



# The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

In 2022 *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* transitioned to fully Open Access and this article is available for use under the license conditions below.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

# UTILISING *the* CONCEPT *of* PATHWAY as a FRAMEWORK *for* INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

## BRONWYN FREDERICKS

Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, Monash University, Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, Victoria, 3004, Australia and Centre for Clinical Research Excellence, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, PO Box 698, Fortitude Valley, Queensland, 4006, Australia

### ■ Abstract

Drawing on Gregory Cajete's (1994, p. 55) explanation of "Pathway" (Path denoting structure, Way implying a process), a research framework was developed exploring Aboriginal women's perceptions and experiences of health and health services. Developing the research methodology was like laying out the Path, as a well thought out structure or the plan for the research. It relates as an external landscape, not just in terms of the Path itself, but also the research process within the landscape of the site of the research. The Way, being the process, involved enabling a clear, thought out process for me to follow and additionally one for me within my Self. The research was informed and guided by Aboriginal women. I also travelled an internal landscape in the journey of the Self, within my own learning and coming to terms with myself as an Indigenous researcher within the Pathway.

### ■ Introduction

Gregory Cajete describes the concept of Pathway as it relates to Indigenous learning and education:

The concept of Pathway, revealed in numerous ways in Indigenous education, is associated with mountains, winds, and orientation. Learning involves a transformation that unfolds through time and space. Pathway, a structural metaphor, combines with the process of journeying to form an active context for learning about spirit. Pathway is an appropriate metaphor since, in every learning process, we metaphorically travel an internal, and many times external, landscape. In travelling a Pathway, we make stops, encounter and overcome obstacles, recognise and interpret signs, seek answers, and follow the tracks of those entities that have something to teach us. We create ourselves anew. Path denotes a structure; Way implies a process (1994, p. 55).

Cajete's work had much relevance in enabling a framework for my PhD research exploring how the relationship between health services and Aboriginal women can be more empowering from the viewpoints of Aboriginal women. The assumption underpinning this study was that empowering and re-empowering practices for Aboriginal women can lead to improved health outcomes. The research methodology can be thought of as laying out the Path, as a well thought out structure or the plan for the research. It relates as an external landscape, not just in terms of the Path itself, but also the research process within the landscape of the site of the research, Rockhampton. The Way, being the process, involved enabling a clear, thought out process for me to follow and also one for me within my Self. I have travelled an internal landscape in the journey of the Self, within my own learning and coming to terms with myself as an Indigenous researcher within the Pathway. I came to learn that I needed to make stops, that I would encounter and need to overcome obstacles, recognise and interpret signs, seek answers and follow the tracks of others that had something to teach me. I also understand that within the Pathway of the research that I have created new ways for others to see Aboriginal women, new ways for Aboriginal

women to have voices, share voices and comprehend more fully themselves and each other within a research process that they participated in developing. I know that I have come to understand myself more clearly as an Indigenous researcher and I have come to view myself in new ways. I believe that I have created myself anew. This is the nature of Pathways.

In this paper, I will first provide a brief overview of issues pertaining to Aboriginal research; that is, issues that I needed to consider when contemplating and undertaking the research project. This is the broader landscape in which the research was based. Secondly, I explore issues specific to myself as a researcher and more importantly as an Indigenous woman researcher. Describing how I have gained an understanding of my placement as an Indigenous researcher enables me to provide a more complex interpretation, while at the same time also providing some simple clarity from which to view and understand my work. It shows the issues connected with being an Indigenous researcher; that is, as a new traveller within the broader landscape of research. Thirdly, I give a brief overview of how the research process was developed, how supervisors were selected for this Pathway and some of research methodologies as they relate to the research project.

### ■ The broader landscape of Aboriginal research

There has been a long history of research conducted on Aboriginal peoples. It is often said that Australia's Indigenous peoples are the most researched people in the world (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), 1994) or referred to as "the most researched group in the world" (Aboriginal Research Institute (ARI), 1993, p. 2; Smith, 1999, p. 3). Historically, the vast majority of this research has been carried out by non-Indigenous people. Some of this research has been invasive into Aboriginal peoples' lives and communities and been undertaken without permission and without regard to Aboriginal peoples' rights to participate or not to participate. Some communities have not been aware that non-Indigenous people have undertaken research while within their communities. Cruse (2001, p. 27) puts it simply when she states, "Many researchers have ridden roughshod over our communities, cultures, practices and beliefs, and we are now in a position to prevent this from continuing". Questions have been raised for many years by Aboriginal peoples, about research which has been and continues to be undertaken in their communities. Aboriginal peoples have been weighed, given blood, urine, faeces and hair samples, given their stories, explained their existence, been interviewed, questioned, observed, followed, interpreted, analysed and written about for years. From the data, reports, books and theses have been generated. Internationally Indigenous peoples have additionally made statements about research within

their own communities and in other Indigenous communities. Smith (1999, p. 1) states that, "The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary".

In the 1970s Australian Aboriginal peoples began to voice more strongly concern as to what was happening. In more recent times, issues have been articulated regarding some of the inappropriate and offensive methodological instruments that have been used and reports presented in ways that were not useable by the communities they were written about. In particular, higher education institutions in Australia have become sites where others have assumed ownership of our knowledges, ways of being and doing; other sites where this has occurred are museums, libraries and art galleries. In the late 1980s and the 1990s, several publications and statements included issues regarding research with and within Aboriginal communities. These have continued to become refined and more than ever before we, as Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, have been actively engaged in determining who, what, where, when and how research will take place and the conditions under which it should take place. Research has become very much part of our contemporary lives, we write about it, talk about, tell jokes about it, and as Smith (1999, p. 1) indicates "Indigenous people even write poetry about research". Thus research has been part of the landscape of our lives in a range of capacities for a long time. It is, however, only recently that we have begun to move into the landscape of research as researchers determining what and how that research should look and be like.

### ■ New travellers within the landscape

Smith (1999, p. 5) states that, "Indigenous researchers are expected, by their communities and by the institutions which employ them, to have some form of historical and critical analysis of the role of research in the indigenous world". Here Smith implies that as an Aboriginal woman who wishes to be called an Indigenous researcher, I need to have more than an understanding of the past research undertaken on and or with Indigenous peoples and communities. It also implies that I need to have worked out within myself the role of research as it relates to Indigenous peoples and communities today, within a contemporary context. While this expectation is one that I have encountered, it is not one that the university sector and the research academy provided training or preparation for me to be able to meet. There is a further expectation that is also placed upon me, as I am still expected to know the way the Western academy undertakes scholarship and the protocols of this.

My survival within the higher education system and the research academy depends on my knowing how the Western academy is structured and operates. That

is, I need to know who the relevant scholars are, who controls the processes within the research academy, committee procedure and ways of “doing business”. Generally and most often such non-Indigenous peoples are “white Australians”. This “knowing” is more than “knowing” your discipline. It is also knowing your discipline inside and out, how it came to be, how it is used and then turning it upside down so you can see how it relates back to Indigenous peoples. My survival as an Aboriginal woman in higher education also relies on me continuing to develop as an Aboriginal woman. This is not something that holds true in the reverse. “White people” do not have to work in the same way. They do not have to work on being “white”. All the processes in place, the knowledge in place, structures, systems, other people, all remind them that they are “white” (Monture-Angus, 1995). They do not have to consciously think that they are “white”. Further to this, they can have total disregard for my reality and they can be one of the sources of my marginalisation within the higher education system (Monture-Angus, 1995). On top of this, there is also the demand for public speaking, papers, articles within the higher education sector, for discipline-based work, for contributions to the Indigenous scholarly network and being part of an Indigenous family, community and broader community. I struggled to balance the issues between the PhD research and the issues associated with living in an Indigenous community and being an Aboriginal woman. In this I am not alone; all of this comes with me as it does with other Indigenous peoples engaged in research.

As I have already stated, my formal Western education did not prepare me to undertake the research I was engaging in or the life I live. In my undergraduate and postgraduate years of Western formal education, I was often told what I had to do, quote from certain texts and to prepare assignments in a prescribed way. When I used an Aboriginal experience, I was told that I was “not objective” or criticised for my failure to be objective. What the system of higher education failed, and still fails, to recognise is that it itself reflects a specific culture, even if the system does not name the culture it reflects. The criticism I received is really a reflection of the failure of those within the academy to examine their own biases and the bias of the system within which they work. I was never formally prepared within the classrooms in which I sat to be an “Indigenous researcher”. I was prepared to be an “Indigenous person” who would know how to teach and research using Western frameworks that can further colonise and act out imperial measures on Indigenous knowledges. I have been well trained in the Western academy and specific disciplinary methodologies. I came to understand that if as an Indigenous researcher I did not and do not interrogate what I have learnt, look at how I use what I have learnt and how I act, I can assist in perpetuating bias, colonisation and racism.

Nakata (1998, p. 4) explains that one issue for Indigenous scholars is how to speak back to the knowledges that have been formed around what is perceived as Indigenous positionings within Western worldviews. Nakata essentially asks “how do we speak to what is known about us, written about us and not owned by us?” We as Aboriginal peoples and as Indigenous researchers within the research academy need to challenge what is written about us and what knowledges are controlled about us, otherwise we will continue to perpetuate the untruths and the ways in which we are marginalised, minimised, misrepresented, represented and devalued (Nakata, 1998; Rigney, 1997). Rigney (1997, p. 6) states that, “sadly, the legacy of racialisation and its ideology continue to re-shape knowledge construction of Indigenous Peoples via colonial research ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies which is so fundamentally subtle and ‘common sense’”.

I also understand the difficulty of interrogating the system, when the system tries very hard at times not to be interrogated, not to be engaged. There are times when non-Indigenous writers who write about Aboriginal peoples can write without fully interrogating their work to see whether they have perpetuated racism and Eurocentric ideals about us and without interrogating their own “whiteness”. There are those within the higher education sector who speak about us, of us and never want to, or avoid speaking with us and to us. I have felt what it is like to be silenced. I have seen Aboriginal peoples left as the shadows of the speakers, as the speechless, the voiceless and the voice of absence. In this process we become rewritten. We remain in the periphery and once again in the margin. We are again portrayed as “object”, and those who do the talking, the speaking about us, are again given the “legitimacy” and further “authority” to keep doing it, to keep making us “voiceless objects”. These people are the “cultural overseers” and the “privileged interpreters” of Aboriginal peoples, issues and objects. In this, the places and spaces within higher education that used to speak about us become further sites of appropriation and objectification and not sites of emancipation, liberation, subjectivity, resistance and sites where we can individually and jointly speak. In making us speechless, voiceless and marginal and maintaining cultural overseer positions, possible sites of radical openness and challenge are lost. It is with a blunt honesty and great sadness that I must also state that some educated Aboriginal people additionally support this happening within some institutions.

It is in reading works by Indigenous researchers such as Battiste (1995), Cajete (1994), Huggins (1987, 1994), Martin (2001), Moreton-Robinson (1999, 2000), Nakata (1998), Rigney (1999, 2001) and Smith (1999) that I can begin to view my own situation, the situation of Aboriginal peoples, and come to an understanding of what it means to be an Indigenous researcher.



I know that calling myself an “Indigenous researcher” brings about a range of labels from other researchers. It is assumed that I work with Indigenous people as the objects of my research. It is assumed I am Indigenous. Both of these assumptions are correct. However, there are other aspects that also need to be considered. It could be considered that I am both subject and object. I attempt to work in ways that are responsive to Aboriginal peoples, that encompass empowering strategies, education approaches, skills development, broadening ownership and in returning the outcomes of this research in ways that Aboriginal peoples can use and incorporate for Aboriginal peoples. I additionally attempted to work in ways that highlighted racialised and biased knowledges and exclusionary practices within the research domain (Hart & Whatman, 1998; Martin, 2001; Smith, 1999). In becoming a new traveller and moving into the research landscape as a researcher with the others who have gone before me, I also need to consider how I enter into the landscape. This is not dissimilar from what is described in the work of Hart and Whatman (1998), Martin (2001) and Smith (1999). Some of this is addressed in the following paragraphs.



#### “Talkin’ up” the research: Developing the research pathway

Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2000, p. 187) explained the term “talkin’ up” as speaking back and the term “talkin’ the talk” as “tell people about what you are going to do”. For me I was given the “talkin’ up” words to describe the research development process by a number of Aboriginal women. When I first started thinking about doing a PhD and research around Aboriginal women’s issues, I’d be asked to “talk up” – throw my ideas out, let the women in the community hear what I was thinking and let them question me about what I was thinking about doing. This context is why the words “talkin’ up the research” are used.

The important ethical principle as defined in numerous pieces of literature (e.g. AIATSIS, 2000; ARI, 1993; Brady, 1992a, 1992b; Collard, 1995; Koori Centre, n.d.; White, 1995) was to involve Aboriginal women from the Rockhampton area in the development of the topic. Numerous topics were discussed over several years prior to the commencement of the research. I encouraged Aboriginal women to ask questions, to put forward ideas and suggestions, and to ask about the long-term benefits of the study. Questions were asked such as:

- What action would result?
- Who would be involved?
- What was a PhD anyway, and why did I wish to do a PhD?
- What did I see as the purpose of a PhD? What were my motivations and my purpose? Who will own it and whose interests did it serve?

- Where would this get us [as Aboriginal women/people]?
- Where did I see it fitting within what I was doing within the community?
- How would it fit with other work being done by other Aboriginal people?

There were concerns and worries later articulated about me possibly moving away when the thesis was near to completion, as others, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, had moved away when their Masters or PhD theses were being finalised. These questions, and many more, along with consequent discussions took some time to work through and posed some internal questions and dilemmas for me.

As the research programme developed, there continued to be an ongoing dialogue and questioning about the research. It became in some ways very much part of community process, similar to other projects and programmes in which I have been involved. There were multiple levels of education occurring as to “What was research?” and “What questions have I got the right to ask?”, and about the process of research. I was conscious of the heightened sensitivity required by me and became very aware of what it is to be an “insider” researcher and the dynamics associated with what is termed “insider” research. Smith (1999, p. 10) proposes that, “Indigenous researchers work within a set of “insider” dynamics and it takes considerable sensitivity, skills, maturity, experience and knowledge to work these issues through”. Furthermore that, “non-Indigenous researchers and supervisors are often ill prepared to assist Indigenous researchers in these areas and there are so few [I]ndigenous teachers that many Indigenous researchers simply ‘learn by doing’” (1999, p. 10). My experience supports Smith’s argument.

The process of “talkin’ up” gave Aboriginal women the opportunity to start sharing their thoughts and talking about some of their life experiences. It allowed issues to surface and a space to dialogue about those issues. In this “talkin’ up” process, realisation of possible topics surfaced, and the area of investigation was born. The research process was able to be responsive to the flow of the community rather than me trying to make the community fit the structure of the research. The “talkin’ up” became a part of the process of engagement of and with community members. It additionally allowed me to begin to consider and discuss some of the research methodologies that may or may not be employed within the research.

#### Thinking out the pathway: Some of the methodologies

Some Indigenous researchers such as Rigney (1997, 1999) and Warrior (1995, 1999) give varied suggestions as to how best to research with Indigenous peoples and determining what is Indigenous research. They both discuss ways of decolonising, repositioning and

supporting Indigenous knowledges and research methods within higher education institutions. Rigney (1997, p. 2) suggests the employment of Indigenist principles, as a, “step toward assisting Indigenous theorists and practitioners to determine what might be an appropriate response to delegitimise racist oppression in research and shift to a more empowering and self-determining outcome”. Wheaton (2000) argues for the need for Indigenous peoples to develop research processes that are about us as Indigenous peoples in order to represent us best. There is without doubt a need for Aboriginal research processes that reflect who we are, what we do, how we think, our protocols and processes, in order to represent us best.

There have been numerous research studies on Aboriginal people over the years from all sectors, including the health arena (whether it be in the sector, discipline or health departments). There is quite an abundance of recent literature written by health researchers on servicing Aboriginal women and Aboriginal people. There have been few studies that have explored the way in which Aboriginal women experience their encounters with health care providers and other aspects of the health care system. This research project has explored in-depth with a group of Aboriginal women their encounters with health care providers and other aspects of the health care system. One of the outcomes was to generate ideas for improving health care delivery and policy for Aboriginal women in ways that are empowering for Aboriginal women. In this way the process, the Pathway, needed to be self-determining and empowering for Aboriginal women within the project. In being mindful of the commitment to understand Aboriginal women's accounts of their health care experiences from their own perspective, the words of Wheaton, Warrior, Rigney and others, I began to frame a process, a Way.

I chose to undertake a qualitative research process. Burns (2000, p. 388) outlined using the education arena as an example that “the qualitative researcher attempts to gather evidence that will reveal qualities of life, reflecting the ‘multiple realities’ of specific educational settings from participants’ perceptions” and they use a range of approaches in an “attempt to capture and understand individual definitions, descriptions and meanings of events”. I knew from talking with the women that I needed to build in a process of interactive dialogue, an empowering element within the process and skills development or learning for participants. These aspects were identified by Aboriginal women as elements required for this research. The women did not want me to be what they called an “absent person” or “non-person”. That is someone who writes about them but does not write about myself. They encouraged me to value the experiences I had within the Aboriginal women's domain and within health and put myself within the research.

I read about the process of autoethnography. Glesne (1999, p. 181) asserts that “autoethnography begins with the self, the personal biography” and then moves to the scholarly discourse and the cultural group that is the site of the research. I included the process of autoethnography. I used narratives of the Self, and drew on experiences and events I have participated in or witnessed over time while living within the community or as part of the Indigenous movement. Remember that my narratives of Self, also relate to the narratives of the community. In one sense it is individual and in another it is community; they intertwine. It is the narratives that offered further information, assisting me to understand the dynamics of the research process and that added much greater depth to this research. It complimented what Rigney (1997) describes as principles for an Indigenist methodology and allowed me to centre myself within the field of this research.

Other forms of qualitative research approaches undertaken in research with women such as symbolic interactionism, case studies and phenomenology were also considered and rejected. I looked at action-based research, community participatory action-based research models and began to look at feminist approaches. I additionally reviewed research processes undertaken with Aboriginal women. I reflected on what I wished to do with the Aboriginal women and what they wished me to do. After careful consideration of a range of methods, I came to accept that feminist participatory action research needed to be one of the research methods. It enabled me to adapt it to fit within an Indigenous context. It allowed me to break away from some of the pre-existing conceptualisations. Although having an issue with the concept of feminism per se, I was able to borrow from the area known as feminist research for the purposes of this research (Lather, 1991a, 1991b; Reinhardz, 1992). The feminist methodology literature provided numerous strategies for me to utilise, with women speaking being the core strategy. Reinhardz (1992) presents the practice of women “telling” and the ways in which the “telling” occurs and can occur. This form of “telling” is not just a “feminist” owned practice. It is regarded as an Indigenous practice. A practice, not only about what is said, but how we speak, and how we listen. Implicitly often explicitly, it is a more egalitarian concept of power. It can be linked to the writings of Miriam-Rose Ungumerr (1988) and her descriptive work titled *Dadirri*.

Other research has taken place that involved Aboriginal women as researchers and subject. They include the works by Acklin et al. (1995), Daylight and Johnson (1986), Huggins and Huggins (1986), Kirk et al. (1998, 2000a, 2000b), and others, providing legitimation to Aboriginal women's voices in texts and reports authored by them as Aboriginal women. Brady (1998, n.p.) notes disappointing that generally “outside autobiography the stories of Indigenous Australia

only receive legitimation when written in texts edited or authored by non-Indigenous academics". Some Aboriginal women have utilised story-telling techniques that are also described by Reinhardz (1992). The telling of the stories is one way for Aboriginal women to explore the way that Aboriginal women think about their history and to identify the effects of events on their lives. Brady (1998, n.p.) states that, "storytelling is an ageless tradition, considered by most cultures to be vital to the health of each individual, the community and their environment". She adds that "the knowledge our stories contain can be shared but its sources and ownership belongs forever to those who have given the gift of the story. The listener's responsibility is to learn from it" (1998, n.p.). Stories open the door to critical reflection, and can assist in moving us to another level of understanding the self, family and community.

Maureen Kirk and colleagues in their work with Aboriginal women on cancer undertook a process of semi-structured interviews, case history interviews and group discussions (Kirk et al., 2000b, p. 4). Their research explored women's personal experiences, their understanding of breast cancer and their views of care and health services. In essence, they undertook a process of Aboriginal women "telling" their stories. These researchers and others were able to undertake shifts and changes within the process of the research. Further to this, they have all been linked to other developments either in policy and/or programmes for Aboriginal women. The findings from these works have been useful in examining the findings from this research.

There are other strategies that were utilised from the fields of qualitative methodology and feminist methodology. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that the qualitative researcher utilises a variety of strategies and methods to collect and analyse a range of empirical materials and evidence. The data gained by the qualitative researcher may be from field notes, interview transcripts, documents, reports, pictures, recordings, graphic representations, newspaper articles and other literature. Tesch (1990) identified 26 analytic strategies that could be applied to qualitative data. I believed that it would be possible to engage a number of strategies and several approaches from methodologies known as community-based action research, feminist participatory research and the principles of an Indigenist methodology as outlined by Rigney (1997, 1999) and elements of reflexivity and/or introspection. These can all be worked together to bring an approach that could be regarded as Indigenous participatory community-based action research. I discussed a range of these strategies and approaches with my supervisors, my guides in the journeying. I drew on their experience and advice to additionally assist me in my decision-making along the path of this research journey.

### ■ Guides in the pathway: Supervision

Normally guides, supervisors are not mentioned in a research project other than in the acknowledgements. In regards to supervising Indigenous postgraduate research, they play an important role and can have major impacts on Indigenous students and communities. For me, a number of people have assisted in the journeying, in the travelling along the Pathway of this research. There were, however, several people who were appointed to be the official guides in the journeying, supervisors. I agreed to the specific people being appointed after much thinking and working through some dilemmas.

I needed to think through issues in regards to supervision. I was not prepared to be supervised by people who were not familiar with working with an Aboriginal woman who was working on her own empowerment and inherent rights. I was not prepared to be subject to objectification through the relationship of student/supervisor or to have a "non-Indigenous Indigenous expert" supervise my work as an Aboriginal woman, with Aboriginal women within the greater Aboriginal community, if that meant substantiating their privileged positioning, cultural overseer, cultural interpreter status and giving them further authority to speak. I was not prepared to be used to give anyone a stamp of legitimacy to talk on Aboriginal business.

There were issues of power to consider and issues of deep importance to my well-being as an Aboriginal woman. I knew that I was trusted to make the decisions regarding who should be and would be my supervisors, my guides to undertake the research. If I was not wise in my decisions, if I did not stop any one of the supervisors in a process that could cause harm to me, Aboriginal women in the community or the Aboriginal community at large, I would have also contributed to the harm. This is something that I was not prepared to carry.

It was difficult to come to know people from behind their images as to whether they would be the right people to be part of the landscape. I interviewed people for the job of supervisors for my PhD. I didn't just take on the people who were suggested by the university as supervisors for my research. There were some people I knew that would not be suitable. I explained what I thought, how I wanted the relationship to be and not be, and my goals. It took some time for Priscilla Iles, Daniela Stehlik and Ron Labonte to become my supervisors – guides within the landscape. Priscilla Iles was the community-based supervisor nominated by Aboriginal women in the community and who agreed to take on the role. Priscilla was the Chairperson of a community organisation that had organised numerous women's conferences, was actively engaged in women's issues through her role as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner (ATSIC) and had worked in health for many years. Daniela Stehlik was the university-

based supervisor with a social science background and came on board in the later part of my PhD process after someone else had left. She was open to sharing my vision of what I was trying to do and encouraged me when I needed it the most. Ron Labonte was an external supervisor who was based in Canada and who had tremendous knowledge in the field of health and empowerment. Ron was consistent, always willing to listen and read materials and had a broader worldview of where my work was situated. I am extremely thankful for Priscilla, Daniela and Ron for being guides in my journey. I am now able to draw upon the knowledge they shared in my support and supervision of other Indigenous researchers as they move through their education and research pathways and in the other work I do in the research domain (Fredericks, 2006).

## ■ Conclusion

I have drawn on Gregory Cajete's (1994, p. 55) explanation of Pathway (Path denoting structure, Way implying a process), as a research framework to explore Aboriginal women's perceptions and experiences of health and health services. Developing this research methodology was like laying out the Path, as a well thought out structure or the plan for the research. The Path relates as an external landscape not just in terms of the Path itself, but also the research process within the landscape of the site of the research. The Way, being the process, involved enabling a clear, thought out process for me to follow and additionally one for me within my Self. The research was informed and guided by Aboriginal women. I also travelled an internal landscape in the journey of the Self, within my own learning and coming to terms with myself as an Indigenous researcher within the Pathway. This is the entirety of the landscape in which the research was based. This has been part of my Pathway, the Pathway of this research project and the Pathway of my higher education learning experience.

## ■ Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge Dani Stehlik, Ron Labonte and Priscilla Iles for their research supervision and the many Aboriginal women in Rockhampton who offered support and encouragement. Thanks also goes to the Centre for Clinical Research Excellence at the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council for supporting the development of this paper.

## ■ References

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. (1994). *Draft discussion paper: Research ethics for undertaking economic development research relating to, involving and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

- Aboriginal Research Institute (ARI). (1993). *Ethics in Aboriginal research*. Adelaide, SA: Aboriginal Research Institute University of Adelaide.
- Acklin, F., Newman, J., Trindal, A., Shipley, D., & Heal, P. (1995, September). *Story telling to raise awareness of certain health issues and health screening for Aboriginal women*. Paper presented at the Indigenous Research Ethics Conference, James Cook University, Townsville, Queensland.
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. (AIATSIS) (2000). *Guidelines for ethical research in Indigenous studies* [Electronic version]. Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Retrieved 27 March, 2007, from [http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/2290/ethics\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/2290/ethics_guidelines.pdf).
- Battiste, M. (1995). Introduction. In M. Battiste & J. Barman (Eds.), *First Nations education in Canada: The circle unfolds* (pp. vii-xx). Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.
- Brady, W. (1992a). Indigenous control of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research. *Aboriginal Studies Association Conference, 2*, 311-315.
- Brady, W. (1992b). Beam me up Scotty! - Communicating across world views on knowledge principles and procedures for the conduct of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research. In C. White (Ed.), *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Conference proceedings* (pp. 104-115). Toowoomba, QLD: University of Southern Queensland.
- Brady, W. (1998). The Stories we tell: Storytelling - A passport across borderlines. Retrieved 27 March, 2007, from <http://www.uts.edu.au/div/iim/wc/brady.html>.
- Burns, R. B. (2000). *Introducing research methods*. Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education Australia.
- Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of Indigenous education*. Durango, CO: Kivaki Press.
- Collard, K. (1995, September). *A Nyungar at research*. Paper presented at the Indigenous Research Ethics Conference, James Cook University, University, Townsville, Queensland.
- Cruse, S. (2001). Encouraging research guidelines to be put into practice: An Aboriginal health research ethics committee in action. *Kaurna Higher Education Journal, 7*, 23-27.
- Daylight, P., & Johnstone, M. (1986). *Women's business: Report of the Aboriginal women's taskforce*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fredericks, B. (2006, October). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lead and governed research: A sign of social change*. Social Change in the 21st Century Conference, Centre for Social Change Research, Queensland University of Technology, Carseldine, Queensland, 27th October, 2006. Retrieved 27 March, 2007, from [http://www.socialchange.qut.edu.au/conferences/socialchange/docs/con\\_papers2006/Fredericks\\_FIN.pdf](http://www.socialchange.qut.edu.au/conferences/socialchange/docs/con_papers2006/Fredericks_FIN.pdf).
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Sydney, NSW: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Hart, V., & Whatman, S. (1998). *Decolonising the concept of knowledge*. Retrieved 27 March, 2007, from <http://www.oodgeroo.qut.edu.au/academicpage/decolonising.jsp>.
- Huggins, J. (1987). Black women and women's liberation. *Hecate, 13*(1), 77-82.
- Huggins, J. (1994). A contemporary view of Aboriginal women's relationship to the white women's movement. In N. Grieve & A. Burns (Eds.), *Australian women and contemporary feminist thought* (pp.70-79). South Melbourne, VIC: Oxford University Press.



- Huggins, R., & Huggins, J. (1996). *Auntie Rita*. Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Kenny, C. (2000). A sense of place: Aboriginal research as ritual practice. In R. Neil (Ed.), *Voice of the drum: Indigenous education and culture* (pp. 139-150). Brandon, MB: Kingfisher Publications.
- Kirk, M., Hoban, E.; Dunne, A., & Manderson, L. (1998). *Barriers to and appropriate delivery systems for cervical cancer screening in Indigenous communities in Queensland: Final report*. Brisbane, QLD: Queensland Government Press.
- Kirk, M., Manderson, L., Hoban, E., McMichael, C., Potts, H., & Hill, D. C. (2000a). *Breast cancer among Indigenous women community report*. Brisbane, QLD: Queensland Health.
- Kirk, M., McMichael, C., Potts, H., Hoban, E., Hill, D. C., & Manderson, L. (2000b). *Breast cancer: Screening, diagnosis, treatment and care for Aboriginal women and Torres Strait Islander women in Queensland*. Brisbane, QLD: Queensland Health.
- Koori Centre (Aboriginal Education) University of Sydney (n.d.). *Policies and procedures for the conduct of research*. Sydney, NSW: Koori Centre, University of Sydney.
- Lather, P. (1991a). *Feminist research in education: Within/against*. Geelong, VIC: Deakin Press.
- Lather, P. (1991b). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Martin, K. (2001, September). Ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing: Developing a theoretical framework and methods for Indigenous re-search and Indigenous research. Paper presented at the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Conference*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Retrieved 27 March, 2007, from [http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/5718/MARTIN.pdf](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/5718/MARTIN.pdf).
- Monture-Angus, P. (1995). *Thunder in my soul: A Mobawk woman speaks*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (1999). Unmasking whiteness: A Goori Jondal's look at some Duggai business. *Queensland Review*, 6(1), 1-7.
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (2000). *Talkin' up to the white women: Indigenous women and feminism*. St. Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press.
- Nakata, M. (1998). Anthropological texts and Indigenous standpoints. *Australian Indigenous Studies*, 2, 3-12.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Rigney, L-R. (1997). Internationalisation of an Indigenous anti-colonial cultural critique of research methodologies: A guide to Indigenous research methodology and its principles. *Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) Annual Conference Proceedings, Research and Development in Higher Education: Advancing International Perspectives*, 20, 629-636.
- Rigney, L-R. (1999). The first perspective: Culturally safe research practices on or with Indigenous peoples. In G. Oetelaar, T. Peck & E. Siegfried (Eds.), *Indigenous people and archaeology, Proceedings of the 32nd Annual Conference of the Chacmool Archaeological Association* (n. p.). Calgary, AB: Chacmool Archaeological Association.
- Rigney, L-R. (2001). A first perspective of Indigenous Australian participation in science: Framing Indigenous research towards Indigenous Australian intellectual sovereignty. *Kaurua Higher Education Journal*, 7, 1-13.
- Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. New York: Zed Books.
- Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software tools*. New York, NY: Falmer Press.
- Ungunmerr, M-R. (1988). Dadirri. *Compass Theology Review*, 1-2, 9-11.
- Warrior, R. (1995). *Tribal secrets: Recovering American Indian intellectual traditions*. Minneapolis, MS: University of Minnesota Press.
- Warrior, R. (1999). The Native American scholar: Towards a new intellectual agenda. *WICAZO Review: Journal of Native American Studies*, 14(2), 46-55.

#### ■ About the author

Dr Bronwyn Fredericks is a NHMRC Research Fellow, Department of Epidemiology and Preventative Medicine, Monash University and Centre for Clinical Research Excellence, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC). She has been actively engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled community-based organisations for over 25 years and has worked as an educator and activist within schools, universities, communities and at State and national levels. Dr Fredericks was the first Aboriginal person to head a national education organisation in Australia.