

TITLE: Shifting the gaze from white to brown: Indigenous pathways for Indigenous evaluators.

Abstract

This presentation supports the assertion that having Indigenous evaluators evaluating with the Indigenous communities they are part of, live in and have intimate knowledge of, is invaluable. The address will describe Kaupapa Māori, an Indigenous approach to evaluation used in Aotearoa New Zealand. Kaupapa Māori evaluators argue that taking a Kaupapa Māori approach is as important as having formal evaluation training so long as emerging evaluators are well supported with adequate resources and academic supervision. Whakauae Research Services, a tribally owned health services research centre in Aotearoa New Zealand, has nurtured a culture of training Indigenous evaluators 'on the job'. The Whakauae investment in Indigenous evaluation capability building, the gains, and the challenges will be explored through the voices of Indigenous evaluators. We will explain what it means to have 'skin in the game' through shared whakapapa (genealogy) and culture. We will reflect on what is culturally important to us and how these shapes and enriches our evaluation and research practice. We will explore how having 'skin in the game' means we are personally invested and committed to championing success resulting in positive outcomes both for our communities and those funding evaluations. Committed to working with stakeholders and building evaluation capacity, we will share some of the methods that have helped us to achieve our aims. During the address you will learn about the challenges and rewards that come with being both an insider and an outsider and how these competing tensions are managed within a cultural framework. We will show how working in this way builds Indigenous self-determination and resilience. It is hoped that the session will encourage emerging Kaupapa Māori and other Indigenous evaluators, to ground and affirm their practice in accordance with their Indigenous positioning; to look beyond the Western paradigms of research for affirmation.

Karakia whakatau and Acknowledgement of country

Aio ki te Nuku

Aio ki te Rangi

Ko te kawa ora

Ko te kawa ora

Tihei mauri ora

Tuatahi, ngā mihi nui ki ngā tangata whenua ngā iwi, Turrbal nga iwi Yuggera. Tēnā kautau, tēnā kautau, tēnā tatou.

We would like to acknowledge Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation particularly the Yuggera people and the Turrbal people the traditional custodians of the lands we are meeting on. We pay our respects to all elders' past, present and emerging as they hold the memories, traditions, and cultures of this land and to all other Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who are present.

Introductions

Ko wai au? Who am I?

He uri ahau no te Awa Tupua o Whanganui, Raukawa ki te Tonga hoki,

Ko Gill Potaka Osborne tōku ingoa

He Kairangahau Matua o Whakauae Research Services

Kia ora, my name is Gill Potaka-Osborne, I am a senior researcher with Whakauae Research Services, an iwi-based research organisation, in Aotearoa NZ. Today Mel and I are going to tell you our story of how we

became part of the evaluation and research world. Amohia Boulton, who couldn't make it today sends her greetings.

Introductions

Kia ora koutou,

He mokopuna o Te Awa Tupua, Ko Ngāti Tuera tuturu

He Kairangahau Āwhina Matua ahau

Ko Mel Potaka-Osborne tōku ingoa

Good afternoon, my name is Mel Potaka Osborne, I am a senior research assistant at Whakauae Research Services where I have been working since 2010.

[Gill] : Mel and I are sisters and we both work for Whakauae Research Services, a Kaupapa Māori Iwi-owned Health Services Research organisation. Whakauae combines Kaupapa Māori and Western approaches to undertake evaluations and research with Māori communities.

This presentation reflects on the investment Whakauae has made over the last 18 years, to grow a sustainable indigenous research and evaluation workforce. First, we'll describe our journey as evaluators, second, we'll tell you what we think are important elements of indigenous evaluation pathway. Finally, we'll summarise what we think are the key components of building indigenous evaluation capability.

This commitment to building an indigenous evaluation workforce was originally driven by Dr Heather Gifford, the inaugural director of Whakauae, who used evaluation to transition us into the world of research. This capacity building has since been amplified by our present Whakauae Director – Dr Amohia Boulton and deputy-director Dr Tanya Allport who is sitting in the audience.

I am the product of a NZ European mother and a Māori father. The eldest of 5 children born within 7 years of each other. Mel and I have three brothers between us. Growing up we were a one income family which meant my parents were experts in stretching the budget and while money was tight, we were rich in whānau or family and in our Māori culture. Our childhood was spent playing in the neighbourhood till dark when someone would whistle, and we'd all come home for tea. Our dad made sure we were connected to our Māori side, and we spent many carefree weekends on the land of our ancestors. My great – grandfather and grandfather believed in the importance of a good education and being part of a workforce; consequently, we all worked from an early age. I loved learning and went on to gain university entrance while my siblings entered into trades. Not everything goes to plan and not long after I left school, I had the first of 4 children. During those childrearing years I worked as a cleaner, indigenous childcare worker and spent 15 years as an office worker administering government benefits. It wasn't long before I realised that policies didn't work for Māori and in the hope of making a greater difference, I accepted a position in a Māori Development Organisation where I met Heather, who, was finishing her PhD. In 2005, she used her post-doctoral funding, bypassing a university to set up Whakauae Research Services under the umbrella of Ngāti Hauiti. I tagged along, seeing it as an opportunity to work with Māori at a community level and perhaps influence policy change. She says she employed me because after working for a government organisation I knew about **systems and change**; after a lifetime of playing sport and community involvement I had many **connections and relationships**. I wasn't fluent in te reo but my identity was strongly placed in Te Ao Māori, and I had a passion of growing Māori potential, no doubt fuelled by my personal journey. Heather recognised that these skills could be an advantage and although my evaluation experience was limited to programme assessments, I was interested in how things fitted together, how systems worked for Māori how I could influence **building capacity for Māori** from a different angle.

I was employed as an administrator/research assistant - learning on the job and evaluations were our bread and butter. Unbeknownst to me Heather began honing my skills as an interviewer by taking me to interviews as an observer and notetaker. I sat in on planning and analysis meetings and was supported to write reports. It was a whirlwind, and before I knew it, I found myself undertaking evaluations on my own. Evaluation knowledge was passed between us like osmosis. As my skills increased, I was given other roles within Whakauae including operations manager, research office, internal lead, community evaluator and researcher. Before I knew it, I was tasked with writing evaluation and research plans, developing budgets, writing ethics proposals, designing tools and writing articles. I was supported, mentored, and sweet-talked by Whakauae to engage in professional development opportunities including undergraduate and post-graduate studies. Without that support and belief in me in those early days I would not be where I am today. First and foremost, I am a mum, a nanny, and a member of a large whānau, but I am also a senior researcher, an AES awards committee member and a member of the Wairangahau Ethics Committee. I am living proof you can grow evaluators and researchers.

[Mel]: My story is a bit different to Gills where she excelled in academia and the school environment, I spent most of my time trying to work out where I fitted in as someone of Māori descent brought up predominantly Pākehā. At the time my father worked for a government organisation called Māori Affairs, they ran a Māori Trade Training Scheme which gave 16-18yr olds fresh out of school, a head start by offering them a 1st year qualification in a trade. So, it was deemed my destiny... a Painting & Interior Decorator! Yeah... nah! After trying it out for 6 months or so I decided it wasn't my thing and headed off on to my next adventure in my cousins shearing gang. My motive was to get enough money to escape overseas. After spending a couple of years travelling and working around the UK & Europe, I returned home, back to the shearing sheds, and to settle down and start a family. Following the birth of #2 of 4 children, I became a support worker helping Māori mothers and their babies, it was here the penny dropped for me that 'by Māori for Māori' was actually a thing! I was able to engage with Māori where my Pākehā counterparts couldn't, learning Pākehā structures which were to be the foundation of my journey into health care. I was then shoulder tapped to work for a local Māori Health and Social Services provider as a child support worker visiting Māori language pre-schools doing Hearing & Vision testing around our district. Eventually I became team leader working with Māori families from the 'womb to the tomb.' My true destiny.... After 10yrs of working with and for my people, I was asked to partake in an interview with Dr Heather Gifford about a Whānau Ora [family wellbeing] research project, only to be informed later on down the track that I was to be named as a co-author on a paper from the findings. Before this I was lucky to write a half page report let alone be an author on a paper lol. I was soon to be whisked away from iwi provider land to join the rest of the crew at Whakauae as an Administrator/Research Assistant, to-ing and fro-ing between these roles. I was dragged along to various project meetings and interviews with Heather, not realising at the time that she was slowly immersing me into the world of research. I also learnt via osmosis – no orientation just get into it lol! As Heather managed a growing organisation it was Gill, as Heather had done for her, who introduced me to the evaluation scene, again taking me along to interviews and partaking in planning to better understand the process. I became a personal assistant to the research team, a responsibility that included managing all the interview documentation including transcribing. Here I learnt about informed consent and coding. I was tasked with organising and coordinating research meetings including analysis, taking minutes, and organising symposium. In the last two years my confidence as a researcher has grown and I now participate as an equal alongside Whakauae senior researchers.

Fun fact, I was recently asked to become a member of the Audit & Risk Committee for that very same Māori Health & Social Services Provider I was employed with 11 years ago. **What grows indigenous evaluators and researchers?**

1. Having a deliberate recruitment strategy

Surprisingly, I wasn't born an evaluator, in fact when I was younger, I wanted to be a pig hunter like my dad. Like many indigenous evaluators I fell into evaluation as the demand for programme evaluation escalated. In those early days Whakauae recognised the potential of this to generate funding and subsequently developed a recruitment strategy of identifying likeminded people through relationships and networks that could undertake evaluation and research. In most cases this involved, and still does, shoulder tapping. In fact, I can only remember three occasions where we advertised for staff members. We all know that indigenous evaluators and researchers get snaffled up by mainstream, so you must be quick. Most of those people we shoulder tapped are still around today and continue to have a long-term relationship with Whakauae. Two of were:

- Kiri Parata, your current AES president, a PhD student, and
- Teresa Taylor, a skilled evaluation practitioner with expertise in KM supervision.

Since 2008 and 2010 respectively; both have partnered with Whakauae on multiple evaluation and research projects. Kiri currently coordinates our Health Research Funded programme grant and manages discrete projects. Teresa also does project management and facilitates planning sessions with the wider team. Both are valued external members of the Whakauae village who continue to contribute to the growth of the organisation and whose skills and attributes we appreciate.

2. Investment in multi-level capacity building

Building evaluation and research capacity demands a multi-level approach. Without governance and back-office systems no evaluation or research project will succeed. Alongside building research capability, Whakauae has invested in growing those systems. Administration staff have been supported and mentored to upskill in their specialty areas such as finance and IT.

We value the insights that young people bring to the table and have supported their participation in governance. Our current chair, now in his 2nd three-year term, was elected board chair in 2023. His place was taken by another Ngāti Hauiti young person, both who are under 30.

As well as growing internal capability, Whakauae has provided opportunities for tertiary students to gain real life experience of the evaluation and research. Whakauae has supported secondary school, undergraduate, master's and PhD students via symposium, scholarships, and mentoring. In 2016, Whakauae launched Te Pae Tawhiti Scholarships. I had a key part in administering this scholarship stream, adding another string to my bow. We have now awarded over 24 scholarships and studentships to potential researchers. As we speak, Whakauae is supporting 3 PhD students, 5 summer studentships and attendance at 5 conferences. Also, individually, Amohia and Tanya mentor and supervise master's and PhD students.

3. Prioritising indigeneity

Who we are as Māori is important, what we value as Māori is important, our knowledge is important, and we are the experts of our own reality. Whakauae values were gifted to us by the iwi and find their foundation in Te Ao Māori. They guide us in everything we do; how we work with each other, with community, with funders and with iwi. They ground us in our culture. Consequently, Whakauae runs cultural wānanga or workshops for Whakauae staff and governance. How might this fit into the evaluation and research space you might ask? The wānanga are designed to encourage critical thinking and understanding how Māori

perspectives fit alongside western paradigms. Wānanga include visiting traditional sites, te reo classes or attending iwi land claims at the marae. In such cases, the whole team (governance, management, research, administration, and finance) attend so there is a collective understanding of the research impacts on Te Ao Māori.

4. Engaged with community

Engaging with community is the key to success when undertaking indigenous evaluation and research, therefore we are committed to nurturing these relationships. Building capacity is part of every evaluation and research project we undertake. We value what the community has to say and include them in all facets of evaluation and research such as:

- co-designing data collection tools
- developing logic models and rubrics together
- training community members in data collection and data analysis.
- asking them to review dissemination before they go to the funder.

Working in community has its rewards and challenges. As Māori we are both insider and outsider. As an insider we have easier access to participants, and a better understanding of what fits and works for that community. As an outsider, the expectations from the community of us as members is a huge responsibility.

Research can leave the community, but a community researcher cannot leave the community.

Finally, to recap

We believe that we as Māori, indigenous peoples of Aotearoa NZ are natural evaluators and researchers, our tikanga (traditions and values) demands it of us.

As a Kaupapa Māori research organisation we seek ways to identify and nurture potential indigenous evaluators and researchers while they are young. Provide them with a supportive environment. Grab them before someone else does, looking for people who have:

- **Connection to culture** - no matter how small or big it's about the longing in that person to make things better for their culture.
- **Connection to community** – makes engaging easier, knowing that community is the expert of their own knowledge not the evaluators.
- **Enduring relationships and networks** – can nurture relationships that will be helpful down the track when it comes to seeking funding, partnering, and finding the people to participate.
- **Transferable skills** – training helps but a critical thinker, a natural inquirer with a desire to learn is a great start to growing an evaluator.

Finally...

- Becoming an indigenous evaluator or researcher is a journey.
- It takes time, support, and mentoring.
- Learning on the job is a part of that journey, upskilling and training another part.
- Being part of a community or having 'skin in the game' is important but comes with expectations and responsibilities.
- Indigenous evaluators and researchers are both insiders and outsiders. The challenges are many, but the rewards are endless.

Kua mutu taku kōrero. Mouri Awa, Mouri Tangata, Mouri Ora