

## Addressing inequities for Māori in the research, science and innovation sector through Te Ara Paerangi

My suggestions are evidence-based and are guided by my research into inequities in the research centre and driven by experiences of the research sector as a Māori woman and as an early-career researcher (ECR). In addition to my suggestions below I have attached two of my most recent papers both of which have been accepted pending minor revisions but are not yet published. Please do not circulate these beyond the Te Ara Paerangi team.

The underrepresentation and undervaluing of Māori in the research sector could be addressed by the following suggested changes:

- 1. Increase PhD scholarships** Low PhD scholarships limit the diversity of who can do a PhD<sup>1</sup>. An additional barrier for parents who are PhDs, is the lack of eligibility to government paid parental leave for students. This could be addressed by the government providing those on a PhD scholarship access to paid parental leave or by Universities employing PhD students.
- 2. Māori leadership.** Change comes from the top. There are good models of co-leadership in the RSI sector, for example in the National Science Challenge: New Zealand's Biological Heritage. All Centres of Research Excellence, Universities (including schools, departments and faculties) and CRIs should have Māori leadership or at the very least co-leadership. A sector that truly valued te Tiriti o Waitangi would nurture Māori leadership.
- 3. Māori postdoctoral fellowships.** In 2017, there were more Pākehā postdoctoral fellows employed at NZ universities than the entire Māori academic workforce<sup>2</sup>. Historically, the FoRST Postdoctoral fellowships performed an admirable role in nurturing "emerging talent" and I would suggest reinstating a national scheme similar to this. I would also suggest a similar selection mechanism as the MBIE Science Whitinga Fellowships. We should, however, be aiming for more than population parity for Māori for any created fellowships. Equity for Māori, as outlined in te Tiriti o Waitangi would involve 50% of fellowships being awarded to Māori not 16.5%. Many of our now leading Māori scientists received FoRST Postdoctoral Fellowships and due to them being abolished by a change of government there is now a considerable "pipeline" problem due to lack of opportunities for Māori ECRs in Science. In addition to creating a large nationwide postdoctoral scheme, I would suggest that in order to address the lack of post-PhD pathways for Māori that all Universities agree to waive overheads for Māori postdoctoral fellows, initially for a period of 5 years. There is already some institutional support for this and it would incentivise universities to hire Māori postdoctoral fellows.
- 4. Conduct a national review into racism in the RSI sector.** Racism directly results in Māori leaving the RSI sector. Māori have been telling our stories of racism, exclusion and marginalisation for decades, yet nothing has changed<sup>3,4,5,6</sup>. Racism is embedded in our education system but is nurtured in other organisations which play vital roles in the sector, including the Royal Society of New Zealand. In 2020, 37 Māori professors from New Zealand Universities signed an open letter calling for a nationwide review into racism in the tertiary sector<sup>7</sup>. I support this ongoing call but extend it to the entire RSI

sector, including an investigation into structural racism at both MBIE and the Royal Society of New Zealand. A national review would help pave the way forward and lead to transformational change in the research sector. To move forward collectively we must confront the past and the present.

- 5. Funding and resourcing a kaupapa Māori science organisation.** Some groups have been very successful in nurturing Māori excellence in science in mainstream/white institutions (e.g. Associate Professor Anne-Marie Jackson at Te Koronga at the University of Otago), however places and spaces that are culturally safe for Māori are few and far between. Creating a large dedicated hub for Māori researchers, particularly in science would help address this. This could come in many forms including a Kaupapa Māori CRI for example or the development of regional hubs for Māori science and for mātauranga Māori.
- 6. Change the way we fund research.** The way in which RSI is currently funded in Aotearoa is not responsive to te Tiriti o Waitangi and only functions to marginalise Māori scholarship. The main funding mechanism which is somewhat responsive to Māori needs is Te Pūnaha Hihiko: Vision Mātauranga Capability Fund. The investment in the Vision Mātauranga Capability Fund is around \$2 million per year and is miniscule compared to the \$18 million per year Endeavour Fund. Also can we please stop naming funds after Captain Cook and his deathship as it is a constant reminder about who the fund is for (i.e. not Māori) and is a reminder of the deeply embedded colonialism in the research sector. As it stands, Māori research is significantly underfunded in our RSI sector. This lack of funding suggests that Māori research is not valued in our research sector. We need significant changes in funding structures and how projects are selected to alter this trajectory. Under te Tiriti o Waitangi, 50% of all research funding should go to Māori. I suggest that a new research fund focused on increasing Māori capacity and advancing Māori aspirations is created. This fund should be used solely for Māori-led projects and should be developed by Māori research leaders. More attention needs to be paid to how the way we fund research only reproduces and reinforces whiteness in the research sector. An example of this is who sits on funding panels. Many funding panels are made up of older, white men (see our attached paper: Delivering on Diversity) and lack Māori representation. The latest Marsden Fund round is an excellent example of this, where 5/11 of the panels appear to have no Māori representation which is completely unacceptable in 2022. How are non-Māori researchers well-placed to assess Vision Mātauranga?

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- 8. Fund diverse teams.** Interestingly, in the Green Paper document there was no mention of MBIE's Diversity in Science Statement. I suggest that in line with MBIE's Diversity in Science Statement, more attention needs to be paid to the diversity of teams, who are awarded funding as we know diverse teams lead to more novel research. Our funding system currently actively selects for older, white men. This is extremely clear when you examine data looking at who sits on funding panels and who gets funding and there has been very little change in this over time. In order to address this disparity much more attention needs to be focused on funding diverse teams, including ECRs. If teams do not include the right people and the appropriate level of diversity then they should not be funded. I would like to see the number of Māori-led projects funded through existing national research funds, actively monitored and increased significantly.

## References

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