

BOOK REVIEW

Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology. Edited by Jo-Ann Archibald, Jenny Lee-Morgan and Jason De Santolo with a Foreword by Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

I was in high school in the 2000s when I first learnt the kupu “pūrākau” in my Māori class. Often translated as “myth”, but meaning far more, I understood, even then, the importance of stories, of legends, of whakapapa and building those relationships through storying. Pūrākau is a word, or more importantly a concept and practice that I have clung too into my career as a re-search teina, and as a new and emerging Kaupapa Māori researcher. Finding ways of undertaking research, of talking about our Indigenous stories, of creating and re-creating, of writing and re-writing and re-righting our pūrākau, has become a central feature of what I want to do and how I undertake my re-search praxis.

Storywork, in its various forms of Indigenous relationality, provides a platform for re-thinking and re-prioritising Indigenous ways of being and making sense of the world. Whilst these praxes are not new to Indigenous peoples, within westernised academia, they offer a decolonising alternative to dominant, hegemonic narratives that have often re-presented and re-positioned Indigenous stories through western lenses (Smith, 2012). Storywork has become a method of decolonising and re-Indigenising within research.

Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology explores the various ways Indigenous people utilise narratives as pedagogy, as learnings and as expressions of our languages, our cultures and our identities. This body of work brings together Indigenous researchers from Aotearoa New Zealand, Canada and Australia to forward Indigenous Storywork as research methodology. Jo-Ann Archibald Q’um Q’um Xiiem coined the term “Indigenous storywork” to enable space where “storytellers, story listeners/learners, researchers, and educators can pay better attention to and engage with Indigenous stories for

meaningful education and research” (Archibald, Lee-Morgan & De Santolo, 2019, p. 1).

Archibald, Lee-Morgan and De Santolo’s collaboration provides a platform for critical, transformative, decolonial, re-Indigenising storywork to be had and as such they pose a challenge for us, as Indigenous peoples, to expand our thinking and ultimately our storyworlds. This book challenges ‘dominant’ westernised theories via Indigenous understandings of meaning making by traversing new relationships through stories.

Archibald, Lee-Morgan and De Santolo bring together storytellers, story-listeners, academics and researchers to talk story. The book is written in three each exploring the storywork of three distance geographical settings. The first section explores storywork in Canada through Jo-ann Archibald’s seminal conceptualisation of storywork and Indigenous ethical praxes as expressed by Canadian scholars who have contributed chapters. Dorothy Christian explores the importance of re-visualising our narratives from multiple Indigenous perspectives and re-prioritising knowledge holders expertise and influence on our research. Georgina Martin and Elder Jean William’s chapter discusses how Archibald’s principles of respect, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy relate to healing from historical trauma and the maintenance of cultural identities. Archibald’s principles are explored further in her chapter with Cynthia Nicol and Joanne Yovanovich around Indigenous storywork as methodology within transformative mathematics education.

Moving to Aotearoa, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan discusses her seminal conceptualisation of pūrākau as methodology. Contributing author Hayley Marama Cavino explores notions of gender and power through Māori Land Court and explores closely held purakau that challenge

dominant heteronormative imposed narratives. Extending our understanding of pūrākau in legal settings, Carwyn Jones discusses the importance of pūrākau as cultural expressions in Māori law and the legal issues experienced by Indigenous peoples broadly. Leonie Pihama, Donna Campbell and Hineitimoana Greensill's collaborative contribution centres relationships, relationality, and whanaungatanga, delving into the Indigenous pedagogies of pūrākau and storying in reconnecting with Indigenous value systems that centre mokopuna. Lee-Morgan concludes this section of the book, discussing te pū o te rākau, where she emphasises the importance of (re-)creating spaces where Indigenous ways of being are transformative and healing.

Finally Australian scholar Jason De Santolo explains the role of storytelling in transformational research for Aboriginal peoples. In a legal context, Larissa Behrendy explores storytelling and relational responsibilities as ways to challenge colonisation and colonial violence by providing a platform for Indigenous voices to share and indeed heal from trauma. Evelyn Araluen Corr's work discusses the limitations of western literary theories and positioning Indigenous storywork as restorative, combative recovery and praxis. This is followed by Nerida Blair's work on ethics within the academy utilising metaphor and philosophy to re-privilege Indigenous knowing. Finally Jason De Santolo's work on Indigenous homelands explores talking and storying, video practice and how this relates to Indigenous Kaupapa and methodologies for working with relations, researchers, creatives, activists and water protectors who move in Indigenous knowledge and relational spaces.

Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology demonstrates the importance and potential of (re-)establishing relationships with Indigenous peoples. Where I believe there is space to expand upon in its next form is through the inclusion of storywork from wider Indigenous peoples, such as our Pasifika relations. Talking story with Kānaka 'Ōiwi, talanoa with Sāmoan and Tongan relations, talanga with Tongan whanaunga, Cook Island metaphor and storying in tivaevae, for example, are happening within these spaces as well as the diaspora. Further considerations for this crucial storywork could be the place of Pasifika storywork in this field of decolonising and re-Indigenising research—is this a space that converses with/about peoples who were colonised differently and includes whakawhanaungatanga with these whanaunga? Re-conceptualising the ways in which we make meaning of Indigenous storywork as sites of knowledge (re)production, knowledge restoration and knowledge continuation requires continued critical reflection and incorporation of our various storying methods and methodologies from all our Indigenous relations.

This book provides a space for a critical re-thinking, re-doing and re-claiming of how we relate to each other and to our stories. I look forward to the next set of pūrākau we right, write, listen to and share.

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