

## Ta Tipene O'Regan: Our Heritage, Our Legacy – Notes by Shawn Nicholls

### *“Biodiversity through the lens of historical and cultural values”*

- ❖ “How to define biodiversity?”
- ❖ John Adams received a letter from the continental congress, defining where sovereignty should lie,
  - “Sovereignty should lie in the people”
- ❖ People unable to define biodiversity in a fully definitive manner
- ❖ Biodiversity can be ambiguous and/or a type of ideology
- ❖ Substitute for a religion
- ❖ However, when confined to indigenous species of the land becomes a much different issue especially to the Maori people
- ❖ The general consensus is that biodiversity is much desired
  - But what is biodiversity?
- ❖ Examples of biodiversity seem to contradict
  - Movement of Takahe to an unsuitable habitat in Hauraki Gulf.
  - Work to increase birdlife through the Foveaux Strait
    - Appointed an unexperienced manager in that of the lighthouse keeper to monitor
    - Birds came in devoured the berries, distributed seeds all through the surrounding islands and habitats
    - Disrupting much of the already established eco-systems of the area
  - Wellington created a zone where birds have flourished under the increased protection and monitoring (Tui are now in abundance)
    - Consequently, the numbers of smaller birds that cannot compete with the larger birds like the Tui, have declined
- ❖ **Unintended consequences**
- ❖ All is done in the name of biodiversity

- ❖ NZ cultural habit of finding smaller animals more desirable
  - Complete pushovers for images of baby photos such as seals
  - Regulations on small fish but instead eat the healthy breeding females
  - The culture is persistent on protecting the young across all animals
  
- ❖ This principle differs in Maori culture. They do not take healthy breeding females
  - Example – The customary Maori views was you harvested ducks when they were in malt
  - Muster them into isolated corners, then netting – sorting through them, taking juveniles/elderly and leaving the adult females with only a handful of males to reproduce with
  - Taking the young as they acquired a significant amount of fat
  - Needed fat in your harvest (to preserve)
  
- ❖ The Maori applied this principle to most harvested animals (e.g. Kereru)
  
- ❖ The general Ngai Tahu views are:
  - Absolute protection is unwarranted and seemingly unnecessary
  - Instead focusing on sustainability
  - Rahui – Absolute protection of native birds
    - Until such a time where numbers are at a state which that can provide a substantial *sustainable* harvest
  
- ❖ Resistant to absolute protection
  
- ❖ Seals – in Canada an annual culling season – not get out of balance with predators
  - In bluff – similar situation – excess seals migrating to South Australia blamed for increasing shark numbers
  
- ❖ Paua – in certain areas they don't grow as big so can't take them as they're undersized by law
  
- ❖ The problem with “one size fits all” is that not all environment and habitats are the same and require different rules and regulations

- ❖ The idea of population control is vital
- ❖ Animals are beginning to migrate further due to the warming of the climate and rising sea temperatures (Yellow eye penguins & Leopard Seals)
- ❖ The idea of protecting all animals is unrealistic under the customary views of Maori beliefs
- ❖ Need to be rational in what species we try to protect without causing an imbalance
- ❖ Evidence based sustainability should be mandatory
- ❖ Kermadec's have the highest protection of everywhere in the world
  - They're increasing the zone
  - Maori aren't happy with this existing proposal
  - Little evidence of declining numbers
  - Similar case further south
- ❖ Kelp forests volume are thinning so we implement a fishing ban
  - Should instead be preventing the on-land pollution which is detrimental to the health of the kelp
  - Need to start addressing the core issues instead of just treat symptoms
  - Long term goals instead of short term
- ❖ All marine restrictions are not based on evidence of fish numbers declining??
  - Numbers are the same as in 1986, in most coastal fisheries
  - Still pressured to put protection on waters with no evidence of immense declination
  - The last thing Maori want is reductions enforced on an ideological bases with little to no proof
- ❖ Agriculture Biodiversity
  - Modified pastures that can rid or at least reduce the amount of methane produced
  - New Zealand, however, is against the modifications of grass

- ❖ Maori are very interested in the preservation and expansion of native biodiversity
  - Kai of the land relates to identity and place and holds a lot more significance than just providing sustenance (spiritual sense)
  
- ❖ Characteristic of life for Māori in the South historically was quite a bit different to the North
  - Hunger was combated by preservation technology
  - People are changed by the place/environment they reside in
  - Maori food culture has also changed
  - Seasonally foods were special & treasured
  - Traditional foods were markers and identities for the Maori people
  
- ❖ This idea of food holding special values is shared amongst many different culture and religions
  - These values are treasured and want to be maintained and protected
  - The collection of native animals for the use of feathers on decorative cloaks has now in high demand due to the ban of culling specific native fauna
  - Many birds are found dead on the road which are collected and preserved for later artistic purposes
  
- ❖ Protection of the availability, is at the heart of Maori heritage & identity
  - There will come a time again when protected animals can once again be harvested where their population is stable
  
- ❖ Transformative aspects for Māori post colonization
  - First thing most indigenous people do when they're faced with new technology or ideologies is to adopt the idea and make it more of their own. In other words, mould it into your own unique characteristic
  - "Dynamic Adaptation"
  - Potatoes – could grow all year round
  - Whale boats – safer coastal trading
  
  - Idea of organised trade

- Substitute barter for money
  - Contracts that they unfortunately did not receive their full claim
  - All these transformations were modified for their own purposes and views
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- ❖ As a society we must recognise the fact that growing/improving our resources is not a matter of absolute protection
  - ❖ Resources must be well managed
  - ❖ Countries must lead by example in the way they approach biodiversity and sustainable and allow other countries to observe and emulate the correct approach to their given environments
  - ❖ A future sense of values
    - Sustainability, honesty, and compelling evidence
  - ❖ Overall, biodiversity in general is very much a good thing and is desirable by practice, however any ideology taken to the extreme can be detrimental and must be managed