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Dancing at the Interfaces: Ways of Doing

The Interfaces between Indigenous Knowledges and Western Science

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Abstract

An opportunity exists for Māori to lead the development of a new way of knowledge production in Aotearoa New Zealand that acknowledges and capitalises on the rich traditions of both mātauranga māori and western science. Research at the mātauranga māori and western science interface has the potential to contribute to the preservation and evolution of mātauranga māori and for the creation of new knowledge of benefit to Aotearoa New Zealand society.

Dancing at the interfaces is the title for this thesis. The title encapsulated how I see the interactions and relations between mātauranga māori and western science. A primary focus of this thesis is the interfaces between branches of knowledge mainly indigenous knowledges, for example mātauranga māori, and western science. The research begins by exploring the national and international literature for harms done to indigenous knowledges and mātauranga māori since colonisation. A profile of harms was compiled from this literature and based on interviews with four Māori scientists regarding their own impressions and experiences of the interfaces. From this data five themes at the interfaces emerged: activity, passion, challenge, uncertainty and deficit. These themes are used to describe characteristics of the interfaces and develop recommendations for developing a new way of knowledge production at the interfaces. The research concluded that there are several issues and three key elements that must be addressed at the interfaces to facilitate the collaboration of mātauranga māori and western science as a transformative force for Māori development. The key elements were: ways of doing literacy; rangatiratanga and leadership; and innovation and productivity.

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