



COVER SHEET

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Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing: a theoretical framework and methods for Indigenous re-search and Indigenist research¹.

Karen Martin – Booran Mirraboopa².

Introduction.

The myth of *terra nullius* implied that this country was uninhabited and *terra nullius* social policy supported by research enabled for the dispossession of knowledges of Indigenous peoples. It must be remembered that university curriculum, teaching methodologies and research endeavours have a history of development that contributed to this dispossession. Has the time come for change?³

Aboriginal writers, Jackie Huggins⁴; Michael Dodson⁵; Rosemary van den Berg⁶, Lester Irabinna Rigney⁷ argue that the extent of research conducted in Aboriginal lands and on Aboriginal people since British invasion in the late 1770s, is so immense it makes us one of the most researched groups of people on earth. Natural scientists such as biologists, geologists, botanists, have conducted research on Aboriginal lands to identify resource potential and thus, economic value. Similarly, social scientists such as anthropologists, archaeologists, educators, psychologists, have conducted research on Aboriginal people to establish our antiquity and humanity. Indeed, in some social science disciplines⁸ we are over-researched and this has generated mistrust, animosity and resistance from many Aboriginal people.

One reason for this reaction is that, until recent times, research conducted in Aboriginal lands was done so without permission, consultation, or involvement of Aboriginal people⁹. The same is especially true for research conducted on or about Aboriginal people generating what I call '*terra nullius* research'. In this research, we are present only as objects of curiosity and subjects of research. To be seen but not asked, heard nor respected. So the research has been undertaken in the same way Captain James Cook falsely claimed the eastern coast of the land to become known as Australia as *terra nullius*.

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This issue of *terra nullius* has been at the heart of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations since then and whilst over the course of some two hundred and thirty-plus years, representing some five generations of Aboriginal people, much has been achieved, much more remains to be done. The traditions of western research have recently come under scrutiny from Aboriginal academics, researchers and thinkers. This critique of western research programs has resulted in Aboriginal writers and theorists reframing western research experiences to develop our own research paradigms and programs. This paper discusses the Indigenist research framework (Lester Irabinna Rigney¹⁰) used in a research study with people of Far North Queensland. But first there are protocols to observe.

Background.

The protocol for introducing one's self to other Indigenous people is to provide information about one's cultural location, so that connection can be made on political, cultural and social grounds and relations established¹¹

As in the above words of a fellow Quandamooka woman and in accordance with the customs of my people, I provide the following details:

My name is Karen Martin. I am the youngest of seven children in the family of George and Ruby Martin (nee Holt). My Father is a Noonuccal man from Minjeripah - the land, waterways, skies and spiritual systems of North Stradbroke Island. My Mother is a Bidjara woman whose ancestral land is the north-eastern area of Carnarvon Gorge, Central Queensland I am a Noonuccal woman with ancestral ties to Bidjara land and come from a tradition of artists, weavers, educators, storytellers, healers and law people. By qualification I am a teacher of young children and their families and I have worked in various education roles where I developed policy and curriculum and advice for education systems based on the expressed needs and aspirations of Indigenous people of Queensland. I have written and lectured in subjects of Indigenous Studies at university, designed and conducted numerous professional development programs and cross-cultural awareness programs with clients ranging from the Playgroup Association to the Queensland Police Service and teachers of Aboriginal children. In 2001, I began a Master of Indigenous

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*Studies by research at James Cook University, Cairns, north Queensland. I was awarded a scholarship by the Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre to undertake research relating to Aboriginal people of the wet tropics region of far north Queensland.*¹²

In providing these details, I am claiming and declaring my genealogy, my ancestry¹³, and my position as researcher and author. The purpose is to locate myself firstly as an Aboriginal person and then as researcher. As a researcher, this clearly presents the assumptions upon which my research is formulated and conducted. This also allows others to locate me and determine the types of relations that might exist. So, in providing these details, I am also identifying, defining and describing the elements of Indigenist research¹⁴.

Indigenist Research: towards a definition.

The strength of my Aboriginal knowledge and heritage hasn't always been recognised by others, particularly researchers. In the early to mid 1990s the Quandamooka people, as did many other Aboriginal groups in Australia, prepared a claim for registration through recently introduced *Native Title Act* (1993). Under this legislation, our rights as traditional owners were recognised for the first time since 1770 thus bringing some closure to the myth of *terra nullius*.

I was an executive committee member of the Quandamooka Land Council when research was being compiled as evidence to satisfy criteria for registration. We had to prove that we were indeed the traditional owners of the land in question by disclosing our genealogies, customs, traditions, beliefs and knowledges. The criteria was based on western, anthropological notions of ownership, affiliation and association to fulfil western legal requirements. I watched with interest and listened to the ways in which our knowledges, cultures and beliefs were collected, analysed, interpreted and presented for this claim. Placing some faith in the concept of native title, I wanted to contribute to the collection of evidence. Although I was interviewed, I felt my knowledge and experiences were measured against pre-determined categories of culture to which it was deemed I could provide no new or convincing examples. Since I didn't speak the language, I hadn't

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grown up on the island, nor had I at that time, lived on the island, I was not considered a potential witness. My life, my knowledge and my reality as a Noonuccal, Quandamooka woman was inconsequential according to western, anthropological and legal structures of native title research. I was not alone however, as other Quandamooka people shared the same concerns and frustration privately, and at community meetings. Others still, chose to not participate. I wondered how something that held much promise, had actually taken away more. Thus began a quest to develop a framework for research with the ways in which we view the world.

Paradigm shifts and Indigenist research:

This paper then, is a preliminary finding of this ongoing quest to re-search and re-present our worldviews as the basis from which we live, learn and survive. It encompasses some of the experiences, beliefs, tensions, celebrations and exchanges that have occurred over time to myself, and my people. More recently, it has been extended by pertinent discussion about challenges to western research from Maori academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith¹⁵, Norman Denzin¹⁶, Lester Irabinna Rigney¹⁷ and Errol West¹⁸ who have each written about the challenges presented to existing frameworks, structures and methodologies of western research. While the work of these writers has been instrumental for my own research, I will focus the work of Lester Irabinna Rigney and Errol West because they are Aboriginal researchers and each contributes to developing an Aboriginal research framework. Lester defines Indigenist research as culturally safe and culturally respectful research that is comprised of three principles: resistance as an emancipatory imperative; political integrity in Indigenous research and privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenist research¹⁹.

For my own research purposes, I questioned the central role of critical theory and the position of resistance espoused by Lester. My belief as an Aboriginal researcher is that I actively use the strength of my Aboriginal heritage and do not position myself in a reactive stance of resisting or opposing western research frameworks and ideologies. Therefore, I research from the strength and position of being Aboriginal and viewing anything western as 'another', alongside and amongst western worldviews and realities. I have therefore expanded Lester's principles to highlight this standpoint and the proactive,

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progressive and visionary purposes that both structure and guide my research. These principles are

- Recognition of our worldviews, our knowledges and our realities as distinctive and vital to our existence and survival;
- Honouring our social mores as a essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Aboriginal people in our own lands and when in the lands of other Aboriginal people;
- Emphasis of social, historical and political contexts which shape our experiences, lives, positions and futures;
- Privileging the voices, experiences and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands.

However, the next activity in developing an Indigenist research framework is to explain its form and structure. As an example, in describing the Japanangka teaching and research paradigm Errol West honoured the uniqueness of Aboriginal ontology and epistemology. This paradigm is presented within a work of art, a matrix that depicted the following dimensions: cultural, spiritual, secular, intellectual, political, practical, personal and public dimensions. Together these comprise the Japanangka teaching and research paradigm. Errol explains:

The teaching and research paradigm I propose eliminates the need to seek knowledge of the quality of cultural universality in Aboriginal Australia...What is left to establish are the fluctuations of intensity and the compelling orientations of a research action, in the connection of non-white methodologies and frames of reference, in the action of research²⁰

The works of Lester Irabinna Rigney and Errol West particularly inspired my efforts to develop an Indigenist research framework based on Quandamooka ontology and epistemology.

Quandamooka Ontology: a framework for Indigenist research.

Given the above discussion, Indigenist research must centralise the core structures of Aboriginal ontology as a framework for research if it is to serve us well. Otherwise it is western research done by Indigenous people. Why ontology? It is through ontology that

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we develop an awareness and sense of self, of belonging and for coming to know our responsibilities and ways to relate to self and others. Barbara Thayer-Bacon refers to this as relational ontology and writes:

A relational (e)pistemology, which is supported by a relational ontology, helps us focus our attention on our interrelatedness, and our interdependence with each other and our greater surroundings²¹

So, I draw upon the knowledges, beliefs, behaviours, experiences and realities from my own Quandamooka worldview and show how these become the framework for Indigenist research. In doing so, my authorship does not equate to absolute authority on all things regarding Quandamooka. I am articulating what many Quandamooka people, for centuries, have already expressed in words, technology, writing, dance, art and life. So whilst I shape this articulation, it is also informed and affirmed by using the words and writings of other Quandamooka people.

Quandamooka Ontology:

I provide an overview of Quandamooka ontology through which I locate myself and describe the country that is Quandamooka. Quandamooka is the land, waterways, skies, spiritual and law systems of the Quandamooka people of Minjerripah (North Stradbroke Island), Moorgumpin (Moreton Island), Moreton Bay and part of the mainland. There are three clans who have traditional rites to this country: Noonuccal, Koenpul and Ngugi.

Minjerripah and Moorgumpin are sand islands and are part of a chain of such islands that are found along the south east coast of Queensland. This chain of sand islands is unique to the world. Some of my people and people from these islands believe we have a common creator spirit and this links us as sand and saltwater people. This sets us in relationship to these people, their country and the Entities within this. One of our main creator spirits is Quandamook, a sea spirit that manifests as a dolphin. So Quandamooka literally means '*the place of the creator spirit Quandamook*'. Another creator spirit is Kabool, a land spirit that manifests as a carpet snake. A well-known and respected Quandamooka woman, poet, artist and educator, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, succinctly express our ontology in this way:

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God gave our Yulubirribi (salt and sand people) nation nutritious food supplies and miraculous medicines and the ability for our people to utilise these gifts by listening to his messages for management from weather, flora, fauna, environment, heavens and each other. After creation, he then gave our ancestors knowledge to pass on through learned and natural expression the ways and means of existence without having to defeat his gifts. This expression is enjoyed by the Koenpil, Noonuccal and other nation's form of education for some hundreds of thousands of years.²²

We believe that country is not only the Land and People, but is also the Entities of Waterways, Animals, Plants, Climate, Skies and Spirits²³. Within this, one Entity should not be raised above another Entity as these live in close relationship with one another. So People are no more or less important than the other Entities. Dale Ruska, a Koenpil – Noonuccal man asserts:

men and women, no matter how high in status they thought they were, had no right whatsoever to decide over the fate of their country or their Mother Spirit. They were there since the time of creation, and our Dreaming or Dreamtime began a long time ago. We are somewhere in the middle of it now and there is a long time to come. Where we now put ourselves in the position of the God and we think we have the right to decide over the fate of our Mother Spirit, we are actually denying the future generations a human right, a blood born right, and we are taking away the Mother Spirit. And that means we are also taking away their spirit²⁴

The strength of our country can also be seen in the relationships these Entities, hence, it is a truly relational ontology. All things are recognised and respected for their place in the overall system. Whilst they are differentiated, these relations are not oppositional, nor binary, but are inclusive and accepting of diversity. These relations serve to define and unite, not oppose or alienate. As saltwater people, the motions of tides, phases of the moon, movements of wind and sand each structure and inform our worldview. This continual movement of air, sand and salt water is arresting, cleansing and healing as much as it is harsh and contradictory. Oodgeroo explains:

We know if we respect the sea she will respond by giving to us her many foods. When the Noonuccal's sea spirit Quandamooka grows angry, she orders us away from her shores, and we wait until she has exhausted her anger and is calm and serene again, before we venture out on to her waters²⁵

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Other times, the Entities restore what has become depleted. There is nothing like the caress of your senses when you lie on the warm, white sand and breathe with the salt air. The sun warms your bones and you feel yourself merge into the sand. The she-oak will shift its branches in the breeze and sing and that's when you know you're being watched. Mirrigimpah²⁶ floats above, hovers, dips and hovers again. You no longer know yourself as a 'person', you've become an Entity amongst other Entities. Through a relational ontology, the connections are restored, relatedness reciprocated and maintained.

We also have a strong relationship with the Skies and stars because whilst they share their knowledge of imminent storms and guide us on our travels they are our library of stories, information, knowledge, entertainment and news. The Skies are a major part of the worldwide web of the southern hemisphere. Oodgeroo, writing in her former English name, shares with us:

There is something unfailingly and breathtakingly beautiful about a sunrise – and this was especially true of a sunrise over Stradbroke Island. The fantastic, indescribable light that brightened the sky always made me feel I was in the presence of the Good Spirit. The colours would appear in the sky as if from nowhere and blend together as the sun peeped over the horizon. It was like a great rainbow rolled up in a huge ball, covering the eastern sky. This spectacle never failed to move me²⁷

But not all our island exists this way. Our island sits at the mouth of the Brisbane River, which is the main watercourse for Brisbane, the capital city of the state of Queensland. The salt water and winds wash sand through channels between Minjerripah and the island of Moorgumpin (Moreton Island) into the catchment area of the Brisbane River. Brisbane is known to be the largest capital city in the southern hemisphere in terms of geographical size. So the river gets very busy, very polluted and very tired, and so does country and so do the Entities. Sand mining has distorted and destroyed almost two-thirds of Minjerripah and a whaling station on Moorgumpin in the early to mid-twentieth century contributed to the near extinction of the whale population. Invasions and incursions from tourists, feral weeds and animals all contribute to the sicknesses of each and every Entity. In the people it causes sickness of our physical, mental and spiritual health. Oodgeroo²⁸ forewarned:

Stradbroke is dying. The birds and animals are going. The tress and flowers are being pushed aside and left to die. Tourists come to soak up the sunshine and

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bathe in the blue Pacific, scattering as they go their discarded cans and cigarette packets and bottles and even the hulks of cars. Greedy, thoughtless, stupid, ignorant man continues the assault on nature. But he too will suffer. His ruthless bulldozers are digging his own grave²⁹

Quandamooka worldview constructs: Indigenist Research theory.

Having outlined dimensions of Quandamooka ontology, I will now outline how this informs a theoretical framework for Indigenist research. Essentially this describes three main constructs and their processes: first, establishing through law what is known about the Entities; second, establishing relations amongst Entities; and third, enacting ways for maintaining these relations. Elsewhere, I identify these as Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing³⁰.

Ways of Knowing.

The time of learning in the Aboriginal world never stops. It goes on and on. As soon as the children are able to sit up, they are taught to observe the reptiles, animals and birds and to draw them in the sand. In this way they learn to recognize every creature in the bush. And they learn, too, how to imitate their calls and cries³¹

Ways of Knowing is specific to ontology and Entities of Land, Animals, Plants, Waterways, Skies, Climate and Spiritual systems of Aboriginal groups. Knowledge about ontology and Entities is learned and reproduced through processes of: listening, sensing, viewing, reviewing, reading, watching, waiting, observing, exchanging, sharing, conceptualising, assessing, modelling, engaging, applying. Ways of Knowing also entails processes that allow it to expand and contract according to social, political, historical and spatial dimensions of individuals, the group and interactions with outsiders. So this incorporates the contexts as well as the processes. It is more than just information or facts, but is taught and learned in certain contexts, in certain ways at certain times. It is therefore purposeful, only to the extent to which it is used. If it is not used, then it is not necessary.

However, in this system, no one person, or Entity knows all, but each has sets of knowledges to fulfil particular roles. These roles are gender specific and directed by life

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stage. For example, introducing our young to country is a responsibility of adults, particularly the women towards the child, but it is also a responsibility we fulfil for ourselves in expanding our relations. Uncle Bob Anderson describes his Ways of Knowing as a Quandamooka, Ngugi Elder:

Age does not denote Eldership. There are no application forms posted when a certain age is reached. People are observed and their activities noted in much the same fashion as when children are undergoing their transition to maturity. Later in life when it is felt that their minds are receptive to understanding their role in adult society, they will be invited to become a member of the Elders group not an Elder in their own individual right but for what they can contribute to society as a group³²

So there are varying types of knowledges, having different levels that have to be operational for group function. This keeps the Entities known to and in a network of relationships. Without this knowing we are unable to ‘be’, hence our Ways of Knowing inform our Ways of Being.

Ways of Being.

We are part of the world as much as it is part of us, existing within a network of relations amongst Entities that are reciprocal and occur in certain contexts. This determines and defines for us rights to be earned and bestowed as we carry out rites to country, self and others – our Ways of Being. These are indelibly driven by our ontology through our Ways of Knowing and serve as guides for establishing relations amongst the Entities. Our Ways of Being are about the rights we earn by fulfilling relations to Entities of country and self. Oodgeroo explains, ‘All living things, be they mammals, birds, reptiles, insects or trees are our sisters and brothers and therefore we must protect them We are their custodians. We not only share with them, we also guard them’³³

Our Ways of Being evolve as contexts change. For instance relations change amongst people at particular times such as movement from one life stage to another, or with a birth or death of a member. Relations amongst Entities are also effected in this same way hence the passion and determination behind protection of the Land, Waterways, Skies and Spirits and all Entities.

Where once our Ways of Being were exercised within our country and with other known groups, since colonisation we engage often with many Aboriginal people and groups. This is certainly so since the times of physical dispossession, compulsory schooling and work. In these instances, we immediately set about establishing identities, interests and connections to determine our relatedness. Pat Dudgeon and Darlene Oxenham call this ‘kindredness’³⁴ and Simon Forrest names it ‘connectedness’³⁵. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, a Quandamooka woman, calls this relationality defined as:

*one experiences the self as part of others and that others are part of the self; this is learnt through reciprocity, obligation, shared experiences, coexistence, cooperation and social memory*³⁶

*Indigenous women’s relationality encompasses principles of generosity, empathy and care that connote ideals of respect, consideration, understanding, politeness and nurturing*³⁷

In these circumstances we draw upon what we know and have been taught from our Elders and family members as proper forms of conduct. Through this, our Ways of Being shape our Ways of Doing.

Ways of Doing.

Our Ways of Doing are a synthesis and an articulation of our Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being. These are seen in our: languages, art, imagery, technology, traditions and ceremonies, land management practices, social organisation and social control. Again these are life stage, gender and role specific. For example, women have responsibilities and rites to fulfil as nurturers and men have responsibilities and rites to fulfil as protectors. Our Ways of Doing express our individual and group identities, and our individual and group roles. Our behaviour and actions are a matter of subsequent evolvment and growth in our individual Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being. We become tangible proof of our ontology and it’s constructs of our Ways of Being and Ways of Knowing. That is, we are able to show (Do), respectfully and rightfully (Being) what we know (Knowing). Oodgeroo explains:

Our people did not cut down trees for paper, nor did they mine metals for pencils, typewriters, computer, printouts, phones, facsimiles, photocopiers etc etc. They successfully sustained our people and environment as they talked,

*sang and danced the knowledge on to the young, while others used bark, branches, sticks, stones, ochres, fire and smoke for communication. To many, these methods are preferable for the environment... These methods were shared amongst the many nations through clan gatherings, family gatherings, message stick carriers, story tellers, songs, dance and paintings*³⁸.

Although our worlds are now historically, socially and politically imbued with features of western worldviews and constructs, we never relinquished, nor lost the essence of our Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being and this is reflected in our Ways of Doing. Vince Martin, a Noonuccal man asserts:

*Well, we were bought up to share, no matter what it was. And that's still the custom these days. You can put modern life in to all those changing attitudes. Some people want to go back to the old ways, some want to go ahead. It's spreading the culture in certain ways. But you'll find the majority of these people on this island have never really lost their culture, it's just done a different way. That's the only difference.*³⁹

To represent our worlds is ultimately something we can only do for ourselves using our own processes to articulate our experiences, realities and understandings. Anything else is an imposed view that excludes the existence of our ontology and the interrelationship between our Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing.

Indigenist Research methodology.

For Indigenist research to be recognised by the academy of western research it must also identify its methodology. But western research is a western practice and in this way, it is not a feature of our own world so a research framework that is entirely Aboriginal, is not possible. So Indigenist research occurs through centering Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing in alignment with aspects of western qualitative research frameworks. This alignment or harmonisation occurs in both structure of research and in research procedures. Of these, eight are identified in this discussion of Indigenist research. These are: research assumptions; research questions; literature review; research design; conduct; analysis; interpretation; reporting and dissemination⁴⁰. These procedures and processes reveal the ontological and epistemological foundations upon which research methodology occurs. It is interesting to recall that Errol West, too, identified eight structures that comprise the Japananka research paradigm. The following

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discussion articulates this alignment and harmonisation in terms of the research study I am conducting.

Research assumptions: to re-set through research.

A researcher's worldview both informs and shapes the assumptions and parameters for undertaking research activity. Within Indigenist research these assumptions are grounded within matters pertaining to the protection and preservation of our country and its Entities and the protection and preservation of our Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing. Another assumption is the emphasis given to the relational nature of our worlds and lives. This relatedness is core and permeates every aspect of every procedure of research.

Research question: to re-claim through research.

For the Indigenist researcher, research questions centre on the Entities of a location, or country. Research questions will emphasise different aspects of a phenomenon and seek solutions to issues we prioritise. In this study the research questions seek to establish how the Burungu people regulate the behaviours of outsiders, and how will I regulate my own behaviour as an Aboriginal outsider and researcher.

Literature review: to re-view through research.

The Indigenist researcher will firstly seek out primary sources of the research location. These will invariably be sources produced by People and by other Entities in the context of country. The purpose is to establish the state of relations amongst the Entities that can only be achieved by being there. A re-view of primary sources such as photographs, audio-visual media also forms the sources in Indigenist research and contain evidence of their Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing. The Indigenist researcher then 'reads' these sources for relevance to the research question.

Primary and secondary sources by non-Aboriginal people should also be re-viewed keeping in mind the cultural assumptions, standpoints and biases of the author.

Research design: to re-frame through research.

Research design is embedded in theoretical framework and reflects the assumptions, standpoint and values of the researcher. For Indigenist researchers, design is contextual and accords recognition to the way relations are maintained between and amongst Entities. For example, research design considers how the relations amongst individuals, families and community members exist in spite of their geographical distribution. Whilst there might be a primary research site, Indigenist research expects to be multi-sited. So whilst Buru is the main site, other localities within the Cairns, Mossman areas are also significant.

The ability to design research that celebrates a relational ontology requires flexibility and reflexivity that is more than a matter of matching methods of data collection to the research question. Flexibility in design demonstrates the extent to which the researcher is prepared to show respect and responsibility to understand that research is not a priority in times of crisis, grieving, celebration, ritual or maintenance of relations amongst Entities. This is the cultural safety and cultural respect Lester Irabinna Rigney commands.

Reflexivity in research design affords the ‘space’ to decolonise western research methodologies, then harmonise and articulate Indigenist research. Reflexivity is a process that allows us to work from Aboriginal centres and ensure we work with relatedness of self and Entities. Reflexivity challenges us to claim our shortcomings, misunderstandings, oversights and mistakes to re-claim our lives and make strong changes to our current realities. Being reflexive ensures we don’t compromise our identity whilst undertaking research.

Research conduct: to re-search through research.

In this phase of the research, conduct is still driven by our Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being to know to observe protocols and respect relations and earn rights to continue the research⁴¹. warns against methodological erasure whereby the methods for data collection ignore and perpetuate power imbalances of research expert and Aboriginal research subject. Therefore, data collection methods entail following codes for communication and protocols for interacting that expects different behaviour in different

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settings. This varies according to setting, gender, life stage and roles of the People and Entities.

Methods such as storying and exchanging talk are most often used amongst People but methods for interacting with other Entities (eg. Animals, Weather, Skies) is equally necessary. This requires field work, that immerses the researcher in the contexts of the Entities and to watch, listen, wait, learn and repeat these processes as methods for data collection.

Data analysis: to re-visit through research.

Since the assumptions upon which research is based vary according to worldview of the researcher, then the criteria, categories and themes devised for data analysis will further entrench this worldview. Using the Entities as principle data sets, a thematic analysis⁴² is employed to uncover the perceptions, relationships, activities, strategies and processes as these relate to the research questions.

Data interpretation: to re-connect through research.

In a voice centred approach to interpretation, data interpretation accords respect to the country and Entities to allow these to tell the patterns within their own stories, in their own ways. It may also require the Indigenist researcher to watch and wait with patience as the interpretations and representations of these patterns come forth. This may occur as dreams, or in the form of words and pictures seen in our daily life and not expected to carry messages. The task of interpretation is to maintain these micro- and macro-relations of research as a process for re-connecting the patterns revealed in analysis. It has less to do with capturing 'truth' or drawing general conclusions, than the re-connecting of self, family, community and Entities that can be claimed and celebrated.

Reporting and dissemination: re-presenting through research.

Within Indigenist research, reporting is culturally regulated through respect of protocols to others such as: asking permission, using preferred language, terms and expressions and the ultimate aim of maintaining relations. So reporting and dissemination of research is to

re-present the research to the participants, to maintain their relatedness to this work. This relatedness permeates all aspects and procedures of the research.

In my postgraduate research studies, I am working with the Burungu who are a clan within the Kuku Yalanji nation of far north Queensland. I am not working with my own people and I am ever mindful that I behave in ways that serve to identify relations and maintain relatedness. As a result I developed a set of research protocols that consists of a number of statements by which I agree to abide. These protocols are part of the research findings and strongly reflect the relational ontology, epistemology and methodology employed through the Indigenist research framework. The protocols are stated in a one page document that identifies seven succinct statements where I agree to: respect for Bubu⁴³; respect Buru⁴⁴ laws; respect Buru Elders; respect Buru culture; respect Buru families; respect Buru futures. I then list a number of ways in which I will demonstrate this respect⁴⁵ and finally outlines ways for the Burungu people to address misbehaviour on my part. This includes contacting my Elders and senior family members as well as staff of James Cook University. The protocols have been distributed to key research participants and described at a community meeting. I have also distributed them to Quandamooka community organisations as an act of accountability and for maintaining relations.

Conclusion.

This discussion of Indigenist research is by no means complete but a life's work. I am often confounded by the levels of trust that have been established, and I attribute this to using a research framework of which a relational ontology, epistemology and methodology are a necessary condition. I am indebted to the Burungu, Buru Entities and so many others because this research study and its discussion of Indigenist research would not be possible. So for me, working with another group has in fact re-newed a deeper understanding of relatedness and the importance of relations.

The prospect of further developments that confirm Indigenist research as a paradigm in its own right are exciting. Whilst it signifies the challenge to western research that Victor Hart and Sue Whatman⁴⁶ presented in the introduction of this paper,

it is equally about our continued assertion to take control of our lives and protect ourselves, our lands, our past, our present, and particularly our future.

In closing, I'll share some more of her words of Oodgeroo Noonuccal who left not a legacy in her words and her art, but the means to traverse the terrains of research and remain related and whole. Without these writings and art, my research would not be the same. She proclaims:

*to our father's fathers, the pain, the sorrow,
to our children's children, the glad tomorrow⁴⁷*

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ This title was first used for a panel presentation made to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies conference 'The Power of Knowledge and the Resonance of Tradition': September, 2001.
- ² This is the most recent name given to me by Quandamooka Elders and Senior women. Its English translation is 'all winds under the southern cross'.
- ³ Victor Hart & Sue Whatman *Decolonising the Concept of Knowledge* Paper presented at the HERDSA conference, Auckland, 1998.
- ⁴ Jackie Huggins *Sister Girl*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1998.
- ⁵ Michael Dodson *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commission, Third Report*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1995.
- ⁶ Rosemary Van den Berg 'Intellectual property rights for Aboriginal people in Australia' in *Mots Pluriels*, no 8, 1998, <http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP898rvb.html> accessed 14/01/02.
- ⁷ Lester Irabinna Rigney *The First Perspective: Culturally Safe Research Practices on or with Indigenous Peoples*. Paper presented at the Chamcool conference, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, 1999.
- ⁸ Such as education, criminology, health and psychology.
- ⁹ Eleanor Bourke 'Dilemmas of integrity and knowledge: protocol in Aboriginal research' in School of Indigenous Australian Studies (ed) *Indigenous Research Ethics: Papers from the conference held in Townsville in September 1995*. Centre for Social and Welfare Research, James Cook University, Townsville 1999, pp 9-20.
- ¹⁰ Lester Irabinna Rigney 'Internationalism of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander anti-colonial cultural critique of research methodologies: a guide to Indigenist research methodology and its principles' in *Research and Development in Higher Education: Advancing International Perspectives*. Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australia, Annual International conference proceedings, 1997, vol 20, pp 629-36.
- ¹¹ Aileen Moreton-Robinson *Talkin' Up to the White Women* University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2000. ppxv
- ¹² The full title of this research study is 'Please knock before you enter': an investigation of how Rainforest Aboriginal people regulate outsiders and the implications for western research and researchers.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Rigney 1997 *ibid*.
- ¹⁵ *ibid*
- ¹⁶ Norman Denzin 'The practices and politics of interpretation' in N Denzin & Y Lincoln (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Routledge, London, 2000, third edition, pp 897-922.
- ¹⁷ Rigney 1999 *ibid*.
- ¹⁸ Errol West (2000) *The Japanangka Teaching and Research Paradigm: An Aboriginal Framework*. Paper presented at the IndigenSou Research and Postgraduate Forum. Aboriginal Research Institute: University of South Australia. 18-20 September, 2000.
- ¹⁹ Rigney 1997, pp 10 *ibid*.
- ²⁰ West pp 11.
- ²¹ Barbara Thayer-Bacon 'Ecofeminism as an example of a relational (e)pistemology' Abstract submitted to the *SIG Research on Women and Education*. 2002
<http://tigersystem.net/aera/2002/viewproposaltext.asp?propID=113> accessed 02/09/02
- ²² Oodgeroo Noonuccal from a speech given at the Yulubirri Art Exhibition, Dunwich, North Stradbroke Island 1993 cited in Donna Ruska 'An assertion of customary law over invader law and eco-perspective. In R Ganter (ed) *Stradbroke Island: Facilitating Change. Proceedings of a public seminar held by the Queensland Studies Centre with Quandamooka Land Council, May 1997*. Queensland Studies Centre, Griffith University, Brisbane 1997 pp 21-31.
- ²³ In according these Entities full respect, they are treated as proper nouns and given capitals.
- ²⁴ Dale Ruska 'Bloodline to country' in R Ganter (ed) *Stradbroke Island: facilitating change: proceedings of a public seminar held by the Queensland Studies Centre with Quandamooka Land Council, May 1997*. Queensland Studies Centre, Griffith University, Brisbane 1997 pp43-9.
- ²⁵ Oodgeroo Noonuccal *Legends and Landscapes*. Random House, Milsons Point, New South Wales, 1990.
- ²⁶ Mirrigimpah is the sea eagle. Its colouring is a white head and throat with russet brown body and wings.

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- ²⁷ Kath Walker *Stradbroke Dreamtime* Angus & Robertson, Sydney, reprint, 1984 pp 9.
- ²⁸ Writing in her former English name of Kath Walker.
- ²⁹ *ibid* pp 7
- ³⁰ These constructs were introduced in IA1015: Indigenous Australian Worldviews I, a first year subject of the Bachelor of Indigenous Studies, School of Indigenous Australian Studies, James Cook University, Townsville, 2000.
- ³¹ Kath Walker *ibid* pp 50
- ³² Bob Anderson 'No application forms' in *Arts Nexus* Queensland Community Arts Networks, Brisbane, 1998, pp 22-3.
- ³³ *Ibid* pp 8.
- ³⁴ Pat Dudgeon & Darlene Oxenham 'The complexity of Aboriginal diversity: Identity and kindredness' in *Valuing Cultures: Recognising Indigenous Cultures as a Valued Part of Australian Heritage*. Key Issues Paper no 3, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 1990.
- ³⁵ Simon Forrest 1998
- ³⁶ *ibid* pp 16
- ³⁷ *ibid* pp 18
- ³⁸ Oodgeroo 1990 pp 22
- ³⁹ Vince Martin 'Exploring alternatives' in R Ganter (ed) *Stradbroke Island: Facilitating Change: proceedings of a public seminar held by the Queensland Studies Centre with Quandamooka Land Council, May*. Queensland Studies Centre, Griffith University, Queensland, 1997, pp 91-2.
- ⁴⁰ P Liamputtong Rice & D Ezzy *Qualitative Research Methods: A Health Focus* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.
- ⁴¹ *ibid*
- ⁴² Bogdan & Biklen (1982)
- ⁴³ Bubu is the Kuku Yalanji term for country.
- ⁴⁴ Buru is the Kuku Yalanji term for the site where this research is taking place.
- ⁴⁵ For example a selection of these are: keep Buru as the main place for research, visits and meetings; ask permission before making visits to Buru; not more objects, nor take anything from Buru; not go anywhere in Buru unless I am taken by Buru Bama (term for Aboriginal people); bring no alcohol or drugs into Buru; keep my word; share what I know and have in ways to help Buru Bama meet their vision for their future.
- ⁴⁶ *ibid*
- ⁴⁷ Oodgeroo Noonuccal *My People* Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1990 pp