranga Māori of tomorrow' based upon fragments and portions of pre-existing mātauranga Māori. It is through this creative reorganisation (which is already underway) that:

- roles and responsibilities will be identified
- domains, portions and specialist applications within mātauranga Māori will be prescribed

- stakeholder interests and beneficiaries of mātauranga Māori will be more clearly and more easily described
- the beneficial outcomes of the use of mātauranga Māori will be more clearly articulated

Hence, in my view, New Zealand needs a fundamental rethink about mātauranga Māori. We need to adopt a creative attitude with respect to this body of knowledge and its various parts. Our understandable desire to protect pre-existing mātauranga Māori should be balanced with a creative ethos which seeks to create new mātauranga Māori based upon pre-existing ideas, concepts and knowledge.

5.0 Roles

What are the roles of iwi and hapū and whānau in the expression, acquisition, transfer, protection and maintenance of traditional knowledge; (What are these collective roles and responsibilities?)

This question, I suggest, arises from a popular conception as to the community dimension of mātauranga Māori – the collective ownership of knowledge, often expressed through the concepts of *kaitiaki* and *kaitiakitanga*. In my view, the community and collective dimension of mātauranga Māori has been overplayed. Generally, mātauranga Māori does possess a strong community dimension and iwi knowledge is generally considered to be a collectively owned asset. The World Intellectual Property Organisation makes a relevant comment in its statement which appears in Section 2.2 of this report.

However, in many instances portions of mātauranga Māori are created and applied by specialists. Further, one can see from the traditional institution of *tapu* we can see a deliberate sectioning off, a ‘partitioning out’ of knowledge as the preserve of specialists and adepts alone. The curriculum of the traditional whare wānanga, for example, was for the use of the initiated alone. Knowledge pertaining to the placement of mauri stones in fishing nets, bird snares and gardens was for the adept alone. Now one might say that the ‘ownership’ of the knowledge was held in the community and that certain individuals were sanctioned and commissioned to use and apply the knowledge. The problem with this idea, however, is the term ‘ownership’ itself. It is unclear whether ancestors of 300 years ago, for example, maintained a comparable notion as part of their culture. Additionally, it is also highly debatable whether our ancestors saw knowledge (at all!) as a discrete phenomenon which they regarded as property and to which property rights might be ascribed.

In my view, a good deal of our contemporary psychology and perspectives concerning mātauranga Māori arise from our experiences of colonisation and change in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is possible to argue that the emphasis upon the collective nature of mātauranga Māori has arisen through the dismantling of the old *tapu* system which did segregate knowledge into various parts. Further, it might be argued that the emphasis upon the collective nature of Māori society generally owes as much to the onslaught of European culture as to *whanaungatanga*. That is to say, colonisation forced many Māori communities inward and to collectivise in ways that were not envisaged prior to the arrival of European influence.

There is much more to say on these matters. The general point I would make is that mātauranga Māori contains both general community and specific individual dimensions and that much of the contemporary disarray in mātauranga Māori is

partly attributable to a diminishment of our ability to grow true experts in the mātauranga Māori tradition.

Like all communities, iwi, hapū and whānau have important roles to play in the creation, maintenance and application of knowledge that is important to those communities. These roles include:

- fostering, growing and training individuals to be repositories, creators and users of traditional knowledge (creating and maintaining the circumstances whereby these individuals may be trained in particular aspects of traditional knowledge and whereby these individuals may achieve excellence in their chosen field or activity)
- setting the moral and ethical parameters for the creation, maintenance and use of traditional knowledge (the moral and ethical context in which traditional knowledge is used and applied)
- setting out broad and specific contexts in which traditional knowledge is used and applied (creating and maintaining enterprises and activities where traditional knowledge is used and applied e.g. whare rūnanga, whare wānanga etc.)

It may be helpful, at this stage, to mention the domains and fields of knowledge within mātauranga Māori. Like all bodies of knowledge of this kind, there are aspects that are common to the community and there are aspects which are held by specialists. For example, common mātauranga Māori knowledge includes everyday Māori language, everyday activities in which mātauranga Māori is used and so on. We could call this the 'public domain' of mātauranga Māori where knowledge is relatively free and where restrictions over usage are few. An example of this kind of mātauranga Māori is the Māori language generally. Here we are trying to expand the public domain of mātauranga Māori (the Māori language at least) so that more and more people may speak and use the language.

Narrow domains within mātauranga Māori tend to be defined by specialist applications. For example, *whakairo* and *raranga* are specialist areas which require particular training pathways and projects whereby a person can gain real skills and knowledge in those specialist areas. With respect to these areas of knowledge, the iwi, hapū and whānau have a limited role in making crucial decisions about the nature, character and content of the knowledge applied in these areas. However, iwi, hapū and whānau communities exert influence:

- during the selection of individuals proposed to be trained in a specialist area

- during the application of certain kinds of knowledge (ethical decisions which affect the wider community)
- during community commissioned projects

6.0 Government

Does the government have a role in supporting the expression, acquisition, transfer, protection and maintenance of traditional knowledge, and if so, why and what is this role?

Yes, the Government has a role; however, we need to be precise about the nature of this role. In general, the Government ought to be interested in traditional Māori knowledge (mātauranga Māori) for two key reasons:

- traditional Māori knowledge-mātauranga Māori is critical to Māori development, to the ongoing life of Māori communities as a distinctive and vital aspect of New Zealand society and culture.¹⁰
- traditional Māori knowledge-mātauranga Māori is able to make distinctive and considerable contributions to a range of enterprises and activities in our nation's life and culture

Under these two prescriptions, the Government could play a variety of roles. The first role for Government concerns the establishment and maintenance of circumstances and conditions which enables mātauranga Māori to be created, maintained and applied for the benefit of Māori development. In my view, Māori Development can only be achieved when Māori envisage possibilities ourselves and take action to realise our goals. And so the Government's role is limited in this regard. However, the Government is able to set conditions, to influence contexts and to regulate certain aspects of New Zealand's life and culture and it is suggested that in conducting these activities, the Government should be sensitive to these aspirations.

The Government already exerts a great influence upon mātauranga Māori in direct and indirect ways. From support for kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori and so on, through to Māori broadcasting to support for the Māori language (such as the *Mā te reo* fund) these activities have direct and indirect influence upon the life of mātauranga Māori today. The Government has been generally prompted to support initiatives such as kōhanga reo for two reasons:

¹⁰ This does not mean that Māori people will live separate and isolated lives from the rest of New Zealand's population nor does it mean that Māori will be subsumed and assimilated into the wider population and more dominant culture. Rather, it means that there will be many things that Māori share with our fellow New Zealanders and there will be some things that are distinctive to Māori. The notion that a population (or a phenomenon) is both a whole unto itself as well as being a part of a larger whole is called a *holon*. The *relationships* between these wholes of varying size is referred to as a *holarchy*. These ideas were pioneered by the American philosopher Arthur Koestler and represent a positive response to the vexed issue of Māori independence and self-determination (*mana motuhake*) and its relationship to New Zealand as a whole.

- Reducing inequalities – responding to and addressing historical underdevelopment and lack of success of Māori people, communities and institutions.
- Responses to claims and actions taken in various judicial fora - in recent times, recognition has grown (primarily through claims before the Waitangi Tribunal) that the historical impoverishment and disenfranchisement of Māori people and communities arose through direct and indirect actions of the Crown

Hence, on the whole, the paradigm of response from Government has been driven by a social-justice paradigm. Recently, this paradigm has been supplemented by a ‘creative potential’ paradigm. (Te Puni Kōkiri’s own ‘Māori potential’ policy framework is an example.) This does not mean that social-justice is no longer an important plank in policies relating to Māori development but rather to introduce a supplementary and interconnected way of thinking about the Māori dimension in New Zealand society and culture.

The creative potential paradigm states that Māori knowledge, resources and people are able (and do) make considerable contributions to our nation – to Māori communities specifically and the nation generally (sometimes specifically too)¹¹. Hence, the creative potential paradigm suggests that initiatives arising in the Māori world ought to be encouraged and supported not just because of an obligation created through history but because the initiative itself has merit and contains creative potential.

- Clarity with respect to goals and objectives (an outcomes based approach)
- Supporting activities on the basis of their merit and success in achieving goals and objectives
- A sense of openness and freedom with to the way in which activities are conducted, decisions are made, goals reached
- Building enterprises of goodwill and understanding. Whilst they are distinctively Māori, there is a reasonable amount of understanding outside of Māori communities

On the whole, the creative potential approach seeks to re-inspire and reinvigorate a *mana* centred culture for Māori people, knowledge and resources. Whilst Māori communities reside at the intersection of a large number of values, worldviews and behaviours, the potential contribution of mātauranga Māori – particularly the traditional Māori worldview – to contemporary culture is illustrated

¹¹ For further information, see, for example, *Māori Economic Development: Te Ōhanga Whanaketanga Māori*, New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, 2003

keenly in the idea of a *mana* inspired culture. Whilst our understanding of mana is constantly being renegotiated and updated in our contemporary circumstances, a mana inspired culture is one that is well regarded, instils feelings of goodwill and understanding

The creative potential of Māori people and Māori knowledge is a national asset, a New Zealand asset. Whilst Māori naturally wish to contribute to their own communities, the creative potential of Māori people to contribute to Māori development is but a subset of what is possible when creative Māori individuals and communities really get cracking.

The role of Government should focus upon setting the conditions whereby this creative potential may be unlocked and yielded for the benefit of Māori communities and the nation as a whole. The means to make this happen will be multidimensional and may require a mixture of targeted interventions together with a range of 'contextual' activities designed to incentivise certain activities.

6.1 A Proposal

With respect to the advancement of mātauranga Māori, there is clear scope for some kind of entity which is concerned with the overall life of this body of knowledge. In my view, its purpose would be to fulfil a mission statement which read something like this:

- To yield for the benefit of iwi, hapū and whānau and New Zealand overall, the potential contribution of mātauranga Māori to our nation's life, culture, society and economy.

Its initial function would be primarily of the nature of communication. Gathering and communicating knowledge concerning, among other things:

- The nature, character and contents of mātauranga Māori
- Contemporary stories about the revitalisation, protection, maintenance and creation of mātauranga Māori
- Models for education involving mātauranga Māori – curriculum and pedagogy
- Models for the economic use of mātauranga Māori including information concerning the development of appropriate IP arrangements
- Discussions over traditional applications and new applications of mātauranga Māori
- Assisting with standards setting, descriptions of roles and responsibilities, matters of quality assurance and validation

I look forward to discussing this proposal further.