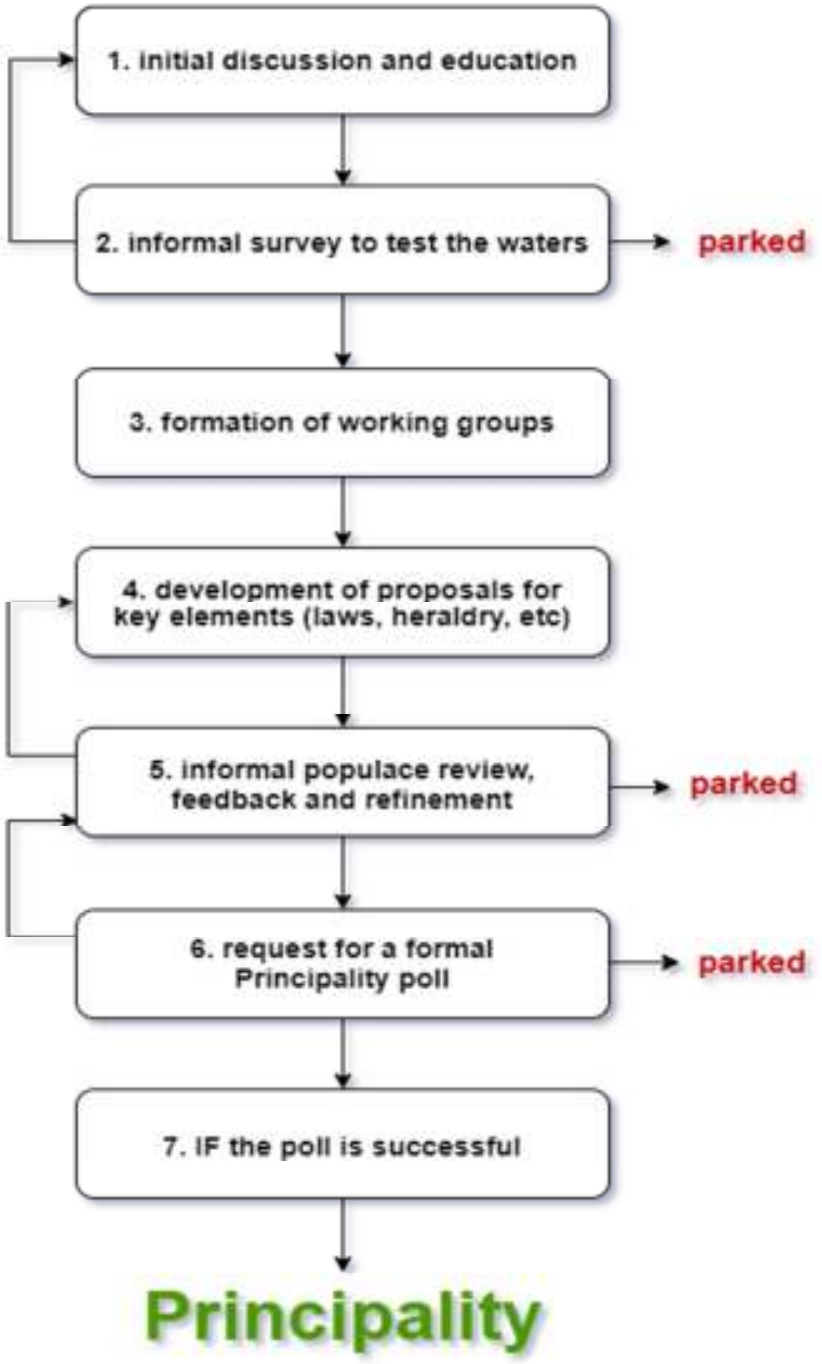
Road Map for a Possible SCA Principality in New Zealand

Bartholomew Baskin, Aug '20/Nov '23

For some years now there have been intermittent discussions on whether to form an SCA Principality in New Zealand. In 2020, several people asked about the process for forming a Principality and, most importantly, "what next?" These notes were my initial take on both questions with some updates in 2023. I must emphasise it's by no means cast in stone and others may well have different views and approaches.

Here are the main steps required for a Principality to move from an idea - where it stands at present - to an actuality. Or to be parked, at least for a while.



Explanation of steps:

***Blue text** gives a rough timeline of when early steps actually happened.*

1. **initial discussion and education – form late 2019 to late 2020 and ongoing**

This was where we were at when this roadmap was created in August 2020 - lots of discussion about what a Principality is or could be, the main pros and cons, and how the latter might be addressed. It doesn't commit anybody to anything, and is inherently bottom-up. That is, Kingdom isn't waving a wand saying "go thou and form a Principality!" It's really up to us to collectively figure out whether there's a good enough reason to do so.

2. **informal survey to test the waters – Grim's survey in Dec 2020**

At some point (as actually happened in late 2020), anybody could run an informal survey to try and figure out whether there's enough background support to encourage supporters to start investing significant effort in the next steps. Survey timing may be fairly important - if done too soon, there might be limited interest because too few of us have had a chance to consider what a Principality might mean to us. If left too late, the impetus might have faded - or been rudely shouldered aside by some more immediate concern (see: Covid-19 last February).

No mandate from above is required before a survey happens - because this is not a formal poll that binds any of our groups, officers, Crown or Kingdom to do anything at all. Even if the response was extremely positive, the result wouldn't be "A Principality" but rather "Some people will decide to do more work" (this is, in fact, exactly what happened after Grim's survey in 2020 and the subsequent CF discussion).

3. **formation of working group(s) – after informal meeting at CF 2021**

Here's where rubber starts to hit the road. Assuming enough supporters are encouraged by the survey response, I'd expect they'd naturally band together into one or more working groups. As with the survey, this *isn't* something mandated or controlled from on high - people would either join in or not, according to their inclination.

They might decide to work internally, or in regular or even constant consultation with the wider NZ populace - whatever they feel is most appropriate and effective to get a good result. It would be up to them, but obviously their aims would include continuing the education process and encouraging as many people as possible to be interested and/or engaged, thus increasing support for the final offering.

4. **development of proposals for key elements – 2021 and ongoing**

The working group(s) would seek out and generate ideas for several key elements of a possible Principality, viz:

- Name and Heraldry
- P&P selection process - on the assumption that there's interest in at least *trying* for something other than "only Heavy Combat", while recognising that it might be hard to achieve
- Principality Law, including things like which officers we'd need, job descriptions etc.
- Ensuring we've covered all other requirements for going Principality, e.g. membership numbers, general competence and capabilities, tentative slate of initial officers, regalia, tentative tourney timing, etc. – such requirements would be relatively easy to meet given our current situation

5. **informal populace review, feedback and refinement – second survey late 2023**

I'd expect at least one and possibly several iterations of consultation with the wider populace on the above elements, especially the first two. It's highly likely there would be one or more new surveys on each of them, just to test that the results are adequately supported well ahead of any formal poll.

There is a marked benefit in resolving an acceptable Name and Heraldry reasonably early in the process so they can be registered - a process which can take many months. Leaving it too late can create timing problems with the SCA's group-advancement process. In the past, that's led to inconvenient re-running of the formal poll. To be clear though: even if a Name and Heraldry were registered early on, that does *not* commit us to going Principality - only the results of a final, formal poll and the resulting Kingdom/SCA NZ decision process determines that.

We would remain in this part of the process until the working group(s) felt that they had something complete enough to be worthy of support by populace in a formal poll. This could take months, even years. Or they could abandon the process and go home if they thought it wasn't possible just now.

6. **request for formal Principality poll**

Any formal poll would be conducted by the Kingdom Seneschal as they saw fit, and would include both members and non-members in New Zealand. The poll result and all other Principality requirements would be assessed by the KS in consultation with relevant Kingdom officers, the Crown and SCA NZ Inc.

7. **IF the poll is successful**

The KS and Crown would announce the formation of the group and coordinate various issues such as when officers start functioning, when and where the Coronet tourney is held, etc. Much of this might have been pre-agreed with them by the working group and/or proposed officers. The main point is that it all needs to happen but there *isn't* a lockstep formula or timeline.

The big day would be the Coronet tourney and the Investiture – quite possibly the same day, depending on what Principality Law says. At that moment, Principality Law would come fully into effect, the new officers would swear fealty to the Coronet, and on we go.

8. **wrinkles**

Ok, so at least one important wrinkle is possible:

Let's say there was a consensus to go for a non-standard P&P selection process. And it's in the proposed Law, voted on as part of the formal poll. At the very least, this would have to be taken up with the BoD (the SCA Ltd Board in the US), as it would run counter to existing SCA rules. It's *possible* this issue would be resolved in advance - certainly efforts would be made to do so. But it's more likely that nothing would be resolved, hence it's entirely possible that the working group (and ultimately the populace) would decide to send a message to the BoD by voting to go Principality with “heretical” Laws.

In that scenario, we'd have to wait for the BoD to either accept or reject the result. It could take months, and it's not something the KS or SCA NZ could decide locally - no matter how much they supported the idea. And if the BoD rejected it, we'd have to either abandon the Principality idea, or amend Principality Law to match their inclination - then re-run the poll.

We could possibly short-circuit the re-run requirement if the Laws had a bracketed section, describing what we *really* want - if the BoD would only approve it - but also outlining a default (heavy combat) position that we'd reluctantly accept for the time being if they rejected our preference. That means that, if we get a negative response from the BoD, the KS would still be able to approve the poll result and Law with the default option in place. And once we had a Principality, nothing would prevent us from regularly applying to the BoD for a different selection process, if we so desired.

NB: we might try various ways to ease their decision, such as emphasising our relative isolation, and/or proposing it as a time-limited experiment, such as “three years followed by a review”. The key point is that proposing a different selection process will involve a lot of extra thought, networking, work and potential complications - but that's typically how any significant change is created.