

Te Aroturuki

A model for cross-cultural engagement

A Scion Impact Report 2008

Cross-cultural dialogue is often an essential part of developing and implementing research in New Zealand. Scion has developed a deliberate, step-by-step process designed to facilitate effective dialogue between scientists and Māori, so both parties can benefit from sharing their values. This process is being recommended and adopted by the science sector and government agencies.

Good communication leads to robust, long-term relationships that will help science programmes capture the unique contributions Māori can make to scientific research. It also allows proper evaluation and understanding of controversial technologies such as genetic engineering and nanotechnology.

The Te Aroturuki engagement process assumes there is no substitute for informed dialogue. It enables joint decisions to be made about what mutual benefits can be derived from science for the betterment of all New Zealanders.

“One of the main reasons we have partnered with Te Aroturuki and Scion is that we have identified a real need for toolkits. I think scientists will benefit from a step-by-step guide that encourages them to take into account Māori values and incorporate outcomes for Māori from their research”.

Linda Faulkner, General Manager of Kaupapa Kura Taiao, ERMA NZ.

Step-change technologies such as genetic modification (GM) and xenotransplantation create significant opportunities for society; they are also, by their very nature, controversial. The rich potential of those opportunities will never be realised unless the quality of engagement with the stakeholder community is equally rich, valued and meaningful.

Scion works with “Te Aroturuki”, a pan-tribal group established in 2002 to advise, monitor and interact with Scion scientists working on GM. Te Aroturuki was established with the mandate from the rangatira of the hapu (Ngati Tuteata) within whose traditional boundaries Scion’s main campus is located. From consideration of best practice engagement, the Te Aroturuki model emerged to improve dialogue between Māori and scientists around controversial technologies¹.

Scion has been involved in GM research for plantation forestry for some time, including application of transgenic technologies. This incorporates appropriate analysis of potential benefits, environmental considerations and risk. It also must ensure that the science is appropriately communicated in the right language and cultural context of all stakeholders. For New Zealand this particularly highlights the need for effective engagement with Māori. Developing improved methods for dialogue between scientists and Māori for such controversial technologies should lead to better outcomes for all stakeholders. The ‘Te Aroturuki’ model is seen as an effective approach for such engagement.²

¹ Wilcox, P.L; Charity, J.A; Roberts, M.R; Tuawhare, S; Tipene-Matua, B; Kereama-Royal, I; Hunter, R; Kani, H.M and Moke-Delaney, P. 2008: A values based process for cross cultural dialogue between scientists and Maori. Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand, 38(3), 215-227.

² Linda Robinson, General Manager, Kaupapa Kura Taiao Māori, ERMA (personal communication).

The model consists of four distinct components (also see Figure).

1. Toolkits: Exchange and utilisation of toolkits to enhance understanding before the parties engage in dialogue. The information in the toolkits is aimed at increasing each party's level of understanding so that Māori perspectives can be incorporated into the research proposal.
2. Dialogue: Guidelines to enable both parties to engage in the interaction in an atmosphere of mutual respect and benefit.
3. Outcome: Allows for a spectrum of possible responses following dialogue around the research proposal, and identifies alternative outcomes from each of the potential responses.
4. Monitoring/evaluation: Outlines the monitoring and evaluation process.

A Māori intermediary assists the scientists in each phase to ensure that they are adequately prepared for dialogue with Māori and to assist the dialogue process itself.

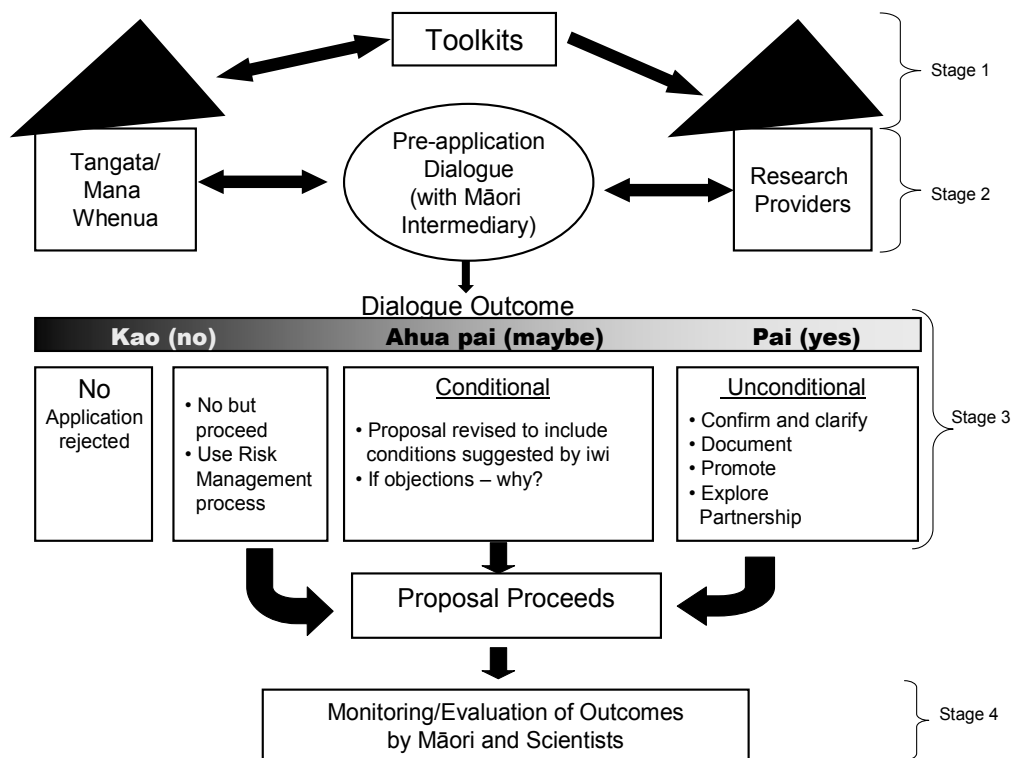


Figure: The Te Aroturuki Process for cross-cultural dialogue

Scion has successfully used the Te Aroturuki engagement process, when undertaking a field trial of genetically modified radiata pine. The outcome was a successful trial, with greater integration of both Māori values and physical involvement of members of the hapu themselves. It also resulted in:

1. Ongoing monitoring of the field trial by Mana Whenua.
2. Production and circulation of a booklet written by and for Māori communicating the intent and early results from the field trial, accompanied by a hui to present the booklet and discuss the trial to the wider hapu.

3. Discussion between senior science leaders, rangatira and other mandated hapu representatives at the cessation of the field trial which identified outcomes from the trial and broader issues associated with Māori forestry beyond those specific to the hapu.

More recently, the process was used in a second field trial application where Mana whenua also played a significant role in writing those parts in the ERMA application of relevance to Māori.

The model concept has gained significant interest across New Zealand. The pan-CRI report on commercialising genetically modified plants in New Zealand recommended “That all the CRIs and research groups undertaking GM plant research in New Zealand adopt the Te Aroturuki process for Māori engagement”³.

The next stage is to ensure interested scientists have easy access to the Te Aroturuki process and the toolkits. Te Aroturuki, together with Scion and ERMA’s Kaupapa Kura Taiao are developing web-based toolkits and the “how to” guide for using the process. The launch is timed for February 2009.

*“Your approach to cross-cultural dialogue is a major step forward for NZ scientists and supports the recommendations of the Report of the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification (RCGM). My experience as Commissioner on the RCGM, back in 2000-2001, showed me the need for the development of such dialogues, where apparently opposing views can be aired, listened to with respect and a mutually agreed path forward agreed on. The key to your method, in my opinion, is to develop an atmosphere of true mutual respect and active engagement on both sides, where each party gains and learns from the other. I have always used the following quote when talking about such debates: “We see things not as **they** are, but as **we** are”. I thought it was from Marcel Proust, but there are many attributions. I am really delighted to see your development of this process, taking our bicultural nation together to the future.”*

Jean S Fleming, Professor of Science Communication, University of Otago⁴

³ Anderson; J 2008. Commercialising genetically modified plants in New Zealand. A report prepared for Agresearch, Crop and Food Research, Scion and Hortresearch by Seltec Ltd.

⁴ Jean Fleming (ONZM), Centre of Science Communication, Otago University and Commissioner with the New Zealand Royal Commission on Genetic Modification, 2000-2001.