

# Ngā Whiringa Muka

Adult Literacy and Employment

Whanganui Iwi Research Project



Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography

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Te Puna Mātauranga o Whanganui

*Whanganui Iwi Education Authority*



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Whanganui Iwi Researcher

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**Te Puna Mātauranga o Whanganui**

*Whanganui Iwi Education Authority*

February 2005

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# 1. Introduction

*Nau mai i te nuku*  
*Nau mai i te rangi*  
*Tēnei nō mua*  
*He tukunga iho ki tātou*

Whanganui Iwi is the tribal confederation of local tāngata whenua (indigenous peoples) who have lived in, beside, and with the Whanganui River for centuries.<sup>1</sup> Whanganui Iwi is widely known as the Whanganui River people, or simply 'The River People'. Ancestral tribal narrative expresses our close lived knowing of our ancestral River – handed down from generation to generation.

Underlying this is an ancestral philosophy which pays deep respect for the sacredness of The River – in the rich web of life that it supports (of which people are a part of), and the wider web of life that The River itself is part of. Through our lived ancestral knowing of The River, we come to be able to understand and speak about, life itself.

This understanding creates an ethic – an ethic that prescribes that our ancestral responsibility is to speak about The River's sanctity, and to advocate that as peoples, we must all set our activities first and foremost around the values that The River has determined for itself.

This ethic is reflected in our ancestral adaptive practices, such as customary fishing, boating and navigation, and cleansing and healing practices. We have respected and lived according to the natural order and seasonal dynamics of The River for centuries.<sup>2</sup> This is widely expressed in the oft-quoted Whanganui Iwi axiom,

*E rere kau mai Te Awa nui*  
*Mai i Te Kāhui Maunga ki Tangaroa*  
*Ko au Te Awa*  
*Ko Te Awa ko au*

*The River has always flowed*  
*from The Mountains to The Sea*  
*I am The River*  
*The River is me*

## 2. Indigenous peoples, and adult literacy and employment: a literature review

### Introduction

*I often heard our old people speak of the streams and springs that flow from Koro Ruapehu, as toto (blood). They were referring to the life essence that flows in our ancestral streams and rivers, from The Mountains to The Sea. And if we look at the depth of that, they were referring to the life force that provides all living things with their life sustenance. Without that sustenance there can be no life. . . . There is no separateness of the life force of the natural world and the life force of people.*

*It is very simple to just look at water and say that is just another river. That is a very westernised view of things. As children, we were brought up on those rivers to learn about their life sustenance. It was not only in terms of mahinga kai, but also as waiora, life giving waters. As tāngata tiaki, we were put here to nurture and care for that life force – so it may sustain all living things.*

*Colin Richards, pāhake of Marangai Pāh, Ngāti Rangī, Whanganui Iwi nui tonu (2003).*

Whanganui Iwi is undertaking a research project to study the relationship between adult literacy and employment for uri, whānau, and hapū of Whanganui Iwi. The project is part of a wider adult literacy and employment study, and is supported by a New Zealand Foundation for Research, Science and Technology grant for a 3.5 year longitudinal study.<sup>3</sup>

The IALS survey (OECD, 1997 & 2000) – as part of a series of international surveys – measured the levels of adult English language literacy skills in New Zealand. It found that the majority of adult Māori have poor English language literacy skills. These levels are associated with a greater likelihood of unemployment, lower pay when in work, poor health, less likelihood of owning a home, and poorer basic skills for children living with adults with poor literacy.

Indigenous peoples acknowledge that English language literacy skills are critical for community wellbeing in today's world. However, the nature and extent of the distinctive issues facing indigenous communities, and their significance in adult literacy learning, policy and programme resourcing, have received scant research attention. Conventional literacy research has employed a 'deficit' approach where poor English language literacy levels are explained in terms of addressing failure within indigenous communities. This entrenched view requires challenging and deeper investigation.

The aim of the Iwi study is to develop a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding adult literacy and employment for indigenous communities, in order to develop meaningful and effective programmes for indigenous learners, and to better inform policy makers about literacy strategies that are appropriate and sustainable for indigenous communities.



The four objectives of the Iwi research study are:

- 1. To establish the adult literacy needs of Whanganui uri, both employed and unemployed.**  
The aim of this objective is to clarify the extent to which employment growth depends on adult (English language) literacy, numeracy and analytical thinking skills (ATS) for Whanganui Iwi, and to demonstrate how this relates to the wider adult Māori population.
- 2. To identify the social, attitudinal and economic barriers to adult literacy, numeracy and analytical thinking skills of Whanganui uri, both employed and unemployed.**  
The aim here is to clarify and understand the social and economic barriers to adult (English language) literacy for Whanganui Iwi, their impact on social outcomes, and how this relates to the wider adult Māori population. This will assist policy makers to implement literacy strategies that promote and support well-targeted initiatives that enable adult Māori learners to overcome barriers and engage more readily with English language literacy programmes. Of key consideration here is defining and understanding the distinctive community issues surrounding adult literacy for Whanganui Iwi.
- 3. To evaluate how effectively adult literacy programmes secure employment outcomes for Whanganui uri.**  
The aim of this objective is to identify the factors that lead to both successful and unsuccessful completion of adult (English language) literacy programmes for Whanganui Iwi learners, and how this affects learners in being able to create or find sustainable employment. Again, of key consideration here is defining and understanding the distinctive community issues surrounding adult literacy and employment for Whanganui Iwi, and how this relates to other Māori communities.
- 4. To examine adult literacy learning processes and their relationship to employment for uri, whānau and hapū of Whanganui Iwi.**  
The aim here is to examine how adult (English language) literacy programmes lead to sustainable employment outcomes for whānau and hapū. While the strategic focus is employment, a key consideration is how adult literacy for employment programmes assist in achieving the wider community-determined needs, goals and aspirations of whānau and hapū of Whanganui Iwi; and demonstrate how this relates to other Māori communities. This will assist policy makers to implement adult (English language) literacy for employment strategies and programmes that are community-appropriate, effective and sustainable.

A wider adult literacy and employment study of Whanganui City and Districts communities has also begun. This wider study is a collaborative community-based project being undertaken in partnership between the Whanganui District Library, Massey University and Whanganui Iwi. Other community organisations and stakeholders are also closely involved in carrying out and guiding the project.<sup>4</sup>

Whanganui Iwi is participating in the development and implementation of the wider collaborative study, as well as instigating the parallel Iwi study. We are grateful to the community and university partners for their support in making the Iwi research project possible.

## Literature review: methodology

*Our ancestral values are about respect for life, respect for all those things around us. It's not only about learning or hearing the kōrero of our old people, but about living it. And if you live it then you come to understand those values. So we were brought up to live them, and that's why we carry them today. Then naturally you care for the natural world because you understand and respect its life essence. So naturally that transfers on to your whānau, and your hapū and so forth.*

*The natural world is based on balance. . . . The life values we learned as children were to sustain a continuity of balance in the natural world. Those values are irreplaceable. If we can't sustain those values then we will lose the tikanga laid down by our old people for us. The danger in te ao hurihuri (the changing world), or the challenge for us, is to be able to sustain that balance. It's very much like a vision. If we don't have a vision then life is a struggle. Our vision was laid down for us by our old people, to be passed on to our tamariki mokopuna.*

*Colin Richards, pāhake of Marangai Pāh, Ngāti Rangī, Whanganui Iwi nui tonu (2003).*

Whanganui Iwi supports, and is developing, education initiatives which foster tribal graduates who are:

1. Proficient tribal speakers of Māori and English.
2. Proficient tribal users of Te Mita o Whanganui.
3. Capable tribal members who can apply ngā tikanga o Whanganui.
4. Knowledgeable tribal members of whakapapa (whānau, hapū and Iwi).
5. Knowledgeable tribal members of Whanganui tribal history (pre-Māori and pre-European).
6. Capable tribal exponents who can apply the Treaty of Waitangi in a Whanganui context.
7. Capable tribal members who can plan their future development (know where they are going).
8. Knowledgeable tribal members who are familiar with Whanganui tribal structures.
9. Tribal members who are responsive to cultural, technological, social, economic and political change.
10. Tribal members who are familiar with local, national and international activities.  
(Te Rūnanga o Te Awa Tupua (on behalf of Whanganui Iwi), 2000: 4)

These graduate standards reflect the Whanganui Iwi tribal approach to education. Within this approach, ancestral understandings, knowledge, and skills are highly valued, while also promoting a healthy regard for international knowledge streams and understandings. This review explores literature about adult literacy and employment that is relevant and related to achieving these key tribal education aspirations.

## Indigenous peoples, and adult literacy and employment: an overview

*Our old people felt very deeply about our tūpuna awa and our tūpuna maunga. They have a life force as we do, and we share in each other's sustenance. The old people didn't so much teach us by telling us the significance of our ancestral rivers, streams and springs, but we were taught by being taken with them, and watching them. You could tell by the way they touched the waters – it was like a caress. There was and still is a sacredness about our rivers and springs, and the relationship we have with them. It is the same for all our kin of the natural world.*

*Manaaki tāngata (hosting visitors appropriately) was a key value and taonga to Ngāti Rangī people. Whenever we were expecting visitors, fishing was a primary activity to ensure we could provide for our guests. . . . It is often misunderstood how manaaki tāngata plays an important role in uplifting our people's mana. The kai provided for our guests is often misperceived as an indication of our material wealth. Rather, our ability to provide kai, especially local delicacies, is an indication of our ability to sustain and nurture our tūpuna awa. It is from our ability to maintain our role as tāngata tiaki that we draw our mana.*

*I think it has become more difficult to maintain our people's practices and values, as our ability to care for our ancestral waterways as we once did, has become more difficult. Our tūpuna awa are now predominantly viewed as a source of profit and they have been seriously affected because of this. We still feel an immense sense of sadness for our awa, and frustration at not being able to revive them. Our Ngāti Rangī world is a holistic one, meaning that when our tūpuna awa and other aspects of the natural world are negatively affected – so are we as a people. We feel the illness and diminished life force that our awa feel . . . .*

*Ida (Morna) Taute, kuia of Tīrorangi Pāh, Ngāti Rangī, Whanganui Iwi nui tonu (2003).*

Adult literacy has become more commonly defined and approached by non-indigenous peoples as an important means of ensuring economic stability, and stimulating economic growth (OECD, 1997 & 2000). While acknowledging the wider social and community benefits, recent international emphasis and national activity have focused primarily on raising English language literacy skills in order to secure improved employment and economic outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2001).

While literacy has always been valued by indigenous peoples as a means of achieving economic prosperity, within indigenous and First Nations understandings, literacy skills function in a more fundamental and critical way. Literacy is the means with which to express, understand, provide for, and make sense of, one's self and the 'whole' richness of one's self in its widest cultural, spiritual, intellectual and physical sense (Penetito, in Irwin et al, 2001). There are many rich, ancestral 'literacy' practices which function in this way. Describing these as 'indigenous literacies', validates these literacy skills and approaches as being just as important, and just as relevant as orthodox western understandings and economic approaches to adult literacy learning.

For Whanganui Iwi, their ancestral 'River literacies' bind the people to The River, and The River to the people – to the extent that the people and The River become inseparable. Through these literacies, River descendants come to understand and respect who they are and their relationships and responsibilities to each other, wider communities, and the natural world. Ancestral literacies add meaning to physical landscapes, changing them into cultural, spiritual, and historical landscapes that help River communities make sense of themselves and their wider-selves – that is, their wider-world and their past, present and future. Separating indigenous and First Nations peoples from their

ancestral literacies has had serious adverse social and environmental consequences on a world-wide scale (Fanon, 1967; Nandy, 1989; Memmi, 1991; and Nettle and Romaine, 2000).

The impact of this on Whanganui Iwi has been very real and cannot be overstated. The severing of these literacies has impaired their ancestral connections, to the extent that their spiritual, intellectual, physical and community wellbeing has also become impaired (Māreikura, 1994; and Wood, 2003). At the same time they have seen the physical, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of The River gradually eroded (Tihu, 1984; and Māreikura, 1994). It has been noted that colonising processes seek to extinguish ancestral literacies by a number of means, one of the strongest tools being to make indigenous peoples ashamed of and ambivalent towards their cultural heritage (Jackson, 1992; and Memmi, 1991). This, together with the gradual loss of political, economic, and legal ability to practise and uphold these literacies, saw western social and economic activities and philosophies which place people as having the authority to 'control' natural resources, encroach upon The River, and cause degradation at an increasingly rapid pace (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999). Revitalising their ancestral literacies for The River's wellbeing is inextricably connected to restoring the River people's wellbeing.

Traditional non-indigenous notions of literacy denigrated and devalued non-western literacies, describing these as 'preliterate', 'primitive' and 'uncivilised' (Jackson, 1992; and Hohepa and Jenkins, 1996). This predated a major international shift in western thinking in recent years (Baker and Street, 1994; and Barton and Hamilton, 2000).<sup>5</sup> Such traditional attitudes are often long-standing, strongly-held convictions that continue to inform adult literacy understandings, policy and practice. Biases towards English language literacy are for the most part, deeply-entrenched western eurocentric assumptions that are so widely taken for granted as being 'what adult literacy is about', that they are extremely difficult to challenge, let alone change (Yates, 1996; and Antone et al, 2003). Indigenous peoples have argued that this greatly affects their ability to remove the structural barriers to realising their adult literacy and employment aspirations – and the consequent cultural, educational and economic benefits. A wider, systemic understanding and acceptance of the importance and validity of ancestral literacies for indigenous communities has yet to be achieved.

While sustaining ancestral literacies is of fundamental importance to indigenous peoples, adapting English language literacy tools to support cultural, economic and political aspirations is well-established. Indigenous cultures are not static – indeed, tāngata whenua have a rich early contact history of reading, writing and publishing widely in western print-based forms, with most written in Te Reo Māori. Expanding on an existing regional and national system of trade, by adapting quickly to non-indigenous economic activity and international trade, was also a strong feature of this time. A competitive national and international trade in fishing, firmly based around a local endemic economy, is one example that has been extensively documented elsewhere. This was well-established by the 1820s, and continued up until the late 1860s (when legislation began to be passed which prohibited these developments). Such activities were enthusiastically pursued as a means of upholding and sustaining traditional communities and political systems, and the underlying long-standing customary values (Waitangi Tribunal, 1988). Tāngata whenua newspapers published from the 1840s into the early twentieth century also demonstrate this well. While using the new print-based medium, the text conveys complex metaphors and imagery which require a sound understanding of ancient literacies to be able to comprehend the subject matter (Curnow et al., 2002). The many petitions, submissions and letters of this time to the Crown and the colonial administration, protesting against the relentless and ongoing invasions to tāngata whenua way of life, provide good examples of strong political literacy firmly based in ancestral values and philosophy (Cleave, 1979; and Smith, 1998).

The demise of tāngata whenua enthusiasm and vigour in pursuing these new literacy synergies reflected the gradual erosion in their ability to maintain control over their own lives, and in particular, sustain their ancient customary literacies. Education policy and practice which imposed English language and English cultural literacies as a means to abolish and supplant their ancestral literacies, closely aligns itself with wider Crown and colonial settler legal, political and military action to undermine tāngata whenua political and economic strength (Jackson, 1992; Smith, 1999; and Solar, 2000). Such recent histories resonate with indigenous and First Nations peoples' experiences worldwide (Churchill, 1993; and Deloria, 1995).

Contextualising adult literacy and employment theory and discourse within the legacies of these experiences and histories helps to situate current international and national adult literacy debates in a more overt and open way. The purpose of this literature review is to construct an indigenous discourse on adult literacy and employment. The review is of literature written in English, mostly by indigenous peoples. This analysis is intended to provide critical insights into aspects of adult (English language) literacy learning for deeper scrutiny and examination within the Iwi research study. This will strengthen and advance the rich potentials of connections that can be made within indigenous community-based research studies, and provide for more effective and meaningful research outcomes.

## **Undertaking literacy research within indigenous communities: research theory, praxis and methodology**

*We would go out all the time for kai. We would teach the kids not to be frightened of kai – of being bitten by eels or nipped by koura, and not to tease or frighten other kids with kai. Especially the little kids who don't know the difference. They learn that kai is there for their benefit and to be appreciated. . . . How to get kai is a basic skill for our children to know, it develops their wit and skill. They enjoy it. It's you and your know-how against the eel's. You try all sorts of ways to get him out. You know he is there and you don't want to frighten him away. You put your meat out from the hole, not too close, or the next minute your meat is gone. You figure out ways to improve your skills, and you match your skill and wit against his or hers. The kai getters enjoy it. It's not a dying art, but it can become a dying art.*

*We always go to get kai, whether it is tuna, puha or watercress. It's natural for us, even though we have money to buy it. There is nothing wrong with buying kai, but there is nothing as good as being able to get it yourself. . . . It is a way of life, it teaches you to be independent. It puts you more in touch with nature. You are aware of the changes in the seasons. If we lose these things, we will lose the value of life and why all those things are in our rivers in the first place. We will take all those things for granted. . . . Our way of life gives you a deeper understanding, a better appreciation of nature.*

*Jim Turuhia Edmonds, pāhake of Te Puke Pāh, Ngāti Rangi, Whanganui Iwi nui tonu (2003).*

An important first step in studying adult literacy and employment within indigenous communities necessarily requires a close examination of research theory, praxis and methodology. Non-indigenous theories of postmodernism have emerged to define and explain what tāngata whenua have known and spoken about for years. That is, we are each defined, guided by, and grounded

within 'who we are'. Non-indigenous researchers commonly describe this as one's socio-economic and cultural background.

For indigenous peoples, this notion of 'self' embraces the physical, intellectual, cultural and spiritual aspects of who they are, and emphasises that these personal aspects derive primarily from outside the individual. That is, from one's kin – inclusive of past, present and future generations – and just as importantly, from one's kin of the natural world, with special significance placed on the particular natural environment and geography within our ancestral territories and homelands (Durie, 2000; and Cajete, 2000). The meaning of this understanding lies in relationships established through ancient genealogies, and underpins notions of space and time which exist outside orthodox non-indigenous linear approaches (Smith, 1998; and Cajete, 1994).

As with all aspects of life, 'who we are' – and how we define 'who we are' – determines to a large extent how we act, and in whose interest we act (Walker, 1997). Non-indigenous postmodern approaches have come to accept that these aspects of 'self' impact on the way different peoples approach and conduct research. In this way, research is understood to not be neutral, challenging long-held traditional assumptions of orthodox western research theory and methodologies – a challenge which has been strongly and consistently voiced by indigenous peoples throughout the world. Indigenous scholars emphasise that research should instead seek out and make respectful connections, and facilitate understanding amongst different peoples who hold different ways of relating to the world (Smith, 1999).

Developing indigenous research paradigms seeks to facilitate more meaningful research outcomes for indigenous peoples. Traditionally, non-indigenous research about indigenous communities and peoples has been poor, with an indigenous 'perspective' treated as an additional variable, and considered within theories loaded with unspoken and undeclared western assumptions and biases. Such research experiences have not only provided findings that 'miss the point' entirely about indigenous needs and aspirations, but more dangerously, have served to further entrench deeply held ethnocentric beliefs and positions (Smith, 1999).

In seeking to address the challenges that traditional research practice poses, the literature suggests that the following guidelines are important to Māori, indigenous and First Nations peoples when undertaking research within indigenous communities and developing appropriate and effective research theory and methodology:<sup>6</sup>

- **Elders mentor and guide the research project**

Within indigenous communities, Elders are highly respected (Cajete, 2000). They are often very unassuming and people from outside the community may have difficulty in recognising or understanding the vital leadership role they play. Elders are both men and women, and their respective roles are held in equal regard. Their knowledge has been passed on to them orally; and they have gained deep insights from living it. They are not all aged and often have a keen sense of humour. Their recognition as Elders comes from the fact that they speak wisely, and have integrity.

Including Elders to mentor and guide the research project ensures that cultural integrity is maintained (Irwin, 1994). Furthermore, their involvement is valued for the many rich and valuable insights that they bring in guiding those involved in the project. Researchers who have been privileged by such experiences understand this well. The leadership that Elders provide is to be respected and valued.

- **Indigenous cultural and spiritual ways of knowing and understandings are brought from the margins into the centre**

Acknowledging and paying respect for the rich interconnections between the spiritual and the material – as well as the past, present and future – is very important to indigenous communities. One way this is achieved is through observing formal protocol. They are not merely a means to ‘open’ and ‘close’ meetings, nor are they simply traditions from a time past. They express ancestral values which are equally relevant for present-day realities, and future generations. These values continue to provide the basis for community social, economic and political action within day-to-day living (Smith, 1999; and Cajete 1994). Indigenous peoples expect that these values will be integrated into, and reflected within, research praxis within our communities.

Centring indigenous ways of knowing (epistemologies) and realities (ontologies) within research projects validates ancestral knowledge and understandings as the basis for developing effective theories and methodologies. It establishes an equality of approach (Smith, 1999). Ancestral ways of knowing are reaffirmed and validated as being just as systematic, and just as philosophical, as non-indigenous approaches to research theory and method.

- **Indigenous cultural and spiritual ways of knowing and understandings are celebrated and affirmed**

This principle validates ancestral ways of knowing as being practical, useful, and valuable in research praxis. It seeks to reverse a traditional western approach of researching ‘indigenous failure’ or the ‘indigenous problem’, particularly in terms of cultural deficit (Smith, 1999). Instead, culture is affirmed as a community strength, and a positive basis for exploring, understanding and seeking effective solutions to the contemporary issues facing indigenous communities.

This approach does not imply exclusivity. It simply places ancestral values and philosophies (epistemologies) and present-day realities (ontologies) as the principal framework to further develop and adopt western research methods that support cultural and community regeneration. This principle firmly supports a fundamental aspiration of indigenous communities to live their ancestral heritage, and to pass it on to future generations in its full richness and vitality.

- **Indigenous cultural and spiritual ways of knowing and understandings are respected as not being open knowledge**

Ancestral knowledge is treated with great respect within indigenous communities. It has its own life-force, and is the source of their humanity and dignity. It is not to be misinterpreted, misappropriated or misapplied; or used for personal gain or prestige, particularly where there is no reciprocation which ‘gives-back’ to the dignity of the community from which the knowledge was sourced. Indigenous communities have very clear expectations about what appropriate ‘reciprocation’ is – and they are very different from traditional western notions.

This principle challenges the long-held traditional western belief that researchers have an inherent right to knowledge in the pursuit of finding the ‘truth’ (Smith, 1999). It maintains instead, that there is no automatic right to community knowledge. Providing for authority to remain with the community over how ancestral knowledge is published, shared and

represented is important. Appropriate guidelines and protocols that respect this need to be established at the outset.

- **Interconnection and reconnection are emphasised**

This principle emphasises the importance of taking an holistic approach to research within indigenous communities. It acknowledges and respects the community's ancestral and natural values (Cajete, 2000). It respects the life-force in all things and includes listening to the land, as well as the importance of custodianship. Traditional western research paradigms generally do not acknowledge this, and in doing so, fail to support the development of community-appropriate research theory and methods.

Within the process of research, indigenous communities are asked to express their lived realities and experiences. With this come stories of dispossession, racism, cultural denigration, disconnection, pain and struggle. The need for reciprocity and mutual-benefit is of particular significance here. It is equally important to seek out community solutions within research projects to rise above these realities. This approach openly acknowledges and integrates a process of community healing and recovery (Smith, 1999). The importance of ancestral heritage within this process, as a basis for developing community solutions, is acknowledged and respected.

The western notion of ethical distance does not fit easily with this principle. By contrast, this approach requires researchers to engage, at different times, at both personal and professional levels. Building trust, and being present, is important (Te Awakōtuku, 1991).

- **Research theory, praxis and method are simplified and demystified (particularly language), and shared openly and generously**

Undertaking research within indigenous communities – even where the researchers are community members themselves, as is the case here – essentially involves an interfacing between western research praxis and indigenous values and ethics.

This principle emphasises inclusivity and mutual-benefit in the research process. It seeks to reverse past negative experiences of research as 'information-mining'. Orthodox western approaches to academic research have traditionally excluded the community from the design, implementation and benefits of research (Cameron et al, 1997). Again, the western notion of ethical distance does not fit easily here also. Being present, and respectful reciprocity, are important.

Working through an ongoing, robust process of information-sharing about research method in appropriate ways, enables the community to take a more active and informed decision-making role. It makes space for community expectations and aspirations to be built into the research project in a systematic and proactive way. To indigenous peoples, it provides for a respectful, ethical approach (Smith, 1999).

Clearly, working through the challenges inherent in this approach requires time, commitment, and goodwill from both the researchers and the community. However, it creates the potential for building strong working relationships and positive synergies between academic research and indigenous communities; as well as seeking to ensure research outcomes that are effective, meaningful, and practical.



- **The project facilitates proactive processes of change that seek to reshape non-indigenous research understandings and approaches, rather than fit indigenous peoples into a western paradigm**

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has argued that research is not a distant academic exercise. Rather, it is an inherently social and political activity, determining what is valid, and what is not valid. Within this principle, research projects within indigenous communities seek to take a critical approach, challenging the ideologies, values, and assumptions underlying traditional western approaches (Bishop, 1994). It has been noted that this approach is difficult for a number of reasons. First, because western orthodox 'ethical' and 'professional' requirements serve to constantly reaffirm these ideologies as the most legitimate and valid way to approach research. They remain the dominant framework within which academic institutions and research funding agencies operate (Cameron et al, 1997). In addition to this, these prevailing ideologies are widely held as 'taken for granted', 'common sense' beliefs within our wider society; and are reinforced by 'mainstream' social, economic, political and legal institutions (Deloria, 1995; Smith, 1999).

Traditional western approaches to research are highly problematic for indigenous peoples. Overall, non-indigenous research approaches have failed dismally to understand or analyse indigenous communities' needs and aspirations. As noted earlier, this has meant that research has often 'missed the point', with conclusions then drawn which are based on false assumptions, value judgements and misunderstandings (Smith, 1999).

By bringing into focus the issues, aspirations and processes that are significant to indigenous communities, research theory and methods can then be developed within indigenous frameworks. In doing so, the community can define the questions that are important to them, and then a systematic way to work through these questions can be developed to enable the community to find the answers themselves. The community can give a 'voice' to the things that matter to them – where others may dismiss and reject their importance or validity. And more importantly, the community can find solutions to the many real-life and pressing issues they face today – in real, meaningful, effective and sustainable ways. Linda Tuhiwai Smith has described the process of reshaping research praxis in this way:

When indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, people participate on different terms. (Smith, 1999: 193)

As noted earlier, Whanganui Iwi is developing a parallel research project within the wider collaborative adult literacy and employment project. By applying these guidelines within the Iwi research project the outcomes will be threefold. First, Whanganui Iwi will build upon the research theories, methods and tools currently being developed by indigenous researchers, as a means of complementing and enhancing traditional research theory and praxis. In this way, the study will contribute to further developing exemplary practice when undertaking research within indigenous communities.

Secondly, Whanganui Iwi will instigate research that involves River communities in respectful and meaningful ways to identify their adult literacy and employment aspirations, and the barriers to successful outcomes. In turn, the research project will identify more clearly their adult literacy teaching and learning needs, and thereby help to develop (or better coordinate, or increase, as the case may be)

the programmes needed to raise participation levels and achieve improved social, cultural and economic outcomes for these communities.

Thirdly, Whanganui Iwi will gather research that will engender a wider understanding and acceptance of the importance of approaching adult literacy and employment theory, practice and learning in ways that are appropriate to indigenous communities; and this will contribute to developing literacy policy and resourcing that supports this approach in effective and sustainable ways.

## **Adult (English language) literacy needs, barriers and learning processes – and the role of ‘biliteracy’ for indigenous communities**

*I spent my teenage years in the ngahere. Everyone knew when I was going out to get kai because I rode past their houses. And the kai would get shared out when I got home. That’s how it went. When we had our children, we used to light a fire in our smoke house, so everyone knew we had eels. Or everyone would see them hanging on the line. All the kids used to come and have a hot smoke or a cold smoke – Pākehā kids too. We would put golden syrup or brown sugar on them and smoke them. It would give them a sweet taste and an orangey-brown colour. Even if family didn’t stop at home, we would roll up two or three and take them over. This is what we would do, everybody shares their kai around.*

*There are times in life when you are too young to know why, but you are taught how to get kai. Then you get to a stage when you can get the kai yourself, and you appreciate our rivers, our ngahere. And you take kai to the old people, they really enjoy it. . . . You see them just about crying – it brings back memories for them. Then there comes a time when someone will bring kai to you. We talk about life and death. It’s part of life. It’s a cycle, and we’re part of that cycle every day.*

*Jim Turuhia Edmonds, pāhake of Te Puke Pāh, Ngāti Rangī, Whanganui Iwi nui tonu (2003).*

Within day-to-day living, indigenous communities seek to be able to integrate new knowledge, technologies and skills, while also maintaining the integrity of ancestral values and ways of life (Te Rūnanga o Te Awa Tupua (on behalf of Whanganui Iwi), 2000; and Antone et al, 2003). Margie Kahukura Hohepa (2001) has noted that extreme care is needed to ensure that literacy programmes do not default into assimilation. She draws a distinction between ‘assimilation’ and ‘acculturation’. Assimilation is where it is advocated (intentionally or otherwise) that ancestral heritage should be abandoned for non-indigenous ways of life. By comparison, acculturation involves the community adapting non-indigenous skills, technologies and tools into day-to-day living, in a manner which retains and enhances an indigenous world-view and its incumbent ancestral values and practices. Dr. Hohepa argues that in seeking to reverse the adverse impacts of imposed assimilationist policies – the impacts which our communities are now living with – literacy programmes need to be able to support and provide for cultural continuity and dynamism.

Similarly, Martin Nakata (2000) has argued that indigenous peoples need to develop a more effective theoretical framework for literacy, which gives primacy to indigenous standpoints. By framing literacy theory around the needs of indigenous communities (as articulated by those communities), the discourse then shifts away from discussing ‘cultural difference’ within literacy theory, to the notion of ‘community empowerment’. Within this shift, the debate about the importance of English language literacy learning then becomes focused on improving the ability of indigenous communities to shape, influence and reshape knowledges of the outside world that seek to position them within a perspective

that is not their own. He argues that this is as critically important for community future survival as understanding and practising traditional knowledge pathways.

In 2001, the Māori Adult Literacy Reference Group was convened to provide policy advice with respect to Māori and the New Zealand Government's Adult Literacy Strategy. In its report (Irwin et al, 2001), the Reference Group discusses in detail the notion of 'biliteracy' and Māori adult literacy learning. A 'biliteracy' approach is where ancestral literacies and English language literacies are given equal emphasis in literacy programmes. The report found that tāngata whenua education initiatives over the last 25 years such as Te Wānanga o Raukawa and Māori providers in Literacy Aotearoa for example, have spearheaded 'biliteracy' approaches to education. They are not simply about improving reading and writing skills – although they include this – they are also about increased cultural and political knowledge, and have transformed Māori participation and achievement rates in their respective sectors. The Reference Group identified that the major 'critical success' factor of these initiatives, is that they are by Māori, for Māori, and in Māori (language and/ or culture).

Margie Kahukura Hohepa (2001) has described these initiatives as demonstrating a local and global shift in critical thinking amongst indigenous and First Nations peoples. There has been a shift away from providing for learning '*about*' our language and culture within education, to an approach that provides for learning '*in*' our language and culture. She contends that this shift is "as much about interceding in language and cultural loss, as it is about addressing the lack of political, social and economic control and power many tāngata whenua have over their lives" (Hohepa, 2001: 3).

Huhana Mete (1996) has described a kaupapa Māori approach to adult literacy learning as being holistic in nature. Within this approach, English language literacy learning emphasises and supports *te taha wairua, te taha tinana, te taha hinengaro and te taha whānau* – that is, spiritual, physical, intellectual and collective wellbeing. Mete argues that this approach provides more meaningful and effective learning outcomes for Māori adult learners. Both Huhana Mete and Bronwyn Yates (1996) note that a fundamental barrier to achieving this is the dominant monocultural notion of 'literacy' as being primarily about reading and writing in English. Simply having to justify a kaupapa Māori approach is a subtle way of undermining its validity from the outset. Another barrier is where funding is denied because the focus is deemed to be racist, separatist or of little benefit to the overall population.

A study by Eileen Antone et al (2003) found that for Aboriginal peoples in Canada, 'literacy' is also more than reading, writing and numeracy towards gaining employment, although it does include this. It is equally about reconnecting with ancestral literacy skills, ways of learning and values to facilitate self-determination, affirmation, achievement, empowerment, and a sense of purpose. The report notes that literacy programmes for Aboriginal peoples need to encompass the spiritual and the material, ancestral and present-day realities, and deal with the recent past, and on-going impacts of colonisation. In its broadest sense, for Aboriginal peoples being 'literate' is about sustaining a particular worldview, and the survival of a distinct and vital culture. It is about living ancestral values in today's world, and this kind of learning spans a lifetime.

The study found that for Aboriginal literacy providers, a major barrier to success is again, a lack of understanding and 'mainstream' support for holistic, community-appropriate literacy programmes. Other barriers identified by providers were: the need for additional staffing; the need for training and professional development relevant to Aboriginal literacy programmes; and community-relevant teaching resources.

Identified barriers for Aboriginal learners were: the 'stigma' which misperceives literacy programmes as being for those who are "not-smart"; an internalisation of negative schooling experiences and racism; the importance of putting family needs first before individual learning; a lack of self-esteem and self-confidence caused by an historical denigration of Aboriginal heritage, language and culture; financial restrictions, lack of child care, transport, housing, career skills, life-skills and knowledge of various opportunities for learning and literacy for self-growth.

The (Canadian) National Aboriginal Design Committee was brought together in 1998 to organise and oversee the inaugural National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering, held in 2000. The Committee's position paper brings together the findings of the National Gathering and other Aboriginal literacy research (National Aboriginal Design Committee, 2002). The guiding principles for Aboriginal adult literacy learning that emerged from these findings are:

1. The learner is the most important person in the programme – learners' strengths, experiences and aspirations determine programme philosophies, teaching approaches, activities and curriculum materials, *not funding criteria*.
2. An holistic approach – inclusive of Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body – is both effective and crucial. While each is of equal importance, for Aboriginal peoples Spirit comes first.
3. Literacy in Aboriginal languages and culture is paramount – literacy policy which does not recognise or affirm Aboriginal languages will further erode Aboriginal culture and the Aboriginal worldview of interconnectedness.
4. Aboriginal peoples have their own ancestral literacies. Recent, print-based literacy is only one type. Practitioners need access to relevant teaching methods and resources based on ancestral literacies. They do not have time to find them, read them, and incorporate them into programmes. A national organisation needs to be established to coordinate this.
5. Modeling inclusivity – of Elders, practitioners, learners, youth, on- and off-reserve, Metis, non-Aboriginal – is important. The values embodied in the Medicine Wheel – Honesty, Kindness, Sharing and Strength – permeate Aboriginal literacy activities.
6. Aboriginal control of Aboriginal literacy education is important – Aboriginal peoples know what has worked, and what hasn't for learners. This also ensures community-relevant programmes and positive role-modeling for learners. It also prevents Aboriginal literacy from being subsumed and lost within national or provincial literacy strategies.
7. Adequate long-term funding is critical for success.

## **Adult (English language) literacy learning and 'biliteracy' – and their relationship to employment for indigenous communities**

*The River is just like you and I, we can sustain ourselves up to a point, but when we get below that we do start to feel the effects. The River has had that problem. And our fishing has been depleted . . . When our fish don't come there's something wrong with our River. They tell us what is good. It's like the birds, when the birds keep landing on your tree then your tree is healthy. When they don't come anymore, there's something wrong with your tree. And likewise with the River. When we found that the fish didn't come anymore, the old people were concerned. . . . It was a very important thing for our people to be able to fish and to supply. But you know I remember when the fish stopped*

*coming up here. They stopped coming and we were wondering kei hea ngā piharau nei. Ah, he aha te mate, you know, what was wrong?*

*And at the same time, the old people were still trying to teach us the ways of catching the fish, catching them the right way, the old way. . . . And so you'd wait season after season. That was heartbreaking to see the old people, and to sit and listen with them, their aroha, because something was taken away from them. Because you know, the fish in our Whanganui River are caught differently. We still catch it the way that they caught it hundreds of years ago. Today the catch is there if the fish come. And we prepare every year, we go to the River, and we prepare these pāh, and we wait. Sometimes it's in vain, they're not coming.*

*Matiu Māreikura, pāhake of Maungarongo Pāh, Ngāti Rangī, Whanganui Iwi nui tonu (1994).*

Shirley Roburn (1994) has argued that western notions of literacy are biased towards documentation rather than experience; and view text as the keeper of knowledge. For First Nations and indigenous peoples such as the Dene, whose ways of life are attuned to the natural order and dynamics of the natural world, there is no decontextualisation of knowledge – the knowledge is the people, the forest, the creatures, the plants, and the land.

Takirangi Smith (1998) describes the natural environment as the predominant 'text' for Māori prior to colonisation. Reading the natural environment was an everyday part of life and the triggers (called mnemonics) for recalling the specialised knowledge held by the community were in everything Māori saw, smelt, heard, felt and sensed. Detailed ancestral knowledge about the natural environment was accumulated over years of close community living with the land, and handed down from generation to generation. Underpinning this knowledge base is a distinctive 'tāngata whenua discourse' based on whakapapa (a complex set of relationships linked by ancient genealogies), and located in entirely different notions from western lineal descriptions of time and space. Smith argues that this discourse is recorded in our own distinctive forms of literature, such as ancestral carvings, which are just as valid as the representations of a western world view expressed in written texts.

In discussing the notion of 'Māori literacy', Wally Penetito described it in this way:

Being literate in Māori should also include having the capacity to read the geography of the land, i.e. to be able to name the main features of one's environment (the mountains, rivers, . . . valleys, etc); to be able to recite one's tribal/ hapū boundaries and be able to point them out on a map if not in actuality, as well as key features of adjacent tribal/ hapū boundaries; and being able to 'read' Māori symbols such as carvings, tukutuku, kōwhaiwhai and their context within the whareniui (poupou, heke, etc.), and the marae (ātea, ārongo, etc.).

I'm not even sure but the ability to 'read' body language (paralinguistics) should not be outside the scope of a definition of 'literacy' in Māori terms.

This is the sort of work that 'the politics of everyday life', structured in the nature of relationships, has much to say about. This might be taking a definition of literacy too far but then again perhaps the definition that has been imposed has been far too limiting. (Irwin et al, 2001: 26)

The role of education in caring for Whanganui Iwi ancestral literacies and literacy practices has been noted:

For Whanganui Iwi, education will contribute to the achievement of positive development and outcomes. It is a central brace to the process of growth and wellbeing for the individual, the whānau, the hapū and the Iwi. Education is the gateway to understanding and wisdom, so that Whanganui Iwi can be independent and strong, yet willing to coexist with respect and dignity, *while caring for and nurturing the Tribal Estate for future generations*. [emphasis added] (Te Rūnanga o Te Awa Tupua (on behalf of Whanganui Iwi), 2000: 3)

'Tribal Estate' is defined as "marae, land, forests, tribal knowledge, philosophy and practice, such as mita, tikanga, whakapapa and wānanga". They provide the basis for Whanganui Iwi to move forward as a strong, vibrant, robust and prosperous Iwi – culturally, socially, and economically. There has been very little examination of how adult English language literacy programmes can be modified to engender employment outcomes which are consistent with such aspirations.

Bob Broughton (1998) has argued that vocational training programmes for remote Australian indigenous communities should be developed according to the communities' needs and aspirations, as expressed by their community organisations. In a later study, Ralph Catts et al (2000) found that there was no prior consultation with the community when implementing 53 adult education initiatives. In comparing two separate studies, Ralph Catts and Sue Gelade (2002) found that for remote communities, learners have role models and community expectations which do not reflect the National Training Agenda. They argue that planners need to ask indigenous communities what they want in vocational training programmes. Otherwise, not only will training programmes be irrelevant for community realities, but more dangerously, the "rhetoric" of a narrow competencies definition currently employed within the National Training Agenda will promote an inherently assimilationist training policy.

A later study within another remote Aboriginal community by Inge Krol and Jan Falk (2004), found that most vocational training programmes did not fit into the meaning and purpose of community life. The report suggests that the key to sustainable programmes is for training to be integrated into the community's social and cultural framework, and must include community goals and aspirations. Kinship relationships were found to be a crucial, cohesive element of community life, which continues to be based on Aboriginal values and norms. The study found that vocational training is only relevant if it is linked in a useful way to this. Training and employment pathways must reflect community realities and tolerate alternative definitions of employment relevant to the community.

## Conclusion

*And so we go back to The River, and The River is the beginning, the beginning for our people from The Mountains to The Sea. . . . We have been taught to treasure The River for what it is, and what it has been given to us for. For we are its caretakers, we have been given the job of taking care of The River. And we care for it jealously.*

*Tribal karakia and rituals, poi, action songs and haka all go back to The River, and to The Mountains, and to The Sea. We have been given the task to hold and to preserve these things for our mokopuna – not for us, but for the generations yet to come. We do that because if we say it's for us, the time is only short. But if we say it's for our mokopuna, then that time is like this shadow. It starts to spread out and spread out, and when our shadow is long, we are in line with the old people and the ancestors. The waters down the Whanganui River are different from the waters in the Mangawhero here, or the Mangateitei over there, or the Manganui-o-te-ao. Each river has its own mana and its own kōrero . . .*

*All have a reason to be there, and to run the courses that they run for reasons far beyond us. Reasons that were put there right from the beginning.*

*Matiu Māreikura, pāhake of Maungarongo Pāh, Ngāti Rangī, Whanganui Iwi nui tonu (1994).*

Indigenous peoples have consistently maintained that defining 'literacy' is an inherently social and political act, determining what is valid and what is valued for today's society (Hohepa and Jenkins, 1996; and Smith, 1999). Inherent within orthodox western notions of 'literacy' are eurocentric assumptions that have historically described indigenous ways of being in the world as 'preliterate', 'uncivilised' and 'primitive'. Notions of 'cultural superiority' and 'cultural inferiority' are strong recurring themes within this discourse, and have served to secure western social, cultural, political and economic domination (Jackson, 1992; and Roburn, 1994). Arguably, the rhetoric of this discourse largely persists today. Richard Darville (1999), and Mary Hamilton and David Barton (2000) argue that the IALS survey fits in well with a western capitalist agenda of globalisation. It reaffirms an orthodox western view of 'what literacy should be'; rather than supporting indigenous and other communities to determine for themselves their literacy needs, and how literacy skills can best be used to achieve their own community-determined aspirations.

The research undertaken in this literature review demonstrates that indigenous peoples accept that English language literacy skills are critical factors in addressing the high rates of poverty, poor health, and widespread unemployment their communities face today. However, the commonly-held belief that literacy barriers are simply due to cultural and linguistic differences which require 'special learning assistance', is firmly rejected. Furthermore, an assimilationist approach – where English language literacy programmes for employment for indigenous communities, are devised and taught in isolation from ancestral literacies – is also firmly rejected.

Instead, indigenous notions of adult literacy and employment are about participation on their own terms in today's world. They are based on a desire to continue to manage their own affairs – according to ancestral ways of life and values – as they have done for many centuries. An indigenous discourse on adult literacy and employment is about elevating and validating indigenous communities' aspirations and values. It is emancipatory and self-determining in its thrust, and human rights-based. It is about cultural continuity and dynamism; and being able to transform the 'outside' institutions that impact on their lives. The irony and inherent difficulties of seeking to change institutions which continue to legitimate deeply-entrenched monocultural beliefs is not lost on indigenous peoples. They influence the level of autonomy – or conversely the level of subjugation – within which indigenous communities are able to operate. As Martin Nakata (2000) has argued, for indigenous peoples, English language and culture literacy learning is about improving the ability of indigenous communities to shape, influence and reshape outside knowledges that seek to position them within a perspective that is not their own. He argues that this is as critically important for community survival as understanding and practising traditional knowledge pathways.

The Māori Adult Literacy Reference Group encapsulated this discourse within the following definition of literacy:

Literacy is a lifelong journey of building the capacity to 'read' and shape Māori, and other worlds. (Irwin et al, 2001: 13)

Indigenous adult literacy and employment needs are distinctive and multifaceted. They have policy and resourcing implications which are borne out by the studies cited in this review. The studies

indicate that indigenous peoples have distinctive ways of learning and using English language literacies. Appropriate resourcing and learning resources are required to deliver and sustain community-appropriate programmes.

The studies also suggest that to be effective and meaningful for indigenous communities, adult literacy strategies and policies for employment must be situated within the social, cultural, political and economic aspirations of those communities. It would appear that a wider, systematic understanding and acceptance of this has yet to be achieved; and the consequent, socially-equitable adult literacy and employment outcomes, for those communities.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See further pages 15–104 of: Waitangi Tribunal (1999) *The Whanganui River report: Wai 167 Waitangi Tribunal report*. Wellington: GP Publications.
- <sup>2</sup> The Whanganui River flows from The Mountains of the Central Plateau region, to its outlet on the lower West Coast of the North Island, Aotearoa/ New Zealand. It is the longest navigable river in Aotearoa/ New Zealand. The tribal territory and ancestral homelands of Whanganui Iwi stretches from the lands surrounding The River's source through to its outlet at The Sea.
- <sup>3</sup> The Author wishes to acknowledge the NZ Foundation for Research, Science and Technology for its support of the project under grant MAUX0308 Literacy and Employment. A parallel (non-indigenous) literature review is also being undertaken by Massey University.
- <sup>4</sup> Other community groups and stakeholders involved in the wider collaborative project are: Whanganui District Council, Whanganui Community Foundation, Literacy Aotearoa (Wanganui), Work and Income NZ (WINZ), Wanganui Police, and Wanganui Hospital Board senior management personnel.
- <sup>5</sup> Within this shift (known as new literacy studies), literacy is considered as a socio-cultural practice (Baker and Street, 1994) and becomes historically situated and placed within a wider context of power relationships (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). Mary Hamilton and David Barton (2000) argue that this approach is more humanitarian in its agenda, and has yet to be widely accepted and integrated into literacy strategies and policy.
- <sup>6</sup> These guidelines have been adapted from the research framework developed and applied within the 'Purga Community Cultural Development Project', a collaborative indigenous community-based research project, between Purga Elders and descendants and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit of the University of Queensland (Sheehan and Walker, 2001).



# 3. Māori, indigenous and First Nations peoples and adult literacy: an annotated bibliography

## Introduction

*Knowledge is inherent in all things. . . . The world is a library.*

*Chief Luther Standing Bear, Oglala Lakota/ Sioux (1928).*

The need to document Māori perspectives on adult literacy, the distinctiveness of Māori literacy provision, and the role of Te Reo Māori (Māori ancestral language) has been noted (Benseman, 2003: 12). This annotated bibliography brings together literature specifically on this topic, to draw out the key themes and considerations that Māori have identified as being important to them; as well as other indigenous and First Nations peoples. Selected commentaries/ research on this topic by non-indigenous researchers have also been included.

Defining what constitutes 'literature' is problematic for both academic and indigenous communities. Given the lack of academic commentary and research into Māori adult literacy by Māori, a deliberately wide approach has been taken. Moreover, this is consistent with Māori aspirations to develop theoretical approaches that are holistic, culturally appropriate, and firmly grounded in Māori and indigenous realities (Smith, 1999: 39). In challenging western assumptions that traditional academic theory and research is 'neutral' and 'objective', this approach allows theoretical frameworks to be developed that are firmly centred in the world views, experiences and priorities of indigenous communities (Smith, 1999: 193). Notwithstanding this, it is accepted that the selected literature is largely descriptive in nature and based on the perceptions of literacy commentators and providers, rather than learners. Many of the arguments made would benefit from further local research and empirical backing.

The literature suggests that Māori literacy understandings, experiences and aspirations differ significantly from an orthodox western approach. Given this, a wide-ranging selection of literature has been chosen to further demonstrate and support stated indigenous notions of literacy. Recurring fundamental themes have also been emphasised. It is intended that this will provide a useful starting point for extending the current framework used to analyse national and international adult literacy discourse, theory, and policy; and assist in informing and further developing exemplary practice in adult literacy research in Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

Some of the literature discusses other issues beyond Māori, Te Reo Māori, indigenous and First Nations peoples and adult literacy. Discussions outside this topic have not been included.

## Key themes

The key themes that have emerged are:

- a monocultural definition of literacy (as primarily being able to read and write in English and other dominant languages) has historically been imposed on Māori, indigenous and First Nations peoples as a tool of colonisation, in order to marginalise ancestral literacies;
- this is closely tied into political, social and economic imperatives and objectives;
- this approach remains largely intact today within current adult literacy theory, policy, practice and resourcing;
- Māori, indigenous and First Nations peoples have their own rich and distinctive ancestral literacies, and it is asserted that these are just as valid in adult literacy learning as western literacies;
- ancestral literacies are firmly based in ancestral values, understandings and ways of learning. They are holistic in approach, respecting and providing for *te taha wairua, te taha hinengaro, te taha tinana, me te taha whānau* – spiritual, intellectual, physical and community vitality and wellbeing, with community wellbeing including the interconnections between past, present and future generations, and the natural world;
- a shift in the current dominant political and social attitudes is required to accept and recognise the validity of biliteracy in adult English language literacy learning for Māori, indigenous and First Nations peoples. Within this approach, ancestral language and literacies are valued as being as equally valid as English language literacies – and just as importantly, so too are the consequent economic, cultural, environmental and community outcomes;
- biliteracy approaches enhance quality of learning for Māori, indigenous and First Nations peoples;
- biliteracy approaches have transformed Māori, indigenous and First Nations peoples participation rates and successful outcomes in English language adult literacy programmes – locally, nationally, and globally.

## The wider historical, cultural, social and political contexts

Cleave, P. (1983) 'Tribal and state-like political formations in New Zealand Māori society 1750–1900'. In, *Journal of Polynesian Society*, 92(1), 51–92.

In his paper, Dr. Cleave notes that language holds its own rich distinctive cultural meanings. For example, the literal translation of 'iwi' is bones, 'hapū' is to be pregnant, 'whānau' is to give birth, and 'whenua' is the placenta. Even today Māori continue to refer to "my bones". Translating traditional concepts into the English language – such as iwi, hapū, whānau and whenua as 'tribe', 'subtribe', 'extended family' and 'land' – only partially captures their rich distinctive meanings.

Between 1840–1870, Māori were publishing newspapers and writing letters to the government as a means of communicating political speech. They were written in traditional whaikōrero style, for the most part using missionary Māori; and used Scripture in a way similar to how whakatauki are used in speech.

Curnow, J., N. Hopa and J. McRae (Eds.) (2002) *Rere atu, taku manu!: discovering history, language and politics in the Maori-language newspapers*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.

The 12 essays in this book examine different aspects of Māori language newspapers, which were published from the 1840s into the twentieth century. The essay topics range from language and literature through to politics, and expand on this commentary from the introduction:

[These newspapers document an] . . . engaging and revealing report of the everyday life of Maori. There is ample record of political views, notably the constant effort that Maori people made to resist assimilation to European ways and to retain, socially and politically, their very *Maoritanga* or Maoriness. There is also echo of the voices of the ancestors, '*ngā reo o ngā tūpuna*', . . . [where] oral tradition – through quotation of songs, sayings ancient tribal history, genealogies, incantations – combines in print with modern Maori literary style. That writing captures the beauty, complexity, and highly poetic character of Maori language at its best and, at the same time, preserves how it is employed with great, if often oblique, point in service of many topical issues. And, confirming the very evident power that the press brings, the newspapers reveal not only a Maori view but also their belief in the importance of print to educate, inform, reform, and entertain.

Hohepa, M.K. and K.E.H. Jenkins (1996) 'Te ao tuhi – Māori literacy: a consequence of racism?: joint paper presented to the Conference on Racism, Indigenous Peoples Ethnicity and Gender in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, 9–11 December, 1993, Sydney, Australia'. In, *Ngā Kete Kōrero: Journal of Adult Reading and Learning*, 4-5, 5-11.

In this paper, the authors argue that according to western society, being 'literate' is associated with being able to read and write a set of alphabet symbols and draw meaningful messages from it; and that this means of communication is valued more highly than any other. This forms the basis for western values and attitudes about what constitutes 'real' literacy; and in particular, that indigenous literacies are not considered as valid as western print forms. This is reflected in descriptions about indigenous societies as being 'preliterate', 'primitive' and 'uncivilised'. The authors contend that this approach to literacy remains largely intact today.

It is argued that 'literacy' does not mean only speaking English and behaving according to western ways of life. All peoples have their own literacy encoded in their own language, which expresses their distinctive knowledge, values and understandings. Indigenous literacies are as relevant today as they were prior to colonisation. In this way, literacy policy and practice is an inherently a political project, determining what is valued, and what is valid in today's society.

Hohepa, M.K. (2000) 'Issues in the production of written Māori text'. In, Soler, J and J. Smith (Eds.). *Literacy in New Zealand: practices, politics and policy since 1900*. Auckland: Longman.

In opening her paper, Dr. Hohepa argues that the introduction of print literacy was used as a tool to assimilate Māori, and to marginalise ancestral literacies. Today, print literacy is being used as a means to revitalise Te Reo Māori and ensure cultural continuity. This requires quality literacy resources that are not simply English language and culture resources

translated into Te Reo Māori. Te Reo Māori literature must be firmly based in, and reflect, ancestral values, understandings and knowledge.

**Hohepa, M.K. (2001) 'Maranga e te mahara: memory arise – learning, culture and language regeneration: paper presented to the NZARE Conference, 6–9 December 2001'. In, NZARE Conference Papers. Rangiora: New Zealand Association of Research in Education.**

In seeking to address the impacts of colonisation, Māori have sought to regenerate Te Reo Māori me ōna tikanga (Māori language and culture). This has seen a significant shift locally (and globally amongst other indigenous peoples), from advocating for education that provides opportunities to learn *about* Māori culture, to advocating for education that provides for learning *in* Māori culture. In discussing this shift, Dr. Hohepa argues that attention must be given to how learning forms, informs and 'reforms' culture.

One concern is that, if learning is restricted to relatively formal, ritualistic activities, or performing arts, this may contribute to a gradual decrease of everyday, informal language use; and to fewer potential speakers using language and culture in natural, regenerating ways. It may also undermine aspirations for self-determination, as it does not challenge the assumptions and imposed ideologies that disempowered and marginalised indigenous peoples' ancestral ways of life in the first place.

Dr. Hohepa notes that there has been very little examination of how literacy practices can be modified to support learning in informal contexts such as the home. She argues that the challenge is how to utilise ancestral pedagogies to both 'inform' and 'reform' a literacy curriculum that supports and engenders cultural continuity and dynamism. She draws a distinction between 'assimilation' and 'acculturation'. 'Assimilation' is where ancestral culture is abandoned for non-indigenous ways of life; 'acculturation' is where non-indigenous skills, technology and tools are adopted while retaining and enhancing ancestral values, understandings, and knowledge.

**Hopa, N., et al. (2004) *He kūmete kōrero – an adult Māori literacy study: a research project update (September 2004)*. Unpublished paper. Hamilton: Aotearoa Business School, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa**

He kūmete kōrero is a demonstration research project seeking to explore Māori adult literacy, to find out what Māori understand 'literacy' is. A literature review and discussion paper found that Māori literacy is a complex issue. It is not just about reading and writing. It is equally about relationship and respect building between peoples. Underpinning everything, it is about Māori culture and what Māori want to be passed on to future generations. The project is now moving into the next phase, to hold focus groups and individual interviews to gather qualitative data on what Māori consider literacy to be.

**Hopa, N., et al. (2004) *He kūmete kōrero – an adult Māori literacy study: working papers: August 2004*. Unpublished paper. Hamilton: Aotearoa Business School, Te Wananga o Aotearoa**

He kūmete kōrero is a small scale pilot project designed to test the methodology of 'listening' in the importance of orality and literacy development. Initial listening activities involved viewing and listening to video-taped discussions by Tainui elders who gathered to assess and discuss their ancestral knowledge base. From this, generative themes were drawn relating to

Māori adult literacy development and aspirations. Some of these were: definitions of literacy; sustaining wairua, family, and culture; preventing loss of an ancestral way of life, knowledge, language and whānau; and fall out from colonisation.

The paper goes on to discuss the importance of orality as an ancestral tradition, as well as the links between orality and literacy. Appropriate assessment tools are required for measuring Māori literacy competencies, and their distinctive world view. It is not sufficient to simply transfer across English benchmarks.

**Irwin, K., et al. (2001) *Te Kāwai Ora: reading the world, reading the word, being the world: report of the Māori Adult Literacy Working Party*. Wellington: Te Puni Kōkiri.**

The report discusses in-depth the notion of biliteracy – the ability to read and write in both Te Reo Māori and the English language, and to be functional within each distinctive cultural approach. In the last 25 years Māori have led the biliteracy strategy and this is changing the social and economic fabric of New Zealand. Te Ataarangi, Te Kōhanga Reo, Te Wānanga o Raukawa and Māori literacy providers have initiated these transformations. Overall, the major ‘critical success’ factor is that these are initiatives by Māori, for Māori, and in Māori. Such an approach demonstrates the possibilities of biliteracy and biculturalism, rather than the rhetoric of it.

Such Māori literacy programmes are not simply about reading written text, though they include this. They are also about increased cultural and political knowledge, and have transformed Māori participation and achievement rates in their respective sectors.

The report discusses the many and varied aspects of Māori literacy pedagogy. For example, different knowledge and understandings should be respected, and programmes should be based in mātauranga whānau, hapū, iwi, as well as mātauranga Māori. Recommendations include amending the Education Act to refer to the Treaty of Waitangi; and redefining literacy policy, practice and resourcing within a Treaty partnership framework of biliteracy based in Te Reo Māori and English.

**Jackson, M. (1992) ‘The Treaty and the word: the colonization of Māori philosophy’. In, Oddie, G and R.W. Perrett (Ed.s) *Justice, ethics, and New Zealand society*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.**

This paper discusses the process of colonisation in Aotearoa/ New Zealand in a comprehensive manner. In discussing literacy, Jackson contends that a major tool of colonisation is the power to “name” and “redefine”, and thereby define what is valid and what is valued. Thus, Māori language, philosophy and the ancestral institutions which maintain these, are dismissed in colonial discourses as ‘heathen’, ‘uncivilised’, and ‘primitive’.

Jackson argues that “the soul of a people, the essence of their being, exists within the warmth of their philosophy”; and is nurtured and sheltered in the wisdom of their language. The recent historical demeaning of these, started the colonisation of Māori thought – resulting in an alienation from, and self-negation of, the Māori soul.

Jackson argues that such colonial discourses continue today in the current neo-colonial bicultural rhetoric, which is largely tokenistic in nature and continues to privilege dominant Pākehā ideologies. Jackson argues that the outcome of this approach remains the same – the

ongoing denial of the validity of ancestral language, philosophy, and the Māori institutions which maintain these.

**Jenkins, K.E.H. (1991) *Te ihi, te mana, te wehi o te ao tuhi: Māori print literacy from 1814-1855: literacy, power and colonisation*. Unpublished MA thesis, University of Auckland.**

In her thesis, Jenkins argues that overall, the process of teaching written literacy was to subordinate Māori via assimilation into European culture. 1818 texts demonstrate that, in learning to write in English, Māori students were required to write in a manner that was obedient, subservient and non-political.

Furthermore, Jenkins contends that being able to read and write in Te Reo Māori assisted in securing Pākehā dominance. Māori did not understand the English text of the Treaty of Waitangi, and most only signed the Māori text. However, the Courts only recognised the English text. The British therefore secured political and legal dominance by default. Another example of dominance achieved via literacy was the Gazette. Any conveyance, legal transaction and governance business had to be notified by the Gazette. It was written in a form of English not familiar to, and therefore not easily understood by Māori. Jenkins argues that in this way, the Gazette heralded colonisation, and ushered in a new order.

Jenkins provides examples of Māori using print literacy as a means of self-determination. However, overall the history of print and writing in New Zealand has been closely tied into economic and political power and dominance.

**McKenzie, D.F. (1985) *Oral culture, literacy and print in early New Zealand: the Treaty of Waitangi*. Wellington: Victoria University Press with Alexander Turnbull Library Endowment Trust.**

A written alphabet form of Te Reo Māori was developed by missionaries in the early 1800s. McKenzie notes the remarks of commentators of the time, that Māori would very quickly commit large texts to memory. Māori had a well developed retentive memory, nurtured by a strong ancestral oral heritage. Changing from a culture which values orality, to one where primacy is given to written text, was a major cultural shift which took Europe two millennia to realise. McKenzie argues that the spoken word remains of fundamental importance to Māori – and even today this has not been displaced by the introduction of the written word.

McKenzie criticises the ‘myth’ which links written literacy with status. He notes that there is a complex relationship between text, print and economic and political power. In considering the Treaty of Waitangi, the written text cannot be considered without reference to the oral discussions and spoken consensus. Nor can the surrounding political imperatives be disregarded.

**Mete, H. (1996) ‘Māori literacy – the reality’. In, Benseman, J., B. Findsen, and M. Scott (Eds.). *The fourth sector: adult and community education in Aotearoa/ New Zealand*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.**

The ‘Te Huarahi Whānau Literacy Project’ ran from 1991–1995. The project sought to provide literacy programmes specifically designed to support whānau/ Māori development. It emphasised the concept of ‘ako’, that is, an holistic approach to learning which supports te taha wairua, te taha tinana, te taha hinengaro and te taha whānau (spiritual, physical,

intellectual and collective wellbeing). A kaupapa Māori approach outside the mainstream was not supported by funding agencies. Insufficient funding led to management and operational difficulties, as well as volunteer burn out. For Māori literacy programmes to succeed there must be wider political acceptance of the validity of a kaupapa Māori approach to literacy, to ensure appropriate local and national literacy funding assistance.

**Nakata, M. (2002) *Some thoughts on the literacy issues in indigenous contexts*. Melbourne: Language Australia.**

Dr. Nakata argues the need for Indigenous peoples to develop a more effective theoretical framework for literacy, which gives primacy to Indigenous standpoints. Indigenous students' education failure is commonly explained within anthropological discourses of cultural inferiority. For example, it is commonly argued that Torres Strait Islands students are not culturally equipped to understand non-indigenous mathematical concepts. Dr. Nakata argues that these students do have similar concepts, but express them differently and cannot untangle the language used in teaching. This is a literacy issue – it is the preconceived notion that these children learn according to orthodox teaching processes and concrete language that causes the difficulty.

An indigenous discourse of English language literacy shifts away from focusing primarily on “cultural difference” to the notion of empowerment. Improving English language literacy teaching is as critically important for community future survival as understanding our traditional pathways. Indigenous communities gain and retain a sense of their own history, while improving their ability to shape, influence and reshape knowledges of the outside world that seek to position them within a perspective that is not their own.

**Nettle, D. and S. Romaine (2000) *Vanishing voices: the extinction of the world's languages*. New York: Oxford University Press.**

This book discusses in-depth the extinction of the world's languages. Linguists estimate that at least half of the world's languages, if not more, will become extinct in the next century.

Detailed examples are given of the rich, detailed source of accumulated inter-generational ecological and cultural wisdom in ancestral languages. Within these languages are the insights required for the sustainable management of all the resources that we rely on for the survival of diverse species, including people. However, ancestral knowledge tends to be valued by non-indigenous peoples only if it is making a contribution to the western economy.

The authors contend that language death is ignored because of a widely-held mistaken belief that multilingualism and the use of non-dominant languages are divisive, and a barrier to communication, economic development and modernisation. The authors argue that language disputes are primarily about intolerance to cultural and political distinctiveness; and closely related to economic and political marginalisation. They are closely tied into indigenous peoples' struggles against ongoing human rights abuses.

The authors argue that tolerance for cultural and linguistic diversity is a key solution to the environmental and humanitarian crisis facing the world today. Few people think of languages like natural resources, as needing planning and support for slowing environmental damage. Empowering indigenous peoples to preserve their ancestral communities, language and culture, will contribute to preserving local ecosystems and reversing environmental damage.

Moreover, all peoples have a right to their own language, to preserve its cultural resource and to transmit it to future generations.

**Parr, C.J. (1962) 'A missionary library: printed attempts to instruct the Māori, 1815–1845'. In, *Journal of Polynesian Society*, 70, 429–450.**

In this article, Parr gives an historical overview of missionary production and distribution of printed books from 1815–1845. Print production was almost exclusively in Te Reo Māori, and about religious instruction. They were products of a deliberate missionary policy of religious conversion.

**Parr, C.J. (1963) 'Māori literacy 1843–1867'. In, *Journal of Polynesian Society*, 72, 211–234.**

Between 1814–1843 Māori were enthusiastic readers and writers of Te Reo Māori, developing their own methods of instruction by, and within, their own communities. From 1843–1857 missionary day and boarding schools were established. These schools were bilingual, with most instruction in Māori, and some instruction in English to teach the English language.

These schools were not well supported by Māori. Some reasons cited by Parr for this were that: the separation of children from their communities was repugnant to Māori; the school discipline was often regarded by communities as harsh and unjust; and the harsh and demanding manual labour often required of the students to maintain the schools was regarded as being akin to slavery. Parr notes commentary from School Inspectors that the meagre financial assistance from government led to extremely harsh and poor living conditions in boarding schools.

By 1862 School Inspectors were describing Te Reo Māori as an obstacle in the way of “civilizing” Māori – and strongly advocating education as a means to assimilate Māori into European language and ways of life. By 1867, the government had completely reversed the missionary schools’ practice of bilingual education, and started establishing Native Schools and implementing strictly monolingual and monocultural teaching policies and practices.

**Roburn, S. (1994) 'Literacy and the underdevelopment of knowledge'. In, *Mediatribes: Concordia University's Undergraduate Journal of Communication Studies*, 4(1).**

**Retrieved from:** [http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/202/300/mediatribes/mtribe94/native\\_knowledge.html](http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/202/300/mediatribes/mtribe94/native_knowledge.html)

In this short paper, Roburn argues that western literacy practices have favoured the expansion of industrialism; while simultaneously destroying the land base of indigenous peoples, eroding ancestral knowledge, and has brought about the underdevelopment of indigenous communities.

She contends that western notions of literacy are biased towards documentation rather than experience; and separates humans from the natural world giving people ‘dominion’ over the land. It views text as the keeper of knowledge. For First Nations and indigenous peoples such as the Dene people, living in a world attuned to the natural order and dynamics, there is no decontextualisation of knowledge – the knowledge is the people, the forest, the creatures, the plants, and the land.

Roburn argues that indigenous values and thinking need to be applied to reform current western notions of literacy, rather than applying western literacy practices to indigenous



knowledge. Such a shift in practice requires a shift in thinking and attitudes about what 'literacy' is.

**Smith, T. (2000) 'Doing research from home: tāngata whenua issues and Māori research: a paper delivered to Te Oru Rangahau Māori Research and Development Conference, 7–9 July 1998, Massey University'. In, Te Pūmanawa Hauora (Ed.). *Proceedings of Te Oru Rangahau Māori Research and Development Conference: School of Māori Studies, Massey University, 7-9 July 1998.* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Palmerston North: Te Pūtahi-ā-Toi, School of Māori Studies, Massey University.**

Smith notes that Māori correspondence to the Crown around the mid 1840s strongly protests against Crown actions which gradually encroached on Māori communities, their ways of life, and homelands. However, once this generation dies, the tone of correspondence becomes less harsh and in some circumstances accepts the Crown's version of events.

Smith also discusses that prior to colonisation, the predominant 'text' for Māori was the environment. Early ethnologists were astounded at the ability of Māori to recall hundreds of names, songs and stories. Reading the environment was a natural part of life and the triggers for recall (or mnemonics) were in everything that they saw, smelt, heard, felt and sensed. Smith contends that ancestral carving is a written form of the Māori world view, and that this is just as valid as the Pākehā representation of their world view in historical texts.

Smith argues that tāngata whenua discourse is based on whakapapa kōrero (a complex system of relationships linked by genealogy) and located in entirely different notions from western lineal descriptions of time and space. Today it has been marginalised and its discourses submerged. Smith contends that it is a valid view of the world in its own right.

**Soler J. (2000) 'Māori literacy and curriculum politics: 1920–1960'. In, Soler, J and J. Smith (Eds.). *Literacy in New Zealand: practices, politics and policy since 1900.* Auckland: Longman.**

Although this paper focuses on literacy policy and practice within the primary school curriculum from 1920–1960, it provides a useful background context to the politics surrounding adult literacy today. Soler contends that historical structures and power relations have impacted on literacy policy and practice, and the development of New Zealand society to what it is today.

The 1904 primary school syllabus entrenched a political agenda of colonial imperialism, by imposing English language and English culture as a means to supplant Māori language and culture. When implementing the 1923 and 1926 syllabus, Native Schools Inspectors again emphasised that English must occupy a very important place, if not the most important place, in Native Schools curriculum. As late as 1940 there were calls for Māori culture to be totally abandoned, not only in school but also in Māori communities.

No Māori were accepted into training for Native Schools service until 1950s. Although post-1950s the Education Department encouraged this, the curriculum continued to support the dominance of English as a means of 'civilising' Māori. As had been argued since 1904, this was because the Māori language was considered inadequate for the modern complexities of life; and only assimilation would ensure the equality of Māori with Pākehā.

**Soler, J. (2000) 'Literacy for the cultured individual 1900–1930'. In, Soler, J and J. Smith (Eds.). *Literacy in New Zealand: practices, politics and policy since 1900.* Auckland: Longman.**

In this paper, Solar argues that literacy curriculum is not created in a political and social vacuum; it is influenced by dominant social, cultural, economic and political values. The paper provides an account of the historical and political forces that have shaped the teaching of literacy in primary schools in New Zealand. Solar contends that literacy instruction entrenched the notion of 'cultural literacy', that is, a 'cultured' person is someone who is literate only in the English language and culture.

**Tauroa, P. (1994) 'Development of basic literacy learning materials and minority language'. In, *Resource persons' papers delivered to the 1994 2<sup>nd</sup> Sub-Regional Workshop, Development of Basic Literacy and Learning Materials for Minority Peoples in Asia and the Pacific, Chiang Rai, Thailand*. Tokyo: Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre, UNESCO.**

Retrieved from: <http://www.accu.or.jp/litdbase/pub/main4.htm>

In this paper, Tauroa contends that Māori have two adult literacy objectives: first, to attain literacy in Te Reo Māori, and secondly, to attain literacy in English. Adult literacy in Te Reo Māori means learning our ancestral language as well as our ancestral heritage. There are two important considerations tied into this: (1) There is a degree of embarrassment for Māori adults in being unable to speak Te Reo Māori; (2) There is shame associated with being unable to read and write in both Te Reo Māori and English. It is therefore important to emphasise to adult learners that there is no shame in wanting to learn our mother tongue, nor is there any shame in wanting to learn to read and write in English.

Tauroa argues that there is dignity in knowing who you are, and where you come from. No matter how important English language is – and its importance in adult literacy education is acknowledged by Māori – knowing and understanding Te Reo Māori is valuable and part of our humanity and dignity. Children are the future survival of the language and culture; but parents learning Te Reo Māori helps to emphasise to children that it is important and valued.

**Winiata, W. (1985) 'Aotearoa before the computer'. In, Williams, W.R. (Ed.) *Looking back to tomorrow: a survey of the impact of the first twenty-five years of the use of electronic computers in New Zealand together with some thoughts for the future*. Wellington: New Zealand Computer Society.**

This paper discusses orality and recall. Prof. Winiata notes that the human mind was the memory bank for recording information. A variety of external aids and stimuli were used to assist in information retrieval. Systems of classification and imagery were also used to order information into manageable inventories.

Insights into these remarkable accomplishments are recorded in the writings of Elsdon Best. For example, one speaker gave the equivalent of 300 pages of written text from memory. Prof. Winiata goes on to discuss similarities and differences between this ancestral system of information management and computers.

**Woods, D.B. (1999) 'Bran nue langwij'. In, *Fine Print: A Journal of Adult English Language and Literacy Education*, 22(3), 8–10.**

In this article Woods argues that although there is currently insufficient research to authoritatively support this, practitioner experience indicates that cultural identity affects English language literacy learning for Aboriginal adult learners. Mid-1990s research of

Aboriginal high schools students suggests that strong cultural identity improves educational success. Adult literacy programmes designed specifically for Aboriginal learners suggest that they provide improved completion rates and successful employment outcomes. The learning needs of Aboriginal adults have not been developed to an extent where it is fully understood as a subset of, or distinct from, adult literacy learning in general.

**Yates, B. (1996) 'Striving for tino rangatiratanga'. In, Benseman, J., B. Findsen, and M. Scott (Eds.). *The fourth sector: adult and community education in Aotearoa/ New Zealand*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.**

Māori literacy providers seek to: (1) make a contribution to addressing the impacts of colonisation; and (2) create literacy programmes that are drawn from, and firmly support ancestral values, understandings and knowledge. Yates argues that kaupapa Māori programmes will provide more meaningful and effective learning outcomes for Māori. Set against these aspirations, Yates contends that a fundamental barrier is the dominant monocultural notion of what 'literacy' is. Simply having to justify a kaupapa Māori approach is a subtle way of undermining its validity from the outset. Another barrier is where funding is denied because the focus is deemed to be racist, separatist and of minimal benefit to the overall population. This is then compounded by an overall under-resourcing of the adult literacy field.

In 1988 ARLA, a national body of literacy providers, in taking a Treaty of Waitangi partnership approach, agreed to share funding equally between Māori and non-Māori literacy development and coordination. This was not easy to achieve and required commitment and understanding from all involved. However, it enabled tikanga Māori and practices to become part of the everyday ARLA working and learning environment. Research has demonstrated that this approach has substantially increased Māori participation in literacy programmes.

## **Māori, indigenous and First Nations peoples as adult literacy providers and learners**

**Antone, E. et al. (2003) *Literacy and learning: acknowledging Aboriginal holistic approaches to learning in relation to 'best practices' literacy training programs: final report*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.**

This adult literacy study found that for Aboriginal peoples in Canada, 'literacy' is more than reading, writing and numeracy towards gaining employment, although it does include this. It is primarily about reconnecting with ancestral literacy skills, ways of learning and values to facilitate self-determination, affirmation, achievement, empowerment, and a sense of purpose.

Aboriginal literacy learning encompasses the spiritual and the material, ancestral and present-day realities, and dealing with the recent past and on-going impacts of colonisation. In its broadest sense, for Aboriginal peoples being 'literate' is about sustaining a particular worldview, and the survival of a distinct and vital culture. It is about living ancestral values in today's world, and such learning spans a lifetime.

The research found that for Aboriginal literacy providers, a major barrier to success is the very little understanding of and 'mainstream' support for holistic, culturally-appropriate Aboriginal literacy programmes. Other barriers identified by providers were: the need for

additional staffing; the need for training and professional development relevant to Aboriginal literacy programmes; and culturally-relevant teaching resources.

Identified barriers for Aboriginal learners were: the 'stigma' which misperceives literacy programmes as being for those who are "not-smart"; an internalisation of negative schooling experiences and racism; the importance of putting family needs first before individual learning; a lack of self-esteem and self-confidence caused by an historical denigration of Aboriginal heritage, language and culture; financial restrictions, lack of child care, transport, housing, career skills, life-skills and knowledge of various opportunities for learning and literacy for self-growth.

**Australian National Training Authority (1996) *Djama and VET: exploring partnerships and practices in the delivery of vocational education and training in rural and remote Aboriginal communities*. Darwin: Northern Territory University Press.**

These case studies explore the difficulties and successes in delivering vocational and training programmes within remote Aboriginal communities. The studies found that courses were better received when they are encapsulated in the community's life and development. This is more successfully achieved where courses were developed in partnership between providers, funding agencies and local communities. Barriers to achieving this were: the perception by providers and funding agencies of this as obstructive; 'mainstream' course rules and regulations which are inflexible; tardiness; obstructive personnel; and a lack of willingness and resources by providers and funding agencies to support distance programmes.

The studies also suggest that the more 'invisible' the programmes, the more successful and sustainable they were. This will also be the case where training takes place at the work site, and the site is already integrated into community life – the training will have more relevance. The current competency-based curriculum approach which is centralist and behaviourally oriented, sits uneasily with the community. Flexibility and ongoing negotiation between the partners are essential.

**Catts, R. and S. Gelade (2002) *Rhetoric and realities: equating the delivery of indigenous VET to the demands of its context: commonalities from two research projects: conference paper to the fifth Australian VET Research Association Conference, "Innovation, Internationalisation, New Technologies and VET", Melbourne - March 20-22, 2002*. Nowra: Australian Vocational, Educational and Training Research Association.**

Retrieved from: [http://www.aveetra.org.au/abstracts\\_and\\_papers\\_2002/catts-gelade.pdf](http://www.aveetra.org.au/abstracts_and_papers_2002/catts-gelade.pdf)

In comparing two studies of vocational education training (VET) programmes within remote indigenous communities, the authors found that learners have role models and community expectations that do not reflect the National Training Agenda. VET planners need to ask indigenous communities what vocational training they require. In one study, 54 adult education initiatives were set up without any prior community consultation. The paper notes that if VET is about providing indigenous peoples with the skills to get jobs, then training needs to be aligned to the realities of the jobs that are, or can be made available. The authors argue that if this is not pursued, then more dangerously, the rhetoric of a narrow VET competencies definition will provide for an inherently assimilationist approach in training.

**Krol, I. and I. Falk (2004) *What is all that learning for?: Indigenous adult English literacy practices, training, community capacity and health.* Adelaide: NCVER.**

This case study investigated and described how the English and local Indigenous languages are used in reading and writing by adults in a remote Indigenous community in the Northern Community, to determine how this impacts on adult literacy learning within vocational education and training.

A theme that emerged is that most vocational training programmes do not fit into the meaning and purpose of community life. Consequently, a relevant and appropriate 'training culture' has yet to evolve and become integrated into community life. The report suggests that the key to sustainable programmes is for training to be integrated into the social and cultural framework of the community, and must include community goals and aspirations. In this community, kinship relationships are a key crucial, cohesive element of the tribal community authority structure which is based on Aboriginal values and norms. Literacy is only relevant if it is linked in a useful way to this. Training and employment pathways must reflect community realities and tolerate alternative definitions of employment relevant to the community.

**National Aboriginal Design Committee (2002) *Position paper on aboriginal literacy.* Toronto: The Author.**

This paper is the first of its kind to present a comprehensive position on Aboriginal adult literacy concerns, issues and aspirations in Canada. The guiding principles that have emerged over the preceding four years of work are:

1. The learner is the most important person in the programme – learners' strengths, experiences and aspirations determine programme philosophies, teaching approaches, activities and curriculum materials, *not funding criteria.*
2. An holistic approach – inclusive of Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body – is both effective and crucial. While each is of equal importance, for Aboriginal peoples Spirit comes first.
3. Literacy in Aboriginal languages and culture is paramount – literacy policy which does not recognise or affirm Aboriginal languages will further erode Aboriginal culture and the Aboriginal worldview of interconnectedness.
4. Aboriginal peoples have our own ancestral literacies. Recent, print-based literacy is only one type. Practitioners need access to relevant teaching methods and resources on ancestral literacies. They do not have time to find them, read them, and incorporate them into programmes. A national organisation is required to coordinate this.
5. Modeling inclusivity – of Elders, practitioners, learners, youth, on- and off-reserve, Metis, non-Aboriginal – is important. The values embodied in the Medicine Wheel – Honesty, Kindness, Sharing and Strength – permeates Aboriginal literacy activities.
6. Aboriginal control of Aboriginal literacy education – Aboriginal peoples know what has worked, and what hasn't for learners. This also ensures culturally-relevant programmes and positive role-modeling for learners. It also prevents Aboriginal literacy from being subsumed and lost within national or provincial literacy strategies.
7. Adequate long-term funding – this is critical for success.

Barriers to adult literacy learning were identified as: a denial of First Nations identity; shame; poor self-esteem; communication difficulties; an expectation to be judged negatively; experience of racism; violence and physical abuse in family; sexual abuse; alcoholism; the impacts of socio-economic inequities; and the failure of the education system to recognise and address these factors in learning.

**Merriam, S.B and M. Mohamad (2000) 'How cultural values shape learning in older adulthood: the case of Malaysia'. In, *Adult Education Quarterly*, 51(1), 45–63.**

This study looked at how cultural values shape learning in older adulthood in Malaysia. There is currently little literature on how one's culture influences the nature of learning in older adulthood. In this study, 19 men and women aged between the ages of 60 and 83 were interviewed about their experience of aging and their learning activities. Three themes were drawn from the interviews. First, older adult learning in Malaysia is nonformal and gained through 'experienced' learning. Second, learning is communal. Third, much of the learning is religious or spiritual in orientation.

**Omolewa, M. (2000) 'The language of literacy'. In, *Adult Learning and Education*, 55.**

**Retrieved from:** <http://www.iiz-dvv.de/englisch/default.htm>

In this paper Prof. Omolewa discusses the issue of whether literacy instruction should be in the dominant languages, or whether local indigenous languages – of which there are over 400 in Nigeria – should be used. There are two major schools of thought within current scholarship; one which argues that pragmatism must guide language choice – accordingly, it is argued that the major languages accommodate the major interests of people, and further, this will achieve a unity of communities. The other contends that literacy instruction in the local indigenous language will assist to preserve the cultural identity of the people and ancestral respect for the gift of the natural world.

The outcomes of literacy projects in local indigenous languages are instructive. The projects reported an overwhelming success with local attendance; and the people began to rewrite their histories and document songs, idioms and proverbs of the area. The communities felt comfortable with owning the projects, which respected their culture and language. Another outcome was that learning in local languages facilitated the mastery of second languages, and enriched the quality of learning.

Prof. Omolewa argues that all literacies – for example, social, political, scientific, computer, gender, prose – would benefit from indigenous languages. Literacy programmes which respect local values, also acknowledge that confidence-building is important in learning. This is critical for sustaining community economic and social development.

**Rose, D. et al. (1998) 'Providing access to academic-literate discourses for indigenous learners'. In, *Fine Print: A Journal of Adult English Language and Literacy Education*, 21(2), 7-10.**

In this article the authors describe the 'scaffolding' approach to Aboriginal children's literacy learning. Middle-class (mostly non-indigenous) children arrive at school already prepared to understand English language written texts, the meaning behind the text and the sequence of text patterns. Teaching practice reinforces this as being 'common-sense' to all learners, and in doing so excludes Indigenous students' learning needs.

The scaffolding approach addresses this by first discussing with Indigenous students the language features of English texts. By becoming familiar with the meanings and patterns in the text, they can then accurately predict the text pattern without needing to decode every word. Words and text patterns then become more familiar and meaningful, and moving on to learning to spell them is less stressful. Writing activity then follows to reconstruct the text, using the same text patterns and structures. From here, the students then move on to using these to write independently. To date, trialing this method in primary and high schools has been very successful.

**Tremblay, P.C. and M.C. Taylor (1988) 'Native Learners' perceptions of educational climate in a Native Employment Preparation Program'. In, *Adult Basic Education: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Adult Literacy Educators*, 8(1), 30–46.**

**Retrieved from:** <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/pat/vol8no1/page30.htm>

The authors undertook a case study of a Native Employment Preparation programme, to determine the factors that provide optimal learning conditions for Native adult learners. They found that the cultural environment emerged as the most influential factor contributing to quality learning. Values, cooperation and supportiveness, provided in culturally-relevant ways were influential in providing effective learning conditions.

Learner outcomes were not limited to academic achievement or general literacy skill development. The major outcome that emerged as most influential for learners was personal growth. Criteria for learner and programme success need to be expanded in these broad terms, to encompass the multitude of learner outcomes and impacts.

**Westblade, B. (2000) 'Mullebar: Indigenous tertiary training and education for tomorrow'. In, *Fine Print: A Journal of Adult English Language and Literacy Education*, 23(2), 12-14 and 33.**

This article discusses Aboriginal adult literacy programmes. The most demanding to deliver are the outreach programmes. They require extensive negotiations with communities, extended stays as well as transporting staff and equipment to the indigenous site, which can often be as rudimentary as a shearing shed. On-campus courses are often management courses, based around horses. Many students find the theory daunting but this is balanced out by their success in applied tasks, and their extensive experience with animals. After a few months their literacy and writing skills develop quickly and the course becomes easier and more enjoyable. One exchange trip involved taking Elders camping on the local beach to learn about the local culture.

Indigenous peoples do not often see the point in practising – they prefer to be involved in real events and mimic the skilled person, or their uncle. The degree to which students apply themselves often correlates to how much they respect the person teaching them. They are often much more attentive where the tutor is Aboriginal. Networking with Indigenous learners via email in Canada and Southern Africa has also been successful. The courses allow students to learn at their own pace, which increases as they settle into the course.

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# Glossary

<b>Awa</b>	River(s).
<b>Ethic</b>	Used in this review to refer to tāngata whenua ethic, this is a code of conduct or a way of behaving according to ancestral and customary philosophies and values.
<b>Hapū</b>	Sub-tribe/ kin-grouping of descendants from a common ancestor who traditionally lived in a geographical area for many generations. A hapū is made up of a number of whānau.
<b>Iwi</b>	Tribal/ kin-grouping of descendants from a common ancestor, who traditionally lived in a geographical area for many generations. An iwi is made up of a number of hapū.
<b>Kai</b>	Food.
<b>Kōrero</b>	Tribal narrative which expresses ancestral and customary values, knowledge and practices.
<b>Koura</b>	Fresh-water crayfish.
<b>Kuia</b>	Senior female Elder.
<b>Mahinga kai</b>	Food gathering.
<b>Māori</b>	Generic term commonly used to describe the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/ New Zealand.
<b>Mita</b>	Dialect (of Te Reo Māori). Each tāngata whenua tribal grouping has its own distinctive mita/ dialect. Within each mita are words, metaphors and aphorisms specific to the local natural environment and the local culture. Research has shown a striking correlation between areas of high biodiversity and high linguistic diversity. This is known as biolinguistic diversity: where the rich spectrum of life within the natural environment and human cultures, is encoded within local ancestral languages (Nettle and Romaine, 2000).
<b>Ngahere</b>	Native bush/ forest.
<b>Pāhake</b>	Elder, male or female.
<b>Paradigm</b>	A way of looking at the world.

<b>Philosophy</b>	Used in this review to refer to tāngata whenua philosophy, this is a set of fundamental truths which form the basis, or guiding principles, for tāngata whenua spiritual and cultural ways of life. Often referred to by indigenous peoples as the ‘sacred balance of life’ – it is fundamentally about respecting and living according to the natural order and dynamics of the natural world.
<b>Tamariki mokopuna</b>	Future generations.
<b>Tāngata tiaki</b>	Indigenous peoples, carrying out their ancestral responsibilities as custodians of the natural environment of their ancestral homelands.
<b>Tāngata whenua</b>	Indigenous peoples. Used in this review to refer to the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/ New Zealand.
<b>Te Reo Māori</b>	The Māori language. This is a generic term used to refer to the ancestral language dialects of tāngata whenua/ indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/ New Zealand.
<b>Tikanga</b>	Tāngata whenua customary ethic, practices and protocols which maintain ancestral philosophies, values and knowledge.
<b>Tuna</b>	Eel.
<b>Tūpuna awa</b>	Ancestral river(s).
<b>Tūpuna maunga</b>	Ancestral mountain(s).
<b>Uri</b>	Descendant.
<b>Values</b>	Used in this review to refer to tāngata whenua values, these are spiritual and cultural standards based on ancestral and customary philosophy.
<b>Wānanga</b>	Local term meaning ancestral/ customary philosophy, values, and knowledge. In 1987 the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development found that the international acceleration of the loss of ancestral knowledge “could be described as cultural extinction”.
<b>Whakapapa</b>	Ancient geneologies, which create the basis for complex kinship relationships between people; between past, present and future generations; and between people and the natural world.
<b>Whānau</b>	Family grouping – generally comprising 3 or 4 generations.