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Living in the Telling
Indigenous Storytelling of Post–COVID Desires for Academia

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Résumé de l'article

Stories provide listeners or readers a doorway to understand the storyteller's context and live in the telling. We, as Māori Indigenous scholars (doctoral students, researchers, and academics), bring together our stories, in the forms of creative nonfiction and poetry located in Aotearoa New Zealand and Te Whenua Moemoeā Australia, to tell the ways we navigate colonial spaces while also imagining our desired future. Centring Indigenous storytelling methods and sensory ethnography, we bring together the interrelatedness that situates our stories across time and place. The next wave of Indigenous researchers will be stepping into these spaces that we now walk, so it is timely and crucial that we find creative ways to provide clearer direction for them. We tell our stories in this paper as an act of hope that our stories might spark a fire in the reader's heart to also tell theirs.

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LIVING IN THE TELLING: INDIGENOUS STORYTELLING OF POST-COVID DESIRES FOR ACADEMIA

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Abstract: Stories provide listeners or readers a doorway to understand the storyteller's context and live in the telling. We, as Māori Indigenous scholars (doctoral students, researchers, and academics), bring together our stories, in the forms of creative nonfiction and poetry located in Aotearoa New Zealand and Te Whenua Moemoeā Australia, to tell the ways we navigate colonial spaces while also imagining our desired future. Centring Indigenous storytelling methods and sensory ethnography, we bring together the interrelatedness that situates our stories across time and place. The next wave of Indigenous researchers will be stepping into these spaces that we now walk, so it is timely and crucial that we find creative ways to provide clearer direction for them. We tell our stories in this paper as an act of hope that our stories might spark a fire in the reader's heart to also tell theirs.

Keywords: Indigenous; storytelling; storying; storywork; poetry; sensory ethnography; academia

Post–COVID differences in academic practices have provided opportunities for creativity and re-imagining spaces, research discourses, pedagogy, and academics through Indigenous lenses. Existing research considers the impact COVID has had and continues to have on Indigenous communities (Tesar, 2021), as well as helpful ways to teach and support Indigenous students and their wellbeing (Bennet et al., 2020), but more attention is needed to emphasise the agency Indigenous peoples utilise in times of struggle. One way we do this is through storytelling.

Stories provide listeners or readers a doorway to understand the storyteller's context (Brabazon, 2022), though, as Phillips (2010) states, "It is only through live experiences of storytelling that the nuances between teller and listener can be seen, heard, and felt all at the same time" (p. 12). This is what we aim to capture in this article —the relational aspects of shared lived experiences as Māori scholars and parents working in settler-colonial universities.

Māori author Whiti Hereaka (2019) of Ngāti Tūwharetoa and Te Arawa says, "A story is born and lives in the space between the storyteller and their audience" (p. 27). In her view, stories live in the telling, "*we* live in the telling" (p. 27). We adopt this view to recentre our voices which are often silenced and are on the margins of mainstream institutions (Phillips & Bunda, 2018). Indigenous storytelling, then, is both a cultural and political act to rethink the spaces within which we exist (Datta, 2018). Pacific academic Naepi (2020) argues that "many of us enter the academy to change it, not to simply exist within it" (p. 61). As a means of decolonising higher educational spaces, we make room for our stories to breathe.

In this article, we—as Māori Indigenous scholars (doctoral students, researchers, and academics)—bring together our stories located in Aotearoa New Zealand and Te Whenua Moemoeā Australia, to tell the ways we navigate colonial spaces while also imagining our desired future. We understand that individual stories are layered, they have whakapapa, a genealogical trace of a beginning. Although our stories begin at different points of time, are located in different regions and countries, and consist of different positionalities, they also connect to each other through the commonalities of the relational space, shared experiences (positive and negative), and shared desires.

It is only fitting to build on the foundational works of storytelling from Indigenous academics in settler-colonial nations. We weave together storytelling principles originating from the works of Q'um Q'um Xiiem Jo-ann Archibald's (2008) Indigenous storywork situated in Canada, Phillips and Bunda's (2018) storying in Australia, and Jenny Lee-Morgan's work on Māori storytelling or pūrākau, while incorporating Indigenous Māori concepts such as "onamata, anamata" as described by Burgess and Painting (2020; outlined in "Conceptual Framework" below).

Centring Indigenous methodologies as such brings together the interrelatedness that situates our stories across time and place. The next wave of Indigenous researchers will be stepping into these spaces that we now walk, so it is timely and crucial that we find creative ways to provide clearer direction for them. We tell our stories in this article as an act of hope that our stories might spark a fire in the reader's heart to also tell theirs.

Conceptual Framework

Stories allow listeners to view the teller's context and lived experiences. Jo-ann Archibald (2008) developed storywork as a methodology which consists of seven key principles to guide ethical research with Indigenous peoples. These are: reciprocity, respect, interrelatedness, reverence, responsibility, wholism, and synergy. These principles are relevant in the field when collecting stories as data and working with people; however, we use them to show the interrelatedness of our lived experiences in academia. We understand that our stories are unique and diverse, but together they form a collective that translates our seemingly isolated experiences to a comforting and hopeful journey of reclamation.

Despite experiencing and retelling our struggles, pain, and, sometimes, trauma, we draw on our own strengths and agency to stand in our place. This is where Phillips and Bunda's (2018) storying framework is helpful to us. They offer five key principles of storying but assure readers that these are intended as guidance not prescription, and the list is not exhaustive. Their principles are that storying:

- nourishes thought, body, and soul
- claims voice in the silenced margin
- is embodied in relational meaning
- intersects the past and present as living oral archives.
- enacts collective ownership and authorship (p. 43).

We employ all of the above principles in our own storying as a form of reclaiming space in predominantly White and oppressive academia, to help heal intergenerational trauma, and to embody relational meaning between the authors and readers. Phillips and Bunda state, "Storying evokes transportation into that moment—to weep, to yearn, to see, to hear, to pain, to taste, to love with the protagonists" (p. 56). When we use sensory and emotive language, te reo Māori (the Māori language in Aotearoa New Zealand), and metaphors, we relate meaning to each of the authors in this paper and the readers by transporting them to the places we speak of, whether they belong in the historic past our ancestors paved, the present-day spaces we walk, or the desired places we wish to see for the next generations.

Our focus on the intimate interconnectedness of past, present, and future coincides with Burgess and Painting's (2020) exploration of "onamata, anamata". In te reo Māori, the Māori language in Aotearoa New Zealand, "o", in this instance, signifies the past, and "a" the future, something that will come, while "mata" refers to eyes. Burgess and Painting, therefore, theorise onamata as looking at the past through the eyes of our tūpuna (ancestors), and anamata as peering to the future through the eyes of our mokopuna (grandchildren). As they state, "we are where our mokopuna and tūpuna meet" (p. 218). We employ onamata, anamata as a means to be "in good relation" (p. 208) with our intergenerational connectedness, and as a way of seeing past settler-colonialism and reimagining Māori futurisms. Burgess and Painting argue that a whakapapa-based notion of time (re)connects us with tūpuna and mokopuna, rejecting the common one-dimensional colonial concept of time. In this way, we share our stories of whakapapa so we can re-connect with our "multidimensional, intergenerational selves" (p. 225).

Our stories are a means to embody the knowledge we have from repeated observation across generations (Turner & Ignace, 2000). Aboriginal academic from Dharug Nation, Liz Cameron, refers to two additional senses beyond the common five of sight, touch, hearing, feeling, and taste to evoke deeper meaning and understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. These are "intuitive knowing" (Cameron, 2022, p. 31) and "imaginative knowing" (p. 30). Intuitive knowing refers to knowing because of something unexplainable and beyond words. We employ this sense of knowing as enacting onamata, understanding the world today through our connections with our ancestors who continue to walk with us and communicate with us in the present. They teach us something about the future, the future we leave to our descendants as we draw on our imaginative ways of knowing to consider a future for them through anamata. These knowledges are a combination of the way we understand who we are as Māori scholars, where we belong, and what our responsibilities are in these places.

Jenny Lee-Morgan is well-known as an academic who specialises in Indigenous storytelling, or pūrākau. In her doctoral thesis, Lee-Morgan (2008) asserted pūrākau can "enable us to express our stories, to convey our messages, embody our experiences while keeping our cultural notions intact" (p. 36). Pūrākau informs many of our understandings of the environment and our place (and responsibilities) within it. Māori stories can teach us about how our ancestors understood their everyday spaces and places, and through our own stories, we do the same. Employing these Indigenous ways of knowing and being, we use storytelling to find a balance between the physical and spiritual worlds that make up our worldviews.

Our Collaborative Storytelling Method

The authors in this article are part of a pan-nation, self-formed network of doctoral students and early career researchers from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. We named our group “Unsettling Education”. The intention was to connect with like-minded scholars in the field of education and create a pool of resources, to provide each other with feedback on our writing, collaborate in research, and also make a space to discuss strategies to navigate colonial universities, persevere, resist, and thrive. The resulting conversations included our personal experiences and coping strategies. Our responses to whiteness are outlined in this article through our stories. We are a small group who have come to know each other through Professor Joanna Kidman of Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Toa, and Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga. Joanna is a professor of Māori education and has supervised three of the four authors in this article. The other members of the wider group are all connected through visiting scholarships, also in care of Professor Kidman.

Three of the authors live in Pōneke Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand and one lives in Queensland, Australia. To create this article, we met online monthly, then fortnightly, leading up to the submission date. When the date was very close, email became our main contact. Juggling everyone’s schedules meant that two earlier planned contributors withdrew from the article, and, as the remaining authors have Māori whakapapa, this reshaped our analysis. We thank Laurie-Ann Lines of Yellowknives Dene First Nation in Canada for her input into the direction of this article and wish her all the best in completing her doctoral thesis while caring for her toddler. We also thank Avery Smith, Black American parent, for continuing to meet with the group and understanding that her position as a Black scholar is suited in other aspects of our cause, even if it is not included in this particular Indigenous-focussed article.

After a planning meeting, we created a shared document on Google Drive with a draft outline. The group discussed possible theories and methodologies we could draw on to tell our stories through poetry and creative nonfiction. There were no parameters around our written pieces, just a direction: we would explore the ways we unsettled and disrupted hegemonic educational spaces. We were free to share what we liked and add it to the document. In our own time, we read each other’s stories, provided feedback, and commented on the senses they evoked and the connections between the stories. Each of us then wrote reflections on how we interpreted and connected to the others’ work, guided by Phillips and Bunda’s principle of embodied relational meaning. In similar ways that Pacific educators Allen et al. (2022) utilised in their collaborative critical autoethnographic approach, we see our collaborative meaning making of our stories as storywork in action (Archibald, 2008).

Employing the conceptual framework described above, we analysed the stories and wove together the strands of relational meaning which brought together the past, present, and future.

Hine's Story

If I were to draw my experience as an early career researcher—a Māori Tongan māmā in academia—I naturally want to move my pencil in a clockwise direction. The lead travels in a circular motion, widening and increasing the image to look like a wave. Without coming off the paper, the artwork is thickening as I reverse the motion, turning a single-lined spiral into a double-lined shape.

If I were to embody this image, I suppose I am the pencil, and while I move through white spaces, I have waves of strength, courage, and resilience, as well as anxiety, fear, and heaviness. This is what it feels like for me to exist in spaces that aren't exactly created for me.

I spiral in, through, around, and eventually back out of what I refer to as Te Pō or The Darkness. Darkness can often be synonymous with despair, hopelessness, fear, and grief. And while there are facets of these in Te Pō, in Māori epistemology, it is known as a time of conception, healing, and potential.

The white background and grey pencil lined shape is now filled in with dark blues, greens, and blacks. Hinemoana the ocean takes over. While I'm in her realm, the deity of the sea has a tumbling hold of me. Sounds of bubbling wai (waters) and coughing from all of the near close drownings that take me from Te Pō into somewhere else, a space in between where all my senses are murky at best, and numb at worst, but I'm still conscious—still alive!

There is a sensation of nothing and everything that simultaneously hits me, and within a split second, I learn to make quick decisions. These choices affect my next move, and ultimately, my life.

Sometimes I find just by being in Hinemoana's waters, I connect to my wayfinding tūpuna who were not just fluent in terms of speech but in the language of the ocean, skies, land, fresh waters, and all that exists across time and place. This was possible over the generations of observations my ancestors conducted. They had a close relationship with these living entities and immersing in the waters connects our mauri (life force).

Other times, I find I could be confidently swimming, and then, on the same day, suddenly feel like I'm drowning. But the more I move with her and not against, I realise that I am safe. Though she is unpredictable, relentless, and testing she also guides me

through hard times and helps to lift me up. I sense more than the taste of salt, or the slipperiness of touch, but I feel my intuition urging me to remember forgotten histories, herstories, our stories, those pūrākau that explain every natural phenomenon.

Dipping my toes into the waters or fully immersed in her whirlpool, with each day, I slowly add to my knowledge of ko wai ahau (who I am) and which waters my ancestors travelled through.

Liana's Story

During the closing stages of doctoral studies and all throughout my postdoc I'd wanted to get into academia so badly. So badly that I'd be up hours before daybreak, chugging back coffee so I could pull my head back into the depths of a paper I'd been working on the day before. So intent on making it into the esteemed ivory tower that on some weekends I'd leave my daughter to bond with her Samsung tablet while I worked on articles that seemed so terribly important at the time.

And, by virtue of luck and timing rather than anything else, I managed to secure a job in teacher education. For two years, I spouted messages about decolonisation, white privilege, and racism. It seemed all so edgy for a profession that wanted to 'fess up to its role in colonisation but didn't know how.

Nor did the "revamped" teacher education programme want to admit the truth either. No-one really wanted to do things too differently, but they were nevertheless willing to believe that a sprinkling of race rhetoric would create some magical change.

Tell me, how can a pepeha for non-Māori even remotely disturb the colonial structures and cultural norms underpinning a system that commodifies mātauranga Māori?

How will student teachers' admissions of white privilege move my cousin and her six children from a hotel room to an actual home?

Why have you stopped responding to my emails that describe the racism of other education communities, like the Teaching Council and the Post Primary Teachers' Association?

Why can't [won't] you hear me?

There is nothing more despairing
than the feeling of a steel trap
clamped tight over your mouth.

The problem is

the oppression is in part self-inflicted
because there is a choice buried in that moment
about whether to speak your truth.

So, I chose to swallow my bile
As you whitesplain my words
Backed by the colonial structures
In which we work.

I think about the day
I will manoeuvre into a position
where I am better heard by white ears.

Likely, this is my settler fantasy
And maybe this is all we have;
a fantastical narrative about inclusion and indigenisation
to keep us sane in the face of a reality
that a side note is all we can ever be.

Trapped
inside the design of a settler institution.

There were days like these, where pain and anger seemed all-consuming. And there were days where I'd break out of the glass case.

On one occasion, mahi led me home to speak to relatives about an historic event. The drive from Blenheim to Canvastown was only about 25 minutes but, in that short space of time, my shoulders dropped and my neck relaxed. Any ties to an urban landscape had long disappeared, while my research colleague and I travelled through grass fields and rolling mountains and hills.

Visiting Te Hora marae is like stepping back in time. This is my tūrangawaewae: the place I reconnect with relatives, the fields I roamed freely with cousins, the urupā that holds the remains of whanaunga and of my father.

The wharenui, however, had completely transformed since I was a child. What was once a modest steel structure the size of a small hall, had now grown several extensions including a larger wharekai to the right. I remember meeting Uncle Timi under the porch, my favourite spot on the marae. It had been a while since we last saw each other but he was just the same. A little older but still quick with a quip.

The day had turned out a beauty, hot and still. My eyes had to squint into the brightness. Flecks of pollen and darting insects screened the view looking out to the

hills, my cousin's makeshift home was perched in the foreground flanked by cars and caravans. I noticed the fence cordoning the urupā had grown considerably. Scrub and trees lined the marae on the right and blocked the view to the main road to Nelson below.

At one time, koromiko and waiharakeke grew here in abundance. Although the visage had changed, it's at pace with Papatūānuku; we fit ourselves to her and she to us, there's no pretence here. I spent some time with the moment, then turned to Aunty Margie who took us proudly on a tour of the new building extensions.

Johanna's Story

I've enrolled in an undergraduate astronomy programme: here I am, cross-legged on my bed with my laptop, logging on to a university in England, 18,605 kilometres away around the curve of the Earth. Already I'm thrown.

Please introduce yourself in the welcome forum.

How to represent myself? The other students are mostly from the UK, and I'm staring into an eerie gap—an ocean and two centuries wide—between myself and those who live where most of my colonising ancestors came from.

Intros trickle in and commonalities emerge—*I've always loved astronomy. I'm only now finding time to pursue it*. I could say that too, but it feels so incomplete as to be untrue.

Tamanui te Rā is rising above the hills outside my window. For the English students, he has already set.

***

To have Māori and Pākehā whakapapa, but to be raised, ostensibly, in te ao Pākehā is—inevitably—to be left with a paucity of material relating to your taha Māori, and yet to feel shocks and aftershocks of imperial violence rattling through whānau relationships. It's to be filled with a chorus of competing voices: the wronged and the neglected; the loving and the furious; the miserable, the triumphant, and the guilty; the home people and the invaders—those who flooded your cells as they simultaneously spread across the land. It's to wander the two-centuries-old battlefield of your mind and body, asking everywhere—could I help set things right?

I've gathered ancestral traces and remnants throughout my life, but with more intention lately. I look for the haunted: people and places I feel inexplicably drawn to or repulsed by; triggers for unexpected tears; battered heirlooms that have survived against the odds; family stories with mysteries at their heart; tupuna names that push

their way into my consciousness; pathways I'm propelled along without understanding why.

***

One of my tūpuna is Makarena. Magdalene. She lived at Bethlehem on the Wairoa River. Surely she has another name—one not from the mission?

The father of her children is Te Rei, who joined Pai Mārire to fight the British invasion.

Skeletal family stories tell how, after the wars, three generations of our family danced back and forth with Catholicism and Anglicanism, until my contrarian grandfather threw it all in for Rosicrucianism. My father grew up believing the Rosicrucian worldview unquestioningly, until he found science at high school, and he and his father fought.

Dad became an atmospheric physicist and, outside of work hours, ever since I can remember, he's been working on his own theory of the multiverse. He'd sit in the kitchen, oblivious to household life, scribbling endless equations. At any given time, the table was covered in pages of words, numbers, symbols, and graphs, arranged in piles that no one must touch.

When he talked about his theories, I understood only the barest bones, but I hung on every word. Every possible universe exists? Sure. All time exists at once? A mental shrug: makes sense to me.

On nights when thoughts of death rolled into my bedroom in a suffocating cloud, I reminded myself that if all time existed at once I could never really die. None of us could. And sometimes, when everything in my life seemed set against a dull background wash of mundanity, I reached for the awe that infinite possibilities offered.

Now, I consider the conundrum: in embracing Western science, my father has been trekking back towards a way of feeling and being in the world that resonates with tupuna understandings.

***

It was my father who took me into the backyard and introduced me to the stars, albeit by their English names. They are our ancestors any way you look at it. As a child, I didn't say that aloud in my mind. All I knew was that looking to the sky felt like the salve for all.

Now, I live on the south coast of Te Whanganui-a-Tara. Not on the very edge, where you open your front door to Hinemoana shifting stones and rattling shells. But

close enough that, even windows closed, we hear the momentous pulse of ocean currents.

My son, my daughter, and I live on the top floor of a house that isn't ours, on land that isn't ours many times over, and "my" room is hardly a room at all—just a sun-porch sealed with glass, RV-sized, jutting over the path below. It's as if I'm merely passing through, and any minute the whole porch-box might unhitch and fly on. I fold up my bed each morning; roll my duvet and stash it in a corner.

There are no curtains over the long porch windows and, after dark, when I look up, their frames are creamy pillars, saluting a sky that's sometimes sheer with incandescent cloud and other times full of celestial bodies. The impossible volumes of space, time, energy, and matter still amaze and reassure me, by turns.

Māori astronomer Rangi Matamua says that stars and planets, from a Māori perspective, are like people. We rise together, and we set together. Sometimes we have constant travelling companions; sometimes we take our own paths across the sky. We have our own colours; we shine and scintillate in our own ways. And we have stories.

***

I remember a night I greeted Pareārau.

Emotions had been overwhelming me again. For days I'd felt my skin sizzling and my insides icy—as if I could disintegrate at any moment. When I heard Rangi Matamua give his kōrerō about Pareārau on Facebook, I needed to see her.
I checked an online chart, found she'd be best viewed just before sunrise, and set my alarm. She was going to tell me something, I thought, show me something, give me something new to understand. I had no clue what, only a slightly desperate feeling that she must.

I woke well before my alarm, looked up through the window and she was already there, looking back in: bright, simultaneously hard and soft. And steady.
Other stars flickered, but Pareārau didn't flinch. She was a clear note of light holding to her two long paths—one across the sky from lover to lover, the other down through atmospheric forces and into our eyes. She is so steady, was all I could think.

I remember a night I greeted Hinetakurua.

It was 4 am and I was awake again, on my back, eyes wide open in the half-light, fists clenching and unclenching with useless energy. Far above me, glowing skirts of cloud split apart then knitted together. One time the clouds parted, and a single white-blue star appeared.

I grabbed binoculars from the shelf by my bed, and leaned the lower edges against the windowpane, pressing just hard enough to stop the sky jiggling. I steered the focus wheel left then right, until my view sharpened, and I saw for hundreds of light years.

As clouds coalesced then separated, it was like suffocating then breathing. I oriented myself by the two red stars when they appeared, Pūtara and Taumata-kuku, until I saw her again, and knew her.

Hinetakurua. So bound to her sparkling, icy black home that she is it and it is she. Hinetakurua, who had spent the last half year hosting her lover Tamanui Te Rā, and was now getting ready to send him back to the warming earth, to Hineraumati.

Hinetakurua. Did she feel pains in her nuclear heart? Or was she ready for some alone time?

I remember a day my son and daughter gave me earrings.

It was my birthday. My daughter, who often shocks me with what she sees, had chosen them.

They were black and gold, long. A note from the maker, inside their box, said they represented the constellation Tautoru—three bright stars that are always alongside each other as they travel.

It took me a moment to understand, and when I did, I cried.

***

I type my intro in the forum. *I've always loved astronomy. I'm only now finding the time to pursue it.* With a few more taps of the keyboard, I bring in my iwi and hapū. It's the bare minimum. They don't need to know that I'm here to meet ancestors.

Daniel's Story

The Four Winds

One of my earliest memories, a story gifted by my mother, speaks of the gathering of my whanaunga near to our ancestral home, where I was held to the four winds. Even though I am not exactly sure what this entailed, it is the absence of such detail, or the awareness of its significance with which I have also come to know myself in-relation.

Having been born and raised along the east coast of so-called Australia, similarly, has generated inside of me a kind of absence, a surrender to which these winds return calling, in their eddies of criticality: questions of identity, place, and

belonging. Moreover, a certain longing for land, language, and culture—as it so often essentialised in Indigenous studies—thrusts back on me an inwardly felt anxiety. But it has posited for me a positing experience, a superposition of who I am, and where, writing from Capalaba, (the place of the ringtail possum) on Quandamooka Country. Indeed, my anxiety is manifold. I am a settler here, amidst the turbulence of another kind, a storm to which I am, this time, party. But it is also in this everyday violence that the staunch sovereignty of mob alerts me. Drawing my eyes back to the scene of coloniality. Unwavering in who they are, of who I am in their sovereign place, including how it is that I came to be here.

The Four Winds

Like so many before me, just as I held my own children, we extend into the outlying environment. It was with my son, first, and later my daughter—years apart in the same place, Minjerribah, (place of the many mosquitos)—that I held them towards our ancestral home. Between breaths, I spoke into the wind, on the Eastern shore, first to the ancestors of Quandamooka. Affirmations of their sovereign being, our place there as guests, and the directions from whence we came. I asked them for safe passage and held my children aloft, again to the East, as Māui dragged the sun slowly beyond Western horizons.

These, like so many rituals, were not explicitly taught. Although I remember them in my own way, connecting the dots in the gathering of our histories and its sometimes confounding layers. It seems to me, then, that my children, like me, were born Indigenous, but are becoming Indigenous in the ebb and flow of these tides, the very winds which gather pace and drop-off variably across the seasons. Even still, though, I hear the whispers of my ancestors. And so it is, that my children will learn to read and write this way, or another, with the literacies of our tūpuna.

The Four Winds

These are relational literacies, even I know, in disjunction. Not just in the traces of the wind, the nuance of the tide, but the heaving ocean currents that shift from South to North, signalled by the Northerly winds around September; the veritable kaleidoscope of jellyfish in the coming months, flushed from the Indonesian waterways during their wet season among others. Indeed, it is a literacy beyond the colonial frame. Beyond its margins and contexts, (re)produced by the scene, in the images (pre)arranged, already mapped, and thus waiting to be “discovered.” I do not know I am Indigenous, as much as these conspiratorial passwords in the wind, the phrases of the waves, these harmonies, and their dissonances, simply remind me of my place and belonging.

Discussion

Each story in this article is told from the writer's experiences as a Post–COVID academic and allows space for the creative means of igniting change and healing colonial traumas. We do this through our stories as we sit at the cross-roads that Burgess and Painting (2020) describe as "that fleeting moment where the past and the future meet. By meeting, the past and future interact. At this point of interaction, whakapapa is laid down" (p. 218). Whakapapa, Burgess and Painting assert, "acknowledges wholeness…[and] expands relationality" (pp. 214–215). Taking this stance, we tell our stories to share our desires and to connect the missing links in our family histories to be in "good relation" with our intergenerational selves (Burgess & Painting, 2020, p. 210). We are at the intersection of wanting to relink, repair, reconnect, and reimagine how we can do this. In doing so, we resist colonial forces that weigh us down.

Employing the concepts of Indigenous sensory ethnography (Cameron, 2022) through our writing, we re-think what it means to *belong* through our intuition. In this way, we connect with our ancestors (onamata), and our desires which guide us in the path we create for ourselves and the future generations (anamata) (Burgess & Painting, 2020).

We *long* to know our language, our homes, our stories, our connections.
We *long* to be heard.
We *long* to be accepted.
We *long* to belong.
We *long* to be.

Below are reflections from the authors as they related meaning from each other's stories.

Hine's Reflections

After I read each story, it sounded like we wrote our pieces to fit with the other, but this wasn't the case. Rather, we individually experienced similar growth pains, strengths, and courage in similar storms. The combined lineup of stories reaffirmed the feelings I had, as if I knew I wasn't alone.

I noticed how we spoke to the subtle ways we navigated the academic colonial pressures. We each referred to the physical environment and linked together the spiritual knowledge. Deities in pūrākau Māori featured throughout. The likes of Papatūānuku reared in Liana's longing to feel that homeliness of her embrace away from her ancestral grounds to the esteemed ivory tower. Daniel referred to Māui as he

reflected on the connections of the sun, winds, and water. He sought to “connect the dots” as he gathered missing knowledge of history in the same way that Johanna gathered ancestral traces by connecting the stars to link her whakapapa.

My co-authors drew on metaphors as a natural way to observe and retell the notion of place and the senses evoked in those places. We see this in the way Johanna linked the “shocks and after-shocks” with imperial violence that rattled through her whānau and affected the kinship ties. She also used clouds breaking apart to discuss relationship breaks between extended whānau and the conscious efforts she attempted to weave them back together. And, while it may seem at first that we talk back to our oppressors, we are actually just talking to ourselves, our fellow Indigenous peoples, and our ancestors.

Liana’s Reflections

When I read my co-authors’ stories, I feel like I’ve been given insight into something special and unique; experiences that rarely make it into writing and onto the pages of “scholarly” thought. These are accounts of the spaces in between settler colonialism, or rather, these stories capture the fullness of a lived human existence when the flimsy veil of settler colonialism dissipates.

Johanna shows me that our lives are as boundless as the universe, and more significant and connected than most of us ever take the time to consider. When we take the time to look up at the heavens and across to our loved ones, we can see so much strength and gratitude in spaces that privilege an intangible bond with our surroundings and each other. In Daniel’s writing, I feel a familiar ache of disconnection and uncertainty, that passes when he opens doors to consider the complexities of relationality and place. He speaks of guiding his tamariki through these layers and I feel inspired and hopeful that their upbringing will not be like ours. Strength, perseverance, and hope are similarly conveyed in Hine’s work. She shows me that our tūpuna are a wellspring of vitality and potential which are (to circle back to Johanna) as boundless as Te Pō and Hinemoana. Colonialism cannot touch us here.

Their stories/our stories reveal a collective depth and richness to Indigenous experience that is wider and more vast than we perhaps imagine as individuals. Sinking into spaces that settler colonialism aggressively seeks to render invisible is a means to validate and celebrate Indigeneity within and outside coloniality; a quiet but no less powerful form of resistance.

Johanna's Reflections

Reading each of the others' stories I feel, in different ways, release and relief. I exhale, and exhale, and exhale again, when I hadn't even realised I was holding my breath.

I feel pulled, almost bodily, into Hine's story. As she vividly describes pushing through and against currents, then allowing herself to be held, carried, before beginning the push again, her choice of words takes for granted the eternality of the work she's part of. There is no "when this is done . . ." As I read, I feel the relief of relinquishing *completion*. She makes me think about the way the ripples we create —in the timespace we experience ourselves in—spread and mingle with other ripples, all of us and our work carrying on in all directions. I feel relief, too, when she says of Hinemoana, "the more I move with her and not against, I realise that I am safe." I know I need to pause, let go, and tell myself this more often.

Liana's story hits differently at first. The release as I read it is tied to permission —permission to be angry, to be blunt. I'm inspired by her continual straight shooting. I think: if you, Liana, can say these things, keep fighting these battles every day, so can I and so *should* I. And then she tells how her work took her home, and on an achingly-evoked, hot, still day, she "spent some time with the moment." That moment contains so much, is so full of clarity, safety and power. Like Hine, Liana seems to describe the twin necessities of action and pause.

Winds blow through Daniel's story. As I read and re-read, it's as if his words call them up: I hear them gusting around his writing, imagine them sweeping through his life—cleansing, connecting, disturbing, smoothing. His story seems to remind the reader: listen to the world, but don't try to know all its secrets. The hidden, the unknowable, the intuitive—they permeate Daniel's story, and again I feel relief. Despite the way the academy can make me feel, I don't *have* to try and know everything about something. In fact, I shouldn't, even if I could. And those spaces where all I hear are winds, whispering or howling, carrying messages that are somehow beyond my grasp . . . they are meant to be that way, now, and maybe forever.

Daniel's Reflections

After I read my co-authors' stories, I was present like Liana to the richness of Indigenous experience in the corporeal and incorporeal worlds across which we traverse, worlds which we are from, and into which we have brought our children.

I was present to our collective sense of body-logic and the incongruencies in the ways we are positioned by the institutions and disciplines around us. I breathed a

sigh of relief and my own shoulders relaxed when reading about Liana's "return home." I felt like I was there, alongside her, in the car, with the windows down, extending my hand out of the window, hand-surfing in the wind; city shrinking in the rear-view mirror. I imagined walking with her and Aunty Margie, the tour of the new building extensions, the cars and the caravans, the expanding urupā and the strangeness of the changing landscape. In each, I was reminded of our social mobility as Indigenous people, the strength of iwi, responsibilities to our ancestors, and to whānau. That this work will always be so much more than an ivory tower, which is part of the whole, I guess, but still, above, or outside of everything we have spoken about here.

In Hine's story, I felt how easily certain realities can dissolve. In the beginning, she literally became the story in the embodiment of the pencil, and eventually became one with the waves and the current. When I read this, I was also present to my own wayfinding ancestors, somewhere, perhaps in the sway or undulations of her writing—the greens, blues, and blacks; the tumbling and the bubbling. How thrilling it is to witness Māori knowledges and ways of being converge, from the symbolic embodying of the pencil, the koru spiral, and ultimately, the story itself.

Johanna's story was bookended by her experience during an online introduction, and in between, a veritable universe of her selfhood, place and belonging. I was deeply moved by the generosity in the traces of her past, the objects, heirlooms, and the sprawling night sky which seem to ask more questions than it answers. As she steered the focus wheel left and right on the binoculars, my own view sharpened alongside her own. I saw what she saw, and perhaps felt, for a moment, what she felt. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that, in these little vignettes, I felt seen and heard. That I, too, look for the haunted and find company in the haunting. Although this is not all that we are, it is beautiful company to be in.

Concluding Comments

We conclude this article with questions that can support readers to further reflect and embody their own senses of storytelling and relational meaning. Readers may wish to apply the following questions in their own spaces, whether they are positioned at the centre or the margins or move in between.

- Where does your intuitive thinking guide you when in academic spaces?
- Can you imagine the everyday places you walk in academia through the eyes of your ancestors? What do these places feel like, sound like, look like to those who came before?
- How do you imagine academia will feel like, sound like, look like to the next generations? What desires do you have for them?

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