

A Guide to **Guardians** of Iwi Treasures
He Tohu ki ngā **Kaitiaki** o ngā Taonga-ā-iwi

Museums increasingly accept that iwi must be involved in the interpretation, exhibition and care of all taonga. That involvement can only be achieved from the base of a strong and effective partnership between iwi and museums. This guide looks at ways in which museums can work towards such a partnership.

Sustainable working relationships

The success of developing sustainable working relationships with iwi will depend on the amount of prior research and planning you have done.

First you need to establish the basis for any discussions with iwi. That done, your planning and research can shift to identifying the most effective way of linking with iwi, understanding the history of the taonga involved and the appropriate protocols that must be followed.

Bases for discussions

Your discussions with iwi will probably be based on one or a combination of the following.

- The principle of partnership through the Treaty of Waitangi
- Effective iwi input into your museum's management
- Effective iwi input into policy development
- Liaison with iwi as part of a community liaison strategy
- The development of commercial interests that touch upon intellectual or cultural property rights
- Involvement in the development of exhibitions and other public programmes.

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**BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE FROM YOUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH IWI BEFORE MAKING AN APPROACH.**

Treaty of Waitangi, Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Starter questions

- Is there a sense that the museum has a Treaty obligation in terms of its public accountability?
- Are there issues of effective and equitable iwi or Māori representation at a governance level so that the principle of partnership is fulfilled?

To form a relationship that acknowledges the Treaty of Waitangi, it is critical to communicate with iwi. Remember that the Treaty is a contract between various iwi and the Crown so dialogue must take place at the iwi level.

Initial enquiries

Initial enquiries can be directed to tribal authorities, for example, a tribal trust board, rūnanga or other organisation set up to administer tribal affairs. There may be several tribal authorities within your area. Your local Te Puni Kōkiri office will help you identify them.

Do not be surprised if your approach is assigned a low priority as many iwi organisations are currently involved with the Treaty settlement process and other matters associated with the management of tribal resources.

A wider approach?

Consider whether you may have an opportunity to explore a regional approach that could involve several museums and iwi in your area in developing a relationship. This could lead to joint iwi and museum initiatives for further development.

Management

Starter questions

- Is there a desire for joint management?
- Is it necessary to have effective iwi input into the management process for the museum to achieve its mission, vision and corporate principles?

Examples of involvement

The impetus for a relationship involving management may come from a specific project, for example:

- the development of a local research project
- a restructuring of the organisation
- a major iwi exhibition.

It could also be in response to an initiative, from iwi or museum staff, to ensure that the taonga Māori collection is managed according to the custom and protocol of local iwi. This would therefore require an iwi caretaker (kaitiaki) role.

Approaches

Linkages would need to be established at the iwi level and Treaty-based approaches can be used. Where the project is not iwi-based, it may be necessary to seek input from non-iwi representatives of the Māori community.

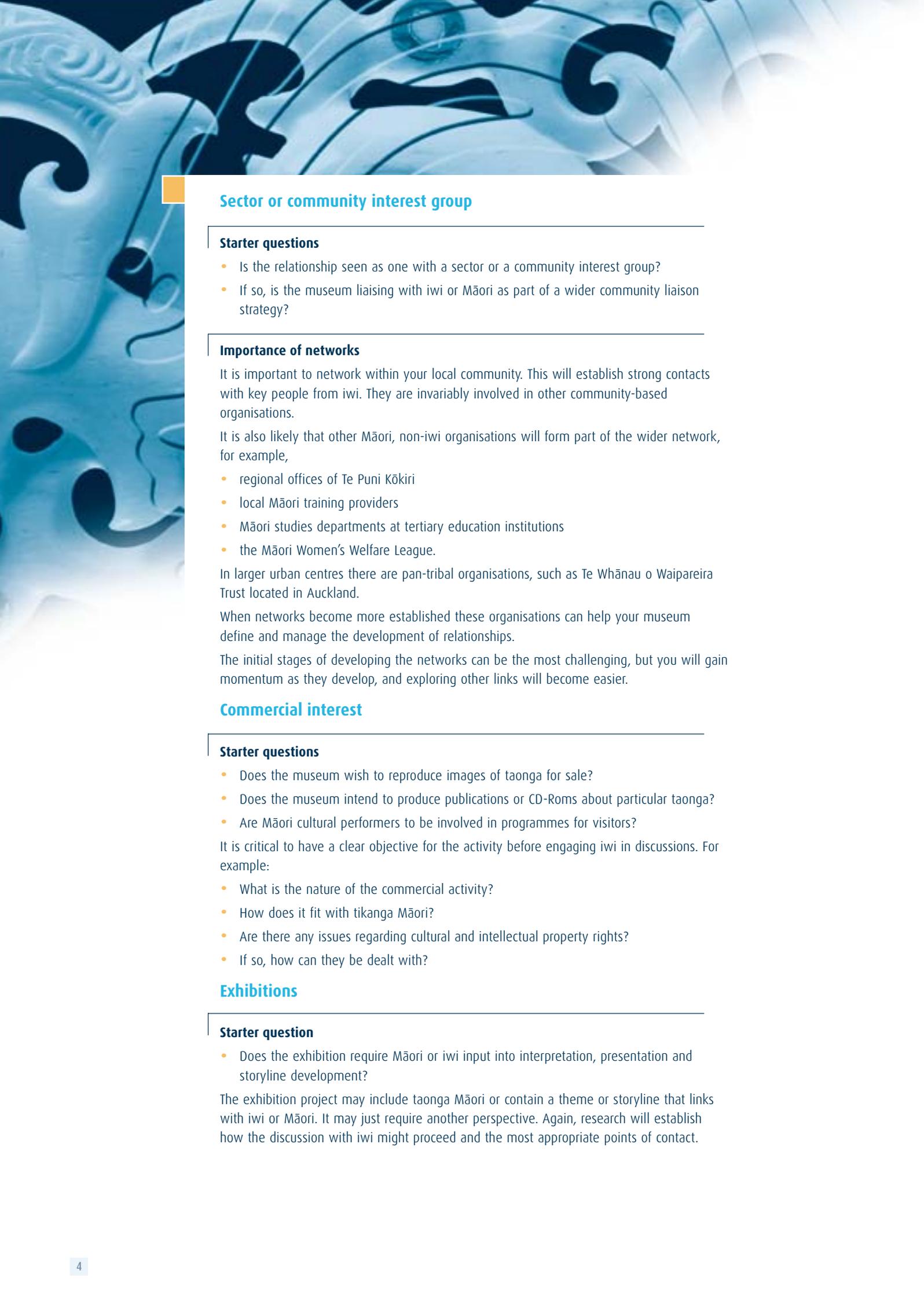
Policy and practice

Starter question

- Does the museum lack iwi input into policy development concerning, for example, care of the collection or conservation of taonga?

Approaches and processes previously discussed are relevant under this heading. The key is to be clear about what you hope to achieve by developing and implementing a particular policy. Also identify how the policy will impact on the Māori community.





Sector or community interest group

Starter questions

- Is the relationship seen as one with a sector or a community interest group?
- If so, is the museum liaising with iwi or Māori as part of a wider community liaison strategy?

Importance of networks

It is important to network within your local community. This will establish strong contacts with key people from iwi. They are invariably involved in other community-based organisations.

It is also likely that other Māori, non-iwi organisations will form part of the wider network, for example,

- regional offices of Te Puni Kōkiri
- local Māori training providers
- Māori studies departments at tertiary education institutions
- the Māori Women's Welfare League.

In larger urban centres there are pan-tribal organisations, such as Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust located in Auckland.

When networks become more established these organisations can help your museum define and manage the development of relationships.

The initial stages of developing the networks can be the most challenging, but you will gain momentum as they develop, and exploring other links will become easier.

Commercial interest

Starter questions

- Does the museum wish to reproduce images of taonga for sale?
- Does the museum intend to produce publications or CD-Roms about particular taonga?
- Are Māori cultural performers to be involved in programmes for visitors?

It is critical to have a clear objective for the activity before engaging iwi in discussions. For example:

- What is the nature of the commercial activity?
- How does it fit with tikanga Māori?
- Are there any issues regarding cultural and intellectual property rights?
- If so, how can they be dealt with?

Exhibitions

Starter question

- Does the exhibition require Māori or iwi input into interpretation, presentation and storyline development?

The exhibition project may include taonga Māori or contain a theme or storyline that links with iwi or Māori. It may just require another perspective. Again, research will establish how the discussion with iwi might proceed and the most appropriate points of contact.

Taonga

in the care of museums

For museum professionals, an understanding of tikanga Māori helps significantly in developing relationships with iwi, as well as enabling more culturally appropriate responses when dealing with taonga.

The awakening of taonga

Iwi hold the view that taonga held by museums are asleep until they are reconnected to iwi. Iwi, whānau and hapū are able to awaken and revitalise taonga. Working with iwi can also lead to partnerships in developing accurate, interesting and innovative exhibitions, public programmes and storylines relating to taonga and local history.

Links with whānau, hapū and iwi

In general terms, taonga are associated with families (whānau) and extended families (hapū) and therefore the links need to be at that level. It is then possible to discover the significance of the taonga to the wider iwi and to develop an appropriate approach.

The general rule is to be guided by the whānau or hapū and the conditions under which the taonga was lent to the museum. As a first step, you need to find out how the taonga links back to iwi, as well as how the taonga came to be in the possession of the museum.

Who to approach

Māori staff may be able to identify a point of contact for initial linkages at the whānau and hapū level. The iwi networks established by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and the Māori Museum Workers (Kaitiaki Māori) through museum professional associations may be able to provide strong leads.



Tikanga

and taonga

Some core concepts about tikanga

As the root word *tika* (right, correct) suggests, tikanga prescribes the correct way of doing things. A great deal of tikanga that relates to museums and taonga is associated with the concepts of tapu, mana and noa.

Tapu

'First and foremost, tapu is the power and influence of the gods. Everything has inherent tapu because everything was created by Io Matua (Supreme God).' (Barlow, C. (1990))

'Ko te tapu te mana o ngā atua - tapu is the mana of the spiritual powers.' (Shirres, M. (1979))

From these references it is clear that tapu, at a general level at least, has wide application. Because it originates from the gods, everything is imbued with tapu - the land as well as the oceans, rivers and forests and all living things.

From Shirres' analysis of old manuscripts, he draws the conclusion that tapu is the potentiality for power - either positive or negative, good or evil. All the karakia (prayers and rituals) that are conducted demonstrate the desire to acknowledge the ultimate source of tapu and to placate the gods.

Acknowledging tapu in this context really translates to having due respect to the powers of nature.

'I feel a close presence to something greater than me when I am in nature. When I am in a forest, I feel I am in the temple of Tāne. For instance, one evening we went to see Tāne-mahuta in the Waipoua forest. It was dark enough for the owls to be flying around and yet that tree was bathed in an eerie light. I knew that I was in a superior presence to myself, there were eternal sounds.' (Walker, R. (1987))

TIKANGA RELATES TO CUSTOM AND PROTOCOL.

Mana

Tapu and mana are closely aligned. If tapu can be seen as 'potential power' mana can be regarded as 'actual power' and is also seen as emanating from the gods. Today, mana has taken on various meanings including the power of the gods, the power of the ancestors, the power of the land and the power of the individual.

Mana Atua This is the sacred power of the gods known as te ahi kōmau which is given to those persons who conform to sacred ritual and principles.

Mana Tūpuna This is the power and authority handed down through chiefly lineage, from generation to generation. Those who inherit such mana must carry out various rituals and duties to ensure that the mana is protected.

Mana Whenua This is the power associated with the possession of land. It is also seen to be the ability of land to produce and sustain life. A person who possesses land has the ability to produce a livelihood and sustain a family and tribe.

Mana Tangata This is the power acquired by an individual according to his or her ability and effort to develop skills and to gain knowledge in particular areas.

Noa

Noa describes a state that is free from tapu. Such a state can be achieved through karakia or through the introduction of cleansing agents (such as water and food) or both.

Tikanga and taonga: some examples

Kōiwi and waka tūpāpaku (human remains and funerary objects)

There is always a high level of tapu associated with kōiwi and waka tūpāpaku because they represent the physical remains of tūpuna (ancestors). It is also highly likely that this material has come from urupā (burial places) that have been specially consecrated (imbued with tapu through karakia).

Dealing with such material should be kept to a minimum and preferably stored in a place that has been dedicated, through karakia, for such a purpose. Whenever the place is accessed, ensure that food is not taken into the area, whether on purpose or inadvertently. For example, you could very easily have a bag of sweets in your pocket - so always check through them!

When leaving the area, use water as a cleansing agent to ensure that the integrity of the tapu associated with the taonga and the place is kept intact.

Other taonga of significance

Many taonga such as whakairo (carvings) and mere and patu pounamu (greenstone clubs) are named and regarded as tūpuna in their own right. Therefore the tapu and mana of the ancestors need to be considered and respected. These taonga may also carry the mana of their creators, whether they be individuals, whānau, hapū or iwi.

Again, the general guide is to treat such taonga with the respect that would normally be accorded to the ancestors. Ensuring that food is not brought in contact with the taonga is also very important - again, to preserve the spiritual or metaphysical integrity of the taonga.

Where to from here?

The proactive approach

A proactive approach will help you convey to iwi the degree to which you are committed to establishing strong working relationships with them. Examples of such an approach are:

- anticipating issues and working with Māori to find solutions
- identifying mutual benefits from the activity.

Being proactive in covering issues will ensure free and frank discussion.

The approaches and the strategies provided in this publication are not exhaustive. Treat them as an initial guide, relating them to the circumstances of your specific situation and the iwi involved.

Iwi as initiators

Be prepared for iwi to be the initiators in discussions. Many iwi are thinking very seriously about tribal identity in terms of art and culture and have, in the long term, plans to develop their own cultural centres. This approach provides many opportunities for museums.

Further reading

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Acknowledgment

The photograph on page 5 was taken at the Hukanui marae at Gordonton during a Customary Concepts hui held at the marae for Te Papa National Services.

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