

Indigenous Knowledges: Understanding their value to communities and place in transdisciplinary research



Takahanga Marae
Kaikōura



Ministry of Health

Kaikōura Earthquake (7.8Mw) 14/11/2016



Research: Indigenous knowledge & Disasters

- Collaborative Research Partnership between Ngāi Tahu (Local tribe) & Māori Researchers at JCDR Massey University
- Community-led (CLPA), Qualitative research using Māori methodology
- Aim: Explore Māori earthquake stories to document enablers, tensions & outcomes of applying IK in response to the Kaikōura Earthquake
- Findings: Ngāi Tahu effective response driven by cultural values & practices
- Takahanga Marae (local Māori community centre) became a welfare hub: provided 10,000 meals, sheltered 500 and registered (1000) people
- Volunteer response teams deployed & 5 marae hosting evacuees
- Transportation of volunteers, resources and evacuees (50 helicopter trips)
- Ngāi Tahu invited to partner with MCDEM, DPMC & NGOs within 24hrs
- Public recognition - Media reporting Māori recovery efforts from Day 1 →
- Central Govt recognition Ngāi Tahu appointed to Kaikōura Recovery Group



Impacts & Value of Indigenous Knowledge

Impacts on community:

- Reduced disaster impacts on Māori, regional visitors & wider community
- Māori cultural attributes → collective authority, agency, accountability, action
- Māori communitarian and value-led approaches to disaster recovery were effective & are relevant in other disaster contexts e.g. Whakaari eruption

Broader Implications encompass

- Increased Māori collaborations with Govt → re-shaping local governance, and enhancing recovery of Kaikōura community
- Disaster recovery phase → opportunities to address factors, which underpin vulnerability in Māori communities
- Māori values and practices that promote regional resilience & sustainability are being taken up by private and corporate stakeholders
- Māori IK pertinent to DRR, recognised in NZ national disaster resilience strategy and other legislative documents



IKs & Transdisciplinary Research

- Indigenous bodies of knowledge are relevant to transdisciplinary research
- They encompass:
 - In depth, locale specific data collected & evaluated over long time scales
 - Diverse forms of knowledge that can be used for triangulation purposes during research
 - Explanations for changes to environments, ecosystems, weather patterns, fauna, flora and communities
- **However, there are a number of tensions:**
 - Indigenous knowledges are dismissed or marginalised in some science contexts as non-evidence based
 - Indigenous knowledges are also positioned in some forums as the exotic 'other', → ↑ interest from non-Indigenous researchers in accessing IK
 - Etic researchers' lack of an emic repertoire in relation to IK has facilitated misunderstanding and misapplication of IK in Western research contexts.
 - The absence of emic or insiders' perspectives has equally undermined the integration of IK into global science policy and legislation
 - Perpetuation of IK/science gaps has prevented best practice research

Key to successful research involving IK



- Indigenous knowledges are not systems but bodies of specialised knowledge that may be locally and globally situated
- Indigenous communities are experts in their own contexts and should determine research priorities including what, how when and where IK may be relevant to, or shared in research contexts
- Indigenous communities should retain intellectual property rights for their bodies of knowledge including new forms of Indigenous knowledge developed during research
- Research that incorporates Indigenous knowledge must be conducted in accordance with Indigenous ethical requirements and research principles
- Only Indigenous researchers should work with Indigenous bodies of knowledge in order to:
 - avoid knowledge misunderstandings and misapplication
 - ensure effective bridging of Indigenous knowledges and transdisciplinary research and science
 - prevent colonisation of the discursive, research and science spaces of Indigenous Peoples that pertain to Indigenous Knowledges