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# Can You Hear us Now? Voices from the Margin: Using Indigenous Methodologies in Geographic Research

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## Abstract

Indigenous methodologies are an alternative way of thinking about research processes. Although these methodologies vary according to the ways in which different Indigenous communities express their own unique knowledge systems, they do have common traits. This article argues that research on Indigenous issues should be carried out in a manner which is respectful and ethically sound from an Indigenous perspective. This naturally challenges Western research paradigms, yet it also affords opportunities to contribute to the body of knowledge about Indigenous peoples. It is further argued that providing a mechanism for Indigenous peoples to participate in and direct these research agendas ensures that their communal needs are met, and that geographers then learn how to build ethical research relationships with them. Indigenous methodologies do not privilege Indigenous researchers because of their Indigeneity, since there are many 'insider' views, and these are thus suitable for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. However, there is a difference between research done within an Indigenous context using Western methodologies and research done using Indigenous methodologies which integrates Indigenous voices. This paper will discuss those differences while presenting a historical context of research on Indigenous peoples, providing further insights into what Indigenous methodologies entail, and proposing ways in which the academy can create space for this discourse.

**KEY WORDS** *Indigenous methodologies; Indigenous epistemologies; Indigenous research agendas; Indigenous faculty and the academy*

## Introduction

I am a Hawaiian woman by birth, a cartographer by training, and an academic by choice. I have been conditioned, through colonial education systems, to believe that Indigenous ways of understanding reality were subordinate to Western science; that Indigenous ways of sharing knowledge, mostly through one-on-one oral or performative communication modes, were hear-say and inferior to the written texts that recorded a superior intelligence. Decolonising an Indigenous mind is a beautiful thing and knowing that I am not alone is a powerful aphrodisiac.

All around the world, Indigenous/Aboriginal/ Native peoples are responding to Western researchers' needs to further develop Western scientific knowledge systems. Our voices may have started out as a low murmur from the margin but it has now become a distinct and unified cacophony of resistance and distrust. The doors previously open for doing research on an Indigenous community in the name of science are closing. And very soon, these doors will be shut for good. Why? You may ask. We've only had the best intentions for you. We've only tried to help you.

It's because we've had enough of your 'conspicuous innocence'. We have been pathologised by Western research methods that have found us deficient either as genetically inferior or culturally deviant for generations (Sue and Sue, 1990). We have been dismembered, objectified and problematised via Western scientific rationality and reason (Sinclair, 2003). We have been politically, socially, and economically dominated by colonial forces and marginalised through armed struggle, biased legislation, and educational initiatives and policies that promote Western knowledge systems at the expense of our own (Bishop, 1997). We know better now.

Have I got your attention yet? I hope so because it's really not my intention to preach about the ills and woes of Indigenous peoples in relation to research. Instead, this paper discusses newly emerging methodologies that not only address this rift between knowledge systems and research paradigms, but also narrow it. This paper is about Indigenous methodologies and, more specifically, about the need to apply them in geographic research.

The impetus for sharing these thoughts came from the Indigenous methodologies sessions organised at the last three Annual Meetings of the Association of American Geographers (2004–6). These sessions were sponsored by the Indigenous People's Specialty Group and they continue to draw concerned academics looking for support from other like minded scholars. These sessions provide attendees with an opportunity to locate themselves within a range of intellectual debates on research methods and academic practices evolving in Indigenous communities and have addressed any number of the following issues: Indigenous priorities and the academic dilemma in the research process; Indigenous epistemologies and the knowledge economy; transforming academic paradigms; cultural identity, resistance and research; new frontiers of knowledge; global economy, culture and the role of academic scholarship; and intellectual property rights of Indigenous knowledge.

Most of this three part paper echoes the concerns expressed in these sessions and draws on the works of an international interdisciplinary arena of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. Although most of these scholars presented their experiences with Indigenous peoples from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States of America, each with their own unique knowledge systems, there are common elements that continue to come forward. The most important

elements are that research in Indigenous communities be conducted respectfully, from an Indigenous point of view and that the research has meaning that contributes to the community. For many Indigenous peoples, 'knowledge for knowledge sake [is] a waste of time' (Meyer, 2003, 57; cf. Crazy Bull, 1997b). If research does not benefit the community by extending the quality of life for those in the community, it should not be done. Geographers need to start building ethical research relationships with Indigenous communities. By doing so geographers will contribute to the body of knowledge about Indigenous peoples and their relationship to the places where they live, those cultural landscapes infused with meaning.

The first part reviews literature on research and Indigenous people presenting two important issues, the association of much of this research with colonialism and the misrepresentation of Indigenous knowledge systems due to differing ontologies and epistemologies. The second part details the points of commonality in the works of other scholars in presenting Indigenous methodologies. And the last, and probably the most important part, proposes ways in which the academy can create space for this new and developing research methodology. This is not intended to be a formal or exhaustive presentation but rather the beginning of a continuing conversation.

### **Research and Indigenous people**

Since the mid 1990s international and interdisciplinary scholars have been writing about Indigenous perspectives on research. From an Indigenous perspective, research is linked to colonialism and oppression and must be decolonised<sup>1</sup> (Hampton, 1995; Crazy Bull, 1997b; Abdullah and Stringer, 1999; Smith, 1999; Battiste, 2000; Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Bishop and Glynn, 2003; Harvey, 2003; Thaman, 2003; Absolon and Willett, 2004; Howitt and Stevens, 2005; Shaw *et al.*, 2006). The legacy of invalidating Indigenous knowledge disconnected Indigenous people from 'their traditional teachings, spirituality, land, family, community, spiritual leaders, medicine people, and the list goes on' (Absolon and Willett, 2004, 9).

Confronting ideologies of oppression is essential in order to decolonise our minds and our disciplines because, contrary to popular belief, we are not in postcolonial times (Smith, G.H. 2000, 215; cf. Moody, 1993, xxix). For Indigenous people, decolonising research isn't about

the total rejection of Western theory, research, or knowledge. It's about changing focus, 'centering our concerns and worldviews and coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes' (Smith, 1999, 39).

Indigenous people need to protect themselves from further misrepresentation, misinterpretation, fragmentation, mystification, commodification, and simplification of Indigenous knowledges (Deloria, 1988, 1995; Sue and Sue, 1990; Moody, 1993; Grenier and International Development Research Centre (Canada), 1998; Mihesuah, 1998; Nakata, 1998; Bishop, 1999; Smith, G.H. 2000; Fixico, 2003). False representations propagate a false consciousness hindering Indigenous people from discovering as much about themselves as they can or seeing themselves as they really are. These images create 'artificial contexts' that further disconnect them from their natural contexts (Absolon and Willett, 2004, 9–10).

Anthropologists have been most heavily criticised. For example, in his book, *Custer Died for your Sins*, Vine Deloria Jr. states:

An anthropologist comes out to the Indian reservation to make OBSERVATIONS. During the winter these observations will become books by which future anthropologists will be trained, so that they can come out to reservations years from now and verify the observations they have studied (Deloria, 1988).

Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo add:

Anthropological accounts of other people's cultures are not Indigenous accounts of those cultures, even though they may be based on interviews with and observations of Indigenous communities, individuals, and societies. All of the foregoing activities, while they draw on Indigenous cultural knowledge, are imagined, conceptualized, and carried out within the theoretical and methodological frameworks of Anglo-European forms of research, reasoning, and interpreting (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001, 58).

Geographers should not be lulled into the false belief that these critiques do not apply to their work because they typically engage in assessing the geographical patterns of cultural landscapes 'rather than the intricacies of mental and social life' (Rundstrom and Deur, 1999, 245). For example, cartographic representations of Indigen-

ous cultural knowledge run the risk of falling prey to the same criticisms because of a loss of translation due to differing ontological and epistemological cartographic structures (Rundstrom, 1993, 1995; Fox, 1995; Crawhall, 2003; Johnson *et al.*, 2005; Pearce and Louis, 2007). Indeed, '(t)he chief failing of this technology has been its inability to further our understanding of the cultural logic that lies behind the relations of space' (Fox, 1995, 9). Furthermore, GIS has come to be seen by geographers as both an empowering and marginalising technology (Goss, 1995; Rundstrom, 1995; Harris and Weiner, 2002).

Unfortunately, with the exception of these and a few other cartographic texts (i.e. Johnson *et al.*, 2005; Pearce and Louis, 2007), literature in geographic journals that addresses the issues of Indigenous people and research is difficult to find. Shaw *et al.* (2006, 269) discovered those 'publications registering the term "Indigen(ous/eity)" equalled only 1.67% (91 of 5418) from 1997 to July 2004, and 3.5% (32 of 913) of articles registering the term "Aborigin(al/ality/es)" found their way into journals with "Geograph(ical/y/ies)" in their title'. My own crude Ingenta search of journals with "Geograph(er/ical/ies/y)" in their title from 1995–Jan 2007 revealed a total of 108 publications with the term 'Indigen(ous/eity)'.<sup>2</sup>

While a few references by geographers can be found in an article by Howitt and Jackson (1998) entitled, 'Some things do change: Indigenous rights, geographers and geography in Australia', a chapter by Rundstrom *et al.* (2003) entitled, 'American Indian geography', and a special issue (88 (3)) of *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* in 2006, there appears to be little engagement with these issues by geographers. Geographers are beginning to take note of the fact that Indigenous scholars are seeking validation of their cultural knowledge systems; knowledge systems that can inform geographers, both physical and human. In order for geographic scholarship to keep pace and remain relevant to Indigenous communities and societies in the 21st century, we must engage with Indigenous methodologies.

### **Insight into Indigenous methodologies**

So what exactly are Indigenous methodologies? To assume there is a singular answer to this question only feeds scholarly beliefs of essentialism emphasising the 'messenger' instead of the 'message'. 'To a large extent, such campaigns

are simply the logical consequences of centuries of intellectual hegemony and academic colonialism where Whites defined Indian history and American Indians served as the objects of definition' (Grande, 2000, 348–349). Who can blame non-Indigenous scholars for wanting to protect themselves and defend the legitimacy of their own scholarship? And likewise, who can blame Indigenous scholars for wanting to assert themselves and gain recognition for their scholarship?

So instead of speaking in specifics, let me paint with broad brush strokes. Indigenous methodologies are alternative ways of thinking about research processes (Akan, 1992; Cajete, 1994, 2000; Ermine, 1995; Crazy Bull, 1997b; Abdullah and Stringer, 1999; Bishop, 1999; Semali and Kincheloe, 1999; Smith L.T., 2000; Steinhauer, 2002; Atleo, 2004; Hodge and Lester, 2006). They are fluid and dynamic approaches that emphasise circular and cyclical perspectives. Their main aim is to ensure that research on Indigenous issues is accomplished in a more sympathetic, respectful, and ethically correct fashion from an Indigenous perspective.

There are overwhelming commonalities in the literature on Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous research agendas. These include four unwavering principles: relational accountability; respectful representation; reciprocal appropriation; and rights and regulation.

Relational accountability describes the concept that Indigenous peoples share about their dependence on everything and everyone around them, casually referred to as 'all our relations, be it air, water, rocks, trees, animals, insects, humans, and so forth' (Steinhauer, 2002, 72). It implies that all parts of the research process are related, from inspiration to expiration, and that the researcher is not just responsible for nurturing and maintaining this relationship but is also accountable to 'all your relations'.

Respectful (re)presentation requires the researcher to 'consider how you represent yourself, your research and the people, events, phenomena you are researching' (Absolon and Willett, 2004, 15). Respect is not just about saying 'please' or 'thank you'. It's about listening intently to others' ideas and not insisting that your ideas prevail (Steinhauer, 2002, 73). It's about displaying characteristics of humility, generosity, and patience with the process and accepting decisions of the Indigenous people in regard to the treatment of any knowledge shared. This is because not all knowledge shared is meant for a general audience.

Reciprocal appropriation is a metaphor by N. Scott Momaday that describes the attitudes of Native Americans to the environment. Specifically, it is 'appropriations in which man (sic) invests himself in the landscape; and at the same time incorporates the landscape into his own most fundamental experience' (1976, 80). It recognises that 'all research is appropriation' (Rundstrom and Deur, 1999, 239) and requires adequate benefits for both the Indigenous people and the researcher.

Rights and regulation refers to research that is driven by Indigenous protocols, contains explicitly outlined goals, and considers the impacts of the proposed research (Smith, 1999). This is meant to ensure that the research process is non-extractive and recognises Indigenous peoples' intellectual property rights to 'own' the knowledge they share with the researcher and to maintain control over all publication and reporting of that knowledge. It demands that the entire research process be a collaboration and any publication or announcement of 'findings' must be written in understandable language and shared with and receive the endorsement of the Indigenous community.

Indigenous methodologies are not merely 'a political gesture on the part of Indigenous peoples in their struggle for self-determination' (Porsanger, 2004, 8). They are necessary to 'reframe, reclaim, and rename' (Steinhauer, 2002, 70) the research process so that Indigenous people can take control of their cultural identities, emancipate their voices from the shadows, and recognise Indigenous realities.

Embracing Indigenous epistemologies is a critical element of Indigenous methodological research. As with Indigenous methodologies, I acknowledge that there is no singular definition of Indigenous epistemologies since knowledge is not just socially constructed from how it is acquired, selected, and stored to how it is symbolised and transmitted, it is also, 'local ... located ... situated and situating' (Turnbull, 2003, 19). Furthermore, what differentiates one society from another are the strategies that they employ to understand their own places (Oliveira 2006, 6). Therefore, please consider this a non-exhaustive presentation of commonalities within the literature.

An overwhelming number of authors, international and interdisciplinary, acknowledge the holistic framework of Indigenous epistemologies (Sue and Sue, 1990; Akan, 1992; Moody, 1993; Cajete, 1994; 2000; Battiste and Barman, 1995; Deloria, 1995; Ermine, 1995; Bishop, 1996; 1999;

Hernandez-Avila, 1996; Mihesuah, 1998; Wautischer, 1998; Abdullah and Stringer, 1999; Semali and Kincheloe, 1999; Smith, 1999; Battiste, 2000; Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000; Graveline, 2000; Struthers, 2001; Bourke and Bourke, 2002; Steinhauer, 2002; AARE, 2003; Fixico, 2003; Lamb, 2003; Thaman, 2003; Absolon and Willett, 2004; Atleo, 2004; McGregor, 2004; Porsanger, 2004; de Ishtar, 2005; Kovach, 2005; Stewart-Harawira, 2005; Moreton-Robinson, 2006). It is a holism that goes beyond the empirically based concept of a unified physical universe. And, while holistic thinking that incorporates the unity of spiritual and physical worlds has had a role in some parts of Western thinking, it is 'doubtful that holistic thinking could be considered an overriding theme in patterns of Western thought ... [when there is a] ... tendency to compartmentalize experience and thus assume that some parts have no relationship to other parts' (Atleo, 2004, xi–xii).

From an Indigenous perspective, research, the search for knowledge, is considered to be a spiritual journey. In Indigenous epistemologies, 'the greatest mysteries lie within the self at the spiritual level and are accessed through ceremony' (Sinclair, 2003). The spiritual aspect of life is as important to the search for knowledge as is the physical and it can only be accessed through prayer, ceremony, vision quests, and dreams. Knowledge received through these means is a reflection of the Indigenous perception of 'living in a sea of relationships. In each place they lived, they [Indigenous peoples] learned the subtle, but all important, language of relationship' (Cajete, 2000, 178). These kinds of practiced beliefs, nurtured over generations, created an intimacy with each place, its animals, plants, and geography. It is because of this intimacy with place that many Indigenous academics believe 'the most welcomed researcher is already a part of the community, ... understand[s] the history, needs, and sensibilities of the community ... focuses on solutions, and understands that research is a life-long process' (Crazy Bull, 1997b, 19).

However, I don't believe Indigenous methodologies privilege Indigenous researchers because of their Indigeneity. In some cases, Indigenous communities have different expectations when working with Indigenous researchers with an 'insider' view. Creating methodologies that only apply to Indigenous researchers provides fodder for more essentialist arguments. While I am fairly confident that most Indigenous researchers will naturally hold themselves accountable to the

principles outlined herein, I would much rather see Non-Indigenous researchers working with Indigenous communities possessing the tools they need to ensure that their research agendas are 'sympathetic, respectful, and ethical from an Indigenous perspective'. Thankfully there is some encouraging literature to this effect (Sue and Sue, 1990; Crazy Bull, 1997a; Wautischer, 1998; Rundstrom and Deur, 1999; Harrison, 2001; Bourke and Bourke, 2002; Steinhauer, 2002; Kievit, 2003; de Ishtar, 2005; Hodge and Lester, 2006).

Before I end this section I would be remiss if I did not clarify the differences between research done within an Indigenous context using Western methodologies and research done using Indigenous methodologies. These four differences were identified in the discussions in the Indigenous methodologies sessions at the AAG conferences (2004–6) and the following discussion incorporates other social science references that reinforce these findings.

1. Accepting/Advocating of Indigenous knowledge systems – the main difference between these two approaches to research is the acceptance and adequate representation of knowledge systems that do not necessarily conform to Western academic standards. Indigenous knowledge systems are poly-rhetorical, contextually based, and rooted in a specific place and time. Moreover, metaphysical phenomena are highly regarded and are integral to the learning process. For Indigenous communities, their oral histories, narratives, and spiritual practices and rituals are important avenues for knowledge transmission. They contain numerous nuances that only certain community members are privileged to understand. Attempting to decipher this rich code and to represent it adequately requires that the researcher becomes an advocate of the Indigenous knowledge system and at the very least incorporates the 'Indigenous voice' in their work. In some cases this even means co-authoring with community scholars (Akan, 1992; Rundstrom and Deur, 1999; Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000; Graveline, 2000; Smith, L.T., 2000; Cole, 2002; Steinhauer, 2002; Agius and Howitt, 2003; Crawhall, 2003; Meyer, 2003; Absolon and Willett, 2004).

2. Positioning of the Indigenous community members and the researcher in the research – the manner in which researchers position both themselves and the Indigenous people in their research is another difference. More often than not, Indigenous people are given diminutive labels such as 'subjects' or 'informants' instead

of 'collaborators' or 'partners in theorising'. While, in recent years, there has been increased acknowledgement of the continued marginalisation that this position maintains, this type of research is still being conducted, especially in areas where positivist research reigns supreme (Ermine, 1995; Crazy Bull, 1997b; Rundstrom and Deur, 1999; Semali and Kincheloe, 1999; Battiste, 2000; Smith, G.H., 2000; Bishop and Glynn, 2003; Thaman, 2003; de Ishtar, 2005).

Prior to the rise of cultural studies in academia, geographical researchers did not regularly indicate their own personal biases in their research. It may have been assumed that all ethnographic research was done from an outsider's perspective looking in, but each person has numerous events in their lifetime that shape their perceptions and bias both their ability to relate to Indigenous communities and their representation of the research they are conducting. Geographical researchers have now become more aware of their outsider-ness whether this has to do with social status, gender, race, or sexual orientation. Howitt and Stevens provide some insight into positioning oneself when conducting cross-cultural research. This begins with:

... a critical awareness of how research is shaped by relationships, power, and ethics. Researchers also can make an effort to work in more culturally-sensitive ways, prepare for research by learning the local language, interact with Indigenous peoples on their terms in their own social/political community venues, and become informed about local concerns, seek local support and consent for research, and honor local cultural research protocols and negotiated research agreements. And they can change the nature of their research by making Indigenous participation integral to it (Howitt and Stevens, 2005, 10–11).

3. Determining a research agenda – geographical research in Indigenous communities is usually done because someone has funding to study some physical or cultural phenomenon with little regard to the needs of the community (Moody, 1993; Bishop, 1997; Crazy Bull, 1997a; Grenier and International Development Research Centre (Canada), 1998; Semali and Kincheloe, 1999; Battiste, 2000; Smith, L.T., 2000; Steinhauer, 2002; Sinclair, 2003; Absolon and Willett, 2004; Porsanger, 2004; Hodge and Lester, 2006). At a recent geographical conference, a researcher presented statistical data about a particular medical problem area for an

Indigenous population. This researcher was hoping to get government funding to 'help' those communities 'in crisis' but never once went out to those communities to investigate the cause of the problem. This researcher's agenda had nothing to do with the needs identified by the community. Furthermore, a later discussion with this researcher included the impassioned response, 'I really believe in what I'm doing. These communities need help and I'm doing my part to help them.' It was as if this researcher truly believed academic knowledge production must be used to benefit the community ... whether they wanted it or not.

4. Directionality of sharing knowledge. Since research is about searching for 'new' knowledge or 'new' ways of incorporating existing knowledge, researchers rarely think about sharing their archival research with the Indigenous communities they are working with. I have heard numerous stories shared in the AAG sessions of researchers going into Indigenous communities with reports of past research done by other scholars that community members have no knowledge of, even though some of the people in such reports may be family members. These individuals are always grateful to receive these pieces of information but it seems odd to me that they are unaware of either the existence of the research or of the involvement of their family members. In one instance I delved further and found that the family member remembered the other scholar but had never heard back from them and had no idea that their participation had led to the report being shared.

Sharing knowledge has to go both ways (Crazy Bull, 1997a; Mihesuah, 1998; Abdullah and Stringer, 1999; Ivanitz, 1999; Rundstrom and Deur, 1999; Harrison, 2001; Heiss, 2002; Steinhauer, 2002; Bishop and Glynn, 2003; Kievit, 2003). Giving the Indigenous communities copies of all the archival documents being used in the research is vital to building rapport and rectifying past transgressions. Furthermore, it really should go without saying but, to be clear, allowing the Indigenous community participants to see the final draft of the work that they have helped the researcher to produce is vital. It may be difficult for academic scholars to be 'judged' by both a panel of Indigenous community members and by a group of their academic peers, and it may be even more difficult to write adequately for both audiences, but it is necessary to do so.

### How to proceed in the academy?

This section is inspired by a presentation made by Kovach (2005) at the First Nations – First Thoughts conference held at the Centre of Canadian Studies, University of Edinburgh on May 5–6, 2005. It also incorporates my own experiences as an Indigenous student navigating through the Geography Department at the University of Hawai‘i. It highlights areas where geography can help students to become more informed about Indigenous research methodologies, acknowledges the importance of Indigenous faculty members and other academic allies, addresses the ever problematic ‘human-subject’ research form, and challenges those academic geographers reviewing the research of Indigenous issues to recognise its value.

#### *Including Indigenous methodologies in the geographic curriculum*

In most North American graduate programmes, a research methodology course is required. Students at the AAG sessions openly shared their views that this methodology course can be more than intimidating; it can be alienating and isolating because these methodologies have a tendency to privilege linearly oriented social science research paradigms. In fact, these courses can be frustrating for both student and instructor when attempts are made to incorporate Indigenous approaches to research. Kovach (2005) offers two solutions to this dilemma. The first is to include Indigenous methodologies as an integral component of these required courses rather than as an *ad hoc* item. The second is to develop an Indigenous research methodology course and to make it available to any student within the university.

Geography is the perfect discipline in which to offer a course such as this, whether or not there are students researching Indigenous issues. Acknowledging Indigenous methodologies is a critical step in decolonising the discipline. Geography and geographers need to be accountable for disciplinary scholarship generated on or about Indigenous people and any criticism of that scholarship must likewise respect the context within which it was generated. Addressing these issues creates opportunities for future scholarship. Furthermore, a class like this would definitely attract students from other social science departments. The University of Waikato not only provides a course on Māori Geographies<sup>3</sup> it encourages students to use their Indigenous voices and it is probably the only Geography

department in the world to provide that opportunity. We can learn from each other; we can learn from their example.

#### *Indigenous faculty matter*

Having a supportive Indigenous community in academia can provide students with the opportunity for intriguing discussions about their research and make graduate work on Indigenous issues feel less isolating. This is why the Indigenous Methodologies sessions at the AAG have been so successful. There is always a new student who attends the sessions and says they no longer feel like they are working alone. ... that it feels good to know that there are other people thinking along the same lines because they don’t have that support within their own university or departmental setting.

Of course, a core group of Indigenous faculty in various university programmes who can instruct, mentor and supervise Indigenous graduate students is a necessary step for creating space for Indigenous methodologies (Hernandez-Avila, 2003). Now, I don’t mean to callously disregard non-Indigenous faculty who have worked to engage their colleagues on different knowledge systems. As you will see in my next point, if Indigenous scholarship is to succeed, you are essential, especially if your department does not have any Indigenous faculty. It is because of people like yourselves that Indigenous scholars have come as far as they have ... and a necessary next step is to provide room for Indigenous faculty to take this cause even further.

#### *Academic allies*

This is probably the most important point in this section because the only way in which Indigenous faculty members could attain the positions they have today is because there already were non-Indigenous faculty who not only believed in them, but who continue to create space for different ways of knowing within the university setting. We need allies such as department heads and other university administrators who play crucial roles in the recruitment, retention, mentoring, and support of existing Indigenous faculty and colleagues who review research for publication, grants, and tenure. As more and more Indigenous students enter graduate programmes, where research is a central component for graduation, the need for more Indigenous faculty to supervise, sit on committees, write letters of reference, and generally support these students, as well as those non-Indigenous students

wanting to do research on Indigenous topics, is becoming pressing and urgent. We need help ... we need allies (Hernandez-Avila, 2003; Kovach, 2005).

#### *Human subject research form*

Different countries have different names for this, but they all have the same goals – to indemnify the University against any lawsuits as a result of their research. The inherent problem with these forms is that they don't really protect the 'human subjects' (don't even get me started on this term) from any negative consequences that this research may have nor do they provide for any reward from any of its positive consequences. As you can imagine, these deficiencies create a number of awkward situations for both researchers and Indigenous communities.

This is why many American Indian tribes have created their own contractual research documents to protect, among other things, their intellectual property rights. Some tribes have even set up research councils that meet regularly and require all researchers to update them on their progress. They even give the community members working with the researchers the right to voice their own opinion of the research, including the character of the researcher. If the community members no longer wish to work with the researcher, for whatever reason, and no other members are prepared to be involved in it, then the research must come to an end in accordance with the contractual agreement (Crazy Bull, 1997b; Rundstrom and Deur, 1999; Howitt and Stevens, 2005).

#### *Research reviews: articles, grants, and tenure*

Lastly, it should be not be surprising that those of us engaging in alternative research strategies face the harshest criticisms when being reviewed for either our article submissions or grant applications and that this inevitably affects our ability to attain tenure. So many of us have to engage in near confrontational evaluations of our work because it is considered 'soft theory', takes too long to publish because we hold ourselves to different ethical standards, or worst of all that we 'only work with those, Indigenous people.' Grant it, the research must be solid. However, after decades of geographic research that continues to perpetuate complicity with colonial and imperial research agendas, its only natural for those of us on the margins who recognise and value Indigenous knowledge systems that contain vast amounts of wisdom about both their

peoples and their environment to stand up and seek to rectify past injustices caused by inappropriate Indigenous geographic research.

Times are changing and therefore our methods and approaches of doing Indigenous geographic research must adapt. In the last few years, academic research on Indigenous issues has spawned several conferences and critical discussions on culturally appropriate research strategies. Conventional academic scholarship and practices are already being challenged by Indigenous scholars. It is time for those of you reviewing article submissions, grant applications, and tenure promotions to recognise this trend.

#### **Conclusion**

This discussion is by no means complete but I hope that I have raised some key issues in relation to Indigenous methodologies and the role that they can play in future geographical research. As an Indigenous researcher, I agree with Crazy Bull that we need to encourage

... research and scholarship that preserves, maintains, and restores our traditions and cultural practices. We want to restore our Native languages; preserve and develop our homelands; revitalize our traditional religious practices; regain our health; and cultivate our economic, social, and governing systems. Our research can help us maintain our sovereignty and preserve our nationhood (Crazy Bull, 1997b, 17).

These are exciting times for Indigenous people. Indigenous methodologies can invigorate and stimulate geographical theories and scholarship while strengthening Indigenous peoples' identities and supporting their efforts to achieve intellectual self-determination.

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#### NOTES

1. Howitt and Stevens (2005) provide an excellent discussion of the colonial research agenda which dominates cross cultural research in geography and anthropology.
2. None, of the journals with 'Geograph(er/ical/ies/y)' in their title from 1995–Jan 2007 contained publications with the term 'Indigenous Methodolog(ies/y)'.
3. See <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/wfass/subjects/geography/maori/>

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