8 Awatere, *Maori Sovereignty*, p. 34.
18 Morris, 'International Law and Political', pp. 55–86.
23 See Chapter 9.
24 I have selected these sayings, having heard them used on several occasions as evaluative comments on people. The saying 'Tītiro, whakarongo, kore' comes from Te Atarangi, the Maori language programme for adults. It seems to be a basic code of conduct in a number of situations for researchers. Actually these sorts of sayings are often spoken by the kin, or older women, on a marae as they watch, very keenly, what people are doing.

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 imaginable dimension. Poor nations do their best to keep up. Corporations and industries fund their own research and sometimes gather data for governments. These programmes are often global in scope. Non-government organizations and local community groups also carry out research and involve themselves in the resulting analysis and critique. 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 although this is a central core of the project activity. In addition to reservations about research outlined in earlier chapters, there is another reason for this reticence. Research is also regarded as the domain of experts who have advanced educational qualifications and access to a 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 of 'real' researchers. Furthermore, indigenous communities as
part of the self-determination agenda 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 that by definition is 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 national 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 that 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 that 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 'localized Kahnawake, national Mohawk, broader Iroquois, and pan-Native.' 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.' 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 categorize these aspects of the community for they frequently overlap. For example, the spiritual element of Aztlán crosses over into its social-historical aspect because Aztlán is not only a physical region but is also a state of mind, a spiritual belief.

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 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. These approaches enable not only communities but also indigenous researchers, who are thus able to work 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, and have skills or sensitivities that 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, artists and writers, health workers and 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 political engagements with Western feminism and 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, one that connects and grounds a wide range of their concerns at local, national and global levels. One result is the burgeoning of a distinctive indigenous women's literature that 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. Indigenous community development needs to be informed by community-based research that respects and enhances community processes. This is a significant challenge across the globe in terms of development as so many communities are held hostage to expert research from the West and to models of development that negate local and indigenous knowledge. In the Maori context there is growing research capacity at the community level and some outstanding models of community-based research institutes that work at the interface of community development.

**Iwi and Indigenous Nation Research**

Iwi is sometimes loosely translated as 'tribe' but is used by Maori people to describe their geopolitical, inter-generational indigenous institutions and relationships that are connected to place, history and shared cultural protocols. Iwi encompasses many different communities. For Maori it is the larger political entity of several smaller groups linked closely by genealogy and shared customary practices. Iwi research currently being conducted in New Zealand covers a wide range. 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, iwi research is being conducted in the areas of resource management, economic development, health, education, justice, family and children, flora and fauna, and traditional knowledges. In the case of one iwi, Ngati Awa, a Ngati Awa Research Centre was established in 1989 to undertake research to support a claim to the Waitangi Tribunal. The centre has carried out research which has resulted in the repatriation of the carved meeting house Mataatu, reopened in 2011 after over a hundred years of alienation from the iwi. After settlement of the claim, the research centre became the Ngati Awa Research and Archives Trust, and continues to supports economic, environmental and social research. The research centre is one activity managed by the runanga or governance council. It has employed several young people with academic qualifications as researchers. Ngati Awa has also established a tribal university, Te Whare Wananga a Awanuiarangi, which offers a range of qualifications including a doctoral degree, all of which have a unique Maori knowledge component. Te Whare Wananga a Awanuiarangi attracts students from all over New Zealand and indigenous students from other countries. Its staff and students make a substantial contribution to development across many iwi contexts.

Another iwi, Waikato Tainui, has established its own College of Research and Development. The iwi has invested significantly in graduate scholarships that will assist students to complete both their studies and a relevant piece of research. This college is now led by a highly respected
researcher from the *iwi* and the expectation is that she will lead the diverse range of projects being undertaken to support development. Other *iwi* have relied on the very small pool of Maori with tertiary-level qualifications to conduct the extensive research required to sustain a claim to the Waitangi Tribunal and to undertake broader studies. 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: failure to take into account the views and feelings of different *iwi* interests can have huge negative ramifications for the *iwi* 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 ‘infighting’ is rampant. Those within tend to interpret such political outcomes as a consequence of being driven by the government agenda for settlement at any cost rather than as 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 Hawaiian academic attempting to work as a Hawaiian academic in the University of Hawaii. 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 an interest in either topics or methodologies. 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 administrative 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.
Currently there are a number of examples of indigenous research centres inside universities across the world – in several Australian contexts, in Sweden, Finland and Norway, in Canada, in the United States, in Latin America and in Africa. The Centre for Sami Research at the University of Umeå in Sweden has a large historical database of the Sami population that enables demographic and social research. The University of Washington School of Social Work has a large team of native researchers working across the country on healing historical trauma. In Australia there are indigenous research centres within most institutions, and an exciting new generation of Aborigine and Torres Strait Islands scholars are working there.

Nga Pae o Te Maramatanga is New Zealand’s Maori Centre of Research Excellence. It was established in 2002 after a competitive bidding process overseen by central government, and is one of only eight centres of research excellence in the country. Nga Pae o Te Maramatanga is committed to a vision of the transformation of society through excellent Maori research. Professor Michael Walker, an internationally acclaimed biological scientist, and I, as a social scientist and educator, became the first joint directors. One unique feature of Nga Pae o Te Maramatanga is the sheer breadth of the collaboration between Maori researchers from diverse disciplines and institutions – from the single engineer to the artists, the scientists, social scientists and educationists. One of the first aims of the centre was to produce 500 Maori with PhD qualifications within 5 years. That visionary aim was first suggested by Professor Graham Hingararoa Smith, who led the development of the proposal. His view was that we had to grow the numbers of Maori in higher education in tandem with a simultaneous expansion of early childhood education: we needed to produce a generation of our own indigenous intellectuals to lead the transformation of our own communities. His aim was heralded as an ambitious target and there seemed general disbelief, especially in the non-Maori community, that such a goal would ever be achieved.

Years of work and development went into achieving a centre of excellence. Overcoming the educational barriers of colonialism – breaking through the glass ceilings discipline by discipline, and institution by institution – has literally taken Maori people decades. Some of our early role models graduated from university in the late nineteenth century. The drive for research capacity began more purposefully in the late 1980s, when political activists called for Maori control of research undertaken in our own communities by outsiders, and advanced arguments for greater self-determination across all dimensions of our lives. Within the host institution of the new centre of research excellence there were already examples of small groups of Maori researchers working together within education, health and Maori Studies. Establishing even small research groups can be challenging in any university institution – but much more so when indigenous knowledge and research were still viewed by senior academic staff with great scepticism and, in some cases, active hostility.

The centre set out to build an entirely new research infrastructure with intersecting linkages: it would connect indigenous researchers to each other across disciplines and institutions; communities to researchers; and indigenous research to indigenous development. One of the first tasks of the centre was to strengthen research capacity by producing more researchers with doctoral qualifications. The MAI doctoral support programme first designed by Graham Hingararoa Smith at the University of Auckland was implemented as a national programme. Maori doctoral students who participated in the programme met regularly as a group to discuss shared concerns, critique literature and contest their ideas in a safe environment. National conferences and writing retreats were funded and senior Maori academic staff were brought in as facilitators and mentors. An online journal, the MAI Review, was developed for students, and a refereed journal, AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples, for researchers. Alongside these initiatives was a national research fund that fostered multi-disciplinary and collaborative research that would lead to positive outcomes for Maori communities. The goal of achieving 500 Maori PhD graduates was achieved, with many students being the first Maori to graduate at that level in their respective disciplines.

Training Indigenous Researchers

What large research institutions and research cultures offer are the programmes, resources, facilities and structures that can, if the conditions are appropriate, support and train indigenous researchers. Although our 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 Saskatchewan:
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. Strategies for surviving the experience while gaining the qualification are employed to varying degrees by indigenous students. They 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 one reaches graduate level or enters employment 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 specialty 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: through tasks such as literature reviews, data entry, transcribing, data analysis and conducting interviews, they gradually build the capacity to take 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. These 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 a number of additional skills that will 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 that 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 when these 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 be repeated again. Informal approaches can be just as fraught, with one elder consulting others on one matter, and then the consultation process having to be 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 the long-term mentor of an indigenous researcher. Certain elders are more appropriate and helpful than others - some may pursue their own agendas, while others remain quietly in the background, providing assurance, support and critical or 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 being either an insider or 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' or '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 tops matching the bottoms), 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 that 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 in these discussions I skirted many confidences: some of these I had been asked to protect; on others I simply decided to keep silent. 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 novice 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 researchers 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 the latter’s 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 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 by 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 that 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 that provides a focus and direction helpful 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
2 Ibid., p. 19.

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 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 lawyers and constitutional experts, others by 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.

It is not claimed that the projects are entirely indigenous, or that they 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 multi-disciplinary 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.