

# **Ka mua, ka muri, ka mua, ka ako: Reflecting on the past to inform our futures**

**Amohia Boulton**

Keynote Address

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## ***He mihi***

Takaia rā ki te mana ō runga. Ki runga, ki raro, ki waho, ki roto. Haumi e, hui e, taiki e!

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā tai e whā, tēnā koutou katoa. Kei te tū tēnei i runga i te ngākau whakaiti, kia torotoro atu te reo whakamihi ki a koutou katoa. E ngā kaiwhakahaere o tā tātou hui, tēnei te mihi ki a koutou mō ō koutou pākahukahu, ō koutou pukumahi hoki. E te hau kāinga, Taranaki whānui, Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Toa, tēnā koutou. Ōtira kei aku rangatira mā kua whakarauika mai i tēnei wā, tēnei te mihi kau ana ki a koutou katoa.

Ko wai au?

He uri ahau nō Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāi Te Rangī, Ngāti Pukenga, Ngāti Mutunga, me Te Āti Awa o Te Waka a Māui hoki.

Ki te taha o tōku whaea, ko Tauranga te moana, ko Mauao te maunga. Ko Pirirakau, ko Ngāti Kahu ngā hapū, ko Poutu te Rangī, ko Wairoa ngā marae. Ki te taha o tōku matua, ko Kura te Au te

moana, ko Arapaoa te moutere tapu, ko Taranaki, ko Piripiri ngā maunga. Ko Urenui, ko Te Awaiti, ko Waikawa ngā marae.

Ko Amohia Boulton tōku ingoa. Ko au te Kairangahau Matua o Whakauae Research Services, tētehi rōpū rangahau nō Ngāti Hauiti.

Good afternoon, everyone. It is my great honour to be here today as the opening speaker for the 2022 ANZEA Conference, which has the theme of Ka mua, Ka muri: Looking back to move forward.

I want to commend the organising committee for this timely, thought-provoking theme, and the opportunity it provides for all of us here to take some time to reflect on where we have come from, as a nation, as members of our respective communities, as a profession, and indeed as individual evaluators, students, commissioners, and policymakers. However, before we move forward with this opening address, my first piece of looking back involves acknowledging where I come from.

As I said in my brief pepeha, I am from Tauranga Moana on my mother's side, Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāi Te Rangi, and Ngāti Pukenga. Our maunga is Mauao, my river is Wairoa, and my marae are Wairoa and Poutu te Rangi.

On my father's side, I am Ngāti Mutunga and Te Āti Awa, my tupuna having left Taranaki during the period of Ngā Hekenga Tangata. This great migration occurred during the 1820s and 1830s, following battles with Waikato and Maniapoto. Having left Taranaki, my ancestors settled in and around the Tory Channel, on Arapaoa Island, and Pāuatahanui.

My ancestors, my people on both sides of my whānau, made their lives on, near, or from the sea. Given family history, it is somewhat ironic that now I live amongst and work for an iwi landlocked in the middle of Rangitīkei under the mantle and protection of te pae maunga, the Ruahine Range. That iwi is Ngāti Hauiti.

For those of you who don't know, Ngāti Hauiti is a small iwi of some 3,000 individuals, located in the southern Rangitīkei, around the small community of Rātā, just north of Bulls on State Highway 1. Typical of many rural iwi in many ways, what is remarkable about Hauiti is that in the mid-2000s, spurred on by some visionary leadership, the iwi established the first tribally owned and mandated health research centre in Aotearoa. And to this day, while iwi around the country are actively involved in many areas of research and evaluation—whether it be in land management, climate change, or environmental research through to whakapapa and historical research—we think that Whakauae remains the only iwi-owned research centre dedicated to undertaking health services, health policy, and population health research and evaluation. Although, as a slight aside, I did see in the newspaper the other day that Ngāti Kahungunu has launched their research centre as well, under the leadership of Dr Annemarie Gillies and Dr David Tipene Leach, so that's a really exciting development for iwi-informed research.

That fact that Whakauae are iwi owned means that we have a particular approach to the research and evaluation which we undertake. For our centre, that fact that we, as Māori, are in control of the research—not just how we do it, or the process by which the evidence is amassed or the analytical lens we bring to that data—but the fact that we control the narrative, the story, and how that story is told is critical and has been a significant point of distinction in all the work we do.

I will return to this idea about who gets to tell the story, who leads the narrative, and whose voice is valued, but before I get too deeply involved in that storytelling, I want to briefly outline what I hope to cover in today's address.

## **Introduction**

When I was first approached to speak, I went through that process that I know is common amongst many Māori women. Wāhine mā, you may be familiar with the script that runs through your mind? It goes something like this:

- Um, why did they ask me?
- Surely, they can find someone more appropriate. Who else could I suggest?
- Well, I'm more of a researcher these days, so they've probably mixed me up with someone else entirely.

And so on and so on and so on. The well-known imposter syndrome is hard at work.

In talking with the conference organisers, it became clear that this room would be full of practising evaluators, experts in the field, and professionals with a long history of undertaking evaluation in New Zealand and beyond. The audience today also includes those relatively new to the field of evaluation, young, and possibly not so young, emerging evaluators who may be just starting and wondering if this evaluation stuff is where they want to be. People who may have even fallen into evaluation careers because they have inquiring minds, and because they enjoy understanding what works for whom, and how, if I may be so bold as to pinch some language from Ray Pawson and Nicholas Tilley.

Or maybe rather than answering what works, for whom, and how, you are one of those people constantly having to explain how come that doesn't work? Why not? And what we can do to reverse this situation? It is in this space, as kaupapa Māori evaluators and researchers, where our team tends to find itself more and more often.

And so what I have pulled together for this session are my

reflections and some lessons—what I have learnt as an evaluator and researcher. Not exactly Evaluation 101, but an eclectic series of thoughts, the result of looking back over an almost 25-year career. In that time, I have had the good fortune of being at the centre of evaluating some of the most interesting (at least in my view) policy changes in the health and social sector. But I have also danced around the periphery of evaluation activity, theory, and practice, and witnessed how the profession has altered and grown.

This presentation then, taken as a whole, represents some reflections on my journey in evaluation, looking back over where I have come from, to inform the next stage of my journey, of our journey, at Whakauae. In reflecting on that journey, I will take time to consider some key things I learnt about being an evaluator in Aotearoa. Some of these things, given our context, our size, our geography, our history, make the profession of evaluation in this country unique. Other things arguably, are issues common to the profession, irrespective of the country. For example, questions around what method do we use? Who is the audience? Who benefits from this work? However, when we ask those questions here, in Aotearoa, they play out in a particular way given our unique context, potentially adding layers of complexity to the act of evaluating and the profession of evaluation.

### ***Overview of the presentation***

The whakataukī which unites the presentations in this conference, Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua, I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past, encourages us to recognise and acknowledge where we have come from; heeding the lessons of the past so that we might work in an authentic partnership to meet the challenges of the future.

And so I will begin back where I was, locating myself as part of a team comprised of dedicated kaupapa Māori researchers and

evaluators and our Pākehā allies, who are all committed to the lofty vision of transforming Māori lives through excellent research.

I will talk about the influence of mentors, of allies, and the part our leadership plays in steering a greater vision—of who you learn from; and how learning often happens when you might least expect it.

I want to discuss the methods and methodology insofar as they relate to values and principles—what is the intersection between methodology and axiology, and how do our values impact our work as evaluators?

Which will then lead on to the notion of research and evaluation as a decolonising practice, and what it means for us at Whakauae on a daily basis as we do the mahi. Who is evaluation ultimately for, and who does and should benefit from evaluation?

Who we are, where we are from, where we live, where we work, who has influenced us, the values or tikanga we enact every day, the fact that we actually live in a nation that was founded on a Treaty partnership—irrespective of how well or ill that partnership has been nurtured, or how well or ill we nurture that partnership in our day-to-day activities—all these elements impact on us as evaluators. So this first point—the issue of context. Let me return to that notion of ko wai au, ko wai mātou. Who am I, and who am I in relation to Whakauae Research?

## ***My journey***

If I look back on my research and evaluation career to date, I think there have been a number of stages to it—like all journeys I have encountered some significant crossroads, turning points, even obstacles along the way. I was often directed, and sometimes accompanied, by people who were a critical part of that journey.

Each of these different stages in the journey brings to mind particular activities, places, and a broader sociopolitical context and

forces which at times, certainly when I was younger, I wasn't even aware of—and yet what was happening around me at that socio-political level was not only shaping my career choices but also the opportunities that existed more widely for those who were involved in, or wanting to be involved in, research and evaluation.

### ***The early years***

My career in research and evaluation began in 1994, almost 25 years ago, when I enrolled in what may have been one of the only tertiary-level humanities courses in the country that formally taught evaluation and research methods. At that time, I was a data analyst in one of the many Wellington policy ministries. I enrolled in this course because my head of division (i.e. my boss's boss) at the time suggested it would be a good idea if I went back to uni and did my master's. This rather insightful (and actually, generous when I think back on it now), Pākehā man told me that not only would work pay my fees, but I could also have study leave to get the master's done, especially the all-important field work component, and I could use the computers at work to write it all up (which was important because at that time people didn't tend to have personal computers unless they were really rich). That ministry never reaped the benefit of my master's work. Still, that man, and his colleague, my immediate boss, another Pākehā man, inadvertently set me on a course and a career from which I have never looked back—a career which has allowed me to work for and contribute to, Māori aspirations for health and wellbeing on a daily basis.

Something to note about that time, the early 1990s—you could probably count the number of Māori evaluators on the one hand; however, importantly, thankfully, they all remain active evaluators to this day. Our graduate course was small, with probably 12 people in total. However, a third of us were Māori or Pacific people. Many of

the women (I think we had one man in our class) who went through that course with me have also stayed in research and evaluation—some in government departments, some in the academy, and others as independent evaluators. In subsequent years, that same course trained many more people who again, to this day, remain active evaluators and researchers. The value of the robust theoretical and conceptual grounding we were given in those years cannot be underestimated.

Also around that time, the next government department I worked in, Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK), the Ministry of Māori Development, was finding its feet as the first Māori policy ministry, headed by the late who ran TPK like a general deploying his b Tā Wira Gardiner. Tā Wira, if you knew him, was a former soldier attalion in the theatre of war. It is not a coincidence that the name *Te Puni Kōkiri* refers to the contingent of warriors who lead an offensive charge. And remember, this was around the time of the so-called fiscal envelope when the government announced it was planning to impose a financial cap on all future Treaty settlements, a plan which led to protests the length and breadth of the country.

TPK replaced the Ministry of Māori Affairs (Manatū Māori) and the Iwi Transition Agency (Te Tira Ahu Iwi), with many of Manatū Māori's former welfare roles transferred to mainstream departments. TPK's statutory responsibilities were twofold:

- lifting Māori levels of achievement in education, training, employment, health, and economic resource development
- monitoring the adequacy of the State sector's services to Māori.

That monitoring function, in conjunction with a strategic vision of being “at the core”, resulted in establishing an entire monitoring and evaluation section charged with monitoring state sector performance with respect to Māori.

In December of 1998, as I was graduating with my shiny new master's degree, the government identified improving Māori social and economic status as a strategic priority. The phrase “closing the gaps” (2000) entered the public sector lexicon, and the need for highly trained, particularly Māori policy staff, with data analytics, research and evaluation, and performance and audit skills burgeoned.

What's the significance of this trip down memory lane? For me, two things come to mind. At that time, creating a monitoring and evaluation team within a Crown or government entity to monitor the effectiveness (or otherwise) of policies for Māori in other government or Crown entities was an enormous step, I believe, for the public service.

Unsurprisingly, it was not a popular notion—the idea that staff from TPK would review and comment on how other departments were meeting the needs of Māori. It put those departments on notice, and it put the public sector, as a whole, on notice. At least, that is how it appeared to me as someone inside the walls at the time. As a nation, it felt as if we were finally getting serious about the vast disparities in health, social, and economic outcomes between Māori and non-Māori.

However, now, in this time and place, some 20 years on, I ask myself, have we delivered on that promise?

### ***Evaluating Crown performance***

The suite of reviews and reports on government performance from 2018 onwards into almost every aspect of social policy alone would indicate we still have a long way to go. Included in this corpus of work is a raft of reviews in the criminal justice system, all of which call for wholesale reform; the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction; a review of the Family Justice Reforms; a review of Whānau Ora; a review of the Health and Disability System; five

reviews in total of Oranga Tamariki, including one led by Māori, and the Inquiry into Abuse in State Care which is ongoing (Boulton, Levy & Cvitanovich, 2020).

The older, slightly more cynical version of myself wonders whether, in the year 2022, it is appropriate that a Crown agency monitors the effectiveness of other Crown agencies. Is that the best place for a monitoring and evaluation function if we are going to truly address the disparities in outcomes that we know persist today? Wouldn't an entity entirely independent of the Crown be more appropriate? An entity led by the Treaty partner, perhaps? By iwi? What might such an organisation look like? What might that entity say about the performance of the Crown with respect to Māori? I imagine it would not be too dissimilar from the many national and international reports already published, from our own Waitangi Tribunal reports through to the reports of the UN's Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples—all of which highlight the need for greater involvement by Māori in the decisions which materially affect us. I will return to this point later in this presentation, but I leave it with you now to take up, once more, the story of my journey.

### ***The academic years***

For me, the next critical part in the journey, having had a slight taste of research and evaluation through the master's, was the PhD. Again, it was my Pākehā allies who encouraged me to think about further study possibilities. I was fortunate that, at that time, the Health Research Council of New Zealand offered Māori Health Training Fellowships. These awards were structured to allow students to enrol in a doctoral degree programme and receive on-the-job training in research and evaluation. Through the Training Fellowship, I was exposed to evaluation practice and learnt that sometimes, despite the best planning in the world, the theory does not always match

what happens on the ground—a valuable lesson to learn early in one’s career.

I was also taught what it takes to develop funding applications, tender for research and evaluation work, and meet or manage the funder’s expectations. During that time, I honed my critical thinking and writing skills, learnt about publishing in academic journals, and heard the phrase “publish or perish” for the first time.

Again, I was incredibly fortunate to work with people who were generous with their time, knowledge, and skills. I was given opportunities to consolidate my career as a researcher and evaluator. I had colleagues and mentors who encouraged me not only to *do* evaluation but contemplate what the act of evaluation means—to think critically about the role research and evaluation plays in policy decision making, to reflect on my practice, and to write about these reflections. While no doubt it is essential to publish the evaluation results, during these years, I learnt it is equally important to think and write about the evaluation process, the how and why of evaluation, especially from our perspective as Indigenous evaluators and researchers.

In terms of the wider context, in the field of health research at least, discussions and debates were being had about how Māori researchers, communities and other collectives (*iwi*, *hapū*, *whānau*) were being involved or not in research—who was determining the degree and nature of that involvement and what say Māori had over the results of research about them. It was during this time that Mason Durie and Chris Cunningham first described a taxonomy of Māori research, a classification system based primarily on the degree of Māori involvement and control in a specific research project (Cunningham, 2000). The term *Māori-centred* was coined to describe a type and form of research that sat in the middle of a control continuum with research that involved Māori at one end and *kaupapa* Māori, where Māori had complete control and oversight in the research, at the other.

As an emerging Māori academic in a Western institution, I recall spending much of my PhD agonising about the type and nature of my work; whether I could be said to be doing kaupapa Māori research as someone who did not speak the reo and who did not live in her takiwā; how I could manage what I saw as the dual accountabilities to community and to the institution which, to all intents and purposes, “owned” my degree; and how I could remain true to my tikanga, my principles regarding doing research that ultimately advanced the Māori position.

Whereas it was an academically stimulating time, a time of great privilege to sit, think, and write, it was also a period of great self-doubt and self-reflection. While I would like to believe that Māori PhD students 20 years later do not have to go through this same, at times traumatic, journey of self-discovery, in some ways, I do think that this is one of the gifts of the PhD process—for Māori, engaging with the theory of research does force you to put a stake in the ground about who you are and where you come from in relation to your work.

And so then, at about this time came the call of the wild—not quite the Jack London version, but a variation on a theme. In 2009 I was approached by my good friend and mentor to work in an iwi-owned research centre—doing what I loved and what, by this time, I found I was relatively good at, but doing it directly for iwi/Māori and being accountable to iwi. This invitation to work for iwi was part of putting my stake in the ground. I could have happily stayed in the academy, in my ivory tower (or, in my case, a hardieboard prefab out the back next to the carpark) and told myself I was making a difference for Māori. And I might well have been, but I needed something much more direct and immediate to ensure I remained accountable to the community. I needed some real people to tell me if the work I was doing was any good or if in fact it was crap.

And so I left the academy and went to work for Whakauae.

## **Whakauae Research**

Whakauae Research for Māori Health and Development—our original name—was established in 2005 as a unit of Te Maru o Ruahine Trust, the contracting and service arm of Ngāti Hauiti. The leaders of that time, Utiku Potaka, Grant Huwyler and the founding director, Dr Heather Gifford, had two clear objectives: to develop the research capacity of Ngāti Hauiti and to undertake high-quality Māori-centred health research to inform and contribute to improved outcomes for Māori.

The vision of those leaders was based on the premise that, in order to pursue their aspirations as iwi, Hauiti had to be in control of their research and evaluation, focused on issues of concern to their people, with the ultimate goal of lifting the wellbeing of the iwi, and Māori more generally. So they considered and then created a way of doing research that was very different from anything else that was around at the time.

When Heather started Whakauae in 2005, it was just Heather and another person, Gill Potaka Osborne, Heather's right-hand woman, an amazing community evaluator in her own right who we are lucky to have with us still. They began with one contract—Heather's Health Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship. From those humble beginnings, by 2012, Whakauae became a stand-alone entity, a company under the auspices of Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Hauiti. Today Whakauae has a staff of thirteen; four administration and business staff, and the remaining team members are either full-time researchers or undertaking their PhDs, or a combo of both—and yet we still need more research-capable staff for the amount of work we have!

We balance a mixed portfolio of investigator-initiated research, some consultancy, and community-based research and evaluation in public health, health services research, and health and social policy. We work under the direct guidance of a governance board comprising

three iwi members and an independent member and we are accountable to Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Hauiti through a relationship agreement.

### ***Our values***

Our values, ngā tikanga o Whakauae, guide the activities we undertake as a research centre, both internally in our day-to-day business and externally in the community, in our dealings with funders or commissioners of research, with partners, and with research participants. Our values link to and derive from the universal values set by our rūnanga and provide greater detail on how we must conduct ourselves in the course of our business (Boulton, 2020).

During my time with the organisation, we have evolved from saying “we do Māori-centred research” to totally and utterly embracing the fact that we are kaupapa Māori health researchers. The decision to claim this practice as our own was a long time coming and was both deliberate and ground-breaking for us. Our thinking was certainly impacted by the scholarship and expertise of many of our Māori evaluation amorangi, including Kataraina Pipi, Nan Wehipeihana, and Fiona Cram. But it wasn’t until an amazing workshop we did as a team in 2016 with Dr Leonie Pihama that we permitted ourselves to step into this space wholeheartedly.

And having done so, having given ourselves permission to say “we do kaupapa Māori research”, we have altered the mindset we bring to our mahi, how we think about our work and the responsibilities we shoulder when we do it. We are more intentional with the ethics and principles we seek to uphold when we work with a community, and it has given us a yardstick, if you will, by which we can measure any potential contract work we are asked to do. Whereas in the past, we may have jumped at the chance of work, we are now more deliberate and consider what we take on, why, and who will ultimately reap the benefits.

## ***Kaupapa Māori***

For us, kaupapa Māori research places Māori values, Māori world-views, and Māori ways of being and operating at the centre of the research or evaluation we do (Pihama, 2015). Kaupapa Māori research is strengths-based and committed to the view that far from Māori being “the problem”, it will be the solutions, direction, and leadership generated by Māori that most effectively and positively impact health outcomes for Māori. Kaupapa Māori research is transformative, critical, and political, and in doing this work, we are actively seeking to improve the position of Māori in contemporary society. In adopting a kaupapa Māori approach to the conduct of the research and evaluation that we undertake, we deliberately seek to resist, challenge and disrupt existing mainstream systems, critique notions of power and privilege; and confront racism in its many forms (Smith, 1993). In undertaking kaupapa Māori research, we aim to produce robust mātauranga Māori which privileges the Māori voice as a means to influence processes, structures, and systems.

So as kaupapa Māori researchers and evaluators, and given one of the purposes of establishing Whakauae was to develop the capacity and capability of iwi, we are conscious of the role we have to play in building and supporting research and evaluation expertise in our community and of those coming through the academy. We have been incredibly fortunate in the last seven years to have access to funding, allowing us to provide formal supervision and training to community members who might work with us on projects. We have funded a small but growing number of scholarships and summer internships. We are also focused on increasing our internal research and evaluation capacity. We always try to support events such as the ANZEA conference and the Mā Te Rae hui, as they allow us to learn from our peers and challenge ourselves in what we do.

The idea of undertaking service and governance roles is closely linked to the notion of giving back through supporting capacity development. We are very aware that we occupy a privileged position in that we are autonomous from any Western institution and forge our direction and path under a tikanga Māori framework. Therefore, it is imperative to us that we give back to the community that has supported us. From my perspective, much of what I have learnt during my time with Whakauae has been as much about the service and governance roles I have undertaken as it has been in the practice of undertaking evaluation. Getting involved in the civil society aspect of evaluation—as members of committees, special interest groups, and boards is yet another way of learning about the profession of evaluation, of making connections with like-minded colleagues, and of expanding your networks and, therefore, your opportunities.

### ***Mentors***

So that brings us to the present, and with the remaining time I just want to touch on a few specific points—reflections from those 25 years. And the first point I want to make is that your mahi will be influenced by those around you.

I know this is somewhat self-evident, and I have already spoken about the role mentors, allies, and leaders played in my journey. Looking back and reflecting, I was reminded that direction could come from the unlikeliest places. If you only knew me as the person that heads up Whakauae, you would unlikely think that the three key instigators of my journey to this role way back would have been three Pākehā men. Yes, my whānau, of course, always supported me. Still, in the beginning, the people who gave me the opportunities to open space, and made things happen, were not who you might expect, and a lot of that came down to the positions of power they were in and their influence wielded. This speaks to

the importance of our allies and the role they have to play in supporting Māori and our desire for autonomy and self-determination and for undertaking research and evaluation from a te ao Māori point of view.

Whakauae has always worked with non-Māori partners and collaborators—we could not have done the work we have done and got to where we are without those Pākehā allies who supported us in gaining a foothold as an independent research organisation. Our team members and research and evaluation partners take responsibility for themselves as allies to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds Whakauae’s vision for the future of our people—practices such as educating themselves about colonisation and the impacts that has had on Māori; educating themselves about the Treaty of Waitangi and te Tiriti o Waitangi and the distinction between the two; taking a listening approach; finding out what it is we as Māori want and letting us determine our own solutions. Practices and ways of working have recently been skilfully articulated in *17 Habits of a Valued Treaty Partner* by Faumuina Tafuna’i, the founder of Flying Geese Productions (Tafuna’i, 2022).

While today there are more and more Māori training as researchers and evaluators, we still need many more—an issue I have already alluded to. The sheer volume of work, particularly from government departments, that requires a kaupapa Māori approach can at times be overwhelming. I would challenge these departments to think about how they can contribute to growing the capacity we need in the kaupapa Māori evaluation and research space. What can they do to support the next generation of kaupapa Māori evaluators? What investment do they need to make alongside the investment made by Māori? Highly skilled evaluators who understand our communities and people do not come into being overnight—it takes time, support, and well-resourced opportunities.

So our mentors and our allies may come from unexpected places, and you may not realise until quite some time later that others had a bigger plan for you of which you were never aware—so to the emerging evaluators out there, I would say take opportunities as they come to you. Yes, be discerning, be critical, and ask why me? But if an opportunity presents itself, don't shy from possibilities because a request or a chance has come out of the left field. Who knows where it may lead? Be bold, be courageous, and back yourself.

Those amazing leaders we have been inspired by—the truly strategic ones like Tā Wira, Tā Tipene O'Regan, Hirini Moko Mead, Moana Jackson, and others, understand that change does not happen overnight. These leaders have a multigenerational view. They are not necessarily thinking about an individual's career but the contribution you will make as part of a whole, the effects of which might not be realised in your lifetime. Those leaders inspire us to work towards an equitable future, one in which a Treaty partnership is evident on a day-to-day basis. And in my view, we each have a part to play in creating that future for ourselves. So look for your allies, your mentors, those leaders who inspire you; surround yourself with people who are on the same waka as you; and keep those high-level visions at the forefront as you undertake your mahi.

### ***Methods and values***

Changing gear a bit—so, you might ask, what do cauliflowers, kina, and eels have to do with evaluation? But trust me, there is a link, and it has to do with the idea of seasons.

I don't get a lot of spare time in my current role but when I do, one of my great pleasures is to go out and spend time in the garden. As every gardener will tell you, you might think you are the one in control of your herbaceous borders, but in reality, as we know

deep down, it is the environment, the cycle of the seasons, and the weather that dictates whether your carefully tended seedlings will flourish and turn into amazing kai for your table, or flowers for your vase, or whether they will turn up their toes and sulk, or in the saddest cases die completely! Those who hunt, who fish, who create and practice rongoā Māori, all of those who rely on aspects of our environment for their livelihood understand and work with the cyclical nature of the seasons. So too in evaluation and research we need to be aware of the cycles that impact our work.

### ***The evaluation tree***

One of those things I think is cyclical and seasonal is methodology and method.

I have been around now sufficiently long enough to have trained in one type of evaluation and seen how forms and schools of evaluation theory and practice rise and fall in their popularity and use. Many of you here, who are much more knowledgeable than I, will be familiar with Carden and Alkin's Theory Tree, first described in 2004 in the book *Evaluation Roots*. The tree is an attempt to visually represent the relationship between the methodology used in the evaluation, how the data are judged or valued, and the user focus of the evaluation effort (Carden & Alkin, 2012). In the updated version presented in Figure 1, we see the addition of so-called adopted and adapted methodologies.

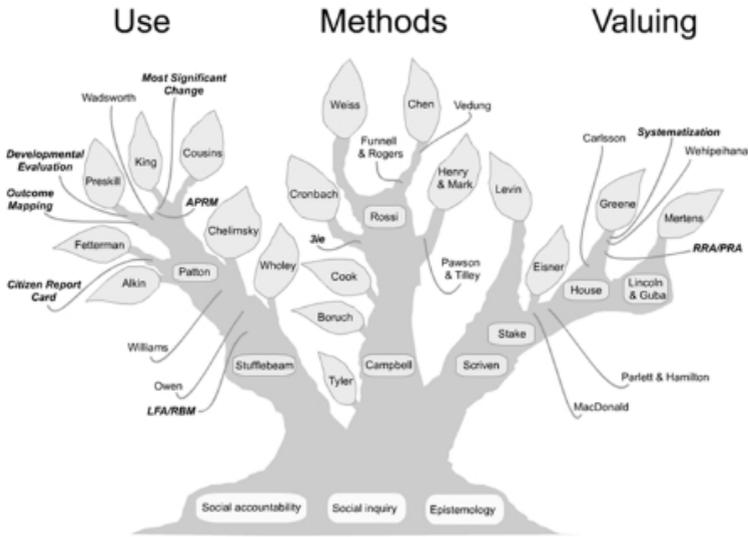


Figure 1. Modified evaluation theory tree (Carden & Alkin, 2012, p. 114, reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Public License).

In my experience, I have observed a degree of seasonality with evaluation as well. I have seen evaluation theories come and go as approaches and methodologies are adapted and adopted and become the flavour of the month and then decline in popularity. Our team have, at one time or another, been influenced by programme evaluation; especially as it is used and applied in public health settings; developmental evaluation, and, more recently, realist evaluation approaches. We have bought the textbooks and digested the wisdom of the good and the great—Michael Quinn Patton, (Yvonna) Lincoln and (Egon) Guba, Pawson and Tilly, and others represented on this tree.

But my thinking, as I look back over all those approaches and how methods and methodologies change and evolve, is that for us, as kaupapa Māori evaluators, our values, our kawa never changes.

Those deeply held principles that organise our society, our way of viewing the world never alter. In looking at this tree, I ask, where in fact, does Indigenous epistemology sit? Is it just one twig off the end of a substantive branch, or is kaupapa Māori evaluation worthy of its own branch, or indeed can an argument be made for our very own tree? For me, the values that drive the work I do, indeed the values that drive the work we do at Whakauae, are at the same time both foundational, underpinning our approach, as well as woven throughout our evaluation practice. So we will adapt and use different methods and tools as we see fit, as long as they meet our ultimate goal of transforming Māori lives.

This modified tree is perhaps more representative of where we are as Whakauae. Where our practise of evaluation comes from a different epistemological view entirely, a te ao Māori worldview, where we, as people, are indivisible of lands from which we come, the lands on which we are born and to which we return when we die. Where we perceive natural, ecological environments as being a medium for physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013; Awatere et al, 2021; Mark et al. 2022) Where contact with the land links us to our mātauranga Māori and our tikanga, to hinengaro and wairua, and to tinana and tāngata. Where our relationships, to land, to water, to people, to all living creatures and to our tupuna who have passed on, are the essence of what it means to be Māori. Where the value of interconnectedness between all the elements that make up our world, forms the basis of our worldview (Boulton et al, 2021).

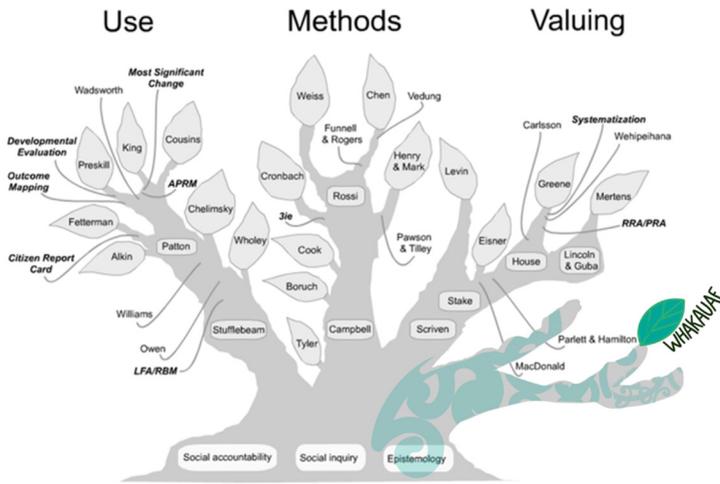


Figure 2. Addition of Indigenous epistemology to the modified evaluation theory tree. (Original modified under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Public License. This version © Whakauae 2022.)

And I think this is the space we inhabit now as Māori and, indeed, as Indigenous evaluators—grappling with what it means to undertake evaluation from within an Indigenous worldview. This is where we see new thinking, new writing, pushing boundaries, demands for greater autonomy and self-determination.

### ***Research and evaluation as a decolonising activity***

Which brings me to this point about research and evaluation as a decolonising activity. In his chapter in Marie Battiste’s book *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, Poka Laenui observes that colonisation and decolonisation are social processes even more than political ones. He describes five phases of decolonisation: rediscovery and recovery, mourning, dreaming, commitment, and action (Laenui, 2000) which may overlap and merge but which we can readily identify in this country as we undergo our decolonisation project.

It will not be a shock to you to know that I consider research and

evaluation to be a critical component in our efforts to decolonise—as I said right at the beginning of this presentation, whose story and who controls the narrative is critical. What our own scholar, Linda Smith, refers to “as getting the story right, and telling the story well” (Smith, 2012).

If we are to ensure the story of the Indigenous people of Aotearoa is told and told well, then it must be Māori voices that are heard. As evaluators and researchers, we should be asking ourselves, asking those who fund the evaluation and asking the communities who are the focus of evaluation—are these the right questions? Will they result in the needs and priorities of Māori being surfaced? Can we, through undertaking this activity, ensure that the community’s voice, that the Māori voice, that the voice of iwi, hapū, and whānau will be the one that is heard, and can we ensure that the principal beneficiary of the evaluation is not the funder, but those communities, those collectives? To paraphrase Laenui once more—we must be careful in our process of decolonisation that we do not, in our haste, reach for supposed solutions that do not truly honour our desires for self-determination but instead limit the losses for those who are threatened by the very act of decolonising. (Laenui, 2000, p 157).

## **Conclusion**

So what then, might we expect of the profession of evaluation, of our place of work, of our practice, as we walk into the future, and from my point of view, as Māori, as uri, as whānau? As Māori, we know that the solutions to the inequities that we face every day lie with us. We have our questions, needs, and priorities, our philosophy and ways of being and knowing, which, when activated, will allow us to determine our path to equity and beyond. Evaluation has a role to play in that pathway, in that future, but only when the hands that shape the evaluation are our own.

As uri, as tribal people, the desire to shape our own narratives and lead our own solutions may result in a greater proliferation of community- and iwi-based research and evaluation centres, whether based within tertiary institutions such as the recently created Te Kura i Awarua, based at the Eastern Institute of Technology and supported by Ngāti Kahungunu iwi, hapū and whānau, or as stand-alone entities such as the Waikare Community Development & Research Trust, founded in 2019 in order to meet the research and community development aspirations of the people and communities of Waikare, Te Kapotai and Ngāti Pare (Northland). The point of difference and indeed, arguably, the ultimate aim, is that these centres operate as expressions of our own tino rangatiratanga—that they are the means by which we can advance our own evaluation agenda, our own development needs, and our own vision for our people.

Which brings us to the issue of growing our own capacity and capability as uri but as hapū and whānau. Whereas the profession of evaluation may only be a calling for the few (the inquisitive, the critical, those who like to write and produce reports), nevertheless the skills and expertise to think critically, to ask questions, to approach “issues” with an evaluative lens *are* skills and competencies we should be encouraging among all our whānau. As a profession we might want to consider how we are supporting, encouraging, mentoring, and growing the next generation of evaluators and those who can apply evaluative thinking and judgement to the issues that we face now, but also that we will be facing into the future. In the absence of formal, tertiary-level evaluation training what is the role of ANZEA, of the Crown, of iwi to build capacity and capability in this area? What can we offer as an association, or individually as members of this association when it comes to on-the-job training opportunities, skills development, and building cultural competency? Do we think ANZEA should have a role in training at all? What, we may ask

ourselves, is our strategy to ensure we continue to build on the gains we have already made as a rōpū of, especially Māori, evaluators?

In reflecting on my own journey I know I benefitted not only from formal training opportunities but also from being part of a vibrant evaluation community; from workplace training opportunities; from excellent mentors; from peers who were learning with, and alongside me; and from “safe” spaces and projects in which I could cut my evaluation teeth, so to speak. It is critical we maintain all these avenues and opportunities for young and emerging evaluators if we are to maintain our evaluation capacity in Aotearoa, and certainly if we expect to grow it. Again, on reflection, we can ask whose role is it to provide all of these means by which young evaluators are supported, trained, and mentored. Equally, we must be prepared for the consequences if we do not support our new and emerging talent. Those with the means, in my view, have a public good role to play in ensuring a vibrant, thriving diverse, and culturally competent evaluation sector is retained in Aotearoa—the needs of our communities demand this investment and commitment from us.

My final reflections when I think about the conference theme of *Ka mua, Ka muri: Looking back to move forward* naturally turn to our Whakauae team, what the future holds for us, and what we have learnt from past experience that will stand us in good stead as we move towards an as yet unknown future. Whakauae came into being because of a bold and transformative vision; a vision that, at its core, was about creating an environment where iwi aspirations could be articulated and achieved without compromising on iwi tikanga. While we have come far in the execution of this vision, we still have some way to go—yes we can, to a large degree, set our own agenda, develop our own questions, and dictate the methods by which we will answer those questions. We are not, however, completely autonomous when it comes to funding this mahi, nor do we have an

unlimited pool of evaluation experts upon which to draw to assist us in our mahi. Like other members of ANZEA we continue to strive for greater autonomy, for rangatiratanga and mana motuhake over our own destinies. We will continue to identify and train those with a talent for evaluation so that they might in time, decide to work in an evaluative capacity for their community. And we will continue to challenge our funders, our Crown partners to redress and rebalance the ubiquitous asymmetries of power that surround us as Māori. We do this, taking heart from the actions of the past and the courage of early leaders knowing we are in good company and that we do this for our future and for the futures of those yet to come.

I began this presentation, and indeed the whole exercise of preparing a keynote, by wondering if I had anything to say—it turns out I did, and there was lots I wanted to squeeze in here, but I don't have the time. So I hope my thoughts have given you a little insight, something to think about as you listen to the rest of the amazing presentations and stories that make up the conference programme. If nothing else, you know a little more about the work one small team does in one corner of the country to support Māori efforts to realise their dreams and ambitions for self-determination. I want to end then, by reiterating the whakataukī underpinning our conference theme *Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua*, so that we are reminded once we leave this conference and return to our working lives, of the experiences we had here. Remember, we must continue to walk backwards into the future with our eyes fixed on the past, so that we recognise and acknowledge where we have come from, so that we heed the lessons of the past and so that we might work in an authentic and genuine partnership to meet the challenges of the future.

Nō reira, e ngā kaiwhakarongo, e ngā ringa raupā, nei rā te mihi ki a koutou. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā rā tātou katoa.

## **Glossary**

*Te reo Māori as used in this article.*

<b>Amorangi</b>	An esteemed leader
<b>Aotearoa</b>	New Zealand
<b>Hapū</b>	Subtribe, or clan
<b>Hinengaro</b>	Mind, thought, intellect, consciousness
<b>Iwi</b>	Tribe
<b>Kaupapa Māori</b>	A Māori approach or ideology, way of doing things
<b>Kawa</b>	Fixed customs or protocols
<b>Mahi</b>	<b>Work</b>
<b>Mātauranga Māori</b>	Māori knowledge
<b>Ngā Hekenga Tangata</b>	The great migration(s), in this instance referring to the migrations that occurred by the people of Taranaki from the period 1822–1833 as a consequence of war with neighbouring tribes to the north, mainly Waikato and Maniapoto
<b>Ngāti Kahungunu</b>	A tribal group of the southern North Island east of the ranges from the area of Nūhaka and Wairoa to southern Wairarapa.
<b>Rongoā Māori</b>	Traditional Māori medicine or treatment
<b>Rūnanga</b>	Tribal council
<b>Takiwā</b>	District, territory, or region
<b>Tangata / Tāngata</b>	Person / people
<b>Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK)</b>	Ministry of Māori Development
<b>Tikanga</b>	A correct procedure that is adaptable
<b>Tinana</b>	The physical body
<b>Tiriti o Waitangi</b>	Treaty of Waitangi
<b>Tupuna / tūpuna</b>	Ancestor / ancestors

Uri	Descendants
Wahine	Woman, women
Wahine mā	Referring to those women gathered today
Wairua	Spirit
Waka	Canoe
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whakataukī	A proverb
Whānau	Family

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