

Decolonising Māori narratives: Pūrākau as a method

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Abstract: This paper is drawn from the methodological journey chartered in my doctoral thesis and was originally presented at the Mai Doctoral Conference, Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiāraangi. Pūrākau, a term usually used to refer to Māori myths and legends, was deliberately designated as a methodological tool to investigate the topic of my study - the 'stories' of Māori teachers. However, to make methodological space for pūrākau as a narrative inquiry method was not a straightforward shift. This paper sets out the way pūrākau as methodology was developed and describes the engagement with decolonizing methodologies and kaupapa Māori as the work of the Indigenous bricoleur.

Keywords: bricoleur; decolonising methodologies; pūrākau

Introduction

Pūrākau is a term not usually associated with academic writing or research methodology; rather, pūrākau is most commonly used to refer to Māori 'myths and legends'. Pūrākau, however, should not be relegated to the category of fiction and fable of the past. Pūrākau, a traditional form of Māori narrative, contains philosophical thought, epistemological constructs, cultural codes, and worldviews that are fundamental to our identity as Māori. Pūrākau are a collection of traditional oral narratives that should not only be protected, but also understood as a pedagogical-based anthology of literature that are still relevant today. Furthermore, pūrākau can continue to be constructed in various forms, contexts and media to better understand the experiences of our lives as Māori - including the research context.

The potential of pūrākau to represent stories of ako (Māori pedagogy) was a methodological discovery during my doctoral study of Māori teachers' work in secondary schools (see Lee, 2008). However, pūrākau as methodology did not emerge in a linear way from Māori tradition to research. Encouraged by broader Indigenous developments of 'decolonising methodologies' and the local expansion of kaupapa Māori theory, pūrākau was reconceptualised as a culturally responsive construct for narrative inquiry into Māori teachers' work. Pūrākau as methodology also draws from and responds to the wider historical, social and political research contexts, in particular the early New Zealand 'research' context that recorded pūrākau as myths and legends. Further, given the current preference for 'evidence-based' educational research, this paper sets out the way pūrākau as methodology developed and describes the work of the Indigenous qualitative researcher as the Indigenous bricoleur.

Decolonising methodologies

'Decolonising methodologies', as coined by L. T. Smith (1999), describes a research approach that recognises the exclusive nature of the knowledge that has emerged from western 'scientific' research codified within ideologies such as imperialism and colonialism. Decolonising methodologies responds to traditional positivist approaches by attempting to recover, re-cognise, re-create, and 'research back' by utilising our own Indigenous ontological and epistemological constructs. Given the diversity of Indigenous experience and varied attempts to resist colonization, such an approach cannot be reduced to a singular, one-dimensional solution, theory, or methodology. Within each Indigenous group there are multiple sites from which to intervene that require a range of research projects that are ethical,

respectful and meaningful for, by and with Indigenous people themselves. L. T. Smith (1999) identifies 25 different research projects undertaken by Indigenous communities (some of which are a mix of existing conventional research methods and Indigenous practices) that all centre on “the survival of peoples, cultures and languages; the struggle to become self-determining, the need to take back control of our destinies” (p. 142). One of these research projects is storytelling.

Storytelling has always been one of the key ways knowledge was sustained and protected within Indigenous communities. Reclaiming story-telling and retelling our traditional stories is to engage in one form of decolonization. Sami researcher, Koukkanen (2000) concurs:

Contemporary Indigenous peoples’ narrative knowledge has to be part of the decolonisation process which is taking place within all Indigenous peoples’ societies. Throughout history oral traditions have been and remain the memory of a people encompassing all aspects of life regarded as important within a culture. A common view of Indigenous people is that stories tell who “we” are. This includes stories of origin and of ancestors, world view, values and knowledge for everyday survival (p. 421).

Indigenous researchers have not only re-employed popular qualitative storytelling approaches such as a life-history method to ensure contemporary lives and realities are heard, but are also reviving traditional modes of storytelling in contemporary ways.

Jo-ann Archibald’s (1997) PhD thesis *Coyote learns to make a storybasket: The place of First Nations stories in education* provides inspiration to record and retell our stories in culturally consistent ways. From the Sto:lo Nation, British Columbia, Archibald uses the Coyote as a traditional trickster character to explore, investigate, and reflect on the pedagogical value of First Nation story-telling traditions, or what Archibald refers to as ‘storywork’. Archibald not only incorporates the Coyote in her thesis but also develops theoretical principles for making sense, meaning and learning from the stories. She argues that it is important to draw on First Nation theories to understand the stories, rather than western theories that don’t ‘fit’; to do otherwise engages in “new acts of colonisation” (p. 21). She writes:

The issues and the way that we want to deal with the issues – the types of conversations and talks – must be given space for us to fill. This does not mean that non-Native people should forever be excluded from the conversations. I am suggesting that we, First Nations, need some space to talk: to share our stories in our own way, to create our culturally based discourse, develop our ways to validate our discourse, then open the conversations for others to join (Archibald, 1997, p. 26).

Her study of First Nation’s orality also directly tackles the tension between western scholarly writing traditions of explicit analysis and Indigenous implicitness and subtlety in the narratives (spoken in their native language) to meet the demands of academic rigour and retain cultural integrity.

Other writers whose work is informed by their own cultural narratives include Peter Cole (2006) from the Douglas (Xa’xta) First Nation of British Columbia. He ‘writes back’ in a creative style that challenges conventional academic writing to illustrate the ways that language has been used to limit, control and define, in particular, Indigenous people. In his article ‘Language as Technology in Indigenous Cultures’ (2006) his precise, rhythmic and poetic style encourages an exploration of language, style and textual layout. Marlene Atleo (2003) a First Nation’s woman from the Nuu-chah-nulth people and rural community in Clayoquot Sound, British Columbia, employs the traditional metaphor of qu’uuc (a large Nuu-chah-nulth burden basket) to explore meaning in narratives, in particular their own learning and teaching theories. Another First Nation woman from the Nlakapamux people,

British Columbia, Shirley Sterling (2002) uses the traditional genre of *spilaxam* (personal narrative) of grandmothers to explore models for transmitting their culture and teaching their children. In a similar way these Indigenous researchers have re-employed their traditional narratives to inform their research and express their stories and my research too looked to *pūrākau* to re-present contemporary stories of *ako* by Māori teachers.

Re-presenting *pūrākau*

Drawing on traditional Māori narratives to express our experiences as Māori is not new. As soon as Māori became literate in the skills of reading and writing the experimentation with encrypting oral narratives in the written word began. For instance, Reedy (1993) points out that since the 1830s and 1840s, Māori have produced a voluminous literature that include newspapers, letters, reports, essays, histories, stories and songs. According to Reedy (1997), much of these early written narratives though, remain unpublished and still in manuscript form, in private individual or *whānau* collections or in *Māori* language periodicals of the nineteenth century – of which only a small amount has been translated into English. Māori also engaged the technology of written literacy to record *pūrākau*, and were unafraid to adapt *pūrākau* to fit the occasion or purpose.

Pūrākau shared in the Native Land Courts, which were designed to individualise Māori land titles and hasten the purchase of Maori land, is one such example. Histories preserved in *pūrākau* were told to make the case of a particular *whānau*, *hapū* or *iwi* connection to the land within specific boundaries. There are various examples of uninterrupted *pūrākau* narratives with detail and explanations of tribal events, stories of building alliances through marriage, reciprocity, family feuds and so on. However, conscious of the court's function, Māori narrators purposefully changed the emphasis of the *pūrākau*. Whereas, traditional *pūrākau* centred on relationships, Māori retold these narratives to focus issues of occupation and land rights in ways that Pākehā would understand (Parsonson, 2001). Māori adapted the style of their *pūrākau* appropriately, and deliberately left other information out. Acutely aware of context, *pūrākau* were crafted by Māori in new ways to satisfy the audience and context, in this case the judicial process of court.

Another example of Māori experimentation with traditional forms of knowledge is by Māori writers and artists. The establishment of the 'Māori Artists and Writers Society' in 1973, marked the intention of practitioners in their respective fields to creatively pioneer ways of using traditional forms in contemporary settings. In *Māori artists of the South Pacific* (Mataira, 1984), Ford remarks:

Old images were broken down and reformed, new materials replaced the traditional ones and the content looked both backward into the past and forward into the future. The exact copying of previous designs was not seen as the only means of conserving the old. Instead, the ancient custom of treasurable uniqueness became the justification and motivation for the new symbols and shapes to express each new venture (p. 9).

Each person profiled in this book, including Māori writer Patricia Grace and poet Hone Tuwhare, refuse to be 'copycats' and retain only the templates of the past. Instead they attempt to incorporate Māori tradition to express and explain contemporary Māori lives and issues.

Ruahine: Mythic Women by Ngahua Te Awekotuku (2003) is a Māori writer re-presenting traditional *pūrākau* in a new form. Te Awekotuku tells her own version of some well-known *pūrākau* that feature powerful women. These *pūrākau* are a significant departure from most other written *pūrākau* that either provide direct translations of Māori *pūrākau* (Biggs, 1997;

Jones & Biggs, 1995; Reedy, 1993), children's stories (Sullivan, 2002; Tairaroa-Smithies & Tairaroa, 2006; Te Kanawa, 1997), or interpretations of pūrākau written by non-Māori (Grace, 2003; Orbell, 1992; Reed, 2004). Despite being written in the English language, Te Awēkotuku maintains the characteristics of traditional pūrākau. They are rich in detail, subtle in their teachings, yet forthright and unabashed. Her version of events reaffirms the power, strength, and position of Māori women in traditional Māori society. Her telling of pūrākau is enchanting, seductive, riveting and thought provoking.

Pūrākau has also been progressed in other media beyond the written to text digital media, as well as performance such as theatre (see Grace-Smith, 1997). Māori filmmaker Merita Mita and others have used video imaging to continue telling 'our stories'. According to Mita (2000) visual media offers a more fluid movement between time and space than the confines of literary structures on the page. Intent on preserving our history as well as producing pūrākau that explore our contemporary culture, Mita reinforces the purpose of pūrākau as an exploration and exposition of culture and identity. She asserts:

We must not overlook the fact, that each of us is born with story, and each of us has responsibility to pass those stories on. To fortify our children and grandchildren, and help them cope with an increasingly material and technological world, we have to tell them the stories which re-enforce their identity, build their self worth and self-esteem, and empower them with knowledge (p. 8).

Māori have continued to explore pūrākau in new arenas – changing, adapting, adding and recreating pūrākau to suit modern-day settings. The research context is not to be excluded.

Pūrākau as a kaupapa Māori methodological process is already being used in therapeutic clinical settings when working with Māori tangata whaiora (mental health clients) and their whānau. Clinical practitioner Diana Rangihuna refers to the process in which she utilises pūrākau as 'mahi ā ngā atua' (the deeds of the gods) (Cherrington, 2003). Rangihuna shares traditional pūrākau (that feature ngā atua) with the tangata whaiora and their whānau, which is followed by wānanga that includes discussion and debate about the knowledge, meanings, and messages embedded in the pūrākau. In particular, the participants explore the trials and tribulations, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of ngā atua and tangata whaiora themselves. According to Cherrington (2003), the most significant part of the pūrākau as therapy is the opportunity for each tangata whaiora and their whānau to retell, recreate and creatively represent the pūrākau (which may include waiata, haka, poetry, drama, sculpting, painting, drawing, storytelling, and/or writing) in ways that connect to their own understandings and experiences. Pūrākau, Cherrington (2003) argues, is a powerful medium that pre-existed for Māori long before any western-based treatment and continues to offer tangata whaiora a culturally specific and valid therapeutic process.

An article entitled 'Interview with a Tree' by L. T. Smith (1998) is an example of a pūrākau-type portrayal in the academic arena. Presented in a simple interview style, the pūrākau unfolds to demonstrate some of the cross-cultural issues facing Māori in the judicial process. Issues of identity based on whakapapa, the effects of urbanisation, and the complexities of representation are covered in this pūrākau. Māori (or the tree's) worldviews are juxtaposed with the values, beliefs, culture and power of the dominant group in the context of the court. The following short excerpt illustrates the way in which these issues are brought to the fore as well as the style of the portrayal:

Interviewer: Right now I am standing outside the High Court in Auckland as the participants and spectators leave the court at the close of the day's session. One participant in the court proceedings has been hanging around the court for a very long time. Non-human entity, I understand that you claim to be among other things a Christmas tree, a pan-tree, an urban tree, a native tree, a Pohutukawa tree, a

descendant of a God who created human beings and insects, a relation of Sir Mahuta and other famous people ...

Tree: You missed out that I am a seed from Rangiatea

Interviewer: Let me get this right, you claim to be a tree and seed at the same time? (Smith, 1998, p. 75).

The often-comical conversation between the tree and mono-cultural interviewer serves to engage the reader in the complexities of the legal definitions of Māori, a topic often reserved for the Māori elite in the courtroom. The light-hearted and engaging style makes some of the key issues accessible to an audience beyond Māori leaders and the legal profession. The pūrākau is also powerful because the tree not only represents Māori, but the pohutukawa tree has a direct relationship with Māori people through whakapapa as a descendant of Tane Mahuta. Therefore, while the pūrākau may be regarded as entertaining, at another level, talking with a tree or the deity Tane Mahuta is possible and acceptable.

Pūrākau provide a conceptual framework of representation that is relevant to research. The innovative methodological work of international Indigenous scholars as well as local Māori writers and academics provides inspiration to look beyond conventional research methods and academic styles of documentation and re-turn to our own narratives, to experiment with literary techniques to research, and disseminate knowledge in ways that are culturally relevant and accessible. Pūrākau offer a kaupapa Māori approach to qualitative narrative inquiry; critical to this approach is the decolonizing process.

Decolonising pūrākau

Kaupapa Māori originally referred to a body of knowledge that has always been integral to the development of Māori epistemological and ontological constructions of the world (Nepe, 1991). More recently, kaupapa Māori has become a popular term in research circles referring to Māori-centred philosophies, frameworks and practices, and is underpinned in a political context by the notion of tino rangatiratanga (absolute self-determination) and the Treaty of Waitangi (Nepe, 1991; Bishop, 1994; Smith, 1997). Kaupapa Māori is also used by academics to refer to Māori theoretical positioning (G. H. Smith, 1997; Jenkins, 2000; Pihama, 2001), a social project (Smith, 2006) and research philosophy (Bishop, 2005; Mead, 1997; Pihama, Cram, & Walker, 2002; Smith, 2005). While adherents to kaupapa Māori have begun to develop different aspects of this theoretical framework in a range of disciplines, including health (Barnes, 2000; Pihama, Jenkins & Middleton, 2003) and accounting (McNicholas & Barret, 2003), the political dimension of kaupapa Māori theory is central in order to intervene in the hegemonic discourses that surround Māori. Cheryl Waerea-i-te-rangi Smith (2002) foregrounds the political nature of kaupapa Māori when she says, “Kaupapa Māori theory emerges out of practice, out of struggle, out of experience of Māori who engage struggle, who reject, who fight back, and who claim space for the legitimacy of Māori knowledge” (p. 13). In this regard, kaupapa Māori can be viewed as a Māori expression of a decolonizing methodology and central in reclaiming pūrākau as a narrative inquiry that is not only appropriate, but is a legitimate way to represent and research our ‘stories’ today.

It is well known that alongside other colonizing devices, research was used to define, destroy and deter the valuing of Indigenous knowledge, philosophies and practices (Mikaere, 1995; Smith, 1999; Battiste, 2000). The early documentation of Māori narratives by Eurocentric anthropologists and ethnographers was part of this research endeavour in Aotearoa. Ani Mikaere (1995) describes the outcomes of this ‘research’ (or rather the inaccurate recordings and imaginary portrayals of our narratives) as ‘dangerous’ because it created epistemological disarray, destabilised religious beliefs and upset the balance of social structures. Furthermore, pūrākau were rendered as mere fantasy.

It was not uncommon for these early researchers to take great liberties in translating, editing and embellishing the original pūrākau for their own purposes, many writers deliberately melded pūrākau to create one totalising, complete story. For example, A. W. Reed (a well-know collector and publisher of Māori language and culture) readily admitted to regularly changing pūrākau with the intention of ‘improving’ the overall readability of the story. In the preface to the 1963 edition of the *Reed Book of Māori Mythology*, Reed (2004) states:

The purpose of the book is to put into simple, connected narrative form, and in a logical sequence of categories, the major legends and beliefs with their more important variants, and thus to provide a volume of straightforward reading and easy reference (p. xx).

Conscious that common pūrākau often varied between tribal groups and sometimes amongst the same tribe, Reed was “in the business of combining different tribal versions to make a satisfying composite picture” (Calman, 2004, p. xiii) - ‘hybrid stories’ (Calman, 2004) that did not belong to any one tribe. Bishop and Glynn (1999) argue that the simplification of the narratives “commodified Māori knowledge for consumption” (p. 17), and reflected the inadequacy of Pākehā to understand and accept the complex nature of a tribal system that supported a diversity of histories and narratives, including pūrākau.

Reed wasn’t alone in the re-shaping of pūrākau; it was an accepted research practice by New Zealand anthropologists and ethnographers of the day to produce this type of synthesis (Calman, 2004). The ‘Great Fleet’ story, developed by Best (1974), is a prime example of the way fragments of different tribal narratives were combined to create the theory that after Kupe in 950 AD and Toi in 1150 AD, a Great Fleet of canoes followed. Later Pākehā ethnologist Simmons (1976), challenged Best’s ‘Great Fleet’ claim by comparing tribal genealogies and Pūrākau. He found that the ancestral waka (canoe) of tribal groups arrived sometimes 12 generations apart, making the concept of a unified ‘fleet’ a sham. Walker (2004) holds Percy Smith responsible for the truncating of tribal genealogies into this notion of a unified arrival of a fleet of canoes. He describes the ‘Great Fleet’ as “just another example of the expropriation and transformation of knowledge by the coloniser” (Walker, 2004, p. 39). The tampering with tribal migration pūrākau to present a tidy synthesis became the basis of the ‘Māori myths and legends’ taught at schools for decades, and as Bishop and Glynn (1999) note, continues to be used by some teachers, politicians and educationalists today.

Christianity (alongside key ‘civilising’ practices such as schooling) also contributed towards the denigration of Māori knowledge, beliefs, values, social structures and pedagogies, including pūrākau. Mikaere (1995) points out that social and spiritual disorder was created, in part, by the promotion of one set of beliefs, values and knowledge (or evidence) as more valid than another, which covertly worked to destroy traditional Māori belief systems. Māori gradually incorporated various aspects of Christian teachings into their own worldview and they constructed their own “blend of religious beliefs” (Mikaere, 1995, p. 71). Mikaere (1995) identifies Christianity as the main cause for this change. She says, “it was through their [missionaries] influence that the very heart of Māori religion and cosmogony, was colonised” (p. 71). In relation to pūrākau, there was a subtle, but significant shift towards stories that reflected Pākehā worldviews; some pūrākau had a striking resemblance to Christian stories.

The way the beliefs, values and worldviews of early Pākehā researchers were inscribed in the pūrākau they reproduced were also evident in the purging of pūrākau of any references to female and male genitals, including sexual liaisons. Ngahuia Te Awakotuku (cited in Mikaere, 1995) describes these writers as “inevitably eurocentric, and quite openly and tritely colonial” (p. 72). In discussing Reed’s perspective to re-presenting Māori ‘myths and legends’, Calman (2004) acknowledges that Reed wrote “within a Victorian sensibility of European racial superiority, the bias of Christianity, prudishness and, in many cases, simple

lack of knowledge of te reo and tikanga Māori” (p. xiv). For example, while a South Island version of the pūrākau of ‘Rona’ tells of Hoka’s testicles being torn off, Reed corrupts the pūrākau by referring instead to a ‘part’ of Hoka (Calman, 2004, p. xiv). Many of the pūrākau popularised as Māori myths and legends were reshaped from a male, Pākehā, Christian perspective, and sanitised to be acceptable for public consumption.

Identifying the colonial influences on our cultural traditions is an important part of the reclamation process of pūrākau as methodology. However, analysing the way pūrākau have been mistreated in the past, and charting the development of pūrākau in contemporary settings is only part of proposing pūrākau as methodology. As well as distinguishing the traditional characteristics of pūrākau to inform pūrākau research (see Lee, 2008), it is also necessary to ‘negotiate’ and position pūrākau in the current methodological context. I have described this as the work of an Indigenous bricoleur.

The Indigenous bricoleur

To borrow Lévi-Strauss’ (1966) concept of the ‘bricoleur’ to describe the qualitative researcher and the research they produce as the ‘bricolage’, the ‘Indigenous bricoleur’ is a useful way to think about how decolonizing methodologies, kaupapa Māori theory and other qualitative narrative inquiry methods influenced the development of pūrākau methodology. In brief, Lévi-Strauss (1966) refers to the bricoleur as a “professional do-it-yourself person” (p. 17) whose task is to weave together sets of practices as possible solutions to a specific problem. In order to create the bricolage, the bricoleur must have broad knowledge of a range of methods that may adapt and evolve during this process as they seek to utilize the most useful tools to find the solutions to that particular situation. For the bricoleur, the scope (including the questions) of the research and the methods are determined by the context itself. Subsequently, a multi-method approach may be utilised or methods created anew.

To create a successful bricolage, the researcher needs an overarching knowledge of interpretive paradigms, and may cautiously move between them. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) explain, “The research-as-bricoleur-theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms” (p. 4). The knowledge of philosophical systems a researcher should possess includes an understanding of the way gender, ethnicity, social class and power-relation constructs inform and shape research; furthermore, that all research is value-laden. Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) advocate that such a multidisciplinary approach requires “a new level of research consciousness” (p. 316) where the researcher is not only familiar with multiple methods but is also cognisant of how the bricolage is influenced by his or her perspective, social location and personal history. Hence, the bricolage (or research product) can be viewed as “a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher’s images, understandings and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 4). A bricolage recognises and reflects the complexities and realities of lived experience of not only the participants, but also the researchers themselves.

The work of a researcher as bricoleur can more specifically be described as a methodological bricoleur, a theoretical bricoleur, an interpretive bricoleur, a political bricoleur, a gendered bricoleur, a narrative bricoleur (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and a critical researcher-as-bricoleur (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). I advance that there is also the Indigenous bricoleur. The development of Indigenous scholarship and projects based on decolonising methodologies (Smith, 1999) can be viewed as a bricoleur approach already used by Indigenous academics and researchers. In response to the history of research that has often demeaned Indigenous knowledge, history and experiences, to participate in the research academy not only requires a return to our own epistemological frameworks, but the reworking of existing conventional research practices.

A pūrākau approach does not exclude autobiographical, testimonio, oral history, case-study type research methods, nor does it assume these methods have nothing to offer. Pūrākau as methodology has undoubtedly been influenced by narrative-based inquiry research, a broad research spectrum that provides a multiplicity of research methods. Life history (Goodson & Sikes, 2001) and portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983) are the two key narrative inquiry research practices that influenced the development of pūrākau as methodology in my doctoral study. Both narrative methods offered appropriate and innovative ways to research, record and represent Māori teacher's stories, however, both methods also had their limitations in the investigation and expression of ako that pūrākau was able to bridge (see Lee, 2008). In an effort to create a bricolage of our experience and engage with the audience in culturally relevant ways, portrayals of a pūrākau may create what Aldama (2001) refers to as a "hybridization of literary or writing practices" or "crosscultural literary genres" (p. 77). As an Indigenous bricoleur I tinkered with research methods in the process of actively seeking the most appropriate way to engage the topic of Māori teachers' use of ako.

Another important aspect of the bricoleur's approach to determining the methodological practices for a particular research study is to engage with the current socio-political research context. Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) describe this aspect of the bricoleur's work as a "methodological negotiator" (p. 317). They state:

A [bricoleur's] consciousness refuses the passive acceptance of externally imposed research methods that tacitly certify modes justifying knowledges that are decontextualized, reductionistic, and inscribed by dominant modes of power (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 318).

Part of negotiating the methodological landscape and selecting pūrākau as my chosen research methodology was in response to the current evidence-based education context. Considered 'proper' scientific research, evidence-based research in England and the United States emphasises large, randomised controlled trials. Although evidence-based research is also preferred in New Zealand, the definition of 'best evidence' in the Ministry of Education's Best Evidence Series (BES) is awarded a much wider definition (see Alton-Lee, 2003). However qualitative narrative-inquiry, of which pūrākau research is a part, still struggles to find acceptance in this evidence-based discourse because it cannot be easily measured, fixed or defined. Selecting the topic of Māori teachers' stories as a topic and pūrākau as methodology was a deliberate act in a research climate that is inclined to overlook the wisdom and experience of teachers, in particular, Māori teachers. Pūrākau also offers an opportunity to investigate ako in relation to Māori teachers' pedagogy – cultural qualities that are often made peripheral in a system that is focused on 'outcomes'. Pūrākau as methodology has developed in an effort to portray the culture of, as well as the culture generated by, Māori teachers.

An Indigenous bricoleur not only attempts to reclaim cultural traditions such as pūrākau, but simultaneously articulates these traditions in new forms. In doing so, we strive to create knowledge outside the production and control of the powerful and elite, a different sort of narrative that aims to contribute to the social transformation of Indigenous groups.

Conclusion

The need to advance pūrākau as methodology was more than a desire to tell traditional 'stories', recount tribal anecdotes or create cultural vignettes. To make methodological space for a culturally responsive narrative approach was fuelled by the knowledge that our own cultural narratives also offer legitimate ways of talking, researching and representing our stories. Furthermore, a key task of the Indigenous bricoleur required an analysis of the way colonisation has impacted on Māori narratives. Such an approach sought to recognise the

ways the mythologising of pūrākau has had devastating and far-reaching consequences for Māori society, which serves to remind us of the ways research is closely linked to issues of power, culture and identity.

Encouraged by other Indigenous scholarship and research activities that share a commitment to engage in decolonizing methodologies to ensure that the appropriate research practices meet the needs of our communities, pūrākau emerged as a relevant narrative inquiry solution to the exploration of ako. While conventional methods of narrative inquiry offer useful and creative approaches to the documentation of lived experiences, the Indigenous bricoleur draws on traditional protocols and practices of pūrākau to provide guidelines for Māori researchers to progress pūrākau in innovative and creative ways. Indigenous peoples have already begun to create 'spaces' in the academic arena to story-talk, pūrākau is one way for Māori to narrate our own renditions within our own cultural and research frameworks.

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