Keeping Māori Authority at the Center

Why the shift risks Māori authority

Shifting from a full census to an administrative data census changes who decides what counts. Authority shifts to agency registers and the IDI, where iwi affiliation, descent and ethnicity are incomplete or outdated, and categories follow operational logic rather than whakapapa. Without Māori co-governance and consent, Rangatiratanga is diluted and Whakapapa flattened, with Crown control being centered once more.

What does this mean in practice

Coverage gaps and linkage errors misdirect funding and skew representation, while modelled fills keep alive historic bias and unfair labels. When data are reused outside of Māori cultural practices, trust decreases, participation falls, and the quality of future data deteriorates. The result is poorer accuracy, weaker equity and diminishing legitimacy.

How to make it work

Share control with Māori through co-governance with a real say over standards and links, and keep a Māori-designed stream to refresh iwi, ethnicity and descent. Use clear, informed consent with easy ways to say no and a simple list of who looked at the data, and manage data in New Zealand with restricted/open access. Together these steps respect Authority, Relationships and Guardianship while keeping admin data timely.