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Indigenous social marketing: the Manuka Honey Purakau (Māorinarrative)

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to examine the appropriation of Te Reo (Māori language) by Manuka honey producers to support a billion-dollar industry. It critiques the failure of New Zealand and Australian producers – and successive governments – to acknowledge the cultural significance of the word "Manuka," despite recommendations from the Waitangi Tribunal. Through an Indigenous Māori lens, it challenges the ongoing colonial agenda that disempowers Māori (Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand) mana and tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) over language and culture.

Design/methodology/approach – Using a Kaupapa Māori approach focused on purakau (Māori narrative, akin to narrative inquiry) and reflexivity, the paper presents the Mānuka honey pūrākāū from a Māori perspective.

Findings – Applying Kaupapa Māori ethics (Whakapapa, Tika, Manaakitanga, Mana) to the Manuka purakau reveals the unauthorised and misuse of kupu (term) Maori by marketers. While the term "Manuka" can enhance product value, a lack of consultation and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) with Māori communities undermines whakapapa (relationships) and reflects cultural insensitivity (not tika or manaakitanga). This appropriation disrespects Māori heritage and limits economic benefits from cultural taonga (treasures).

Social implications – The paper recommends strengthening cultural competency, fostering genuine co-production and advocating for structural change. It calls on social marketing practitioners, educators, policymakers and researchers to uphold Maori rights, respect taonga and actively support tino rangatiratanga (self-determination).

Originality/value – This paper introduces purakau as a decolonial methodology and ethical tool in social marketing. It presents a definition of Indigenous Social Marketing and provides an indigenous-led counter-narrative to dominant social marketing logics. It contributes a rights-based, culturally accountable ethical framework for social marketers working in Indigenous social marketing contexts, particularly with Maori.

Keywords Indigenous social marketing, Pūrākau, Mānuka, Māori ethics, Kaupapa Māori, Decolonising marketing, Indigenous storytelling

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Much of the knowledge about the unique characteristics of Mānuka is directly derived from mātauranga Māori. However, Māori rarely, if ever, benefit from the commercialisation of Mānuka honey, especially by overseas businesses (Jefferson, 2023).

Who owns an Indigenous word? That is the dilemma at the heart of a case dealt with by the Intellectual Property Office of New Zealand (IPONZ), relating to the use of the term Mānuka to market honey produced from the *leptospermum scoparium* plant – known as tea

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tree in Australia, and Mānuka in Aotearoa New Zealand. While the kupu (term) "Mānuka" can significantly enhance product value, it is a taonga (treasure), deeply embedded in mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). Yet, Māori communities have received little benefit from its commercial exploitation, particularly when the product originates offshore.

These tensions reflect long-standing debates regarding the appropriation of Māori language, culture and intellectual property (IP). Although scholarly interest in decolonising marketing is increasing (Baltus, 2019; Bádéjọ *et al.*, 2022; Forrest and Raciti, 2022; Love and Hall, 2022), marketing has historically operated as a colonial mechanism. It positions Māori as "other" and exerts power over our narratives, images and cultural taonga (Love and Hall, 2022). As Māori Indigenous scholars, we would like to highlight for you how this persists today. How it extends to the misuse of kupu (term) Māori to brand and market non-Indigenous products across local and international markets. This paper is our attempt to share our stories and contribute to the ongoing decolonising effort within marketing.

We share the Mānuka honey pūrākau through a Kaupapa Māori lens. Pūrākau, akin to narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2006) and Indigenous storytelling (Iseke, 2013), is a decolonial, story-based methodology that centres Māori voices, protects knowledge and strengthens collective identity (Lee, 2009). Kaupapa Māori research, research for, with, by and as Māori, validates Māori language and culture and supports positive outcomes for Māori (Henry and Wolfgramm, 2015). It aligns with Indigenist research (Barlo *et al.*, 2020) distinguishing itself from Indigenous research led predominantly by non-Indigenous researchers that often reproduces Western ontological, epistemological and methodological frameworks, carrying "outsider" perspectives (Barlo *et al.*, 2020; Smith, 2019; Raciti, 2023). By adopting a Kaupapa Māori and pūrākau approach, we offer a counter-narrative to dominant social marketing logics.

Critical social marketing (CSM) has challenged Western dominance and called for more culturally grounded, decolonial approaches (Gordon *et al.*, 2022). Scholarship has explored Indigenous intellectual property (IIP) (Kennedy and Laczniak, 2014), acknowledged the unintended consequences of social marketing (Kennedy and Santos, 2019), highlighted co-design and best practices with Indigenous communities (Cateriano-Arévalo *et al.*, 2025; Madill *et al.*, 2014), explored targeted interventions (Kubacki and Szablewska, 2019) and Māori social services contexts – for example He Waka Tapu (Hepi *et al.*, 2017). However, Indigenous-led and Kaupapa Māori social marketing remains limited (e.g. Asher, 2025; Hepi *et al.*, 2017; Raciti *et al.*, 2024) and meaningfully centring Indigenous peoples' knowledge, values and lived realities remain rare (Raciti and Harris, 2025).

To address this gap, we make three contributions. Firstly, we define Indigenous Social Marketing as a distinct, values-based approach to social change that centres Indigenous knowledges, lived realities, and tino rangatiratanga (self-determination). Secondly, we introduce pūrākau as both a methodological and ethical tool for social marketing. Thirdly, we propose a culturally grounded ethical storytelling framework to guide social marketers in engaging with Indigenous communities in more accountable and just ways.

Positioning pūrākau at the centre of our approach extends recent discussions of Indigenous storytelling (Forrest and Raciti, 2022; Raciti, 2023) and advances CSM by demonstrating how Indigenous methodologies can reshape the discipline. Although pūrākau (Lee, 2009), circling back (yarning) (Barlo *et al.*, 2020; Raciti, 2023) and story-sharing pedagogies (Yunkaporta, 2009) have been described outside of the field, their potential within social marketing has yet to be realised. We show how pūrākau can reclaim narrative authority, protect cultural taonga and resist the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge, highlighting its value in addressing complex social issues. We contribute to building a more

ethical, inclusive and reflexive social marketing discipline that recognises and amplifies Indigenous (in our case, Māori) ways of knowing.

We also build on the emerging body of Kaupapa Māori research in social marketing (Asher, 2025; Hepi *et al.*, 2017), emphasising the importance of centring Indigenous stories and understanding how Indigenous knowledge can meaningfully shape social change efforts. Although prior research has explored the portrayal of Māori identities in public information advertising campaigns (Elers *et al.*, 2015), co-creation within a Kaupapa Māori led social service provider (Hepi *et al.*, 2017) and differences between Māori (Indigenous) and Western knowledge perspectives (Asher, 2025), research is yet to focus on unethical marketing practices from a Kaupapa Māori lens and how this applies to social marketing. A Māori values-based approach would foreground Māori tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and ensure Māori are not just beneficiaries of interventions, but co-creators and kaitiaki (guardians) of our own narratives and cultural expressions.

We add to critical conversations in social marketing (e.g. Millard and Akbar, 2023), particularly the critique that interventions often responsibilise individuals while neglecting broader systemic contexts (Gordon, 2013; Brettkelly, 2023). We situate our work within the wider political, social and structural system that perpetuate harm, including Māori historical dispossession, the erosion of Te Reo Māori and culture (Henry, 2025), breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and ongoing threats to Mātauranga Māori and taonga. Rather than solely critiquing existing interventions (Millard and Akbar, 2023), our aim is to enhance social marketing practice by providing actionable, culturally grounded guidance for social marketers, policymakers, educators and researchers. We support efforts to advance social change that is ethical, justice-restoring and built on Indigenous, in our case, Māori ways of knowing.

Background

In Māori culture, introducing oneself follows a specific tikanga (protocol) that reflects the importance of identity, connection to land, ancestors and community. This is often done through a pepeha, a formal expression of one's identity in relation to the natural environment and genealogy (whakapapa). The pepeha connects a person to their land, their people and their ancestors, which are integral to Māori identity.

In line with the tikanga of our people and an Indigenous relational approach (Raciti, 2023), we offer the following details:

Ko wai au, ko Waikato-Tainui, ko Ngāpuhi taku iwi, ko Ngāti Hape, ko Ngāti Tarao taku hapū, nō Ōpuatia tōku whānau, nō Tāmaki Makaurau ahau. My tribes are Waikato-Tainui and Ngāpuhi. My sub-tribes are Ngāti Hape and Ngāti Te Wehi. My whanau are from Ōpuatia, north Waikato. I am from West Auckland.

Ko wai au, ko Ngātikahu ki Whangaroa, rātou, ko Ngati Kuri me Te Rārawa, ōku iwi, he kōtiro no Muriwhenua ahau. My three tribes are Ngātikahu ki Whangaroa, Ngati Kuri and Te Rārawa, I am a child of the far north, Muriwhenua.

By sharing these details, we are affirming and declaring our genealogy, ancestry and position as both researchers and authors. Our aim is to first position ourselves as Māori, and then as researchers. The first author is a Māori marketing scholar, and the second author is a Māori Indigenous Entrepreneurship scholar. This helps to convey the assumptions that underpin our research and the framework within which it is conducted. It also helps others understand who we are and the types of connections that may exist. In doing so, we are identifying, defining and acknowledging elements of mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori as guiding our work.

Kaupapa māori borne out of māori history

Kaupapa Māori literally means "the Māori way". It is a term that has gained prominence as part of the cultural and linguistic revitalisation of Māori culture and society, which Walker has termed the Māori Renaissance (Walker, 1990). Kaupapa Māori research is more akin to a paradigm than a methodology, encompassing ontology, epistemology and methodology founded on ancient Māori knowledge (Henry and Pene, 2001), to ensure that Kaupapa Māori research is founded on tikanga (cultural practice), which empowers the researchers and participants, and contributes to better outcomes for Māori (Henry and Foley, 2018). Over time specific ethics (Smith, 2019; Hudson *et al.*, 2010) and principles have been developed to ensure research is for, with and by Māori (Jones *et al.*, 2006). Tikanga provides a framework to actively address Māori ethical understandings and perspectives, including:

- Manaakitanga, generosity towards participants;
- Whaunaungatanga, kinship between researcher and researched;
- Kaitiakitanga, protection and stewardship of participants; and
- Wairuatanga, protection of the spiritual essence of participants.

These principles offer not only a foundation for ethical research, but also a challenge to conventional marketing practices, particularly in contexts involving one culture marketizing elements of another (Witkowski, 2024). For example, social marketing – which aims to harness the power of markets and marketing to improve well-being and ensures fair allocation and access to the means of maximising well-being (Lefebvre, 2012) – can be reimagined through a Kaupapa Māori lens to avoid reproducing colonial dynamics and harm.

To provide more context to these tikanga, we offer a brief introduction to Māori history and society. Māori are the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, having settled in the islands over the past 1,000 years as part of the Austronesian Diaspora. The language that evolved, while maintaining linguistic commonalities with other Indigenous peoples of the South Pacific, is unique to these lands. Like the language, the science and technology of the Māori also developed in a manner distinctive to Aotearoa. Mātauranga Māori encapsulates Māori knowledge, science, culture, philosophy and values.

Māori embraced the new technologies afforded by the outside world after Cook's arrival in 1769, displaying the same entrepreneurial spirit that guided their journeys across the Pacific (Petrie, 2013). That positive interaction led to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, between Māori and the British Crown in 1840. There is a significant body of literature that outlines the negative consequences of colonisation for Māori (Mikaere, 2011; Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011; Henry, 2012), which resulted in expropriation of land (Walker, 1990), repressive legislation (Henry and Dana, 2019) and open warfare, resulting in confiscation of huge swathes of land (Belich, 2013). The results have been devastating, with the loss of the economic foundations, the diminution of te reo Māori, Māori language and culture (Henry, 2012), and the impacts of intergenerational poverty and disease, leading to the assumption that Māori were a dying race.

However, the 20th century wrought many new challenges and changes, some of which have proven beneficial to Māori. A consequence of the urban drift was a new generation of Māori with greater access to higher education and professional careers. Walker (1990) termed this the Māori Renaissance, emerging in the 1970s, manifest in the formation of activism and protest against past breaches of Te Tiriti, eventuating in the formation of a tribunal to hear cases of breaches by the Crown. Since its inception the Waitangi Tribunal has heard and made recommendations on thousands of claims, which are then left to governments to settle. These settlements have related to tribal claims, and multi-tribal, or

kaupapa claims, relating to issues such as forestry, fisheries, te reo and government funded broadcasting, as a vehicle for protecting Māori language and culture. Financial and cultural redress have been proffered for proven breaches of Te Tiriti through government action or inaction, and legislation has enacted Crown responsibilities for that redress (Waitangi Tribunal, n.d.).

One claim, particularly relevant to this case is referred to as WAI262, lodged in 1991. According to Houghton (2021, p. 870):

> In the Wai 262 claim, six Māori claimant groups sought the Waitangi Tribunal's findings that the Crown had breached its Treaty of Waitangi guarantee to allow Māori to exercise tino rangatiratanga (the unqualified exercise of our chieftainship) over our mātauranga Māori (the body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors, including the Māori worldview and cultural practices) and taonga (tangible and intangible treasures).

The claim was heard, and a report from the Waitangi Tribunal was presented to government in 2011. According to Keenan (2022), the report emphasised the need to define kaitiaki with regard to mātauranga Māori and taonga. Furthermore, it suggests that parliament adopt a legislation to protect taonga from offensive use by third parties. The report also recommended a commission of experts to advise government on protection of mātauranga and taonga, and adjudicate complaints. Houghton refers to the National Government (2008–2017) reviewing the report, but not making public comment. The Labour Government, which came into power in 2017, created Te Pae Tawhiti, which he describes as, "a work programme to address the Crown's breaches of its guarantee under Te Tiriti o Waitangi 1840" (2021, p. 870). However, none of the explicit recommendations in the report from the Tribunal have been implemented by 2025. It is into this milieu that this case, the litigation relating to the use of the term Mānuka to describe honey produced in both Australia and New Zealand, has evolved.

Before presenting the pūrākau, we explore the literature on cultural appropriation, as it relates to Māori and Indigenous peoples.

Cultural appropriation

Rogers (2006) defines cultural appropriation as the, "use of a culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture", (2006, p 474). He refers to four types of appropriation, exchange, dominance, exploitation and transculturation, stating that cultural exploitation refers to, "the appropriation of elements of a subordinated culture by a dominant culture without substantive reciprocity, permission, and/or compensation" (op. cit, p. 477).

Heyd (2003) focuses on the greater awareness about cultural appropriation arising in the 1990s, particularly around events in Canada, the USA and Australia, which raised criticism. He goes on to state that, "Insofar as the cultural appropriation is performed by people with different standards than those prevalent in the original culture, the application of those alien standards to their cultural goods may entail a subversion of the original culture's voice" (2003, p. 38).

Lai refers to the colonisation of Aotearoa, "and the subsequent removal of many Māori from their traditional social structures and norms" (2010, p. 1). Thus, Māori culture, identity, language and knowledge has become much changed by Pākehā (dominant Anglo) culture. She goes on to argue that is "why Māori interests and needs, with respect to their cultural heritage, should be met, in relation to the benefits from its use and trade, socially and economically" (op.cit, p. 1). However, Lai also recognises that IP regimes in New Zealand do not necessarily allow for this.

Taking another perspective, van Miejl, acknowledges the cultural renaissance among Māori, which is manifest in increased pride in the cultural heritage, traditions and mātauranga (traditional knowledge) and this revitalisation is increasingly seeing culture, "cast as property of which the Indigenous people of Aotearoa are the intellectual owners […] these more recent Māori discourses of cultural and intellectual property may be considered a sign of protest against the neglect of Indigenous knowledge and associated traditions in the colonial past, while they also evoke a political struggle for Indigenous autonomy" (van Meijl, 2009, p. 341):

The appropriation of Māori culture for economic gain – without consent or reciprocity – challenges the ethical assumptions underlying not just IP rights (Kennedy and Laczniak, 2014) and commercially oriented marketing (Love and Hall, 2022), but also practices like social marketing, which purport to advance the social good. When Te Reo Māori and mātauranga are commodified without accountability to Māori, even socially-orientated marketing strategies risk becoming complicit in cultural exploitation unless researchers and practitioners are aware of and actively embed Indigenous ethical frameworks. Currently, non-Indigenous social marketers are wrestling with how to adopt Indigenous methodologies, how to transform colonialist methodologies and how to minimise cultural appropriation (Raciti *et al.*, 2024). Thus, the notion of cultural appropriation is a relevant lens through which to define Indigenous social marketing and view the Mānuka honey pūrākau.

Indigenous social marketing is a values-based approach to social change that positions Indigenous peoples not as recipients or co-producers of interventions (Cateriano-Arévalo *et al.*, 2025; Madill *et al.*, 2014), but as knowledge holders, decisions-makers and designers. It represents strong Indigeneity (Love and Hall, 2022), grounded in Indigenous epistemologies, ontology, methodology, cultural identity and lived realities. Like Indigenist research (Barlo *et al.*, 2020), which honours Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, Indigenous social marketing affirms, validates and empowers Indigenous voices by reclaiming narratives, reframing dominant approaches and reconnecting with cultural values and community priorities. In practice, this re-position social marketing as a collaborative, culturally grounded process embedded in Indigenous worldviews, storytelling and aspirations for collective well-being. Guided by principles of self-determination, reciprocity, relationality, accountability, collective and intergenerational responsibility, Indigenous social marketing works on problems identified as priorities with, by, for and as Indigenous Peoples. While welcoming allies (Raciti *et al.*, 2024), the emphasis remains on Indigenous-led projects that uphold tino rangatiratanga (Indigenous sovereignty) and mātauranga (Indigenous Knowledge), and uplift Indigenous aspirations and mana. Next, we discuss our methodology.

Methodology

Our research is imbued with reflexivity (see Millard and Akbar, 2023 for discussion in a social marketing context). Throughout the writing process, we were mindful of our positionality, our worldviews, values and lived experiences as Māori scholars, as well as our marketing and entrepreneurship lenses. This reflexive stance required critical attention to the language and framings we used. For instance, choosing to describe the narrative as a pūrākau (a "culturally responsive construct" Lee, 2009) rather than using conventional case study terminology. This reflects a deliberate effort to privilege Māori kupu and epistemologies and resist subsuming of Indigenous knowledge into dominant Western categories. Pūrākau was traditionally ascribed to myths and legends, it is a tool for narrative inquiry and part of a growing suite of decolonising methodologies, in this case drawing on Māori narratives (Lee, 2009).

Reflexivity also informed our tone of writing. Instead of adopting an authoritative, detached academic voice, we sought to write with humility, transparency and openness to multiple interpretations. We are continually questioning whose perspectives were centred, whose values were amplified and what unintended consequences might emerge from our framing. By revisiting the manuscript iteratively, we aimed to create space for Indigenous voices, citing Māori scholars and communities as knowledge-holders, while situating these contributions within broader critical debates in social marketing. In this way, the act of writing itself became a reflexive practice, an ongoing negotiation between positionality, language and the ethical responsibility of storytelling.

This in combination with Kaupapa Māori enabled us to make sense, create meaning and learn directly from pūrākau. Kaupapa Māori theory, grounded in resistance and resilience, provided a foundation to understand the narrative from an intrinsically Māori perspective, rather than wrestling the story to fit Western theories. Information drawn from public sources was filtered through our understanding of tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori to ensure the perspective reflected an authentic pūrākau. While our analysis draws primarily on one in-depth article documenting the trademark case, this source is complemented by other relevant media and discussion in the public arena (Brettkelly, 2023; Fati, 2023; Jefferson, 2023; McClure, 2023; Murphy, 2023), which capture the wider discourse of that period.

Our reflexive engagement is also informed by lived connections. One of the authors has supported WAI262 Kia Whakapūmau (WAI262 Kia Whakapūmau, 2026), the advocacy group led by claimants, and their descendants, of the WAI262 Treaty Claim. The Waitangi Tribunal published their report in 2011 (WAI262), but no government since has shown an appetite to return to Māori the ownership of cultural and IP that has greatly benefited to settler/colonisers. Advocacy groups like Kia Whakapūmau are at the forefront of arguing for these changes, and government acknowledgement of the role played in dispossession of those taonga, precious aspects of language, culture and traditional knowledge, that have contributed to ongoing poverty and trauma for Māori people.

Thus, our analysis is shaped by a combination of public information, anecdotal evidence and personal experience, all filtered through a Māori scholarly lens. Immersion in the pūrākau narrative is itself an expression of reflexivity, similar to in-depth wānanga (deep discourse), through which Māori scholars critically engage and theorise. This aligns with decolonising methodologies (Mahuika and Mahuika, 2020), where Māori researchers are empowered to explore, analyse and theorise. By drawing together, expanding upon and articulating Māori methodologies, we not only push back against the epistemic violence (Seuffert, 1997) of Eurocentric paradigms – epistemicide (De Sousa Santos, 2016) and epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2017) – but also reframe those methods in our language, te reo Māori and on our terms. This approach is grounded in the principles of Kaupapa Māori Research (Henry and Wolfgramm, 2015, p. 210), which guide both researcher and research:

- research for, with and by Māori;
- research that validates Māori language and culture;
- research that empowers Māori people; and
- research that delivers positive outcomes for Māori.

It is these principles, interwoven with reflexivity, that shape our identities as researchers, the research process and the outcomes we seek. We next share the Mānuka honey pūrākau.

Mānuka honey pūrākau (māori narrative)

As stated, the study draws heavily on a recent article by Jefferson (2023), who described it as a complex and long-running trademark case, which was lost by New Zealand's Mānuka honey producers. More importantly, it highlighted how ill-equipped New Zealand laws are, despite the WAI262 findings, for protecting Māori taonga and mātauranga.

The case was heard by the IPONZ and centred on the use of the term Manuka Honey. Jefferson (2023) wrote, "The Appellation Society as a certification trademark in Aotearoa New Zealand. Registration would have allowed the society to exclusively use the Manuka Honey name (without the tohutō or macron over the 'a') when marketing honey made from the nectar of the Mānuka (Leptospermum scoparium) plant." Australian honey producers opposed the move, because, if successful, only New Zealand-based producers would be able to use the trademark on their products. The Australian Manuka Honey Association believed that their product has a long history of being recognised as Manuka honey, it is produced like the New Zealand product and offers the same sought-after antimicrobial properties that consumers value worldwide (Murphy, 2023).

Jefferson goes on to state, "The Mānuka case dates back to 2015, when New Zealand honey producers lodged an application for the Manuka Honey trademark. The Australian Manuka Honey Association opposed the application, arguing the proposed trademark was merely descriptive and not distinctive". There is no acknowledgement here that Mānuka is kupu Māori and knowledge about it is derived from mātauranga Māori.

On this point, Jefferson acknowledges this case is a clear indicator of the weaknesses in the IP rights system, particularly with regard to taonga and mātauranga. He refers to the Assistant Commissioner presiding over the case, who "carefully considered the taonga status of Mānuka, in addition to tikanga Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi in deciding the case", acknowledging the "critical importance" of Māori IP rights. However, working within the parameters of the existing legislation, she was required to work with the provisions of the Trade Marks Act, and it does not require IPONZ to consider the status of taonga and kupu Māori. Ending on a more positive note, Jefferson concludes that, "Kiwis may have lost the naming battle, but it may still be possible to win over consumers who are looking for products that embody the uniquely bicultural character of Aotearoa".

From an Indigenous Māori perspective, the use of the kupu Māori, Mānuka, by both New Zealand and Australian honey-producers, without any sense of responsibility or accountability to the people whose language has been co-opted, which is used to underpin high quality honey in the global marketplace, is deeply troubling. Māori patent lawyer Lynell Tuffery Huria was "gutted" by the decision by the IPONZ and expressed how "the intellectual property system and regime is not designed to protect our taonga" (Brettkelly, 2023). Manuka Charitable Trust Chair Pita Tipene also formally commented that he was "disappoint[Ed.] in so many ways, but our role as kaitiaki (guardians) to protect the mana, mauri, and value of our taonga species, including Mānuka on behalf of all New Zealanders is not contestable […]. we will remain resolute in protecting our reo Māori (language) and the precious taonga (treasure) and today's ruling in no way deters us. If anything, it has made us more determined to protect what is ours on behalf of all New Zealanders and consumers who value authenticity. It is time the New Zealand government took urgent action and committed sufficient funding to address these issues as raised in Wai 262 claim and recognised the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (Murphy, 2023).

Furthermore, the fact that successive New Zealand governments have prevaricated, despite a Tribunal Report recommending the protection of mātauranga, is also a deep concern. As Māori scholars, we argue this case is merely a continuation of the colonising agenda, to assimilate Māori, to dispossess Māori of our mana and our tino rangatiratanga

over our language and culture. To understand the ethical marketing issues surrounding the Mānuka honey pūrākau, we explore these next.

The role of māori ethics in marketing

To better understand the ethical issues surrounding the Mānuka honey pūrākau, we apply a Māori ethical framework Te Ara Tika (Hudson *et al.*, 2010). This framework guides our evaluation of the marketing practices involved in the pūrākau and offers a valuable tool for social marketers, policymakers and researchers by foregrounding moral considerations and promoting community well-being. The four values of Te Ara Tika – (1) Tika (rightness), (2) Manaakitanga (cultural and social responsibility, respect for persons), (3) Mana (justice and equity) and (4) Whakapapa (relationships) – offer a culturally grounded ethical compass to unpack the use of kupu Māori, Māori knowledge or taonga in social marketing.

Tika (rightness)

Tika, as a foundational ethical principle within Tikanga Māori, demands conduct that is culturally, socially and morally right (Hudson *et al.*, 2010), not merely legal compliance. Current IP laws fall short of this standard. While instruments such as the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007) and evolving frameworks for biologically related IIP (Kennedy and Laczniak, 2014) exist, legal systems in Aotearoa and internationally continue to privilege individualistic, Western notions of ownership (Barnes and Yessilth, 2018) – rendering Indigenous communal rights largely invisible (Kennedy and Laczniak, 2014).

The Mānuka honey pūrakau exemplifies this failure. Although Australian and New Zealand producers may legally use the term Mānuka, their actions disregard the term's Māori origins and the mātauranga Māori embedded within it. Rather than centring Māori voices, the Australian Manuka Honey Association adopted a legalist, profit-oriented approach that marginalised Indigenous perspectives. This reflects an ethical orientation relying on legal frameworks to justify decisions and seeking commercial gain rather than cultural respect and/or social equity.

Furthermore, the coloniality of the Anglo-Saxon world is inscribed not only in law and commerce but also in language (Zeng *et al.*, 2023). English dominates international markets, scientific discourse and IP regimes, forcing Indigenous terms like mānuka into foreign categories (Meighan, 2023; Zeng *et al.*, 2023). In this process, mānuka is reduced from a taonga rich in whakapapa and mātauranga to a mere trademark or commodity descriptor. Such translation does not simply name mānuka in another language; it colonises its meaning, stripping it of cultural depth. This linguistic dominance risks erasing Indigenous knowledge systems and language (Meighan, 2023; Zeng *et al.*, 2023) by forcing them to be legible only through Western frames. To honour the kupu mānuka, requires resisting this erosion by centring te reo Māori and Indigenous storytelling as authoritative, refusing the reduction of mānuka to a market term alone.

A Kaupapa Māori approach – in which Māori define the problem, lead the process and retain sovereignty over the outcomes (Hudson *et al.*, 2010) – would have enabled a more just, respectful and culturally informed form of marketing. Without this shift, the marketing of Mānuka remains extractive, undermining trust and reinforcing colonial patterns of cultural appropriation.

Manaakitanga (cultural and social responsibility, respect for persons)

Manaakitanga, which encompasses care, generosity, respect and the upholding of others mana (inherent dignity and authority) (Hudson *et al.*, 2010; Spiller *et al.*, 2011), is notably

absent from the branding and commercialisation of Mānuka honey by Australian and New Zealand producers. Despite token gestures towards cultural consideration, there has been no meaningful effort to engage Māori as rightful kaitiaki of the term. From a Te Ara Tika and Kaupapa Māori perspective, this constitutes a breach of cultural protocol and failure to uphold the dignity, authority and responsibilities of Māori communities (Hudson *et al.*, 2010; Spiller *et al.*, 2011).

Australian honey producers' appropriation of the kupu Mānuka – without meaningful consultation or engagement – disregards the spiritual, cultural and socio-economic significance of the kupu to Māori. It limits Māori commercial opportunities, undermines our kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and diminishes the mana and mauri (life force) of the people and taonga, such as Mānuka and te reo Māori. The act is not only offensive but also reflective of deeper structural inequities that prioritise commercial gain over cultural care and accountability.

Social marketing must exceed symbolic inclusion (Brauer *et al.*, 2021). Genuine, respectful co-production (Raciti, 2023) requires culturally safe processes and must be grounded in māhaki – spiritual integrity and accountability to Māori communities (Hudson *et al.*, 2010).

Without these commitments, marketing continues to reproduce colonial extractivism. Our goal is to support a social marketing vision that restores integrity, justice and trust.

Mana (justice and equity)

The international marketing of Mānuka honey reveals the erosion of Māori mana. Defined as conferred or inherited power and authority (Mahuika, 1992), mana is central to determining who holds rights, responsibilities and decision-making power in relation to the community, knowledge or taonga affected (Dell *et al.*, 2018; Hudson *et al.*, 2010). Current marketing practices by Australian producers undermine mana tangata. This reflects a disregard for Māori autonomy and dignity (Hudson *et al.*, 2010) and undermines both cultural integrity and consumer trust. For instance, marketing products as Mānuka without biological or cultural equivalence – such as the Australian manuka honey (Cook, 2024) – violates basic ethical standards of transparency and fairness. Such misrepresentations are deceptive (Lewicki, 2006; Petty and Andrews, 2008), causing negative outcomes to Māori communities and misleading consumers (Aditya, 2001).

Te Ara Tika guidelines call for structural change to support mana whenua and mana whakahaere. Mana whenua affirms the authority of iwi and hapū over their ancestral lands and associated knowledge (Dell *et al.*, 2018) while Mana whakahaere reinforces the need for Māori-led control over IP, mātauranga, guardianship responsibilities and data associated with commercialisation (Hudson *et al.*, 2010). Ethical social marketing should consider embedding these forms of mana enhancement by involving Māori from the outset. Doing so ensures authenticity, accountability and relational equity in global and local markets.

Whakapapa (relationships)

Whakapapa, a core tenant of mātauranga Māori (Royal, 2008), offers an important lens through which to understand the cultural and ethical tensions (Hudson *et al.*, 2010) surrounding the use of the term Mānuka by Australian and New Zealand honey producers. Often simplified as genealogy, whakapapa is more accurately understood as a dynamic, relational system that connects people, place and the natural world (Edwards, 2011). It provides the epistemological and ontological grounding for Māori worldviews – structuring relationships not only between individuals and their ancestors but also with non-human entities such as plants, waterways and landforms (Edwards, 2011; Royal, 2008; Spiller *et al.*, 2011).

This inherently ecocentric orientation, where humans are understood as part of, not above, the natural world, strengthens Māori claims to strong Indigeneity in marketing (Love and Hall, 2022). From this perspective, the Mānuka plant is not merely a biological resource but a taonga with its own whakapapa. Māori have long nurtured this relationship through intergenerational kaitiakitanga and mātauranga. By appropriating the name Mānuka without engagement, Australian and New Zealand producers disrupt these sacred relationships, stripping the term of its depth and cultural specificity. This undermines Māori tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and their rights to exercise authority over taonga species.

In social marketing, this highlights the limits of commodification and underscores the importance of value-based, culturally rooted co-production (Cateriano-Arévalo *et al.*, 2025; Raciti, 2023). Whakapapa provides a framework for relational accountability, centring interdependence, cultural integrity and long-term well-being. For marketers and organisations operating in international contexts, acknowledging and upholding whakapapa is not simply a matter of cultural respect or a sign of cultural sensitivity, it is a prerequisite for ethical social marketing engagement.

Discussion

The telling of the Mānuka honey pūrākau helps contribute to building a collective intentionality towards decolonising the hierarchies of knowledge within the social marketing discipline (Bádéjọ *et al.*, 2022). We respond to growing calls to move the discipline beyond its dominant Western epistemes and towards genuine recognition of Indigenous and other non-Western knowledge systems (Bádéjọ *et al.*, 2022; Cateriano-Arévalo *et al.*, 2025; Raciti, 2021). By foregrounding mātauranga Māori, kaupapa Māori, Te Ara Tika and pūrākau, as a source of theory, method and ethical guidance, we illustrate how Indigenous knowledges can enrich social marketing and reframe approaches to social change.

By sharing and examining the Mānuka honey pūrākau we add to current kaupapa Māori conversations in social marketing that also share the traditional practice and method of storytelling (Asher, 2025). Our Indigenous perspective compared to a Western perspective, supports social marketers to engage not merely with Indigenous peoples (e.g. Madill *et al.*, 2014; Kubacki and Szablewska, 2019), but in ways that uphold and are accountable to Indigenous (in our case, Māori) worldviews. We hope our analysis helps to sensitise social marketers, policymakers, educators and researchers to the broader issues of the misuse of Indigenous language and knowledge without consent, care or reciprocity.

We also give social marketers the tools to prioritise people and communities while acknowledging and respecting cultural identities and heritage. The Mānuka honey pūrākau serves as a powerful illustration of the ongoing dialogue surrounding Māori ethics (Hudson *et al.*, 2010; Smith, 2019; Spiller *et al.*, 2011) and ethics in social marketing (Kennedy and Santos, 2019), urging social marketers, policymakers, educators and scholars to critically reflect on their actions and engage in ethical decision-making when working with Indigenous problems, international commercialisation, branding, development of products and while implementing social marketing programmes with Indigenous Peoples. We recommend the Mānuka Honey Pūrakau as essential reading in the classroom. Ours is important for policymakers who are advocating for Indigenous rights and local and international practitioners thinking about using Indigenous words in their brand and to sell their products.

Foregrounding Māori perspectives helps advance CSM (Bádéjọ *et al.*, 2022; Millard and Akbar, 2023). It exposes how marketing practice often reinforces ideological biases and power imbalances while framing social problems in individualistic, neoliberal terms (Tadajewski, 2010). By contrast, the Mānuka pūrākau demonstrates how Indigenous Knowledges can guide emancipatory agendas for justice, shifting attention to structural

forces such as IP law, cultural appropriation and systemic inequities. These perspectives are also with, by, for and as Māori, not often seen in the social marketing literature.

Ultimately, Indigenous social marketing contributes to dismantling hierarchies of knowledge and building collective intentionality towards decolonisation (Bádéjọ *et al.*, 2022). Our research adds to the decolonising scholarship in social marketing (e.g. Raciti *et al.*, 2024; Raciti and Harris, 2025) and marketing more broadly (Love and Hall, 2022). It also points to the importance of co-orientation (Bádéjọ *et al.*, 2022): reorienting the discipline away from Eurocentric norms and towards pluralistic, relational and justice-oriented ways of being. The Mānuka honey pūrākau therefore signals both a warning and a pathway. It warns against cultural appropriation and tokenistic use of Indigenous language for commercial gain, and towards strong Indigeneity in marketing (see Love and Hall, 2022). At the same time, it offers a pathway for embedding Kaupapa Māori theory and pūrākau as a method and ethical compass, enabling more inclusive and impactful social marketing that aligns with Indigenous sovereignty and well-being. We next provide practical recommendations for social marketers, policymakers, educators and scholars on how to engage with pūrākau (Indigenous storytelling) as an ethical tool in social marketing.

Recommendations for social marketers, policymakers, educators and scholars

The Mānuka honey pūrākau illustrates how social marketing can perpetuate colonial dynamics when Indigenous knowledge, language and taonga are commodified without proper engagement or consent. To support a more just and equitable future, we recommend social marketers embed Indigenous ethical frameworks into their practice. We outline below how the principles of Te Ara Tika (Hudson *et al.*, 2010) inform ethical Indigenous storytelling in social marketing (see Figure 1). Our framework, who was designed by RUN Aotearoa (Māori owned advertising and design agency), is inspired by Te Kāpehū Whētu, traditional star compass used by ancestors to sail across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, the Pacific Ocean and the Amokura or Red-tailed Tropicbird, prized in Māori culture for its valuable red tail features used in adornments and as a symbol of navigation. The amokura, a rare, open-ocean seabird, helped the great navigators of the Pacific chart the largest body of water in the world. It was an important symbol of safety, navigation and leadership, serving as a natural indicator for wayfinding. This relates to the Kaupapa as a new area we are starting to navigate, like our ancestors who traversed the ocean, heading into the unknown, need some navigation aids to guide us. We hope this framework can help you to better understand how to engage with pūrākau (story) as an ethical tool in social marketing.

In conjunction with the framework, we provide a guide that can serve as a checklist, teaching tool and research lens (see Table 1). It encourages practitioners, educators, policymakers and scholars to critically reflect on their work and assess whether it meets a minimum standard, good practice or best practice. Each project can be assessed against levels of practice, with the aspiration of moving towards Kaupapa Māori approaches where Indigenous Peoples lead, determine and safeguard their own pūrākau (story).

Tika – social marketers who do what is right and good

The principle of tika requires conduct that aligns with cultural, social and moral obligations (Hudson *et al.*, 2010) rather than merely legal compliance. It calls practitioners, educators and scholars to reflect on whether their initiatives are ethically sound, not only for target audiences but also for Indigenous Peoples whose knowledge and stories may be involved. We provide further detail below and a check list for you to evaluate your own initiatives (see Figure 2).

Table 1. Guide to ethical storytelling in indigenous social marketing

Principle	Minimum standard	Good practice	Best practice	Reflective prompts
Tika (doing what is right and good)	Mainstream: Protect rights, respect tikanga, avoid harm. Do not commodify stories, words, or designs for mainstream benefit	Māori centred: Indigenous voices shape direction, process and outcomes. Co-production with benefit-sharing, reciprocity and cultural integrity	Kaupapa Māori: Storytelling is for/with/by/as Māori. Māori-led decision-making. Story/data sovereignty. Campaigns embed tino-rangatiratanga. Non-Indigenous partners allies support, not direct. Māori determine which stories are told, how and by whom	• How will this impact indigenous peoples (positively/negatively)? • Who needs to be consulted (kuamātua, iwi, hapū, advisors)? • Is this genuinely indigenous-led? • Whose worldview frames the initiative? • What long-term benefits will be realised?
Manaakitanga (respect, cultural and social responsibility)	Cultural sensitivity: Do no harm. Avoid appropriation, distortion or commodification. Show care, empathy and dignity	Cultural safety: Active protection through co-creation. Māori communities define safety. Advisory groups, iwi/hapū engagement and benefit sharing	Māhaki (respectful conduct): long-term Kaupapa-aligned partnership. Indigenous voices lead storytelling. Ongoing collaboration grounded in authenticity, reciprocity and trust	• Are indigenous peoples treated with dignity? • Who defines "safety" and cultural protocols? • Is your organisation Kaupapa-aligned? • How is cultural authenticity safeguarded? • Is this partnership long-term and mutually beneficial?
Mana (power and authority)	Mana Tangata: Respect individual dignity, equity, transparency. Informed consent. Koha as reciprocity	Mana Whenua: Collective authority. Co-design with hapū/iwi. Outcomes contribute to iwi/hapū aspirations	Mana Whakahaere: Māori retain control and guardianship of knowledge, data and storytelling. Shared governance, indigenous IP/data sovereignty upheld. Co-developed curricular with iwi/hapū	• Who holds decision-making power? • Have iwi/hapū goals shaped the Kaupapa? • Who owns the data/IP? • How are Māori exercising guardianship? • Are Māori voices positioned as co-authors of knowledge?

(*continued*)

Table 1. Continued

Principle	Minimum standard	Good practice	Best practice	Reflective prompts
Whakapapa (relationships)	Consultation: Map who holds relationships to the Kaupapa. Ensure transparent reporting back and clarity of purpose. Avoid repurposing without consent	Engagement: Ongoing reciprocal relationships. Co-defined problems, priorities, risks, success measures. Tangible benefits (e.g. reo resources, scholarships)	Kaitiaki: Empower Māori as guardians. Kaupapa Māori principles guide from start to end. Authority remains with indigenous peoples; stories are safeguarded and reciprocal	• Why does this Kaupapa exist and who asked for it? • Which iwi/hapū/whānau hold relationships to this Kaupapa? • What tangible outcomes are realized for Māori? • Whose stories are being told, and who decides? • How is reciprocity embedded?

Minimum standards: mainstream

At the minimum level, tika means protecting rights, respecting tikanga and avoiding harm. In practice, this means asking hard questions about whether social marketing interventions, practices, campaigns or initiatives genuinely support Indigenous aspirations, or, at the very least, do not undermine them. Pūrākau, Indigenous stories, designs and language must never be treated as mere creative resources for mainstream benefit. For instance, the widespread misuse of the word Mānuka illustrates how commercial benefits can be prioritised over cultural integrity.

Reflective prompts for social marketers include:

Q1. In what ways will this activity impact Indigenous Peoples? Positively, negatively or not at all?

Q2. How will Indigenous Peoples be included: as knowledge holders, collaborators or simply as audiences?

Q3. Who needs to be consulted? (e.g. Kaumātua, Elder circles, iwi/hapū, cultural advisors, Indigenous design agencies), and how can this be approach respectfully?

Meeting the minimum standard for tika requires cultural awareness: an openness to learning about, and aligning with, Indigenous values, histories and worldviews. As Māori patent attorney Lynell Tuffery Huria explains:

> If you're going to use a Māori word, you need to understand why you're using that word, and if you're not willing to align with Māori values and how you use that word, and why you use that word, then you shouldn't use that word[[…] just use the English word and that is fine (as cited in Solomon, 2025).

Ultimately, te reo Māori is a taonga and must be treated with respect, not as a marketing asset.

Good practice: Māori-centred

At this good-practice level, social marketing actively responds to Indigenous aspirations and values but may still be initiated and led from outside Indigenous communities. Indigenous voices are not merely "included" but shape direction, process and outcomes of social marketing initiatives. This is absent from the Mānuka honey pūrākau. There is no evidence in official documents, media coverage, IPONZ decisions or Waitangi Tribunal referencing that either the Australian Manuka Honey Association undertook consultation with Māori to uphold tikanga. Although the Assistant Commissioner Alley considered the impact of the decision on Māori, considering the taonga status of manuka as a Māori kupu and a plant, the principals of tikanga Māori, Te tiriti o Waitangi and the Waitangi Tribunal "Wai 262" report concerning NZ law and policy affecting Māori culture and identity, they could not over-ride the decision based on tikanga principles. This aligns with the broader issue of IP systems centring Western notions of property, not relational obligations grounded in tikanga. To demonstrate good practice, the Australian Manuka Honey Associations and honey producers should have engaged in meaningful consultation, to establish strong relationships and demonstrate commitment to cultural respect and/or social equity.

In addition, superficial or late-stage consultation risks cultural appropriation for commercial gain. This aligns with calls for more respectful, co-production with Indigenous communities (Cateriano-Arévalo *et al.*, 2025; Raciti, 2023). Co-production can take many forms: benefit-sharing agreements, contributions to te reo Māori revitalisation (e.g. through Kōhanga Reo donations), committing to health or well-being outcomes and/or returning expertise and resources to the community, as examples. Such actions reflect reciprocity and

honour the relationships on which research and practice depend (Solomon, 2025). Cultural integrity and reciprocity are central at this stage.

As Spiller *et al.* (2011) shares "a commitment to tikanga is a commitment to keeping the business culturally real and culturally appropriate and attention to values-based processes" (p. 161). The same goes for social marketing campaigns, initiatives, storytelling and practices grounded in tikanga, they move beyond tokenistic inclusion of Indigenous elements. Initiatives reflect the lived realities, aspirations and identities of Māori (Indigenous) communities, making campaigns resonate authentically. It is also not just about the outcomes achieved (e.g. increase recycling, better nutrition) but how outcomes are achieved.

Reflective questions for social marketers:

Q4. Have Indigenous Peoples been consulted early enough to shape the initiative and their stories?

Q5. Does the initiative reflect Indigenous priorities, not just organisational ones?

Q6. What tangible benefits will Indigenous Peoples gain from this project?

Meeting the good practice standard of tika requires cultural competency. Genuine cultural competency must go beyond diversity rhetoric. It requires cultural relativism, a deliberate appreciation of alternative knowledge systems, contexts and the intersectional identities historically marginalised in the Global North (Bádéjọ *et al.*, 2022). The Mānuka honey pūrākau exemplifies this shift: it does not simply add "diversity" but helps to disrupt hierarchies of knowledge by legitimising Māori epistemologies as central to marketing theory and practice. It helps social marketers, educators, policymakers and scholars to make sense, create meaning and learning. It helps us as Māori researchers to bring light to social issues that deeply affects our people. We encourage social marketing educators to integrate pūrākau like Mānuka honey into teaching and practice to build and deepen understanding of mātauranga Māori and support the decolonisation of the field (Badejo *et al.*, 2022; Raciti, 2021; Raciti *et al.*, 2024). By embedding CSM into marketing education, teachers and students can tackle some of the most important social issues (Gordon *et al.*, 2022) facing Indigenous people today.

Best practice: Kaupapa māori framework

Best practice in storytelling is achieved when it is led by Māori. Decision-making authority rests with Indigenous Peoples, and campaigns embed tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) while maintain story sovereignty. This approach aligns with global Indigenous movements for sovereignty over language, land and knowledge (Shrinkhal, 2021). A tika approach is where non-Indigenous collaborators may offer expertise, but they do not control the process. Indigenous Peoples decide which stories are told, how they are told and who tells them. For example, in an intergenerational digital storytelling workshop, Elders shared local Indigenous knowledge with Nak'azdli Whut'en First Nation school children in Canada to co-create digital stories (Hausknecht *et al.*, 2021). This is an example of knowledge sharing through storytelling for, with, by and as Indigenous Peoples.

Best practice also requires active engagement with Indigenous governance structures such as tribal councils, iwi/hapū, Elders's circle, Indigenous storytellers/agencies or designated cultural authorities. In relation to the Mānuka honey pūrākau, only a small number of Māori groups were able to submit supporting material via the NZ appellation society, but this was not consultation. It was advocacy reacting to a commercial threat, not a proactive, tika-centred process. To do what is culturally right would have been to

acknowledge the distinctive nature and cultural significance of Mānuka honey to Aotearoa New Zealand, whether it be due for its taonga status, passing down of mātauranga relating to healing powers and use, the use of te reo Māori kupu and the term "manuka" being an English loanword (being adopted into the English language from te reo Māori; Manuka Honey Appellation Society Inc v. Australian Manuka Honey Association Ltd, 2023).

A tika approach further involves upholding Indigenous data sovereignty frameworks, including OCAP® in Canada (The First Nations Principles of OCAP®, 2025), CARE (Global Indigenous Data Alliance [GIDA], 2025) or Te Mana Rarunga (Te Mana Raraunga, 2024).

Reflective question for social marketers includes:

Q7. Is this project and storytelling genuinely Indigenous-led or are Indigenous Peoples simply included?

Q8. Whose worldview frames the initiative – Western marketing or Indigenous-led Marketing?

Q9. How will this work advance Indigenous aspirations in the long-term, beyond a single campaign or intervention?

Manaakitanga – social marketers who uphold the mana of both parties (cultural and social responsibility, respects other persons)

Manaakitanga requires that social marketers uphold the dignity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples. It emphasises cultural and social responsibility, calling for respect conduct and authentic relationships rather than transactional use of culture (Hudson *et al.*, 2010).

Minimum: doing no harm (cultural sensitivity)

At the minimum standard, manaakitanga is expressed through cultural sensitivity (Hudson *et al.*, 2010), showing empathy, care and respect while avoiding appropriation, distortion or harm. Many brands, both Māori and non-Maori, acknowledge the advantages of integrating Indigenous cultural elements into their offerings, creating a unique value proposition. Ethical concerns arise when these elements are misused in ways that cause harm, through cultural appropriation, distortion or commodification. For example, the misuse of the Māori term Mānuka by Australians honey producers for commercial gains raises significant ethical concerns, specifically related to cultural appropriation and the misuse of mātauranga Māori and taonga. This social problem is important to share as it is one being highlighted by, for with and as Māori and involves the well-being of Māori – who are negatively affected by the inaction of other groups of people (Brenkert, 2002).

Doing no harm in this context means acknowledging that such practices directly impact Māori well-being, identity and tino-rangatiratanga (self-determination). An ethics of care is ensuring multiple perspectives are respectfully recognised and no voice is repressed (Spiller *et al.*, 2011). Manaakitanga requires proactive safeguards guided by aroha (care), respect and cultural sensitivity. This involves respecting people's ideas, being open to understanding them, showing empathy, being responsive, showing receptiveness and reciprocity especially when they are different from your own.

Systemic transformation is needed to ensure Indigenous rights are meaningfully protected. At present, the Māori advisory committee that reviews trademark application involving Māori kupu (term) lack the authority to reject applications that misuse te reo Māori or fail to engage in cultural consultation (Solomon, 2025). This underscores the limitations of

current IP law in Aotearoa when it comes to cultural and ethical obligations. While individual social marketers cannot directly reform legal structures (Brenkert, 2002) they can advocate for change and model ethical practice like manaakitanga – creating ripple effects that influence broader systems.

Reflective questions for social marketers:

Q10. Are Indigenous Peoples being treated with dignity and respect?

Q11. Is there access to Kaumātua, Elders, Indigenous agencies, Indigenous scholars or cultural advisors for guidance?

Q12. How are privacy and confidentiality being defined and applied in partnership with the community?

Good practice: actively protecting and co-creating with communities (cultural safety)

At this level, manaakitanga extends beyond cultural sensitivity towards a shared responsibility and active protection. Cultural safety requires that communities themselves define what is safe and appropriate, with social marketers working in genuine partnership to uphold those standards. This means co-creating goals and outcomes that reflect Indigenous aspirations and values, and ensuring that initiatives not only avoid harm but also generate tangible benefits for Māori and their communities.

Meaningful engagement involves building genuine relationships with Māori governance structures such as iwi, hapū, Kaumātua, Indigenous scholars, Indigenous agencies and/or cultural advisors. It is not about quick consultation or simply including an advisor; authentic co-design involves true community partnership throughout the process (Harding *et al.*, 2020). This was missing from the legal process surrounding the Mānuka Honey case.

An example of good practice is establishing a Māori advisory rōpū (group), comprising academics, community leaders and traditional knowledge holders. Such a group provides critical support, ensures cultural safety and diverse perspectives to guide decision-making, reduce risk and protect communities from unintended harm (Johnson *et al.*, 2024). Genuinely considering and implementing advice helps to ensure cultural safety.

Partnering with Indigenous-led agencies such as Oho, RUN and Ira in Aotearoa New Zealand or Indigenous influencers also reflects good practice. These approaches ensure control and voice remain with the community, which is important for strong Indigeneity (Love and Hall, 2022). They also draw on shared cultural experiences helping messages resonate (Renall and Te Morenga, 2024).

Questions for social marketers:

Q13. How can I empower and support Indigenous voices and their story telling?

Q14. What cultural protocols are being practiced ensuring safety and respect?

Q15. How are you asking Indigenous Peoples to contribute, just to the Indigenous part?

Q16. How are trust, care and reciprocity nurtured alongside social marketing outcomes?

Best practice: Māhaki – respectful conduct

At the highest level, manaakitanga is realised through empowered, trusting, long-term, kaupapa-aligned partnerships (Hudson *et al.*, 2010). This could be achieved between Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Honey producers. A strong example of manaakitanga

in practice can be seen in the partnership between Tourism NZ and six Māori-owned tourism operators, including Manea Footprints of Kupe, Āmiki Tours and Te Ana Māori Rock Art (Tourism New Zealand, 2023). This collaboration was committed to showcasing authentic Māori narratives. Rather than imposing externally defined messages, Tourism NZ worked with the operators to share stories that deeply resonate with mana whenua and their histories. These narratives invited international manuhiri (visitors) not simply to witness Māori culture, but to connect with it emotionally and engage responsibly.

This initiative exemplifies manaakitanga best practice principles: collaborative governance, cultural authenticity and respect, mutual benefit and reciprocity and enduring relationships. Māori operators shaped the storytelling from the start, ensuring direction came from within the community. By sharing their own voices, values and regional stories, they upheld cultural integrity while gaining visibility and agency. As Riwai Grace of Āmiki Tours stated, "Our stories are a taonga. this campaign invites manuhiri to experience our culture and tipuna stories […] in our way and in our voice" (Tourism New Zealand, 2023).

Importantly, this was not a one-off engagement. The partnership extended into ongoing collaborations with NZ Māori Tourism and the Māori-led creative agency RUN. The campaign both elevated Māori cultural presences internationally and safeguarded cultural ownership. It demonstrates how manaakitanga can guide social marketing practice: authority and trust remain with Indigenous experts, reciprocity is embedded and relationships are prioritised alongside outcomes. This represents a replicable model for Indigenous social marketing where engagement is genuine, respectful and mutually beneficial. As Bádéjọ *et al.* (2022) argue, co-constitution requires more than symbolic inclusion; it demands the ongoing participation of Global South and Indigenous scholars and practitioners in shaping priorities, outcomes and theories.

Questions for social marketers include:

Q17. Who holds authority in shaping the narrative, are Indigenous voices leading from the outset?

Q18. How is cultural authenticity safeguarded to ensure Indigenous stories are told in their own way and in their own voice?

Q19. Is your organisation kaupapa-aligned?

Q20. Is this a one-off engagement, or does it contribute to long-term partnership and ongoing relationship-building?

In what ways does the partnership resist tokenism and embody co-production, where Indigenous partners shape priorities, processes and outputs?

Mana – social marketers who acknowledge power and authority

Here, the principle of mana focuses on how power and authority are recognised in social marketing practice. It requires attention to who holds rights, responsibilities and decision-making authority in relation to the community, knowledge, data, stories and taonga (Dell *et al.*, 2018; Hudson *et al.*, 2010). Figure 4 below outlines how mana can be upheld in Indigenous social marketing and storytelling.

Mana tangata – minimum standard

Mana tangata calls for respect for individual dignity, transparency and equity. At the most basic level, it requires moving away from the use of Indigenous identity without Indigenous control (Love and Hall, 2022). For social marketers, this means actively upholding the mana

(integrity) of communities, centring their voices throughout the co-design processes (Harding *et al.*, 2020) and safeguarding of story sovereignty. For storytellers, mana tangata requires full, informed understanding of how their stories will be used, the potential risks involved and who the audience will be. The recent decision by the IPONZ illustrates how mana tangata can be compromised. Māori mana was diminished through the ruling, as reflected in the emotions and commentary of Māori patent lawyer Lynell Tuffery Huria and Manuka Charitable trust chair Pita Tipene. Both highlighting the harm caused when Indigenous authority and identity are overridden.

To uphold mana, campaign intent and outcomes such as the behaviours being encouraged and who benefits should always be made transparent. Consent must be flexible and culturally grounded, recognising oral and whānau consent as equally valid alongside written consent. Respecting storytellers includes allowing them to choose whether they are named, anonymised or represented in particular ways. For instance, content should be shared with them before using it in the campaign. Acknowledging koha is not simply about giving a gift but about recognising mana through reciprocity. Finally, it is critical to check that risks such as stigma or misrepresentation have been clearly explained and minimised for those sharing their stories.

Reflective questions for social marketers:

Q21. Are individuals being treated with dignity and honesty in how their stories are used?

Q22. Is informed consent (including oral consent) clearly established?

Q23. Is koha understood and provided appropriately?

Q24. Are Māori voices included fairly and equitably, not just as "add-ons"?

Mana whenua – good practice

Good practices require honouring mana whenua, the authority of iwi and hapū over their lands, knowledge and taonga (Dell *et al.*, 2018). Stories and campaigns that draw on cultural knowledge, land or whakapapa must not be told without first engaging mana whenua. This involves seeking guidance, approval and co-design with iwi or hapū before telling or sharing narratives connected to their rohe, history or taonga.

Where cultural knowledge belongs to the collective Indigenous group rather than an individual rohe, iwi or hapū, ethical practice may require collective consent.

We encourage educators to incorporate case studies and pūrākau into teaching, highlighting the role of mana whenua in shaping narratives and outcomes. Students should be encouraged to critically reflect on the outcomes for communities, benefit-sharing, collective consent and Māori/Indigenous aspirations in project design.

Questions for social marketers:

Q25. Have iwi/hapū goals and aspirations been acknowledged and built into the campaign?

Q26. How will outcomes be measured and by whom?

Q27. Who benefits, and how is this evidenced?

Q28. Has there been proper engagement with mana whenua, and in what capacity?

Q29. Are your behaviours and activities mana-enhancing for Indigenous Peoples?

Mana whakahaere – best practice (shared control and guardianship)

Best practice involves mana whakahaere, where Māori retain control and kaitiakitanga of knowledge and data. Here, Māori communities hold shared governance and decision-making authority, IP and data sovereignty are respected and Indigenous partners co-author knowledge and outputs. Current challenges around IP law in Aotearoa such as the inability of advisory committees to reject inappropriate use of Māori term, highlight the urgency of supporting this level of practice.

For educators, best practice extends beyond resourcing and curriculum inclusion. While there has been a reluctance to embed Australian Indigenous knowledges in marketing curricula (Raciti, 2021) and attempts to integrate Mātauranga Māori into a Business Minor have been under resourced (Henry, 2025), the priority should be co-developing teaching resources with iwi, hapū and Indigenous communities such as practitioners and academics. Embedding mātauranga Māori into social marketing education transforms storytelling from a pedagogical tool into an act of co-production and reciprocity and can help to uplift the mana of Indigenous Peoples. Incorporating pūrākau through co-developed modules ensures authority over knowledge is shared, and aligns teaching with Māori aspirations, empowering Māori students, decolonising curricula and strengthening recognition of mātauranga Māori. Not only will this help to normalise Indigenous stories and uplift the mana of Indigenous peoples, but it is also a core approach to teaching and learning for Indigenous communities (Hausknecht *et al*., 2021).

Beyond Aotearoa New Zealand context, best practices involve fostering trans-Indigenous solidarity. "Trans" here refers to decentring nations, boarders and colonial boundaries to enable collaborations among Indigenous communities that generate shared meaning (Prendergast, 2023). Such solidarity could include establishing international or national Indigenous social marketing networks to share tools, stories and strategies, ensuring communities learn from and support each other in resisting appropriation. The Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association offers a powerful example (Bird, 2002). By creating a national registry to recognise Inuit seamstresses and designers, documenting regional variations in designs and establish a collective trademark, they provide of model of collective protection and authenticity.

Reflective questions for social marketers:

Q30. Who owns the data and intellectual property?

Q31. Has consent been gained to access and use mātauranga Māori?

Q32. How is power shared in decision-making processes?

Q33. How are Māori communities exercising guardianship over campaign outcomes and legacy?

Q34. Are Māori voices positioned as co-authors of knowledge in educational content?

Q35. Were teaching resources co-developed with iwi, hapū or Indigenous practitioners?

Whakapapa: social marketers foster meaningful relationships

Whakapapa highlights the relational nature of storytelling. Stories are not simply campaign content or teaching resource but are genealogical connections that bind people, place and purposes. This is connected to the idea of ecocentric marketing and strong place-based association discussed by Love and Hall (2022). Ethical storytelling requires nurturing these relationships and safeguarding the whakapapa of knowledge.

Minimum standard: consultation (aroha as caution and risk care)

At a minimum standard, social marketers should engage in transparent consultation. This requires moving away from the use of Indigenous identity, symbols and branding without Indigenous control, towards careful management and control by Indigenous groups (Love and Hall, 2022). Part of this process includes clarifying the purpose of an initiative, identifying who holds relationships to the kaupapa and reporting back to communities. For example, in the case of Mānuka, Australian Honey Producers and New Zealand companies using the kupu Mānuka without consultation could have mapped out who holds relationships to Mānuka and documented consultation processes. Transparent consultation includes ensuring clarity of information (without overstating or understating risks), recording who has been consulted, when and how, reporting outcomes back to the communities involved and never repurposing Māori narratives without clear prior consent. Consultation must be genuine and transparent, not a token exercise.

The hui process (Lacey *et al.*, 2011), culturally specific principles of greeting and relationship building, can help with establishing relationships with Māori and ensuring those relationships are fruitful, in terms of building connection, understanding and willingness to engage and trust. Other cultural practices such as karakia (prayer), waiata (song) and whakawhanungatanga (relationship building) are important for building and maintaining relationships (Hepi *et al.*, 2017). Learning the stories of the area and becoming more connected to place (where people live, work and play) will help with nurturing relationships and safeguarding the whakapapa of knowledge.

Reflective questions for social marketers:

Q36. Have we clearly stated why this kaupapa exists, who asked for it and how it algins with Māori priorities?

Q37. Which iwi/hapū/whānau hold relationships to Mānuka in the kaupapa, and who has been consulted (by name/role)? Is there evidence?

Q38. What is our team's track record with Indigenous research/engagement, and who will vouch for our conduct?

Q39. What topics/usages are out of scope and who can halt the project if boundaries are crossed?

Good practice – engagement

Good practice involves sustained engagement that is reciprocal and co-defined. Engagement should be an ongoing commitment rather than a one-off exercise in data extraction (Wildcat and Voth, 2023). If we think of tohunga whakairo (master carvers) or tohunga tā moko (expert tattooist), we know that the connection to place, to being and/or to a community begins before and extends after the actual crafting process. Similarly, when conducting research, working with communities or developing behaviour change programme/s the process should start far beyond the actual creation, and extend far past the launch or success. Although this does not always fit with academic conventions especially when giving back and working alongside research partners, and does not directly align with a research agenda, a shift in understanding and perspective from the academy is needed.

It requires moving away from superficial or weak associations with place towards authentic, placed-anchored relationships that reflect identity and whakapapa (Love and Hall, 2022). Place-based approaches recognise unique histories, relationships and contexts of

different communities (Antric and Reeder, 2025). If Australian honey producers had a strong sense and connection to the whakapapa of Mānuka not manuka honey, better outcomes for Māori communities would have transpired.

Moving forward, we encourage educators to develop curricula in active partnership with iwi, hapū, Indigenous practitioners and/or scholars. This ensures place-based understandings are integrated into pūrākau and taught in ways that align with Māori aspirations and contribute to student empowerment. Institutions must commit time, funding and resources to:

- build deep and enduring relationships with Māori;
- create opportunities for whakawhanungatanga (relationship-building);
- provide time, space and funding for upskilling, without expecting this work to be added on top of existing academic responsibilities;
- enable participation as Māori, even when it may feel uncomfortable for non-Māori;
- support cultural practices such as koha, ensuring engagement is appropriate and respectful; and
- allow genuine time and additional funding for the creation of much needed teaching resources in this field.

For those social marketers who feel hesitant about integrating pūrakau or Indigenous stories into their classes, we suggest taking small, practical steps. For example, you might begin by assigning this pūrākau as an essential reading and using the resource that sits alongside this article. The authors are also willing to walk alongside you, as you introduce and discuss it with your students, until you feel confident to do so independently.

Another approach is the strengths-based approach (Raciti *et al.*, 2022). It is about sharing positive, Indigenous-led social marketing stories that highlight community strengths and successful outcomes. This shifts the focus from deficit-based narratives (core assumption that people need to be fixed or lack the capability to exert influence or control; Riedel *et al.*, 2022) to stories that are empowering and mana-enhancing. While serious issues remain important, they can be addressed in ways that uplift rather than diminish mana. To do the real work though, educators should start with themselves. If you lack awareness of your own position in relation to Indigenous peoples, and how you may be implicated in colonial systems, your attempts at decolonising the classroom risk becoming paternalistic, reinforcing the same settler blind spots they are meant to challenge (Freeman, 2018). Taking courses such as Te Ao Māori for Marketers (Marketing Association, 2025), Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Groundwork, 2025) or Tikanga based courses (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, 2025) will help to deconstruct a colonial mindset and to help see the world from an alternative worldview.

Reflective questions for social marketers:

Q40. What is at stake in the dissemination of knowledge that comes out of your research and writing as a social marketing scholar?

Q41. Which Māori partners co-defined the problem, success measures, audiences, exclusions and risks? What changed in your planning because of that kōrero (discussion)?

Q42. How can I continue to nurture the reciprocal relationships I built in the process?

Q43. What tangible benefits will be realised for Māori (e.g. te reo resources, local enterprise opportunities, scholarships) and who monitors delivery? (Justice/reciprocity; equitable benefit sharing).

Q44. How can I use the momentum from the initiative/project to catalyse change for communities?

Q45. How will mātauranga shared in hui be protected from misappropriation (limitations on reuse, takedown rights)? Who holds keys to raw assets?

Q46. What actions can I take at the individual level to help with the decolonising the classroom?

Best practice – kaitiaki

At the best practice level, Māori act as kaitiaki (guardians), guiding initiatives from start to finish. While often translated into stewardship, kaitiakitanga is much broader. It reflects enduring, intergenerational responsibility to safeguard and nurture both the spiritual and material wellbeing of resources inherited from ancestors and entrusted to future generations (Spiller and Nicholson, 2017). In the case of Mānuka honey, this involves protecting taonga from misuse and sharing pūrākau to guide responsible and sustainable practice.

In education, a kaitiaki model of curriculum development positions Māori and Indigenous Peoples as the authors and decision-makers of teaching resources. They hold authority over how mātauranga Māori and Indigenous identity are defined, framed and mobilised. This approach enables Indigenous communities to navigate unequal power relations while maintains authority over our own narratives (Oliveria and Wright, 2015). If unsure about a resource, do some research on the authors to see where they whakapapa and their positionality, to determine if it is a resource create by, with, for and as Māori.

Engaging with stories and storytelling also allows Indigenous Peoples to heal from the impacts of colonisation and to reshape collective identities (Iseke, 2013). While Indigenous worldviews are diverse and context-specific (Oviedo *et al.*, 2005), pūrākau as a narrative inquiry can be adapted internationally by encouraging the use of local storytelling traditions such as Dreamtime stories in Australia (Robin *et al.*, 2022) or mo-olelo in Hawai'i (Oliverira and kahunawaika'ala, 2015). Indigenous storytelling is thus a powerful means of delivering culturally relevant and socially meaningful outcomes. As a research method, it privileges voices that have often been marginalised and silenced (Rieger *et al.*, 2020). Storytelling is particularly effective when embedded in participatory action research to engage community and understand lived experiences (Bird *et al.*, 2009; Iseke, 2013). Stories must remain under the authority of the communities themselves, not extracted, reinterpreted or commodified through Western lenses.

For Indigenous Social Marketing scholarship, this means recognising Indigenous Peoples as kaitiaki of the research, knowledge creation and dissemination. Pūrākau enables Indigenous scholars and communities to determine who they are and the stories they wish to tell. As Oliveria and Wright (2015) remind us, if Indigenous Peoples are not their own activists producing scholarship that privileges our perspectives, then the work risks becoming activism and scholarship for someone else to claim. Best practice is about opening space, holding space and enabling Indigenous voices to be heard, even when this feels uncomfortable.

Reflective questions for social marketers:

Q47. Does this initiative empower Māori and Indigenous Peoples to act as kaitiaki with genuine decision-making authority?

Q48. Are governance structures in place to ensure Māori leadership in the design, approval and dissemination of outputs?

Q49. Whose stories are being told, and who decides how they are framed, shared or protected?

Q50. Are Indigenous voices privileged in shaping both process and outcomes?

Q51. Are stories safeguarded from being extracted, reinterpreted or commodified through Western lenses?

Future research directions

Our research critiques the limitations of New Zealand's IP laws in protecting Indigenous knowledge (as previous authors have Kapa-Kingi, 2020; Kennedy and Lacznіak, 2014), further work is needed to situate these issues in a broader comparative context. Future research could examine how different jurisdictions recognise, or fail to recognise, IIP rights. We provide a couple of examples to demonstrate how similar issues are manifesting globally (see Table 2 below). Such a comparative approach would not only illuminate divergent policy frameworks but also reveal common challenges faced by Indigenous communities across national borders.

lthough our Indigenous ethical storytelling framework largely focuses on Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, we encourage exploration of the ethical principles in other

Table 2. Comparison of indigenous intellectual property and cultural rights examples

Community and region	Core issue	Legal/policy instrument	Outcome and relevance
Huna tlingit (Alaska, USA)	Recognition of customary harvest inside a protected area (gull egg collection in Glacier Bay National Park)	US Public Law 113–142 (2014); co-management planning with National Park Service (NPS, 2025)	Legally sanctioned, culturally vital practice resumed. Demonstrates how traditional ecological knowledge and indigenous stewardship can reshape federal conservation law
Sami (Finland)	Protection of duodji (handicrafts) and sacred symbols from misappropriation (Mattila, 2018)	Sami Duodji collective/ certification trademarks; Norwegian IPO trademark invalidation (2020)	Provides consumer with authenticity guarantee; legal precedent prevents privatisation of sacred symbols. A model for safeguarding intangible heritage
Pauktuutit inuit women's association (Canada)	Misuse and imitation of traditional amauti (inuit women's parka) designs; lack of recognition for seamstresses and regional design diversity	National registry/inventory of seamstresses and designs; envisioned collective trademark/mark of authenticity shared among Inuit producers (Bird, 2002)	Strengthened cultural and economic recognition of inuit women's artistry; proposed a seal of guarantee to protect authenticity and assist consumers in identifying genuine inuit products

Indigenous contexts globally. With similarities across Indigenous cultures such as Indigenous relationality and accountability (Wildcat and Voth, 2023) and Indigenous storytelling (Iseke, 2013; Raciti, 2023), the ethical story telling framework (Figures 1–5) likely extends to other Indigenous communities such as the First Nations communities in Canada, and Australian Aboriginals. We encourage Indigenous scholars from other regions to co-develop a comparative ethical framework that honours local values while drawing inspiration from our framework.

Future researchers using a pūrākau methodology in social marketing are encouraged to draw on primary data from interviews and wānanaga with Kaumātua (Elders), Indigenous community leaders and key stakeholders such as Indigenous consumer groups. Incorporating these perspectives can strengthen the analysis and enrich the depth of the pūrākau. For instance, in the case of Mānuka honey, engaging in kōrero with cultural leaders, Māori-led honey producers and Māori consumers could have provided a more nuanced understanding of both the cultural significance of Mānuka and perspectives on its commercial use. Although we highlight the issue well, further work could be undertaken in this space which is outside the scope of this article.

We also encourage scholars to adopt participatory research methods that centre Indigenous voices throughout the research process (Nicholls, 2009). Although we engaged an Māori-led design agency, RUN to help with the visual representation of our framework and educational resource, future research might, for example, explore co-authoring pūrākau or collaborative storytelling with community members, including digital storytelling techniques (Hausknecht *et al.*, 2021; Willox *et al.*, 2012). Such approaches help ensure participants' stories remain central – acknowledged, preserved and represented with integrity.

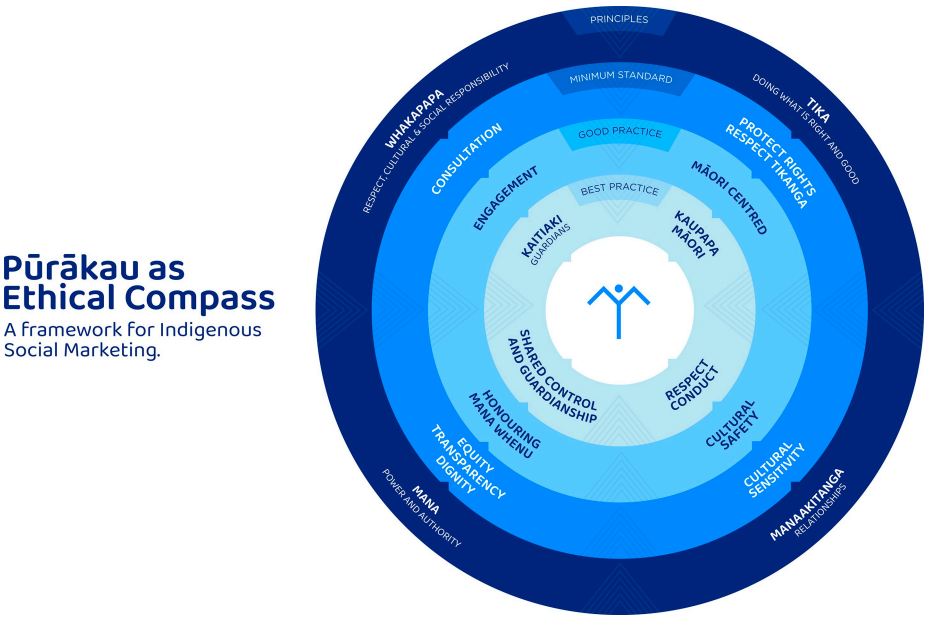

Figure 1. Pūrākau as ethical compass: a framework for indigenous social marketing

Figure 2. Tika (doing what is right and good) for ethical indigenous storytelling

Further research into the field of Indigenous social marketing, that takes account of Indigenous perspectives, aspirations and rights is called.

Conclusion

The Mānuka honey pūrākau raises issues around the long-term history of colonial domination in both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. That is, the notion by the dominant Eurocentric culture that Indigenous knowledge, be it language or other forms of cultural expression, are available for the taking and exploitation.

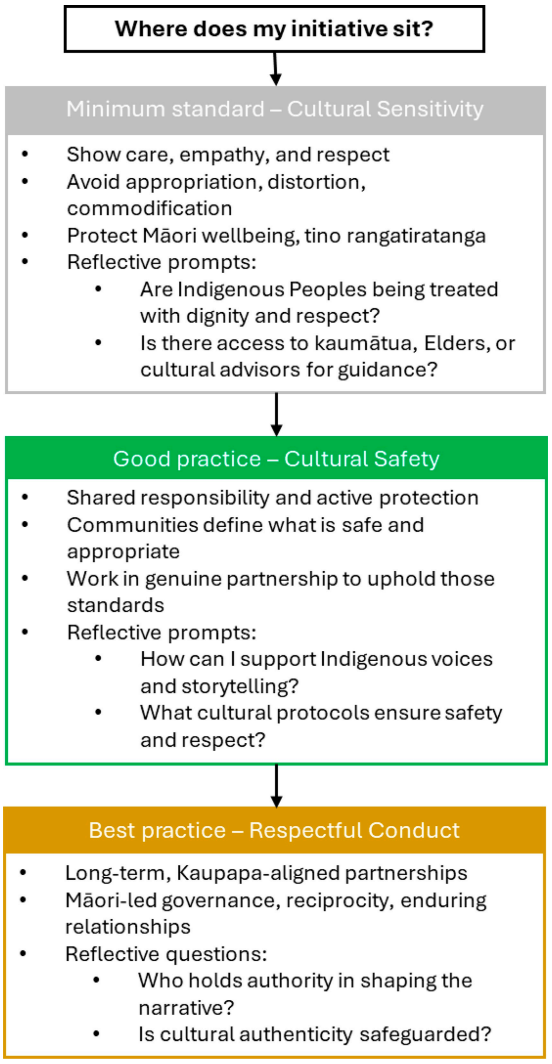

Figure 3. Manaakitanga (respect, cultural and social responsibility) in indigenous storytelling

Social marketing cannot achieve its transformative potential without critically engaging with power, cultural and equity. The misuse of the kupu Mānuka underscores a broader issue: when Indigenous language and knowledge are used without consent, care or reciprocity, social marketing risks reproducing harm. Going forward, ethical social marketing must not only resist appropriation but actively support Indigenous aspirations, language and health outcomes. To do so requires cultural humility, collaborative practice and a shift from extractive to restorative relationships in

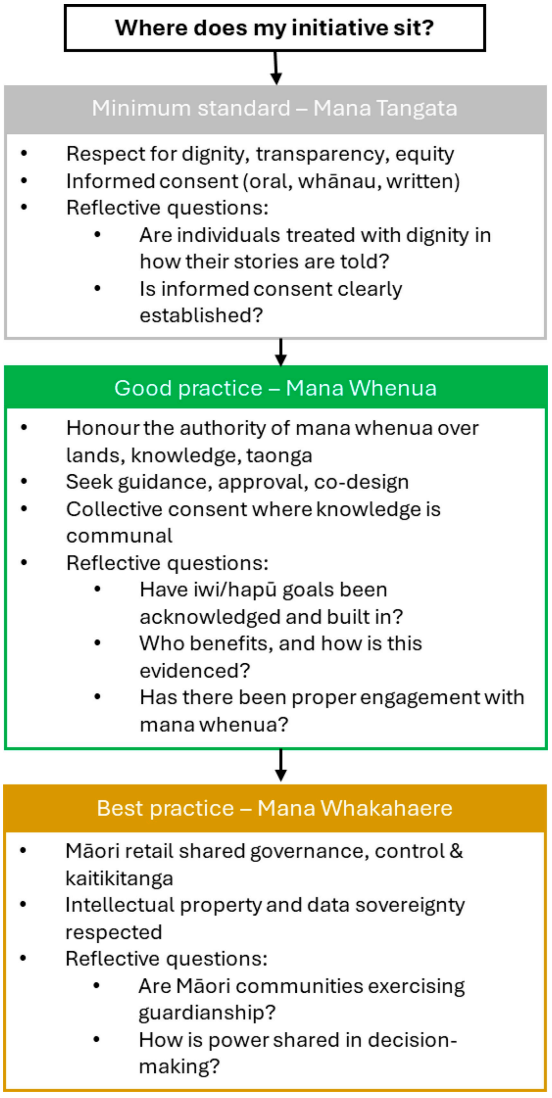

Figure 4. Mana (justice and equity) in indigenous storytelling

marketing. Social marketers, policymakers, educators and researchers are now more equipped with the knowledge and responsibility to lead this change – to become agents of ethical, transformative and culturally grounded practice. We thank you for coming on this journey with us and listening to our kaupapa.

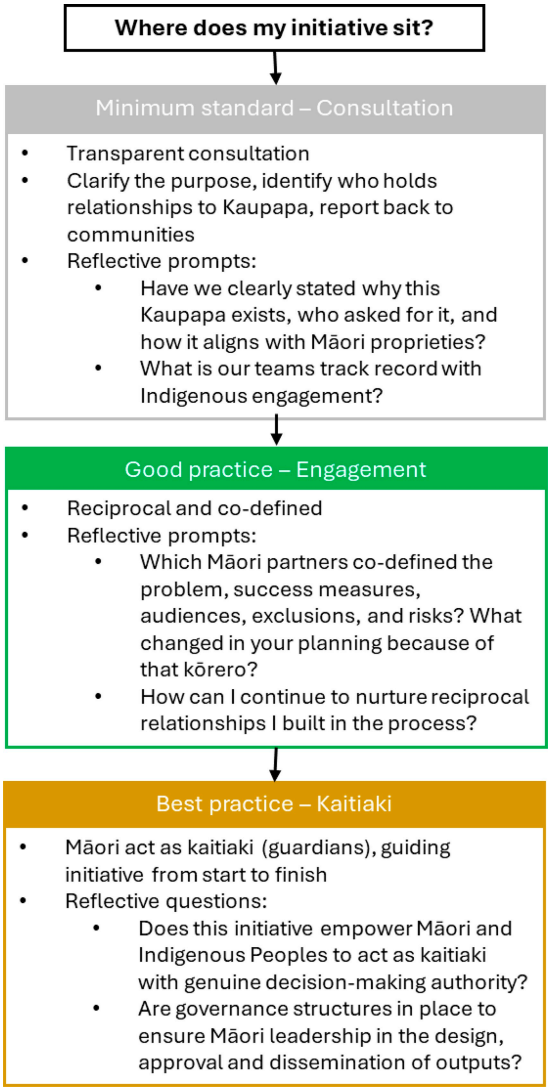

Figure 5. Whakapapa (relationships) as a principle of ethical indigenous storytelling

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