



# Decolonizing Methodologies

RESEARCH AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

*Linda Tuhiwai Smith*



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## Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects

The implications for indigenous research which have been derived from the imperatives inside the struggles of the 1970s seem to be clear and straightforward: the survival of peoples, cultures and languages; the struggle to become self-determining, the need to take back control of our destinies. These imperatives have demanded more than rhetoric and acts of defiance. The acts of reclaiming, reformulating and reconstituting indigenous cultures and languages have required the mounting of an ambitious research programme, one that is very strategic in its purpose and activities and relentless in its pursuit of social justice. Within the programme are a number of very distinct projects. Themes such as cultural survival, self-determination, healing, restoration and social justice are engaging indigenous researchers and indigenous communities in a diverse array of projects. The projects intersect with each other in various ways. They have multiple goals and involve different indigenous communities of interest. Some projects, for example, have been driven by indigenous lawyers and constitutional experts, others by indigenous women and health workers, or by social workers and policy analysts. This chapter sets out 25 different projects currently being pursued by indigenous communities. The projects constitute a very complex research programme. Each one intersects with the agenda for indigenous research discussed in Chapter 6 in two or three different ways, that is by site/s and by processes. Each project is outlined to give a bare indication of the parameters offered within it and how these may link in with some of the others.

The projects are not claimed to be entirely indigenous or to have been created by indigenous researchers. Some approaches have arisen out of social science methodologies, which in turn have arisen out of methodological issues raised by research with various oppressed groups. Some projects invite multidisciplinary research approaches. Others have arisen more directly out of indigenous practices. There are two technical

points to make here. First, while most projects fall well within what will be recognized as empirical research, not all do. Some important work is related to theorizing indigenous issues at the level of ideas, policy analysis and critical debate, and to setting out in writing indigenous spiritual beliefs and world views. Second, the focus is primarily on social science research projects rather than what may be happening in the natural or physical sciences or technology. There is one technical distinction to clarify. In the chapter I draw on Sandra Harding's very simple distinction between methodology and method, that is, 'A research methodology is a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed ...' and, 'A research method is a technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence.'<sup>1</sup> Methodology is important because it frames the questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed and shapes the analyses. Within an indigenous framework, methodological debates are ones concerned with the broader politics and strategic goals of indigenous research. It is at this level that researchers have to clarify and justify their intentions. Methods become the means and procedures through which the central problems of the research are addressed. Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices. The mix reflects the training of indigenous researchers which continues to be within the academy, and the parameters and common sense understandings of research which govern how indigenous communities and researchers define their activities.

### The Projects

The following projects are not ranked or listed in any particular order.

#### *1 Claiming*

In a sense colonialism has reduced indigenous peoples to making claims and assertions about our rights and dues. It is an approach that has a certain noisiness to it. Indigenous peoples, however, have transformed claiming into an interesting and dynamic process. Considerable work and energy has gone into developing the methodologies which relate to 'claiming' and 'reclaiming'. For some indigenous groups the formal claims process demanded by tribunals, courts and governments has required the conducting of intensive research projects resulting in the writing of nation, tribe and family histories. These 'histories' have a focus and purpose, that is, to establish the legitimacy of the claims being asserted for the rest of time. Because they have been written to support claims to territories and resources or about past injustices, they have been constructed around selected stories. These claiming histories have



also been written for different audiences. One audience is the formal court or tribunal audience, who are generally non-indigenous, another the general non-indigenous population, and a third the people themselves. For this last audience the histories are also important teaching histories. They teach both the non-indigenous audience and the new generations of indigenous peoples an official account of their collective story. But, importantly, it is a history which has no ending because it assumes that once justice has been done the people will continue their journey. It may be that in time the histories have to be rewritten around other priorities.

## *2 Testimonies*

‘My Name is Rigoberta Menchu, I am twenty-three years old, and this is my testimony.’<sup>2</sup>

Testimonies intersect with claiming because they are a means through which oral evidence is presented to a particular type of audience. There is a formality to testimonies and a notion that truth is being revealed ‘under oath’. Indigenous testimonies are a way of talking about an extremely painful event or series of events.<sup>3</sup> The formality of testimony provides a structure within which events can be related and feelings expressed.<sup>4</sup> A testimony is also a form through which the voice of a ‘witness’ is accorded space and protection. It can be constructed as a monologue and as a public performance. The structure of testimony – its formality, context and sense of immediacy – appeals to many indigenous participants, particularly elders. It is an approach that translates well to a formal written document. While the listener may ask questions, testimonies structure the responses, silencing certain types of questions and formalizing others.

## *3 Story telling*

Story telling, oral histories, the perspectives of elders and of women have become an integral part of all indigenous research. Each individual story is powerful. But the point about the stories is not that they simply tell a story, or tell a story simply. These new stories contribute to a collective story in which every indigenous person has a place. In a book called *The Wailing: A National Black Oral History*, Stuart Rintoul has called the oral histories he gathered ‘stories handed down in the homes of Black Australians, told to new generations, taught in explanation of racism and mistreatment, recited with rage and dignity and sorrow’.<sup>5</sup> Rintoul writes further that the stories are also ‘memories of injustice ... an avalanche of voices crying out in hundreds of countries across innumerable Dreamings’.<sup>6</sup> For many indigenous writers stories are ways of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new

generations will treasure them and pass the story down further. The story and the story teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story. As a research tool, Russell Bishop suggests, story telling is a useful and culturally appropriate way of representing the 'diversities of truth' within which the story teller rather than the researcher retains control.<sup>7</sup> Bishop also suggests that 'the indigenous community becomes a story that is a collection of individual stories, ever unfolding through the lives of the people who share the life of that community'.<sup>8</sup>

Intrinsic in story telling is a focus on dialogue and conversations amongst ourselves as indigenous peoples, to ourselves and for ourselves. Such approaches fit well with the oral traditions which are still a reality in day-to-day indigenous lives. Importantly, story telling is also about humour and gossip and creativity. Stories tell of love and sexual encounters, of war and revenge. Their themes tell us about our cultures. Stories employ familiar characters and motifs which can reassure as well as challenge. Familiar characters can be invested with the qualities of an individual or can be used to invoke a set of shared understandings and histories.

#### *4 Celebrating survival*

Celebrating survival is a particular sort of approach. While non-indigenous research has been intent on documenting the demise and cultural assimilation of indigenous peoples, celebrating survival accentuates not so much our demise but the degree to which indigenous peoples and communities have successfully retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity. The approach is reflected sometimes in story form, sometimes in popular music and sometimes as an event in which artists and story tellers come together to celebrate collectively a sense of life and diversity and connectedness. Events and accounts which focus on the positive are important not just because they speak to our survival, but because they celebrate our resistances at an ordinary human level and they affirm our identities as indigenous women and men. Celebrating survival as an approach is also a theme running through the collections of elders' stories. In one such collection told to Sandy Johnson she writes of the way in which '[the elders] speak openly of their personal struggles to stay on the path against impossible odds. Their stories of what they have lost and what they have fought to save are both tragic and heroic.'<sup>9</sup> Gregory Cajete writes that 'celebrating is a natural outcome of spiritual sharing and it too can take a diversity of forms. It is an individual and communal process that celebrates the mystery of life and the journey that each of us takes. Celebration is a way of spreading the lights around.'<sup>10</sup>

### 5 Remembering

The remembering of a people relates not so much to an idealized remembering of a golden past but more specifically to the remembering of a painful past and, importantly, people's responses to that pain. While collectively indigenous communities can talk through the history of painful events, there are frequent silences and intervals in the stories about what happened after the event. Often there is no collective remembering as communities were systematically ripped apart, children were removed for adoption, extended families separated across different reserves and national boundaries. The aftermath of such pain was borne by individuals or smaller family units, sometimes unconsciously or consciously obliterated through alcohol, violence and self-destruction. Communities often turned inward and let their suffering give way to a desire to be dead. Violence and family abuse became entrenched in communities which had no hope. White society did not see and did not care. This form of remembering is painful because it involves remembering not just what colonization was about but what being dehumanized meant for our own cultural practices. Both healing and transformation become crucial strategies in any approach which asks a community to remember what they may have decided unconsciously or consciously to forget.

### 6 Indigenizing

This project has two dimensions. The first one is similar to that which has occurred in literature with a centring of the landscapes, images, languages, themes, metaphors and stories in the indigenous world and the disconnecting of many of the cultural ties between the settler society and its metropolitan homeland. This project involves non-indigenous activists and intellectuals. The second aspect is more of an indigenous project. The term is used more frequently in South and Central America. The concept of indigenist, says Ward Churchill, means 'that I am one who not only takes the rights of indigenous peoples as the highest priority of my political life, but who draws upon the traditions – the bodies of knowledge and corresponding codes of values – evolved over many thousands of years by native peoples the world over'.<sup>11</sup> The term centres a politics of indigenous identity and indigenous cultural action. M. Annette Jaimes refers to indigenism as being grounded in the alternative conceptions of world view and value systems, 'These differences provide a basis for a conceptualisation of Indigenism that counters the negative connotations of its meanings in third world countries, where it has become synonymous with the "primitive", or with backwardness among superstitious peoples.'<sup>12</sup> Lester Rigney, an Aborigine researcher in New South Wales, names the approach he takes

as indigenist research, an approach which borrows freely from feminist research and critical approaches to research, but privileges indigenous voices.

### 7 *Intervening*

Intervening takes action research to mean literally the process of being proactive and of becoming involved as an interested worker for change. Intervention-based projects are usually designed around making structural and cultural changes. Graham Smith describes this approach as a necessary approach when faced with crisis conditions. Smith argues

firstly, that Maori educational crises continue – this points to a failure of educational policy reforms, research and researchers. Secondly, educational researchers have continued to fail to intervene because of the lack of responsibility and accountability placed on researchers and policy makers. Thirdly much of research has been counter productive to Maori interests, and has merely served the dominant Pakeha group interests, by maintaining the status quo of unequal power distribution.<sup>13</sup>

It is not ethical to walk away, or simply to carry out projects which describe what is already known. State policies for indigenous peoples were also interventionist in profoundly destructive ways. The indigenous intervening project carries with it some working principles. For example, the community itself invites the project in and sets out its parameters. The various departments and agencies involved in such a project are also expected to be willing to change themselves in some way, redirect policy, design new programmes or train staff differently. Intervening is directed then at changing institutions which deal with indigenous peoples and not at changing indigenous peoples to fit the structures.

### 8 *Revitalizing*

Indigenous languages, their arts and their cultural practices are in various states of crisis. Many indigenous languages are officially 'dead' with fewer than a hundred speakers. Others are in the last stages before what is described by linguists as 'language death'. Revitalization initiatives in languages encompass education, broadcasting, publishing and community-based programmes. ~~While the Welsh people are not formally part of the indigenous peoples' movements as described in Chapter 6, their programmes are often studied as examples of indigenous achievement.~~ The Welsh language programme is promoted as a model for language revitalization. Welsh schools, from kindergarten to secondary schools, offer teaching through the medium of Welsh. This is supported officially through government funding. Television and newspapers in the medium of Welsh – which include children's programming, drama,

documentaries, news, and sports – provide a comprehensive approach to language revitalization. The European Bureau of Lesser Languages has a role of supporting the diverse minority languages of Europe. Maori language development has followed a similar pattern to the Welsh language example, with an official Language Act and associated educational programmes. In the case of Maori and Welsh language, there is a clear singular language. Many places have to battle for the survival of several languages spoken by small populations. In Canada, for example, most of the indigenous languages could be categorized as being on the verge of extinction. British Columbia has a diverse range of indigenous languages, all of which require support. The Squamish language, for example, has few native speakers. The Squamish Nation helped co-host a conference on indigenous languages in 1989 in order to stimulate discussions and seek solutions to the language crisis. Their Nation's Band Office has an education centre whose staff develop resources for schools and encourage the use of the language by their remaining native speakers. For much of the indigenous world there is little proactive coordination or support. Literacy campaigns tend to frame language survival programmes. Such campaigns are designed around either official languages or one or two dominant languages. The indigenous language is often regarded as being subversive to national interests and national literacy campaigns.

### 9 Connecting

The importance of making connections and affirming connectedness has been noted also by other minority group researchers. Connectedness positions individuals in sets of relationships with other people and with the environment. Many indigenous creation stories link people through genealogy to the land, to stars and other places in the universe, to birds and fish, animals, insects and plants. To be connected is to be whole. The project of connecting is pursued in New South Wales in one form as literally connecting members of families with each other. A link programme has been designed to restore the descendants of 'stolen children', ones forcibly taken from their families and adopted, to their family connections. Forced adoption and dehumanizing child welfare practices were carried out in many indigenous contexts. Being reconnected to their families and their culture has been a painful journey for many of these children, now adults. Connecting also involves connecting people to their traditional lands through the restoration of specific rituals and practices. In New Zealand one example of this is the practice of burying the afterbirth in the land. The word for afterbirth is the same as the word for land, *whenua*. The practice was prohibited as Maori mothers were forced to have their babies in hospitals rather than

at home. The policies and hospital practices have now changed and Maori parents have reinstated the practice of taking the afterbirth and burying it in traditional territory. Connecting children to their land and their genealogies through this process is also part of a larger health project designed to encourage young Maori mothers to take better care of themselves and their babies through stronger cultural supports. Connecting is related to issues of identity and place, to spiritual relationships and community wellbeing.

There are other challenges in relation to the project of connecting. Researchers, policy makers, educators, and social service providers who work with or whose work impacts on indigenous communities need to have a critical conscience about ensuring that their activities connect in humanizing ways with indigenous communities. It is a very common experience to hear indigenous communities outline the multiple ways in which agencies and individuals treat them with disrespect and disregard. Connecting is about establishing good relations.

### *10 Reading*

Critical rereading of Western history and the indigenous presence in the making of that history has taken on a different impetus from what was once a school curriculum designed to assimilate indigenous children. The new reading programme is motivated partly by a research drive to establish and support claims, but also by a need to understand what has informed both internal colonialism and new forms of colonization. The genealogy of colonialism is being mapped and used as a way to locate a different sort of origin story, the origins of imperial policies and practices, the origins of the imperial visions, the origins of ideas and values. These origin stories are deconstructed accounts of the West, its history through the eyes of indigenous and colonized peoples. The rereading of imperial history by post-colonial and cultural studies scholars provides a different, much more critical approach to history than was previously acceptable. It is no longer the single narrative story of important white imperial figures, adventurers and heroes who fought their way through undiscovered lands to establish imperial rule and bring civilization and salvation to 'barbaric savages' who lived in 'utter degradation'.

### *11 Writing*

Indigenous people are writing. In Chapter 1 the writing project was named as 'the empire writes back' project. In a localized context, however, writing is employed in a variety of imaginative, critical, and also quite functional ways. Maori author Witi Ihimaera has assembled a

five-volume anthology of Maori literature which he argues represents the 'crossroads ... of a literature of a past and a literature of a present and future'.<sup>14</sup> The title of an anthology of Native Women's writings of North America, *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*, gives a sense of the issues being explored through writing.<sup>15</sup> Similar anthologies and works of indigenous literature are being published around the world by indigenous writers for indigenous reading audiences.<sup>16</sup> The boundaries of poetry, plays, song writing, fiction and non-fiction are blurred as indigenous writers seek to use language in ways which capture the messages, nuances and flavour of indigenous lives. The activity of writing has produced the related activity of publishing. Maori newspapers, which were quite common in the nineteenth century, have been revived as different organizations and tribes seek to provide better information than is available in the mainstream media. Language revitalization initiatives have created a demand for multi-media language resources for children. In the Western Isles of Scotland, a Stornaway publishing house called Acair has produced children's comic books in Scottish Gaelic and cookbooks and other material which supports the Gaelic language. Similar small publishing groups are operating across the indigenous world. Writing workshops and writing courses offered by indigenous writers for indigenous people who want to write are held in many places. The work of authors such as Patricia Grace, Paula Gunn Allen, Louise Erdrich, Witi Ihimaera and Sally Morgan is read by both indigenous and non-indigenous audiences. Biographies and autobiographies including those which are accounts 'told to a non-indigenous person', are sought after by a new reading audience of indigenous people.

### 12 *Representing*

Indigenous communities have struggled since colonization to be able to exercise what is viewed as a fundamental right, that is to represent ourselves. The representing project spans both the notion of representation as a political concept and representation as a form of voice and expression. In the political sense colonialism specifically excluded indigenous peoples from any form of decision making. States and governments have long made decisions hostile to the interests of indigenous communities but justified by a paternalistic view that indigenous peoples were like children who needed others to protect them and decide what was in their best interests. Paternalism is still present in many forms in the way governments, local bodies and non-government agencies decide on issues which have an impact on indigenous communities. Being able as a minimum right to voice the views and opinions of indigenous communities in various decision-making bodies is still being struggled over. Even at the minimal level of representation indigenous communities

are often 'thrown in' with all other minorities as one voice amongst many. The politics of sovereignty and self-determination have been about resisting being thrown in with every other minority group by making claims on the basis of prior rights.

Representation is also a project of indigenous artists, writers, poets, film makers and others who attempt to express an indigenous spirit, experience or world view. Representation of indigenous peoples by indigenous people is about countering the dominant society's image of indigenous peoples, their lifestyles and belief systems. It is also about proposing solutions to the real-life dilemmas that indigenous communities confront and trying to capture the complexities of being indigenous. Many of the dilemmas are internalized stress factors in community life which are never named or voiced because they are either taken for granted or hidden by a community. There is an element of the raw, tough and unsympathetic representation of indigenous life by a writer such as Allen Duff who wrote the novel *Once Were Warriors*. And there is the humour of Alexie Sherman who wrote *Reservation Blues*. Film makers such as Merata Mita have a very clear purpose in their work which locates it firmly within a decolonization framework. She says that,

Not surprisingly, when my obsessive struggle with filmmaking began, it was with the issues that most concerned us as Maori women that I became pre-occupied – the issues of injustice, land, te reo Maori [Maori language], the Treaty, and racism. Add to that women and gender issues, and for those who don't know, these are the things that consume us, consume our energy, beset us every moment of our daily lives, they are brutalising, violent, and some of us die because of them.<sup>17</sup>

### 13 Gendering

Gendering indigenous debates, whether they are related to the politics of self-determination or the politics of the family, is concerned with issues related to the relations between indigenous men and women. Colonization is recognized as having had a destructive effect on indigenous gender relations which reached out across all spheres of indigenous society. Family organization, child rearing, political and spiritual life, work and social activities were all disordered by a colonial system which positioned its own women as the property of men with roles which were primarily domestic. Indigenous women across many different indigenous societies claim an entirely different relationship, one embedded in beliefs about the land and the universe, about the spiritual significance of women and about the collective endeavours that were required in the organization of society. Indigenous women would argue that their traditional roles included full participation in many aspects of



political decision making and marked gender separations which were complementary in order to maintain harmony and stability. Gendering contemporary indigenous debates occurs inside indigenous communities and while it is debated in other contexts, such as in Western feminist debates, indigenous women hold an analysis of colonialism as a central tenet of an indigenous feminism. A key issue for indigenous women in any challenge of contemporary indigenous politics is the restoration to women of what are seen as their traditional roles, rights and responsibilities. Aroha Mead gives an account of a statement delivered by two Maori women to the Twelfth Session (1994), of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples which addressed the way colonialism has influenced indigenous men and had a detrimental affect on indigenous gender relations. She says that

never before have I witnessed what occurred while the full statement was being read out. Indigenous women sitting within their delegations were visibly moved – some looked around to see who was talking about their pain – some gave victory signals and physical signs of agreement, and many, perhaps even the majority, sat stoically, with tears swelling in their eyes. The words broke through the barriers of language and regionalism. A raw wound was clearly touched.<sup>18</sup>

#### *14 Envisioning*

One of the strategies which indigenous peoples have employed effectively to bind people together politically is a strategy which asks that people imagine a future, that they rise above present day situations which are generally depressing, dream a new dream and set a new vision. The confidence of knowing that we have survived and can only go forward provides some impetus to a process of envisioning. In New Zealand, for example, tribes which began their grievance claims against the Crown last century have not only had their claims heard but are negotiating a settlement. For the people who began the process these settlements were simply dreams. If they had listened to politicians, taken the mainstream media seriously, taken heed of scholars and commentators, they would not have begun. Similarly, communities who have worked to revitalise ~~their language or build a new economic base or renegotiate arrangements~~ with governments have worked on the basis of a shared vision. The power of indigenous peoples to change their own lives and set new directions despite their impoverished and oppressed conditions speaks to the politics of resistance.

Sometimes the visions which bind people were set a long time ago and have been passed down the generations as poems, songs, stories, proverbs or sayings. Every indigenous community probably has special

sayings, predictions, riddles and proverbs which are debated frequently and raised both informally and formally. Children are socialized into these sayings and pass them down to their own children. The profound statements of indigenous leaders from the last century and the centuries before are often written in diaries and notebooks, carved into stone, distributed by T-shirt and poster. Often the original source of the comment has been forgotten but the power of the words remain. They make our spirits soar and give us hope. Indigenous people have borrowed freely from each other and it is not uncommon to find the saying of an Indian chief stuck to the kitchen wall in a Maori home, or the saying of a Maori chief embroidered into a wall hanging in an Aborigine home. These sayings have acted like resistance codes which can be passed down by word of mouth to the next person, to the next generation.

### *15 Reframing*

Reframing is about taking much greater control over the ways in which indigenous issues and social problems are discussed and handled. One of the reasons why so many of the social problems which beset indigenous communities are never solved is that the issues have been framed in a particular way. For example, governments and social agencies have failed to see many indigenous social problems as being related to any sort of history. They have framed indigenous issues in 'the indigenous problem' basket, to be handled in the usual cynical and paternalistic manner. The framing of an issue is about making decisions about its parameters, about what is in the foreground, what is in the background, and what shadings or complexities exist within the frame. The project of reframing is related to defining the problem or issue and determining how best to solve that problem. Many indigenous activists have argued that such things as mental illness, alcoholism and suicide, for example, are not about psychological and individualized failure but about colonization or lack of collective self-determination. Many community health **initiatives** address the whole community, its history and its wider context as part of the problem and part of the solution.

Reframing occurs in other contexts where indigenous people resist being boxed and labelled according to categories which do not fit. This is particularly pertinent in relation to various development programmes, government and non-government. In the case of Maori, for example, a Maori language initiative for young children from birth to school age – known as Te Kohanga Reo, or Maori language nests – constantly has to explain why it is not a child-care centre but a language and culture initiative for young children. The problem of definition is important in this case because it affects funding, but the constant need to justify

difference is experienced by many other communities whose initiatives are about changing things on a holistic basis rather than endorsing the individualized programme emphasis of government models. The need to reframe is about retaining the strengths of a vision and the participation of a whole community.

Reframing occurs also within the way indigenous people write or engage with theories and accounts of what it means to be indigenous. In the politics of indigenous women, for example, there is continuing resistance to the way Western feminists have attempted to define the issues for indigenous women and categorize the positions in which indigenous women should be located. Moves to discuss patriarchy without addressing imperialism and racism are always reframed by indigenous women, and of course other minority women, as inadequate analyses. Similarly moves to attack indigenous culture or indigenous men 'as a group' are also resisted because for indigenous women the issues are far more complex and the objective of analysis is always focused on solving problems. In the end indigenous men and women have to live together in a world in which both genders are under attack.

### *16 Restoring*

Indigenous peoples across the world have disproportionately high rates of imprisonment, suicide and alcoholism. Some indigenous activists regard these rates as the continuation of a war. Says Bobbi Sykes, "The main question, which has not been addressed by government, is the legitimacy or otherwise of the assumption that white domination of Aboriginal people is in itself a concept of justice."<sup>19</sup> For Aborigines the high rates of black deaths in custody eventually provoked the establishment of a Royal Commission of Inquiry in 1987 into a problem which had been hidden for many years. The Aborigine rates of death in custody was said to be higher than the rate in South Africa. Inside the incarceration rates for indigenous peoples are similar rates for youth offending and for indigenous women. In the health arena indigenous people have high rates of morbidity and mortality. Maori women have one of the highest rates of lung cancer in the world. Maori suicide rates, both male and female, have risen sharply over the last decade, with New Zealand rates amongst the highest in OECD countries. Aborigine rates of illness have frequently been cited as examples of the Fourth World, rates, which are worse than the rates in developing Third World states, and are made more horrific by the fact that these communities live in nations that have the highest standards of living. At a recent gathering of Pacific leaders, for example, the Australian Prime Minister John Howard was reported to have been reluctant to agree on helping to counter the effects of global warming, citing his duty to put the standard

of living of Australians first. He was not talking about indigenous Australians.

The restoring of wellbeing spiritually, emotionally, physically and materially has involved social workers and health workers in a range of initiatives, some of which have been incorporated into mainstream programmes. Restorative justice in Canada, for example, applies concepts of the 'healing circle' and victim restoration which are based on indigenous processes. These systems have been discussed widely and used to motivate other societies to develop better ways of dealing with offenders and victims. In New Zealand adoption policies and programmes for dealing with children have similarly coopted indigenous practices. Restoring is a project which is conceived as a holistic approach to problem solving. It is holistic in terms of the emotional, spiritual and physical nexus, and also in terms of the individual and the collective, the political and the cultural. Restorative programmes are based on a model of healing rather than of punishing. They sometimes employ concepts such as public shaming as a way of provoking individual accountability and collective problem solving. Health programmes addressing basic health issues have begun to seek ways to connect with indigenous communities through appropriate public health policy and practice models. The failure of public health programmes to improve the health of indigenous communities significantly has motivated a self-help approach by communities. It is especially infuriating when projects such as the Human Genome Project are justified on the grounds that knowledge about genetic resistances to various diseases will 'benefit mankind' when Western health has failed to benefit indigenous human beings.

### *17 Returning*

This project intersects with that of claiming. It involves the returning of lands, rivers and mountains to their indigenous owners. It involves the repatriation of artefacts, remains and other cultural materials stolen or removed and taken overseas. Sykes lists the following examples: 'pickled heads, human gloves, scrotum tobacco pouches, dried scalps, pickled foetus, cicatured skins, complete stuffed, mummified children's bodies and women with child'.<sup>20</sup> In New Zealand the current Minister of Maori Affairs, who is a Maori, has set out a plan to return all tattooed Maori heads which are housed in museums and other collections across the world. They apparently number in the hundreds. In a previous chapter I discussed the house Mataatua which has now been returned to Ngati Awa.

Returning also involves the living. One major tribe in New Zealand has negotiated the return of traditional food gathering sites which will

be marked out for their exclusive use by tribal members. Other programmes have been initiated to repatriate people either through ensuring their membership in official tribal registers or by physically reclaiming them. Adopted children, for example, are encouraged to seek their birth families and return to their original communities.

### 18 *Democratizing*

Although indigenous communities claim a model of democracy in their traditional ways of decision making, many contemporary indigenous organizations were formed through the direct involvement of states and governments. Legislation was used to establish and regulate indigenous councils and committees, indigenous forms of representation and indigenous titles to lands. They are colonial constructions that have been taken for granted as authentic indigenous formations. Furthermore many such councils, because they were established through colonialism, have privileged particular families and elite groups over other indigenous families from the same communities. Needless to say, many councils were created as exclusively male domains while the health and welfare programmes were assigned to the women. Maori lawyer Annette Sykes argues, for example, in relation to a claim being made by Maori women to the Waitangi Tribunal, that

The essence of the claim is to bring to the forefront of the current Treaty jurisprudence, the need to look at notions of governance in Aotearoa and the exclusionary practices that exist, which inhibit and prevent participation by Maori women in the tribal models for self-determination, that have been erected under New Zealand legislation, and the erosion that this in itself has had on Te Mana Wahine in Te Ao Maori [the *mana* of women in the Maori World].<sup>21</sup>

Democratizing in indigenous terms is a process of extending participation outwards through reinstating indigenous principles of collectivity and public debate.

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### 19 *Networking*

~~Networking has become an efficient medium for stimulating information flows, educating people quickly about issues and creating extensive~~ international talking circles. Building networks is about building knowledge and data bases which are based on the principles of relationships and connections. Relationships are initiated on a face to face basis and then maintained over many years often without any direct contact. People's names are passed on and introductions are used to bring new members into the network. The face to face encounter is about checking out an individual's credentials, not just their political credentials but their

personalities and spirit. Networking by indigenous peoples is a form of resistance. People are expected to position themselves clearly and state their purposes. Establishing trust is an important feature. In many states police surveillance of indigenous activists and their families is common practice. In some states, such as Guatemala, the disappearance of indigenous peoples has also been common practice. In these contexts networking is dangerous.

Networking is a way of making contacts between marginalized communities. By definition their marginalization excludes them from participation in the activities of the dominant non-indigenous society, which controls most forms of communication. Issues such as the Conventions on Biodiversity or GATT, for example, which have a direct impact on indigenous communities, are not addressed by mainstream media for an indigenous audience. Indigenous peoples would not know of such agreements and their impact on indigenous cultural knowledge if it were not for the power of networking. The project of networking is about process. Networking is a process which indigenous peoples have used effectively to build relationships and disseminate knowledge and information.

### *20 Naming*

This project takes its name from Brazilian educator Paulo Freire whose saying, 'name the word, name the world' (which was about literacy programmes), has been applied in the indigenous context to literally rename the landscape. This means renaming the world using the original indigenous names. Naming as a project of Maori people can be seen in the struggles over the geographical names of some of New Zealand's mountains and significant sites which were renamed randomly after British people and places. Many of the Maori names have now been restored. Naming can also be seen in the naming of children. Indigenous names carried histories of people, places and events. As a result of Christian baptism practices, which introduced Christian names and family names, and schooling practices, where teachers shortened names or introduced either generic names or nicknames, many indigenous communities hid their indigenous names either by using them only in indigenous ceremonies or by positioning them as second names. A more recent assertion in Maori naming practices has been to name children again with long ancestral names and to take on new names through life, both of which were once traditional practices. Children quite literally wear their history in their names.

Naming applies to other things as well. It is about retaining as much control over meanings as possible. By 'naming the world' people name their realities. For communities there are realities which can only be

found in the indigenous language; the concepts which are self-evident in the indigenous language can never be captured by another language.

### *21 Protecting*

This project is multifaceted. It is concerned with protecting peoples, communities, languages, customs and beliefs, art and ideas, natural resources and the things indigenous peoples produce. The scale of protecting can be as enormous as the Pacific Ocean and the Amazon rainforest or as small as an infant. It can be as real as land and as abstract as a belief about the spiritual essence of the land. Every indigenous community is attempting to protect several different things simultaneously. In some areas alliances with non-indigenous organizations have been beneficial in terms of rallying international support. In other areas a community is trying to protect itself by staying alive or staying off alcohol.

Some countries have identified sacred sites and have designated protected areas. Many of these, unfortunately, become tourist spots. Issues about the protection of indigenous knowledge have been discussed at various indigenous conferences which have produced charters and conventions aimed at signalling to the world at large that indigenous knowledges ought to be protected. History seems to suggest that many of these calls for international adherence to such charters will be at best highly selective. The need to protect a way of life, a language and the right to make our own history is a deep need linked to the survival of indigenous peoples.

### *22 Creating*

The project of creating is about transcending the basic survival mode through using a resource or capability which every indigenous community has retained throughout colonization – the ability to create and be creative. The project of creating is not just about the artistic endeavours of individuals but about the spirit of creating which indigenous communities have exercised over thousands of years. Imagination enables people to rise above their own circumstances, to dream new visions and to hold on to old ones. It fosters inventions and discoveries, facilitates simple improvements to people's lives and uplifts our spirits. Creating is not the exclusive domain of the rich nor of the technologically superior, but of the imaginative. Creating is about channelling collective creativity in order to produce solutions to indigenous problems. Every indigenous community has considered and come up with various innovative solutions to problems. That was before colonialism. Throughout the period of colonization indigenous peoples survived because of their imaginative spirit, their ability to adapt and to think around a problem.

Indigenous communities also have something to offer the non-indigenous world. There are many programmes incorporating indigenous elements, which on that account are viewed on the international scene as 'innovative' and unique. Indigenous peoples' ideas and beliefs about the origins of the world, their explanations of the environment, ~~often embedded in complicated metaphors and mythic tales, are now~~ being sought as the basis for thinking more laterally about current ~~theories about the environment, the earth and the universe.~~

Communities are the ones who know the answers to their own problems, although their ideas tend to be dismissed when suggested to various agencies and governments. Visits to communities which have developed their own programmes demonstrate both the creativity alive and well at the community level and the strength of commitment shown when the programme is owned by the community.

### *23 Negotiating*

Negotiating is about thinking and acting strategically. It is about recognizing and working towards long-term goals. Patience is a quality which indigenous communities have possessed in abundance. Patience and negotiation are linked to a very long view of our survival. When one reads of the decisions made by various indigenous leaders to accept the terms and conditions of colonization, what emerges from those stories is the concern shown by leaders for the long-term survival chances of the collective, of their own people. That was the basis of their courage and, despite the outrage younger generations of indigenous people might feel about the deal which some leaders accepted, the broader picture across several indigenous contexts is one of dignity and acceptance of a specific reality. Their negotiations were undertaken quite literally with guns held at their heads, with their people starving and with death around them.

In today's environment negotiation is still about deal making and it is still about concepts of leadership. Negotiations are also about respect, self-respect and respect for the opposition. Indigenous rules of negotiation usually contain both rituals of respect and protocols for discussion. The protocols and procedures are integral to the actual negotiation and neglect or failure to acknowledge or take seriously such protocols can be read as a lack of commitment to both the process and the outcome. Many indigenous societies are socialized into some forms of negotiation because they are part of trading practices or basic communication styles. The contemporary negotiation project is related to self-determination, in that indigenous nations are negotiating terms for settlements which often mean semi-autonomous government or statutory representation or control over key resources, such as natural



resources within their own territories. Negotiation also occurs where small gains are at stake, however, such as when local communities have worked out an agreement with a local government or agency or another local community. The formality of negotiation is important in protecting the sanctity of the agreement which emerges from a negotiation. Indigenous peoples know and understand what it means for agreements to be dishonoured. The continued faith in the process of negotiating is about retaining a faith in the humanity of indigenous beliefs, values and customary practices.

#### *24 Discovering*

This project is about discovering Western science and technology and making science work for indigenous development. There are very few indigenous scientists who remain closely connected to their own indigenous communities. Indigenous students across many contexts have struggled with Western science as it has been taught to them in schools. Science has been traditionally hostile to indigenous ways of knowing. Science teaching in schools has also been fraught with hostile attitudes towards indigenous cultures, and the way indigenous students learn. There are huge debates within the scientific community about the nature of science and how it ought to be taught. This debate is over the notion of constructivism, and concerns the extent to which knowledge is socially constructed or exists 'out there' as a body of knowledge which students simply learn. The development of ethno-science and the application of science to matters which interest indigenous peoples such as environmental and resource management or biodiversity offer some new possibilities for indigenous people to engage with the sciences which they decide are most relevant.

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#### *25 Sharing*

The final project discussed here is about sharing knowledge between indigenous peoples, around networks and across the world of indigenous peoples. ~~Sharing contains views about knowledge being a collective benefit and knowledge being a form of resistance. Like networking, sharing is a process which is responsive to the marginalized contexts in~~ which indigenous communities exist. Even in the context of New Zealand – a small country, relatively well-off in terms of televisions and communications – Maori people learn more about the issues which affect them at one of the many community gatherings which are held on *marae* than they do from the mainstream media. These gatherings may be for weddings or funerals but they are also used as opportunities to keep the community informed about a wide range of things. The face-to-face nature of sharing is supplemented with local newspapers which

focus on indigenous issues and local radio stations which specialize in indigenous news and music. Sharing is also related to the failure of education systems to educate indigenous people adequately or appropriately. It is important for keeping people informed about issues and events which will impact on them. It is a form of oral literacy, which connects with the story telling and formal occasions that feature in indigenous life.

Sharing is a responsibility of research. The technical term for this is the dissemination of results, usually very boring to non-researchers, very technical and very cold. For indigenous researchers sharing is about demystifying knowledge and information and speaking in plain terms to the community. Community gatherings provide a very daunting forum in which to speak about research. Oral presentations conform to cultural protocols and expectations. Often the audience may need to be involved emotionally with laughter, deep reflection, sadness, anger, challenges and debate. It is a very skilled speaker who can share openly at this level within the rules of the community.

### Summary

The projects touched on in this chapter are not offered as the definitive list of activities in which indigenous communities are engaged. There are numerous collaborative projects being undertaken with non-indigenous researchers and organizations. Many of these research partnerships help to develop a trained workforce through the mentoring and guidance provided by the non-indigenous researchers. There are also the more standard types of research projects and methodologies in the social sciences that have not been mentioned here. Some of these approaches, for example those in critical ethnography, have been written about and theorized by scholars working in those disciplines. The naming of the projects listed in this chapter was deliberate. I hope the message it gives to communities is that they have issues that matter and processes and methodologies which can work for them.

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### Notes

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- 17 Mita, M. (1994), 'Trick or Treat. Issues of Feminism and Post-colonialism in Relation to the Arts', in *Te Pua Journal of Maori Women's Writing*, Research Unit for Maori Education, University of Auckland, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 37-41.
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- 19 Sykes, R. B. (1989), *Black Majority*, Hudson Hawthorn, Melbourne, p. 146.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 226.
- 21 Sykes, A. (1994), 'Constitutional Reform and Mana Wahine', in *Te Pua Journal of Maori Women's Writing*, Research Unit for Maori Education, University of Auckland, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 15-20.

From the vantage point of the colonized, the term 'research' is inextricably linked with European colonialism; the way in which scientific research has been implicated in the worst excesses of imperialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples. Here, an indigenous researcher issues a clarion call for the decolonization of research methods.

In the first part of the book, the author critically examines the historical and philosophical base of Western research. Extending the work of Foucault, she explores the intersections of imperialism, knowledge and research; en route she provides a history of knowledge from the Enlightenment to postcoloniality. The second part of the book meets an urgent demand: people who are carrying out their own research projects need literature which validates their frustrations in dealing with various Western paradigms. In setting an agenda for planning and implementing indigenous research, the author shows how such programmes are part of the wider project of reclaiming control over indigenous ways of knowing and being.

'NO BUDDING RESEARCHER SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE ACADEMY WITHOUT READING THIS BOOK'

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