Articulating an
Indigenous Research Agenda

Diary notes

1991 Ottawa. [Husband] Graham and I invited as guest delegates to attend the All Chiefs Special Conference on Education, hosted by the Assembly of First Nations, sat with friends from the Squamish delegation, the Pacific links are very strong.

1991 Published journal of Maori women's writings *Te Pua*.

1992 [Sister] Aroha in official delegation to Rio de Janeiro for Earth Summit.

1993 January 1st attended gathering of Ngati Porou for celebration of the International Year for Indigenous Peoples, convened women's meeting.

1993 Whakatane, Mataatua. Gathering of indigenous delegates to discuss cultural and intellectual property rights, organized by Aroha, conference produced the Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

1993 Wollongong, New South Wales, World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education. Attended along with several thousand others, including about two thousand Maori. Conference issued the Coolangatta Statement.

1994 Aroha away overseas involved in discussions on the Convention on Biological Diversity.

1994 Wellington, meeting of Maori health researchers, developed draft declaration on Maori health research.

1994 Academic adviser for Te Wananga o Awanuiarangi, tribal university.

1995 Prepared submission on behalf of Ngati Awa for the Waitangi Tribunal.

1995 Began research project on Maori truancy.

1996 Saskatechewan, invited workshop on indigenous issues, opportunity to spend time with indigenous people working across fields of education, law, health, community.

1996 Graham attended indigenous workshop in New South Wales, worked on indigenous research ethics document.

1996 Developed proposal for research institute.

1996 Research project on community diversion.

1997 Invited to speak about research to indigenous programme in Western Australia.

1997 Panel speaker at a conference on educational research.

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As previous chapters have indicated, research is highly institutionalized through disciplines and fields of knowledge, through communities and interest groups of scholars, and through the academy. Research is also an integral part of political structures: governments fund research directly and indirectly through tertiary education, national science organizations, development programmes and policies. Rich nations spend vast amounts of money on research across every dimension possible to imagine. Poor nations also spend huge amounts of money on research. Corporations and industries fund their own research and are sometimes funded by governments to carry out research. Their research programmes can involve large amounts of money and resources, and their activities take place across several parts of the globe. Non-government organizations and local community groups also carry out research and involve themselves in the analysis and critique of research. All of these research activities are carried out by people who in some form or another have been trained and socialized into ways of thinking, of defining and of making sense of the known and unknown. It seems rather difficult to conceive of an articulation of an indigenous research agenda on such a scale. To imagine self-determination, however, is also to imagine a world in which indigenous peoples become active participants, and to prepare for the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead.

This chapter reports on the development of indigenous initiatives in research and discusses some of the ways in which an indigenous research agenda is currently being articulated. It is striking that for indigenous peoples there are distinctly different ways of thinking about and naming research. Often projects are not referred to as research despite having

research as a central core of the project activity. In addition to reasons outlined in earlier chapters about the general regard for research by indigenous peoples, there is another reason for a reticence in naming an activity or project as research. Research is also regarded as being the domain of experts who have advanced educational qualifications and have access to highly specialized language and skills. Communities carrying out what they may regard as a very humble little project are reluctant to name it as research in case it provokes the scorn and outrage of 'real' researchers. Furthermore, indigenous communities as part of the self-determination agenda do engage quite deliberately in naming the world according to an indigenous world view. What researchers may call methodology, for example, Maori researchers in New Zealand call Kaupapa Maori research or Maori-centred research. This form of naming is about bringing to the centre and privileging indigenous values, attitudes and practices rather than disguising them within Westernized labels such as 'collaborative research'. Institutions such as the academy and major funding agencies maintain and reinforce the idea that research is a highly specialized skill which by definition 'has to be' developed and supported at a distance from the community.

There are two distinct pathways through which an indigenous research agenda is being advanced. The first one is through community action projects, local initiatives and nation or tribal research based around claims. The second pathway is through the spaces gained within institutions by indigenous research centres and studies programmes. Although the community-based approach is often said to have greater community control and ownership than it is possible to achieve through the academy, that is not always or necessarily the case. Community-based projects are often conceptualized, funded and directed by researchers who have been trained within a discipline or paradigm and are often employed by a research organization. Also, university researchers who work within the protection of such notions as academic freedom and academic research can legitimate innovative, cutting-edge approaches which can privilege community-based projects. In other words, the two pathways are not at odds with each other but simply reflect two distinct developments. They intersect and inform each other at a number of different levels.

Community Research

The idea of community is defined or imagined in multiple ways, as physical, political, social, psychological, historical, linguistic, economic, cultural, and spiritual spaces. For colonized peoples many local communities have been made through deliberate policies aimed at putting

people on reserves which are often out of sight, on the margins. Legislation and other coercive state practices have ensured that people stay within their own community boundaries. Communities have also made themselves, however, despite policies aimed at fragmenting family bonds and separating people from their traditional territories. Indigenous communities have made even their most isolated and marginal spaces a home place imbued with spiritual significance and indigenous identity. In North America, the term 'Indian Country' defines one sense of community, a named nation such as the Navaho Nation defines another sense of community, a named reserve defines yet another sense. In Australia the term 'mob' is used to identify and distinguish different levels and organizations of community.

Some writers refer to these multiple layers of belonging as 'nested identities'. Gerald Alfred, for example, conceptualizes Kahnawake identity as including 'localised Kahnawake, national Mohawk, broader Iroquois, and pan-Native'.[1] He says, 'Thus people of Mohawk descent who live in Kahnawake have a multi-layered identity which incorporates each one of the "communities" he or she has inherited, and which also includes the broader Native – or the more common "Indian" – identity flowing from their racial affiliation and identification as the indigenous peoples of North America.'[2] In describing Chicano communities in the United States, Irene Blea argues that,

> By entering into a discussion of the factors comprising the Chicano community, as a physical, social-historical, and spiritual setting, a clearer definition of the Chicano community emerges. It is futile to attempt to categorise these aspects of the community for they frequently overlap. For example, the spiritual element of Aztlan crosses over into its social-historical aspect because Aztlan is not only a physical region but is also a state of mind, a spiritual belief.[3]

When visiting New Zealand in 1996, African American historian Bernice Reagon Johnson visited a Maori community and, in response to discussions about the significance of land to Maori identity, described her own community as one held together by song rather than by territory. An Aborigine friend also made the comment that 'we sing the land into existence'. For Maori there are several ways of identifying one's indigenous 'community'. One commonly used way is to introduce yourself by naming the mountain, the river, the tribal ancestor, the tribe and the family. Through this form of introduction you locate yourself in a set of identities which have been framed geographically, politically and genealogically.

Defining community research is as complex as defining community. For example, 'the community' is regarded as being a rather different

space, in a research sense, to 'the field'. 'Community' conveys a much more intimate, human and self-defined space, whereas 'field' assumes a space 'out there' where people may or may not be present. What community research relies upon and validates is that the community itself makes its own definitions. There are many examples of research projects carried out at a local community level. Some projects have been initiated and carried out by local people working in local settings, generating local solutions to local problems. Other projects, which have been supported by development agencies, focus on developing self-help initiatives and building skilled communities. Social research at community level is often referred to as community action research or emancipatory research. Both approaches are models which seek to make a positive difference in the conditions or lives of people. Community action research, according to Stringer, 'is a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems'.[4] These approaches not only enable communities but also enable indigenous researchers to work as researchers within their own communities. Community action approaches assume that people know and can reflect on their own lives, have questions and priorities of their own, have skills and sensitivities which can enhance (or undermine) any community-based projects.

There are also communities of interest that do not necessarily occupy the same geographical space in which local community research occurs. Indigenous women are such a community, as are indigenous rights workers, indigenous artists and writers, indigenous health workers and indigenous researchers. Indigenous communities of interest have formed quite extensive networking and collaborative relationships. They are talking circles of people with similar interests. The community has its own borders and negotiating entry can be every bit as complex as entering a local village. Communities of interest have formed around their own priorities and particularities; they often have their own language or codes; they have their own analysis of self-determination; they may have a strong suspicion of the outsider; some may have formal membership, others may recognize each other through various language and dress codes. For many indigenous women, for example, their analyses have emerged from the intersections formed through the politics of Western feminism and the politics of their own indigenous communities. Writing and talking about the experiences of women within these spaces has developed into a major research priority for indigenous women. This priority connects and grounds a wide range of indigenous women's concerns at local, nation and global level. There is a burgeoning of a distinctive indigenous women's literature which actively works against Western literary categories. In all community

approaches *process* – that is, methodology and method – is highly important. In many projects the process is far more important than the outcome. Processes are expected to be respectful, to enable people, to heal and to educate. They are expected to lead one small step further towards self-determination.

Tribal Research

Despite the negative connotations of 'tribe', it is used here generically to describe one form of indigenous organization. Tribe encompasses many different communities. For Maori it is the larger political entity of several smaller groups linked closely by genealogy and shared customary practices. Tribal research is currently being conducted in New Zealand across a wide range of areas. Apart from claims being put forward to the Waitangi Tribunal in respect of lands and resources taken unjustly by the government since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, tribal research is being conducted in the area of resource management, economic development, health, education, justice, family and children, flora and fauna, traditional knowledges. In the case of one tribe, Ngati Awa, a Ngati Awa Research Centre has been working since about 1989. The centre has carried out research which has resulted in the return or repatriation of the carved meeting house Mataatua; it has undertaken archival and historical research, social impact analysis, oral histories and local development. The research centre is one activity managed by the tribal *runanga* or council. It has two offices, one in New Zealand's capital Wellington, where the major national archives and libraries are located, and the other in Whakatane, the main town centre of the Ngati Awa. It has employed several young people with academic qualifications as researchers. Ngati Awa has also established a tribal university, Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi, which offers degrees in education, Maori studies and indigenous studies. The vision is that the tribe will develop and educate its own members and other people who live in the area.

Another tribe, Tainui, is in the process of establishing a very large research centre in association with their local university. The tribe has invested large amounts of resources into graduate scholarships to assist Tainui students to complete both their studies and a relevant piece of research. In addition, this tribe have their own centre where specific research is being conducted by a team of mostly young researchers. This centre is led by a highly respected non-indigenous researcher and the expectation is that he will train the researchers as well as manage the range of different projects being undertaken. Other tribes have relied on the very small pool of Maori with tertiary-level qualifications to conduct

the extensive research required to sustain a claim. Research through the claims process has fostered a demand for expertise across diverse fields of knowledge. This has radically invigorated Maori demands for advanced educational qualifications and put the role of institutions under scrutiny.

The process of mounting a treaty claim and preparing it for an eventual 'hearing' requires the collective knowledge, effort and commitment of the people in the various sections of the tribe. There is a great deal at stake in such research and failure to take into account the views and feelings of different tribal interests can have huge negative ramifications for the tribe once the claim has been heard and a settlement awarded. Any sign that secret deals have been made, or that traditional processes have been overridden, can result in a halt to further work and a schism in the tribe itself. Outsiders often view such contestability as proof that tribal 'infighting' is rampant. Those within tend to interpret such politics as a consequence of being driven by the government agenda for settlement at any cost rather than a reflection of traditional practices. The processes of consultation, collective meetings, open debate and shared decision making are crucial aspects of tribal research practices.

The Case Study of an Indigenous Research Initiative Inside the Academy

Research is a distinguishing characteristic of universities. Universities are committed to the creation of knowledge through research, reflection, scholarship and academic freedom. It is a role, historians of the university have argued, which has been hard won over centuries of development. The curriculum of a university shapes the way knowledge is reproduced as a curriculum for schools and for society. Intellectuals provide leadership for society in relation to knowledge. For indigenous peoples universities are regarded as rather elite institutions which reproduce themselves through various systems of privilege. Even those universities which are state-funded are considered major bastions of Western elitism. It is not surprising, then, that many indigenous students find little space for indigenous perspectives in most academic disciplines and most research approaches. In many examples indigenous and ethnic studies programmes have struggled to survive in rather hostile environments. Indigenous staff and students, too, have found the institution to be toxic. Haunani Kay Trask describes some turbulent experiences as a Hawai'ian academic attempting to work *as* a Hawai'ian academic in the University of Hawai'i.[5] Unfortunately, her experiences are not unique. The university represents a special sort of struggle and

the following small case study outlines one initiative which has managed to survive and actually get stronger.

Research activities are mostly organized around the interests of like-minded people. The development of research groups tends to occur organically within universities. It is part of what is referred to as a research culture, embedded in the day-to-day practices and values of academic life. Most research activities which operate at a group level share either topics of interest or methodologies of interest. When some research groups develop more formalized arrangements, however, specialized research organizations develop inside the university. In the university system they tend to fall into three types: research units which are situated inside teaching departments; research centres which are situated within schools or faculties; and research institutes which cross faculty and teaching boundaries. The task of becoming any one of these entities is a highly political process.   .

In the New Zealand university context indigenous Maori developments have occurred as academic developments, initially through the study of Maori within the discipline of anthropology and in more recent times through the development of Maori academic centres within faculties and departments such as education, medicine, law, commerce, art history and literature. This is somewhat different from other contexts where indigenous programmes exist more as student services subject to administration constraints and outside the academic domain. There are distinct advantages in being located in the academic structures which relate very directly to knowledge and to the issue of who can teach and carry out research. Maori peoples are comparatively speaking a significant minority indigenous population, representing about 15 per cent of the total population of New Zealand. Although participation rates by Maori in universities have been extremely low, where Maori have participated they have been extremely successful as academics. Sir Apirana Ngata, for example, trained at Canterbury University in the 1890s and as a member of parliament was one of the better educated members, Maori or non-Maori. Sir Peter Buck trained as a medical anthropologist, taught at Yale University and was a foremost scholar of Pacific Anthropology. Later generations of Maori academics gained their doctoral degrees in Britain or the United States. The academic focus for Maori, then, is small in numbers but strong in a tradition.

The Research Unit for Maori Education was formed shortly after two Maori academics were appointed to a shared senior lecturer's position in the Education Department of the University of Auckland in 1988. The decision to form a research unit was seen as a way of promoting indigenous research which could make a difference for Maori (communities and researchers) and developing some strategic alliances with

sympathetic non-indigenous academics The aims of the unit were:

* to promote Maori research which was going to make a positive difference;
* to develop strategies for influencing Maori educational policy,
* to develop and train Maori researchers;
* to disseminate research to Maori audiences through publications and through regular contact with communities; and
* to create an environment for change within the institution.

Gaining support and approval for the research unit was a long and tedious process drawing on the goodwill of senior academics. The first step was to get the proposal accepted by the host department, education. The conditions of this support were discussed around the issue of resources; the research unit had to be self-sustaining and by implication the unit's activities were not to impinge on or limit in any way the activities of other colleagues. Then the proposal went around the university committee system, from committee to committee, from chairperson to head of department. This happened more than once. The issues at this level were about the validity of the activity: for example, was it worthwhile? Were the aims appropriate? Were the people involved appropriate? In most institutions support for indigenous issues is not overt and the ability of academic colleagues to assess on an informed basis what might count as appropriate and worthwhile in the indigenous arena is questionable. A standard institutional response is to bury matters regarded as potentially controversial 'in committee' and in informal consultative processes. Where no indigenous academics exist in an institution, the consultation processes depend on the institutional indigenous experts (non-indigenous academics whose research may be on an indigenous topic). Where an indigenous academic is available, then that person is expected by colleagues to be the all-encompassing resident indigenous expert whose role is to mediate but maintain the *status quo*, often referred to as academic standards. For such a person to say no to indigenous initiatives is interpreted by conservative academics as a strength; to say yes is seen as giving in to self-interest. In the case of this research unit, the head of the Maori Studies Department was consulted and after discussion a slight change of title was required and the Research Unit for Maori Education was formally approved. Research units report through the research committee structures and through the academic departmental structures.

The strengths of the Research Unit for Maori Education over the years 1989–96 can best be summarized as follows:

* the development and promotion of appropriate methodologies for

research with Maori, including a theorized approach now referred to as Kaupapa Maori Research;

• the support through undergraduate curriculum development of Maori educational perspectives;
• the mentoring and supervision of Maori graduate students through their course work and thesis work;
• the provision of opportunities for graduate students to become involved as research assistants in research carried out by staff;
• the attention given to participation in conferences and research discussions by staff and graduate students;
• the hosting of indigenous scholars;
• the networking by members of the Research Unit with other indigenous units and centres;
• the dissemination of research to Maori people; and
• the strong interface between empirical and theoretical approaches to research.

Members of the research unit have gained major research contracts and grants, including one from the Marsden foundation, which is New Zealand's only blue skies fund for 'pure' research. Graduate students have been supported to attend international conferences and have been mentored through the development of their academic careers, going on to gain positions in universities and polytechnics. Non-indigenous colleagues have also been supported through conference programmes and research collaboration.

It became increasingly difficult, however, to achieve as a research unit all the things that members of the unit wanted to achieve. This was due in large part to the success of the unit. Contracts were being offered which could not be taken because of the lack of administrative support. The unit had no staff at all. Research work was carried out by academic staff and students on small limited contracts. The host department worked on a grace and favour basis in terms of support, and this tended to be uneven and unreliable. Students who had become more skilled as researchers were seeking more challenging research tasks which could also provide employment. The Maori academic staff had increased, enabling each Maori academic to develop more specialized research interests. The demands on staff time had also grown with the success of the graduate studies programme, which had become the most popular in New Zealand for Maori graduate studies. The university was very proud of this level of success and included the research unit in its annual research reports and international publicity. The unit's achievement – academically and in terms of making space for indigenous developments within a university – had also attracted attention and invitations from

other indigenous centres across the world. The two original appointments, both full-time and tenured by 1991, were able to build relations and networks with indigenous groups and communities, especially in Australia, Canada, the United States, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. By 1995, however, the Research Unit for Maori Education had outgrown itself.

In 1995 an external review was conducted of the host department, education. The Research Unit for Maori Education took this opportunity to rethink and reposition its aims and activities. This process involved several meetings and other smaller work groups to develop a new vision and new aims. The proposal was written for the university audience in the same way as the earlier research unit proposal. The support for the transition from a research unit to a research institute was much stronger at all levels of the system than was the original proposal for a unit. The research unit had a proven success record which the university had promoted proudly. The new proposal's journey through the committee structures was nevertheless a highly political process. While the academic case was strongly supported, the resource implications were as strongly resisted. This was despite the fact that the institute had already attracted corporate funding for a visiting professorship. The proposal limped from committee to committee, eventually to senate and to council. Minor matters of detail still had to be attended to, including the title. (Specifically, the use of the word 'indigenous', the use of the word 'international' and the use of the word 'the' came under debate!) A supplementary letter of explanation had to be provided before approval of the title could be gained. The International Research Institute for Maori and Indigenous Education finally passed through council at the end of 1996.

It is possible to see many of the barriers and glitches which occurred as examples of institutional racism. The form that racism takes inside a university is related to the ways in which academic knowledge is structured as well as to the organizational structures which govern a university. The insulation of disciplines, the culture of the institution which supports disciplines, and the systems of management and governance all work in ways which protect the privileges already in place. The infant institute's rough passage can be viewed also as part of the contestable nature of knowledge which has similarly impeded the development of other ways of organizing or thinking about knowledge in the academy: women's studies, cultural studies and other ethnic studies have all had similar rough passage through the system. For indigenous development, however, those are barriers which are taken on simply as a challenge to be met, as there are much greater issues at stake. In New Zealand the political and legislative support for this struggle has

been gained through the acknowledgement of the Treaty of Waitangi in the charter statements of all state-funded educational institutions, and through the moral arguments mounted in relation to the university's role in the community. Maori people are clearly a significant group within the New Zealand community. Universities have not served those communities well in the past. They have few avenues into Maori communities in the present. Indigenous developments within an institution such as a university can mediate and structure new relations between institution and community, between indigenous people and non-indigenous people, between communities of the 'researched' and communities of 'researchers'. At the same time indigenous centres which exist inside institutions such as universities continue to struggle for legitimacy. Seeking the international interface in the research field with other indigenous peoples serves two purposes: it supports and strengthens indigenous approaches globally; and it strengthens and supports indigenous developments locally. The mission of the new institute summarizes some of the points made earlier: 'To conduct and disseminate research, scholarship and debate which will make a positive difference to the lives of Maori and other indigenous peoples by drawing together a group of highly skilled and respected scholars who are dedicated to quality outcomes in Maori and indigenous education.'

Training Indigenous Researchers

What large research institutions and research cultures offer are the programmes, resources, facilities and structures which can, if the conditions are appropriate, support and train indigenous researchers. Although communities have a critical perspective of universities and what they represent, at the same time these same communities want their members to gain Western educations and high-level qualifications. But they do not want this to be achieved at the cost of destroying people's indigenous identities, their languages, values and practices. What indigenous students have experienced in universities has been shared by women and other minority group students. For many students it can be an alienating and destructive experience. This is well described by Janice Acoose, who writes about her experiences as a returning student to the University of Saskatechewan,

> Once inside the classroom, even though I had been away from educational institutions for many years, I realized that not much had changed in terms of the ideological character of the teachings or pedagogical strategies. Indeed there were many professors in various disciplines (albeit perhaps unconsciously ignorant or naïve) who attempted both implicitly and explicitly to reinforce notions of white cultural supremacy.[6]

Surviving the experience while gaining the qualification produces a range of strategies which are employed to varying degrees by indigenous students. These strategies range from becoming as invisible as possible to becoming as visible as possible. Surviving undergraduate work is the first hurdle for potential research students as the more systematic mentoring and training of researchers does not normally occur until either graduate level or when employed as a researcher.

Most indigenous researchers who work with indigenous communities or on indigenous issues are self-taught, having received little curriculum support for areas related to indigenous concerns. There are, however, a number of academic programmes being established which are directed specifically towards developing research skills. The Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University in Western Australia offers a masters programme designed for the needs of indigenous students working with indigenous communities. Emphasis is placed on developing action research skills through specific research tasks. At the University of Auckland, the training of Maori researchers occurs across several faculties including arts, education, law, health sciences, management and science. In education, Auckland's Maori programme has been the forerunner of many of the developments both within this university and across other sites. The programme has developed through a coordinated approach to course work, family and student support, thesis mentoring, role modelling by senior students, and employment on research projects. Students are expected to develop sophisticated theoretical skills alongside their research speciality interests. While the training of researchers is much more focused than standard course work, the programme is also located in a context in which Maori academic staff and researchers are conducting research on an ongoing basis. The creation of a Maori research culture has been deliberate and students are involved in the discussions and debates around research problems from the time they begin their graduate programme. Training tends to be project-specific, with some students employed part-time or on scholarships as research assistants carrying out literature reviews, data entry, transcribing, data analysis and conducting interviews, gradually building up towards taking primary responsibility for a small project. Many students have their own topics which they are encouraged to think through and prepare as proposals, while others arrive with a community project already in mind. Those students with strong family or community support networks are encouraged to involve their communities in their own projects. Those students who may have grown up in bicultural families are encouraged to use the skills gained in their own contexts. The programme assumes that students bring considerable knowledge and skills with them. By sharing with other students from

diverse backgrounds, including other indigenous students from the Pacific, and participating in a structured programme, they are expected to gain enough additional skills to be very useful when they return to their own communities.

For some indigenous students one of the first issues to be confronted is their own identities as indigenous and their connected identities to other indigenous peers. While this may seem unusual, given that they appeared to select an indigenous programme, it is often more likely that their participation in the programme is related to needs which are not necessarily educational – for example, emotional support or reassurance. Some may need assistance to reconnect with their own communities or to feel safe. Gender and age are two quite critical factors in some indigenous contexts. For younger students there is a very real constraint on access to knowledge when working with elders. There are also protocols of respect and practices of reciprocity. The relatively simple task of gaining informed consent can take anything from a moment to months and years. Some indigenous students have had to travel back and forth during the course of a year to gain the trust of an individual elder, and have been surprised that without realizing it they gained all the things they were seeking with much more insight, and that in the process they gained a grandparent or a friend. Asking directly for consent to interview can also be interpreted as quite rude behaviour in some cultures. Consent is not so much given for a project or specific set of questions, but for a person, for their credibility. Consent indicates trust and the assumption is that the trust will not only be reciprocated but constantly negotiated – a dynamic relationship rather than a static decision. Similarly, indigenous elders can do wonderful things with an interview. They tell stories, tease, question, think, observe, tell riddles, test and give trick answers. Conversely, they can also expect that an indigenous researcher will do the same back to them. The quality of the interaction is more important than ticking boxes or answering closed questions. Then again, they can simply reply passively to questions, playing the game required of non-indigenous research. Usually young indigenous researchers are used to building and having relationships with elders: the issues tend to be related to the way some research methodologies exclude such extended conversations, especially as they are initiated by the person being interviewed.

Negotiating entry to a community or a home can also be daunting for indigenous researchers. Formal approaches can require several meetings in which the whole ugly history of research on indigenous peoples is reiterated, followed by open and frank discussions of the merit and desirability of a project intersected by other unrelated debates and commentaries, and a conclusion which is highly ambivalent or

inconclusive, meaning that the process has to repeated again. Informal approaches can be just as fraught, with one elder consulting others on one matter, and then the consultation process repeated again on another matter. It is common practice in many indigenous contexts for elders to be approached as the first point of contact and as a long-term mentor for an indigenous researcher. Some elders are more appropriate and helpful than others. Some elders can pursue their own agenda while others can be quietly in the background providing assurance, support and critical and insightful feedback. The dynamics of relationships are by nature hugely complicated. For researchers the skills and reflexivities required to mediate and work with these dynamics are quite sophisticated. Indigenous researchers have to be clear about their intentions. They need to have thought about the larger picture of research and have a critical analysis of their own processes.

Insider/Outsider Research

Many of the issues raised by indigenous researchers are addressed in the research literature in relation to both insider and outsider research. Most research methodologies assume that the researcher is an outsider able to observe without being implicated in the scene. This is related to positivism and notions of objectivity and neutrality. Feminist research and other more critical approaches have made the insider methodology much more acceptable in qualitative research. Indigenous research approaches problematize the insider model in different ways because there are multiple ways of both being an insider and an outsider in indigenous contexts. The critical issue with insider research is the constant need for reflexivity. At a general level insider researchers have to have ways of thinking critically about their processes, their relationships and the quality and richness of their data and analysis. So too do outsiders, but the major difference is that insiders have to live with the consequences of their processes on a day-to-day basis for ever more, and so do their families and communities. For this reason insider researchers need to build particular sorts of research-based support systems and relationships with their communities. They have to be skilled at defining clear research goals and 'lines of relating' which are specific to the project and somewhat different from their own family networks. Insider researchers also need to define closure and have the skills to say 'no' and the skills to say 'continue'.

How does this work in practice? One of my very first experiences as a researcher was with a community of Maori mothers and children who had formed a Maori 'language nest'. I was part of the same group. I was an insider as a Maori mother and an advocate of the language

revitalization movement, and I shared in the activities of fund raising and organizing. Through my different tribal relationships I had close links to some of the mothers and to the woman who was the main organizer. With other women I shared a background in another way as I had taught some of their older children at the local school. To my academic supervisors I was well and truly an insider in this project. When I began the discussions and negotiations over my research, however, I became much more aware of the things which made me an outsider. I was attending university as a graduate student; I had worked for several years as a teacher and had a professional income; I had a husband; and we owned a car which was second-hand but actually registered. As I became more involved in the project, interviewing the women about their own education stories, and as I visited them in their own homes, these differences became much more marked. What really struck me when I visited the women in their homes as a researcher, having done so on many previous occasions as a mother, were the formal cultural practices which the women observed. An interview with a researcher is formal. I could see immediately that homes were extra spotless and I knew from my own background that when visitors are expected considerable energy goes into cleaning and dusting the house. There was also food which I knew had been prepared for my visit. The children were in their pyjamas (the top matching the bottom) all bathed and ready for bed at 7.30 pm. I knew and the mothers knew that as a group we were all quite casual about bedtime rituals but on the night of the interview everything was in the kind of order which is organized solely for the benefit of the outsider. Other signs and comments made during the interview reinforced the formalities in which my interview participants were engaging. These were signs of respect, the sorts of things I have seen members of my communities do for strangers and the practices I had been taught to observe myself. They were also barriers constructed to keep the outsider at bay, to prevent the outsider becoming the intruder. I had not understood that before, that there were some practices which the communities had control over as a way of resisting the prying eyes of researchers. Both during the research and at the end I was asked to discuss general matters at our regular meetings, but there were many confidences some of which I was asked to protect and others I decided to keep silent on. After the project was completed and I had reported back to them on the finished piece of work, our former relations were restored and have continued as our children have gone on to elementary and secondary schools. I learned many things about research in my own community through those women. I never really did justice to them in the report I eventually wrote as an assignment; I never quite knew how, never possessed the skills or

confidence at that time to encapsulate the intricacies of the researcher/ researched relations or my own journey as a beginning researcher. But I remember learning more about research and about being a researcher from that small project than I did from any research course, any lecture or any book.

Insider research has to be as ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It also needs to be humble. It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position. The outside 'expert' role has been and continues to be problematic for indigenous communities. As non-indigenous experts have claimed considerable acceptability amongst their own colleagues and peers, government officials and society on the basis of their research, indigenous voices have been silenced or 'Othered' in the process. The role of an 'official insider voice' is also problematic. The comment, 'She or he lives in it therefore they know' certainly validates experience but for a researcher to assume that their own experience is all that is required is arrogant. One of the difficult risks insider researchers take is to 'test' their own taken-for-granted views about their community. It is a risk because it can unsettle beliefs, values, relationships and the knowledge of different histories. Family-based research for example, can reveal stories of grave injustice, perpetrated by one section of a family and suffered by another. Research can also lead to discoveries which contradict the image that some idealistic younger researchers hold of elders.

The complexities of an insider research approach can be mediated by building support structures. One of the following chapters gives an example of *whanau* structures used by Maori researchers to ensure that relationships and issues, problems and strategies can be discussed and resolved. Whilst most indigenous communities have some form of governance organization, it is more useful to work with such an existing governing body to establish a purpose-developed support group which brings together any outside academic or organizational people involved, the community and the researcher/s. In some contexts an elder has been selected or self-selected to act as a guardian of the researcher, mediating their journeys through the community and through the research. Before either of these supports can be established, in most cases, the community representatives have had to be convinced that the research project is worthwhile and in their interests. Some research models do not allow for change – for example, many questionnaires and other 'measures' have already been developed and tested for reliability long before a project has begun. The 'norms', or the groups with which the measures were developed, are nearly always non-indigenous people. Convincing an indigenous community to participate in such a study

look for absences

*insider research has its own particular dangerous
1 set of ethics to fit all situations*

requires a thorough knowledge of the research paradigm and an ability to mount a sophisticated and honest justification. Not all indigenous communities are averse to such projects; they tend to be persuaded not by the technical design, however, but by the open and 'good' intentions of the researchers. They also expect and appreciate honesty. Spelling out the limitations of a project, the things that are not addressed, is most important. Many community projects require intensive community input. The implications of such input for impoverished communities or communities under stress can be enormous. Every meeting, every activity, every visit to a home requires energy, commitment and protocols of respect. In my own community there are some very descriptive terms which suggest how bothersome and tiring this activity can be! Idealistic ideas about community collaboration and active participation need to be tempered with realistic assessments of a community's resources and capabilities, even if there is enthusiasm and goodwill. Similarly, the involvement of community resource people also needs to be considered before putting an additional responsibility on individuals already carrying heavy burdens of duty.

Indigenous research focuses and situates the broader indigenous agenda in the research domain. This domain is dominated by a history, by institutional practices and by particular paradigms and approaches to research held by communities of like-minded scholars. The spaces within the research domain through which indigenous research can operate are small spaces on a shifting ground. Negotiating and transforming institutional practices and research frameworks is as significant as the carrying out of actual research programmes. This makes indigenous research a highly political activity and while that is understood by very experienced non-indigenous researchers and organizations it can also be perceived as a threatening activity. The research community has a number of terms which are used to good effect as exclusionary devices to dismiss the challenges made from outside the fold. Research can be judged as 'not rigorous', 'not robust', 'not real', 'not theorized', 'not valid', 'not reliable'. Sound conceptual understandings can falter when the research design is considered flawed. While researchers are trained to conform to the models provided for them, indigenous researchers have to meet these criteria as well as indigenous criteria which can judge research 'not useful', 'not indigenous', 'not friendly', 'not just'. Reconciling such views can be difficult. The indigenous agenda challenges indigenous researchers to work across these boundaries. It is a challenge which provides a focus and direction which helps in thinking through the complexities of indigenous research. At the same time the process is evolving as researchers working in this field dialogue and collaborate on shared concerns.

Notes

1 Alfred, G. R. (1996), *Heeding the Voices of our Ancestors*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, p. 18.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
3 Blea, I. I. (1995), *Researching Chicano Communities*, Praeger, Westport, p. 2.
4 Stringer, E. T. (1996), *Action Research. A Handbook for Practitioners*, Sage Books, California, p. 15.
5 Trask, H. (1993), *From a Native Daughter*, Common Courage Press, Maine.
6 Acoose, J. (1995), *Iskwewak- Kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak. Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws*, Women's Press, Toronto, p. 30. See also Garrod, A. and C. Larimore, eds (1997), *First Person, First Peoples. Native American College Graduates Tell Their Life Stories*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Insiders must meet 2 standards:
○ research (rigorous, robust, real theorized, valid, reliable)

○ indigenous (useful, indigenous friendly + just)

always ask in what ways am I an insider / outsider ?
How can I deal w/ those limits + possibilities?