Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature

2.1 Community Language and Cultural Heritage Rights

> *As discussions develop regarding the principles and ethics governing Indigenous research, the issue of control or decision-making reverberates the singular most important principle – Indigenous peoples must control their own knowledge, a custodial ownership that prescribes from the customs, rules, and practices of each group.*
>
> **Marie Battiste 2008**

Many Indigenous scholars and activists are beginning to articulate the need for Indigenous peoples to become more active in and aware of the impacts of research that is conducted within, or which concerns, their communities and their knowledges. In response to this growing concern and awareness, Indigenous communities are developing new ethics and protocols for working with Indigenous people and these are beginning to be implemented by major funding organisations around the world.

In the field of linguistics, many non-Indigenous linguists are beginning to come to terms with what this means for them and the ways they work with Indigenous communities now and into the future. Indigenous people and communities are also working through the issues of how to engage with non-Indigenous linguists in ways that meets their needs to ensure the protection of their cultural knowledges and be self-determining.

However, in the Australian context, we are still very much at the beginning of the process of teasing out the issues and finding our way forward, with language and cultural rights being high on the agenda as one of the most important issues for Indigenous peoples.

My experience as an Indigenous linguist suggests that there is sufficient goodwill between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous linguists who share, in the most part, common goals and that the issues are beginning to be worked through and solutions can be found. Working relationships between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous linguists aim to be far more equitable and address the issues of human rights and equality in linguistic research.

Indigenous linguist Jeanie Bell asks the question 'Who makes decisions about community rights?' (2010). She points out that endorsed community language representatives and tribal elders demanded to be consulted and involved in any discussions around matters relating to research about them at an Indigenous languages conference in 2007. She goes on to say that Indigenous delegates of the conference stated strongly that they must have more control in research that concerns Indigenous people, regardless of whether the research is historical or contemporary. As Indigenous people become more aware and empowered, they are beginning to take control of their language and cultural heritage. At times, the Indigenous community's aspirations and goals can be in conflict with those of non-Indigenous linguists. This can lead to communities not allowing access to their language for ongoing linguistic documentation (Hinton, 2010; Hobson, 2010; Newry & Palmer, 2003; Olawsky, 2010).

There are many parallels between Indigenous nations around the world in our struggles to gain a wholistic recognition and respect for the control and management of our knowledges because the issues are broadly similar in many respects. Indigenous people in many parts of the world and, more recently in Australia, are now calling for research that supports and contributes to Indigenous peoples' struggles for self-determination as defined and controlled by their own communities (Rigney, 1999, p. 110). Rigney says that non-Indigenous people have long been at the helm of knowledge production, including extraction, storage and control of knowledge about Indigenous peoples, and that this knowledge and the ownership of this knowledge has been the basis of many academic qualifications and careers.

Rigney states that it is no surprise that Indigenous people are apprehensive and cautious towards research in general. However, he makes the point that this does not mean that Indigenous people reject research outright and highlights the fact that some research by non-Indigenous people has been beneficial to the project of self-determination (1999, p. 109).

In the absence of protection for Indigenous knowledge in national and international laws, Battiste (2008) writing from a Mi'kmaq and Canadian perspective, says that Indigenous peoples and communities must now develop their own processes. She states that the role of representatives responsible for the holding and passing down of knowledge, and the inclusion of the Indigenous community voice, are central to arriving at solutions to the issues of control of research being conducted among or about Indigenous peoples.

The notion of restricting access to language and cultural information does not sit comfortably with liberal thinkers living in Western democracies but the restriction of knowledge is common in Aboriginal societies (Newry & Palmer, 2003, p. 103). They state that within Miriwoong culture, restriction of access to knowledge is associated with age, gender, and status and is imbedded in the cultural norms surrounding a death or marriage in the community. It was within these cultural practices and norms that, in 2003, the Miriwoong people were no longer willing to distribute language and cultural materials to the open market where control was then out of their hands. They point out that this approach had been taken to prevent inappropriate and/or incorrect use of the language and possible breach of strict social protocols (2003, p. 105) and importantly, this approach enabled their limited resources to be utilised specifically for ensuring the future generations of Miriwoong retain and increase the use of their language and cultural knowledge.

The issue here is explicitly about exercising control of language and cultural knowledge. Yamada says that the Kari'nja community leaders were adamant about maintaining control over language and cultural materials in their local archive in her

work in South America (Racquel-María Yamada, 2007, p. 270). Olawsky points out that protectionism is completely understandable from a historical point of view, when in the case of the Miriwoong, as is the case with many other languages groups across Australia, that language or language materials, are often the last thing that has not been taken away and that Indigenous people might exercise any control over (Olawsky, 2010, p. 78). Reclaiming authority over language and language work is part of a much bigger project of reclaiming sovereignty and self-determination (Eira, 2007, p. 83).

The Miriwoong people later on relaxed their policies around the restriction of language and cultural materials. Their language centre now has a policy of 'language publicity' (Olawsky, 2010, pp. 77-78). Olawsky says that this strategy is aimed at supporting the revitalisation efforts of Miriwoong in the broader community and having the language recognised as the legitimate traditional language of the area. However, this approach is still very much controlled by the traditional authorities and the priority is still to support and implement language maintenance and learning for the Miriwoong community. It is worth noting that once the Miriwoong people's concerns about control of language and cultural knowledge were managed by the community, the Miriwoong people were more open to sharing aspects of their knowledge in a controlled manner.

The growing urgency of Indigenous people to regain control over their language and cultural knowledge combined with the distrust of the global scientific community, sees Indigenous peoples increasingly looking to conduct their own research. Rigney (1999) examines the impact that research has traditionally had on Indigenous peoples and he discusses the role that Indigenous people have to play in conducting their own research for the project of liberation and self-determination. While Rigney acknowledges that the critical research by non-Indigenous people that seeks to inform the struggles of Indigenous people must continue and is welcome, he points out that research by Indigenous people - goes to the heart of Indigenous peoples'

struggles and importantly, he says Indigenous researchers are accountable to their communities (1999, p. 117).

The Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) made tentative steps to move towards the goal of self-determination (Hobson, 2010), which saw its Board of Directors decide to change the organisation's strategic direction to concentrate its focus on oral transmission of languages. This move drew criticism from non-Indigenous linguists who argued that the linguistic community and the broader Indigenous community are being let down because documentation is not being encouraged (2010, p. 141). The KLRC Board asserted that Aboriginal people want and need to be actively involved in the decisions that affect the survival of their languages. They were concerned about what impact this criticism might have at the level of policy development and funding programs. The Board pointed out that linguists' opinions inform government and their lack of support for the community's authority in this regard could potentially have a negative effect on the development of policies about language funding priorities, which could otherwise be supportive of the language maintenance strategies that the KLRC have undertaken to prioritise.

The KLRC also questioned why some non-Indigenous linguists seemingly dismiss or refuse to acknowledge the views and authority of the community and their nominated representatives (2010, pp. 142-143). They ask:

> *Does lack of understanding or disagreement on the part of the non-Aboriginal person make Aboriginal decisions about languages wrong?* [and]
> *Why are Aboriginal continuation strategies seen as less valid than the strategies of Western academia and education?*

The KLRC's questions are valid and are in accord with Battiste's criticism i.e. that Eurocentric colonisers have considered themselves to be the superior culture and an ideal model for humanity, and therefore believe that they can then assess the competencies of others (2008, p. 504). The KLRC argued to have the voices of the communities it represents heard and supported despite having to struggle with the

top-down approach from governments and the imposed academic approach of the non-Indigenous linguistic community (2010, p. 143). They say:

> *We have to ask not only 'whose languages?' but 'whose language centre is it anyway?'*

Musgrave and Thieberger question the degree of control that Indigenous communities can exercise and are critical of language centres that have chosen to restrict documentation in their areas, despite there being no formal structure that provides them with the authority to stop research (2007, p. 4). It is not clear from Musgrave and Thieberger's discussion what constitutes the formal structure mentioned in their paper or why they question the authority of the elected representatives of the community who are vested with the responsibility to act on behalf of and for the benefit of the community as a whole.

Rigney (2001) critiques the origins of what he refers to as Western scientific rationalisation and the role that Indigenous Australians now play in the academy. He states that although the authority of Western science is no longer unquestioned, the notion that Western constructed science is authoritative, neutralised, universal and privileges science, it can therefore be used as the yardstick against, which all other realities are measured and judged be 'rational' or otherwise (2001, p. 3). He says of Indigenous scholars, and I would include here any Indigenous person or organisation who challenges the authority of global scientific research (2001, pp. 4-5):

> *Indigenous scholars have always had to justify not only our humanness and our Aboriginality, but also the fact that our intellects are 'rational' and that we have the right to take our legitimate place in the academy of research.*

The logical conclusion would be that scientific methods and knowledge production used by other cultures would be viewed as inferior and irrational (Rigney, 2001, p. 4). Rigney and other Indigenous scholars around the world are developing what is being called 'Indigenist Research' methodologies, which aim to promote progressive

approaches to Indigenous knowledge production. This research framework seeks to overcome epistemic violence against Indigenous peoples by being subject to research by non-Indigenous researchers, and it frames research around Indigenous people's own priorities and interests rather than the priorities and interests of the non-Indigenous researcher.

In writing about Western research in the Orient, Palestinian American author Edward Said, says that it was his hope that formally colonised peoples will not take up the formidable discourse of Western culture and apply this to themselves and others in their own research (1994, p. 25). Rigney agrees and asserts that the challenge for Indigenous academics (and I would broaden that to all Indigenous intellectuals and thinkers), is to resist and overcome the opposites in Western scientific thought such as object and subject, rational and irrational, and white and black (2001, p. 7) and asks:

> *Can we participate in Western Science without reinventing the hegemonic colonial imagination about ourselves?*

For many Indigenous peoples, the majority of global scientific research conducted by non-Indigenous researchers, is seen predominantly as a tool of colonisation and as having limited application in assisting Indigenous people with the project of self-determination and development as the Māori educationist Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes (Smith, 2005, p. 87). Indigenous people should control their own knowledge and do their own research and this should be at the heart of the principles for research policy and practice (Battiste, 2008). Importantly, Battiste says that if non-Indigenous researchers want to enter into a collaborative research relationship with Indigenous peoples, such research should empower and benefit Indigenous communities, not just researchers, their educational institutions or broader society. Hinton (2010) gives the initiatives of the Volkswagens Foundation, The Program of Documentation of Endangered Languages project as an example of the current trends of strong representation of community interests and, points out that these trends are driven by the communities themselves and their language activists (2010,

p. 36). Importantly, Hinton says that community control of the language may not be a goal that non-Indigenous linguists think about in particular but it is often the goal of community members and can broadly have the following meanings (p. 40):

1. Community access to or possession of original or copies of field notes, recordings and documents on the language.
2. Communities doing their own documentation of their language rather than relying on outside linguists.
3. Communities working with linguists on community terms, control of who works with the language, and what they do, often involving contracts or retainers of linguistic services.
4. Community members acquiring an education in linguistics or language education.
5. Communities being in charge of their own language programs and their own schools.

Hinton goes on to say that issues around community control can raise possible points of conflict with the non-Indigenous linguist around intellectual property rights of documentation, and who may or may not have access to language materials that are products of the research project. This is a trend that we are beginning to see in the Australian context also and this is evidenced in the outcomes of this research presented in chapter four.

2.2 Raising Awareness within Communities

While Indigenous activists and scholars in Australia are becoming aware of the issues around ethics in linguistic research and research more broadly, many Indigenous people in remote and rural areas who do not have a representative organisation, such as a language centre, are vulnerable to the impacts of research and the protection of their cultural knowledges into the future. Richard Grounds, the Director of the Euchee/Yuchi language project (Oklahoma) and member of the Yuchi

nation, points out that when the Indigenous community has no organisation that speaks on their behalf, the community remains vulnerable; he says (2007):

> *Within the Yuchi community, our struggle with these questions reached a peak with the request of a linguist to develop a dictionary for the Yuchi language. The formal proposal had already been submitted to the appropriate governmental agency, and a meeting was convened after the fact for approval by the community. In our community, like most small language communities, there was no institutional review board to take up such questions or look after the interests of the community in the context of academic research. (Grounds, 2007)*

Without strong and robust representation; the idea that informed consent would address the issues of copyright, control of language and cultural knowledge and representation in research is yet to be realised in a concrete way. In the meantime, there are huge gaps in Indigenous peoples' awareness of the issues at the community level in many regional and remote areas across Australia.

Indigenous people around the world are increasingly becoming aware of the political issues that face them in relation to the protection of their Indigenous knowledge (Battiste, 2008, p. 506). However, Battiste points out that at the level of the local community, there is still a need to bring communities up to speed on the issues and says communities must become aware and educated to gain a holistic understanding of the issues, practices and protocols for doing research. Communities must decide on processes which ensure that principles of protection and use of knowledge are developed, shared widely and become the normal standards for research within their communities and territories lest they continue to be vulnerable to the threats to their cultures, knowledges and communities by virtue of research being done on them (p. 502).

Does lack of awareness of the deeper issues within communities create obstacles in forming truly collaborative and productive research projects? Musgrave and

Thieberger identified some problems within their own research contexts and say that the idea of research 'for' let alone 'by' a community presupposes that members of a community are willing to engage in the research project in order to influence the research agenda (2007, p. 3). They say that the community may 'accept' or 'tolerate' the research project but may not be sufficiently interested to provide direction (p. 1). Other factors identified by Musgrave and Thieberger are that the community might have trouble understanding why the linguist would want to give up control of their research (p. 7). Further, they point out that the onerous ethics and protocols requirements of funding bodies may be a factor in a community's lack of engagement in research (p. 3). van Driem says that introducing ethics and protocols sow the seeds of distrust and potentially spoils the relationship between the researcher and language informants (van Driem, 2016).

Are the problems identified above a result of the lack of a grounded understanding of the issues and an active engagement in the planning and setting of the agenda of research projects? Did these communities initiate or request the research from an identified need? In relation to the lack of interest noted by Musgrave and Thieberger, is it possible to propose here, that this could be attributed to a kind of informal revolt in the form of inertia, a confused and vague reaction against the colonisers (Williams, 1983, p. 316)? Williams points out that, all too often, withdrawal of interest in this way is interpreted as proving the unfitness of the communities concerned.

2.3 Motivation for Language Work

There is a growing urgency among Indigenous communities to keep their languages alive and viable through language maintenance and oral continuation, revitalisation programs or to breathe life back into them through revitalisation programs. This is demonstrated by numerous language projects and programs to be found across Australia. Many of these emanate from Language centres where it might be assumed that there is some level of local Indigenous control and ownership of programs and the resulting language materials produced. The question of how much real

Indigenous control or ownership of school and TAFE programs and the resources produced therein, are discussed by Kevin Lowe (Lowe, 2001). There are many more examples of language revitalisation and maintenance efforts in Australia, for just a few - see various chapters in the edited collection *Re-awakening Australian languages* (Hobson, 2010). For examples of local language revitalisation efforts in other countries see Hinton (2013) and Hinton & Hale (2001) and numerous papers in the proceedings of the Foundation for Endangered Languages annual conferences[1].

However, these types of programs, while incredibly important and central to Indigenous communities, are not the focus of this book. It is the role of universities and the currently accepted model of linguistic research, including language documentation, that is the focus in this volume.

Indigenous communities have been involved in language documentation projects for many decades and are beginning to question if documentation alone will save their languages. They are increasingly choosing to take control of their languages programs in an effort to reverse the rapid decline in the number of people speaking the languages and to regain and maintain control of their language and cultural knowledge.

This move has some non-Indigenous linguists concerned that language documentation will take a back seat within communities. They argue that documentation efforts in the past have provided communities whose languages are severely endangered or which have gone to sleep with valuable materials for language revitalisation and reclamation projects. Non-Indigenous linguists also argue for the right to continue to pursue their interests and contribute to the scientific understanding of languages in the global field of linguistics. We are beginning to witness a widening gap in the goals of Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous linguists and a rejection of linguistic research more broadly.

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[1] Foundation For Endangered Languages - Membership (ogmios.org)

2.4 Non-Indigenous Linguists: Documentation of Endangered Languages

The non-Indigenous linguist's motivation to undertake linguistic research or fieldwork may come either from a genuine desire or commitment to documenting endangered languages and global language diversity or be the result of a request from a community where an ongoing relationship exists between the linguist and the community (Bell, 2010, p. 89). Bell says that quite often this research is a requirement of the linguist's academic institution; a requisite for attaining their qualifications. She goes on to say that for the majority of non-Indigenous linguists, an interest in Australian languages is motivated by the universals of language, such as the grammatical, semantic or typological features of the languages, and the contribution the linguist can make to the scientific literature for future generations of the global scientific community. Musgrave & Thieberger (2007, p. 3) agree and say that, traditionally, university-based linguists are generally concerned with issues of interest to the broader field of linguistics and/or in documenting a record of the grammar of a language. They go on to say that a part of the motivation for linguistic research is to broaden linguists' understanding of universal linguistic typologies. Musgrave & Thieberger say that the work associated with what they term 'language affection' – that is, the production of language teaching resources associated with language revitalisation – is for many linguists, 'thin and unsatisfying'.

Giving something back to the Indigenous community is a genuine desire shared by many linguists (Bell, 2010, p. 89). Hinton agrees and points out that there has been a shift from preservation of linguistic diversity for future generations of linguists, to understanding the potential of documentation to future generations of the community members. Importantly, she points out that this was usually the motivation of the community people who agreed to work with the linguist in the first place (2010, p. 37). She says that communities whose languages today are 'sleeping' make very good use of previous documentation efforts in revitalising their languages, and this is further incentive for linguists to undertake language documentation that will meet the future needs of the community. In this respect, Hinton talks about documentation projects that include recording conversational

language which will be of critical importance to community members in the future as second language learners. In many cases, past documentation efforts have resulted in the creation of much of the recorded material available for some languages (Musgrave & Thieberger, 2007, p. 3).

However, giving back to communities which have been involved in linguistic research, involves much more than handing back a manuscript or other language resource collected by the linguist. Importantly, Eira (2007, p. 84) says that linguists must now act as agents for giving that authority back to communities and acknowledging their rightful authority as keepers of their traditional knowledge. They[2] say that to do otherwise means that linguists have not 'returned' anything. When working within endangered language communities, Eira (2007, p. 82) say that linguists operate from a position of unequal power relations between the groups. For example, Indigenous people in communities are beginning to assert their power as the authorities of their language and cultural knowledge but there is still much progress to be made on this front. This weighed against the power of linguists and other researchers e.g. economic as Musgrave and Thieberger discuss (2007), and generally, greater levels of achievement in the national education system and critically, social power from the privilege of being in the dominant group in the country.

Eira says that when linguists focus on the language, its grammar and structures, in isolation from the speakers of the language, and the historical and current social implications of colonisation, that linguists ignore the ground of language endangerment and can potentially unintentionally further endanger the very languages they are working to save:

> *Because we still interact from a position of authority in the languages we are working with, we are maintaining the dominance of an outsider instead of*

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[2] I am respecting Travers Kris Eira's wishes to be referred to by the pronoun 'they'.

acknowledging and supporting the authority of the community in their
language.

2.5 Indigenous Communities: Language Maintenance and Revival

For Indigenous communities and individuals, maintaining, learning and teaching their languages is inherently intertwined with a desire to maintain or regain their autonomy and self-determination, along with their identity, spirituality and cultural knowledge in a counter movement against the forces of colonisation (Hinton 2010, p. 37).

In the context of language revival, Eira (2007, p. 84) says that sometimes the specialist knowledge and skills of a linguist are much smaller than what communities want from their language and, it is becoming obvious that this applies to language maintenance situations also. Eira says that many Indigenous people say that formal linguistic treatment of a language is irrelevant or a low priority to the oral traditions of a living language. Further, the formal linguistic treatment of Indigenous languages serves to make the resources produced in documentation projects, inaccessible (Hill & McConvell, 2010, p. 421). Hill and McConvell say:

> *Products of documentation sometimes languish in archives unbeknownst to*
> *community members, or unfamiliarity with archive procedures can make*
> *applications for access difficult. Alternatively, documentation material may be*
> *physically available but inaccessible due the format in which it is written up.*
> *Long stretches of interlinearised transcriptions or untranscribed material are*
> *of limited use in a moribund language situation and can be difficult to readily*
> *transform into user-friendly resources.*

Hill and McConvell go on to say that despite the inaccessibility of material produced in 'pure' language documentation projects, it is vital that Indigenous people and organisations be aware of the importance of collaborative documentation projects that aim to train local Indigenous people to undertake their own documentation into

the future. While this is a welcome and much needed development; still to this day much of the current outputs of language documentation projects remain locked up in technical linguistic terminology, and Indigenous communities lose control of their language and cultural information through university-based research projects or funding agencies. I use my own communities' experience as an example of how a community typically inadvertently loses control of language and cultural knowledge through a language documentation project undertaken as a PhD program. In the 70's and 80's a documentation project was undertaken on Ngiyampaa, the outputs and products of that project - by way of the default copyright laws - belong to the linguist, who sadly has since passed away. Our community now has to negotiate with the linguist's children in order to have access to our language and cultural materials that are deposited are AIATSIS. Fortunately for our community they are very supportive but the fact remains that we do not have control of that material. The same situation still exists today to a large degree, through research projects that are funded by government and non-government organisations. While there is now much more onus on the researcher to negotiate the research agenda and outcomes with the Indigenous community (Musgrave & Thieberger, 2007), which is a very positive development in itself; it is not usually the case that the copyright in the research outputs will be assigned to the community. While Intellectual Property (IP) rights are almost always acknowledged nowadays, they provide very little protection to Indigenous people's language and cultural knowledge, this point will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.

Musgrave and Thieberger say that linguistic research has a limited impact when compared to mining and, that linguists are simply asking people to sit down and talk with them or take them to significant places and they argue that this causes no harm (2007, p. 4). The harm is not immediate nor obvious to many non-Indigenous linguists who are used to the status quo and, who might think that the loss of control of language and cultural knowledge as outlined in my communities' case; is not significant harm. In fact, the opposite is true, the harm is hugely significant and can be ongoing for many years or decades after the research project has been completed and often, long after the researcher themselves pass away. This does not in any way

take away from the obvious value of linguistic documentation when done ethically but speaks to the need to ensure Indigenous communities and individuals retain the copyright in their language and cultural knowledge's through legally binding agreements.

However, Indigenous communities in Canada argue that a language is not saved by being documented; it is saved when a language is being used and transmitted orally (Hinton, 2010, p. 37). Professor Richard Grounds (Tulsa University also Director of the Yuchi language project and member of the Yuchi nation) points out that community members say that they would rather have the language on their tongues than in a dictionary. Grounds says that in small Indigenous communities, the needs of the community and the needs of linguists constitute separate agendas, while on the surface they might seem to be natural partners. He says documentation projects in small communities with very few native language speakers creates competition for the very limited time of elderly speakers, which creates conflict (Grounds, 2007, p. 28). Grounds says:

> This conflict is a critical issue because the stakes are so high. The bearers of the knowledge that scholars are interested in are also the sole remaining people who can pass forward the gift of language on a breath-to-breath basis to younger learners.

The KLRC say that communities in their area were concerned that despite all of the documentation that had been done for languages in their area, children were not learning the languages. As a response to the community's concerns, the organisation shifted its focus to support oral language transmission strategies (2010, p. 136). In a refreshingly honest case study that reflects on the impacts of ethnomusicological research in the Kimberley town of Derby and the Indigenous communities along the Gibb River Road (S. Treloyn & Charles, 2014, p. 177), Rona Googninda Charles articulates a situation that she faced in her own community when, after many years of research had been done on the junba songs of the region, the old people referred

to the written records (the thesis) rather than passing on the songs as had always been done, orally. She said:

> *Rona: Yes! I remember, I call him abi [brother], [he said] "I'll tell you blokes. I'll tell you the story." He was one of the main people responsible for teaching my sons. When they made a mistake, he used [to correct them]—[but] he said [to them], "It's in the book, read it".*

This situation illustrates the underlying concerns of the KLRC and Grounds above; that is the removal of knowledge from the Indigenous community and its cultural context. In the above case, the non-Indigenous researcher working within the community '*was granted clear privilege over potential learners in the cultural heritage community such as Rona*'. (S. Treloyn & Charles, 2014, p. 178). The authors put it this way (p. 179):

> *Sally (and perhaps the reader) is confronted by a sobering example of not only discomfort but the symbolic violence of colonial Western discourse in action, wherein "knowledge about Indigenous peoples ... [is] collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized". Even the returns of research to communities delineate a "discomfort zone".*

The Torres Strait Islander educationist, Martin Nakata, says that knowledge generated about the language in isolation from the history of the speakers is flawed as it separates the act of speaking from that what is being spoken (Nakata, 2007).This separation of languages from the traditional social context is of great concern to the KLRC (2010, p. 140) also, and they maintain that this encourages the younger generation to think of language as belonging only to the Elders or in books and not a part of their everyday life. This concern is core to the KLRC's change in its strategic plan to move towards a model of language continuation and maintenance strategies with a strong focus on oral transmission (2010). For the Miriwoong people, maintaining their language in the context of its relationship to land and their

peoples' identity was the major factor in restricting outside access to their language. They say that their language cannot be viewed outside of the Miriwoong cultural context (Newry & Palmer, 2003, p. 104). For the Indigenous community or individual, their language represents their cultural heritage, connection to country and forms their identity.

2.6 Participating in the Project of Decolonisation

> *As linguists, we are trained to act as authorities in language work. In addition, our positions in the social schema train us to maintain unequal relationships with language communities. Historically, we have moved through roles of benefactor, advocate, and empowerer. But all of these roles are based on a position of power – and ultimately it is power differentials which endanger languages. In my view, the next vital step is to understand our roles as participants in the project of decolonisation.*
> **Eira 2007**

Linguists may have lost sight of the role that they can play in perpetuating language endangerment in their urgency to genuinely address language endangerment (Eira, 2007, p. 82). Eira's discussion of the issues is refreshingly honest, practical and attempts to address the core concerns. They point to linguistic training with its focus on the analytical processes of the language itself, and say that it is this practice which perpetuates the status quo of unequal power relationships between linguists and the communities they work in and, ignores the authority of the community in their language. Eira says that linguists now need to take a step back in relation to the ways they have traditionally engaged in language work and let go of control over procedures and analysis, which is fundamental to linguistics, if they wish to contribute to the larger project of decolonisation. While Eira's own work was in the context of language revitalisation and therefore predominantly involved working with Indigenous communities as second language learners and with archival records; much of what they discuss can also be applied more broadly to language maintenance situations.

The impacts of colonisation are in no way a thing of the past and self-determination and reclaiming sovereignty for Indigenous people is a high priority; Eira says that this is especially true in the context of language revitalisation and I add here, language maintenance, which are high on the agenda of the larger decolonisation project (2007, p. 83). Eira stresses that linguists must get on board with this agenda if they are genuinely hoping to contribute:

> *If language revival is ultimately reclaiming authority, reclaiming the right to be listened to, reclaiming respect for one's knowledge and abilities, and reclaiming power over your own business, then a linguist hoping to contribute will have to become part of that agenda.*

It's worth repeating here that Eira asserts that the task for linguists is to act as a channel to ensure that stolen knowledge and authority flow back to communities. Eira goes on to say that if non-Indigenous linguists continue to maintain the role of the authorities and keepers of Indigenous peoples' knowledge, then they have not 'returned' anything, and they liken this project to Indigenous peoples' repatriation of human remains and artefacts from museums and universities to their rightful communities. Another important way that the non-Indigenous researcher can participate in the project of decolonisation is to share knowledge (Smith, 1999). Smith says that academics must share much more than surface information, which she terms as 'pamphlet knowledge' and says:

> *… but to share the theories and analysis which inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented … to assume in advance that [Indigenous] people will not be interested in, or will not understand, the deeper issues is arrogant. The challenge is always to demystify and decolonise.*

In the New Zealand context, Smith says that there has been an important shift in the way that non-Indigenous researchers and academics have positioned themselves in

relation to their work with Indigenous communities (Smith, 1999, p. 17). She says that there is a positive move towards bicultural research, partnership research and multi-discipline research. Smith points out that it is important for non-Indigenous researchers generally to clarify their research aims and to strive for effective and ethical research when working with Indigenous communities. Charity Hudley, Mallinson, & Bucholtz assert that it is not sufficient for linguistics to simply address current theoretical questions or meet minimal ethical standards but that research must be inclusive (Charity Hudley, Mallinson, & Bucholtz, 2019, p. 25) they say:

> *It is insufficient for research in linguistics to address current theoretical questions within the discipline or to meet minimal ethical standards set by institutional review boards; instead, in an equitable linguistics, all scholarship must be premised on inclusive research questions and epistemological and methodological ways of answering those questions.*

In an example from ethnomusicology (S. Treloyn & Charles, 2014) in Australia talks about the ethical struggles of a research site in the Kimberley. They talk frankly about how the outside researchers and Indigenous community have managed overcome many of the issues that could have had the effect of freezing the collaboration. Instead, they have found that in honestly and transparently addressing the issues with the community and allowing themselves to be in that often-uncomfortable space, they have moved to a more equitable and bicultural model of research. Also some years before, in perhaps the first well known case of this kind in Australia, David Wilkins (1992) discusses his own collaborative research context. Also see Yamada (Racquel-María Yamada, 2007), Little et al. (Little, Wysote, McClay, & Coon, 2015) among others.

Linguists in Australia have long been identifying training of Indigenous people as researchers or co-researchers as an important and necessary next step (Hale, 1972; Hill & McConvell, 2010, p. 423; Musgrave & Thieberger, 2007, p. 7; Racquel-Maria Yamada, 2014). This raises the question then of why we still have so few Indigenous people trained in linguistics. Charity Hudley et al. talk about the narrow focus of

linguistics as a discipline, which exludes studies that would critically deal with relevant issues of race that directly affect Indigenous people within the discipline (2019, p. 26) they say:

> *Ideological divisions that play out along differentially racialized cross-disciplinary and subdisciplinary lines therefore stifle deep discussion and research around race and racism within linguistics while also systemically marginalizing linguists from racialized groups to the detriment of the discipline and the profession. Such exclusionary boundaries must be eliminated, and community issues must be recognized as intellectual issues within a larger social justice framework.*

Therefore, they say that is distressing but not surprising that people of colour have not gravitated towards linguistics. When Indigenous people feel excluded or marginalised, i.e., not culturally safe; they find it very hard to engage or stay engaged in linguistics. This has certainly been my experience over many years.

2.7 Specialist Training

The movement toward Indigenous people being formally trained as independent documenters and educators in and of their own languages has been seen in North America, with many Indigenous people undertaking doctoral programs in linguistics and the development of community and university training programs and manuals to train Indigenous people to undertake their own language projects and documentation (Hinton, 2010, p. 38). In Australia there have been degrees and diplomas in linguistics offered to Indigenous educators since the early 1970's by the School of Australian Linguistics (SAL) (Black & Breen, 2001). The programs that were offered by SAL were for various reasons; later merged into the Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education. Most recently, the Batchelor Institute offers a

diploma of Indigenous language work, an associate degree of Indigenous languages and linguistics and a bachelor of Indigenous languages and linguistics[3]. They say:

> *Batchelor Institute provides a culturally safe learning environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from all Australian states and territories.*

More recent approaches to providing training outside of the university context for Indigenous people in linguistics and language work, include the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity (RNLD, now known as Living Languages) says in its mission statement[4]:

> *RNLD's mission is to advance the sustainability of Indigenous languages and to increase the participation of Indigenous peoples in all aspects of language documentation and revitalisation through training, resource sharing, networking, and advocacy.*

One of RNLD's core activities is to provide training to Indigenous people around Australia. Their Documenting and Revitalising Indigenous Languages (DRIL) Program is aimed at giving Indigenous people the skills they need to develop, manage and operate their own language programs and projects independently; to support the long-term maintenance of Australian Aboriginal languages. Another important aspect of the RNLD training program is the Leadership Professional Development workshops. The goals of these workshops are to:

> *Increase the professional capacity of Indigenous people engaged in language work, strengthen the participants' knowledge of linguistics, language documentation, and language revitalisation methods; develop the capacity of Indigenous language activists to become trainers and share skills with other*

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[3] https://www.batchelor.edu.au/languages-and-linguistics/

[4] http://www.rnld.org/

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> *people in families, communities and workplaces, and help to build a*
> *professional network amongst Indigenous language activists.*

Sydney University offers a Master of Indigenous Languages Education developed specifically for Indigenous people wanting to improve their knowledge of Australian languages and improve Indigenous peoples' employment prospects in schools and community settings[5]:

> *The program delivers a broad knowledge of the linguistic features of*
> *Indigenous Australian languages as well as covering theories of language*
> *acquisition and learning. It integrates and applies the areas of linguistics,*
> *language education theory and practice to Indigenous Australian languages.*

The trend for Indigenous people to gain specialised education to become language educators and expert consultants for themselves and other communities, could see the development of specialist training programs for Indigenous people to gain the skills in language work, documentation and leadership as the most important contribution of the academy to Indigenous language work (Hinton, 2010, p. 39).

Hinton points out that very few documentary and theoretical linguists are trained in language teaching theory or methodology. Importantly, she says that linguists planning to work with communities involved in language revitalisation – and I would add language maintenance and reclamation given the current trends in Australia – would be advised to receive such training with the focus being on teaching endangered languages as opposed to world languages.

Creating new speakers of the language is at the heart of the trend towards the focus on oral language literacy in both maintenance and revitalisation programs. Hinton points out that methodology in language acquisition falls into the broad categories

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[5] http://sydney.edu.au/courses/programs/master-of-indigenous-languages-education/master-of-indigenous-languages-education

of classroom teaching of language, teaching of language through literacy and language immersion and situational learning (2010, p. 38). Hinton points out that the role of the non-Indigenous linguist in literacy programs is more clearly defined than that of oral literacy programs. She says that oral language programs involve intense immersion processes that sometimes entail as a precondition; teaching of the language to the 'missing generation' of Indigenous people as second language learners in language revitalisation contexts.

Hinton points out that the language revitalisation situation is complex and often beyond the training of linguists, and requires a multi-disciplinary approach from the fields of linguistics, education and language teaching. She says (2010, p. 39):

> *As the field of teaching endangered Indigenous languages progresses, training of both community members and their consultants must become more specialised to their specific needs.*

Indigenous Native American scholar and language activist Richard Grounds says that the challenge is to work out strategies moving forward, to align the endeavours of scholars with the needs of small Indigenous communities to ensure that living languages are being passed onto the next generations to keep the languages alive (Grounds, 2007). This is the responsibility of the field of linguistics and the need to develop and enact policies within the discipline that are in line with Indigenous community expectations.

Further and critically, (Charity Hudley et al., 2019, p. 23) assert that the Linguistic Society of America's Statement on Race, while necessary is not sufficient to combat racism, white supremacy and colonialism within linguistics, they say:

> *Scholars and students of linguistics are rarely trained to develop a critical perspective on how race and racism, as mechanisms of structural inequality, shape and harm both our research and our discipline. This lack amounts to a "race gap" in linguistics—that is, linguists have significant deficiencies*

compared to practitioners in other disciplines when it comes to the critical study of race and the inclusion of racially minoritized groups in our student and faculty ranks. There is thus a dire need for more research in linguistics—using tools from related social sciences as well as language-related fields and critical race studies, which are more welcoming to and structurally supportive of scholars of color and their work—to interrogate why such a "race gap" exists and how to resolve it.

Likewise, the Australian Linguistic society's attempts to address Indigenous people's rights within Linguistics have been well intentioned but insufficient.

2.8 Guidelines, Protocols and Linguists' Field Guides

In 1984, the Australian Linguistic Society (ALS) at its Annual General Meeting in Alice Springs passed a number of motions and set out the linguistics rights and guidelines for working with the Indigenous people of Australia and the Torres Straits[6]. While these guidelines held out a lot of hope for Indigenous people at the time, not a lot has changed in the practices of the field of linguistics in the academy in the following 35 years. This is in spite the establishment of language centres across Australia and recognition of the importance of Indigenous languages by Federal Government in funding these language centres and other language projects, following the release of the Keeping language strong: Report of the pilot study for the Kimberley Language Resource Centre (Hudson & McConvell, 1984).

However, in recent years we are beginning to see a positive shift in ethical linguistic practice which is driven by the demands of Indigenous communities themselves. Other countries such as North America and New Zealand (Hinton, 2010; Smith, 1999, 2000) are well in advance of Australia in this regard, due in large part to the fact that there are so few Indigenous linguists in positions within the academy in Australia that might affect any real change. This is true for other colonised countries to varying degrees also, but perhaps it is because Australia is the only colonised

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[6] https://als.asn.au/AboutALS/Policies

country without a treaty with its Indigenous peoples to date, that the voices of Indigenous people can be all too easily ignored.

Some organisations in Australia are beginning to take a stronger stance on ethics in all areas of research that involves Indigenous people, with the continued development of guidelines and policies such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' (AIATSIS), Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (AIATSIS, 2020) and The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (Anderson, 2011) which universities use as the standard for their ethics boards.

Further, local Indigenous organisations such as the Innawangka Banyjima Nyiyarpali Group[7] (IBN) and Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre[8] in Western Australia, have also developed their own ethical guidelines, protocols and agreements for working with Indigenous people in their communities.

However, this movement is still somewhat in its infancy in Australian with the current AIATSIS guidelines having no compulsion for researchers to adhere to its guidelines. Jacobsen (2018) points out, these guidelines encourage consultation and negotiation with the Indigenous community and she says that such criteria should be made mandatory. The Australian Linguistics Society (ALS) in 1989, adopted a statement of ethics, which at item 4 states:

> *Persons deemed to be conducting research not in accordance with the spirit of this ethical statement may be subject to disciplinary action by the Australian Linguistic Society, according to principles that may from time to time be determined by the Society.*

The ALS does not state what form this disciplinary action might take and, I have not heard of anyone being subject to discipline in this regard. However, there are always concerns with organisations regulating themselves.

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[7] http://ibngroup.com.au/about-us/
[8] http://www.wangkamaya.org.au/news

I would recommend that AIATSIS develop an online course that includes as a necessary outcome, the development of a research plan and the development of a legally binding agreement with the Indigenous community - that outlines such things as copyright that ensures the control and ownership of language and cultural materials and, that clearly demonstrates that the research and the researcher meet the requirements of the AIATSIS guidelines. Such a course could be utilised by universities as a part of their ethics processes for research projects that involve working with Indigenous communities and some institutions are already outsourcing their Indigenous ethics applications to AIATSIS.

This already takes place in some communities in Canada such as at the Cape Breton University which has the Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch (MEW) [9] In its research principles and protocols, MEW states:

> *Any research, study, or inquiry into the collective Mi'kmaw knowledge, culture, arts, or spirituality which involves partnerships in research shall be reviewed by the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch. (Partnerships shall include any of the following: researchers, members of a research team, research subjects, sources of information, users of completed research, clients, funders, or license holders.)*

In the absence of similar controls in Australia, Indigenous communities and their languages and cultural knowledges remain vulnerable. Under the current model, the human rights of Indigenous communities involved in linguistic research or any other research in Australia, has been considered an option with the researcher opting in or out as she or he chooses.

Without some form compulsion for researchers to adhere to guidelines and protocols, the loss of languages and all that is encompassed in those languages is at

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[9] Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch - Cape Breton University : Cape Breton University (cbu.ca)

stake, as well as the possibility of any commercial gain that might assist in the struggle against ongoing poverty (Battiste, 2008, p. 508). Importantly, Battiste says that while communities are working this out for themselves and are often in a state of ongoing crisis at so many levels, she asserts that the academy should not impose standards that contravene communities' desires to control their own knowledge:

> *… any research conducted among Indigenous peoples should be framed within the basic principles of collaborative participatory research, a research process that seeks as a final outcome the empowerment of these communities through their own knowledge.*

Battiste stresses that in practical terms, this means Indigenous people must be involved in all stages and in all phases of research and planning (2008, p. 508). As Eira points out, previous models of the linguist being a benefactor, advocate, and empowerer are no longer viable as each of these roles assumes the linguist is in a position of power (2007, p. 83) and says 'I can only give a community something, if I have it and they lack it'.

The majority of linguists' field guides, while well generally intentioned, do not offer any concrete strategies or sound advice around the important issue of the protection for Indigenous people's language and cultural knowledge. Exceptions are: *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization* (Hinton, Huss, & Roche, 2018), *Living Languages and New Approaches to Language Revitalisation Research* (Stebbins, Eira, & Couzens, 2017) and *Understanding linguistic fieldwork*. Routledge (Meakins, Green, & Turpin, 2018). These field guides represent the current positive trends in linguistic research and documentation (Jacobsen, 2018, p. 29) and are more in line with Indigenous people's expectations. For a review and discussion of fieldwork guides published between the years 2000 and 2018 see Britt Jacobsen's masters dissertation (Jacobsen, 2018). The review does not include Understanding linguistic fieldwork (Meakins et al., 2018).

Eira says that it is crucial to move from thinking about the issues to actually taking action in a different direction. They suggest that on a day-to-day basis, linguists can do some practical things when working with Indigenous people and communities (Eira, 2007, p. 87):

- Actively sit down and remember not to take charge (otherwise, we'll do it in spite of ourselves).
- Listen most of the time; talk when asked to. People are so used to non-Indigenous people talking over them, they often need a lot of listening space before they are willing to talk.
- Avoid deciding things, even when asked to. Communities and linguists alike are used to the norm where the linguist or non-Indigenous person decides things. It can take a while to unlearn.
- When decisions are being made, avoid being the person 'holding the chalk' (Stebbins, 2001). The person writing up decisions necessarily has the role of deciding what to write.
- If someone asks an open question, leave it for someone else to answer. We assume very easily that any question is directed to us.
- If someone wants a story, song, etc. written or translated, don't do it – help the person to do it themselves.
- Remember that the people we are working with are the people with the right to know their language – not us.

A pathway forward which could include both Eira's suggestions as to what do on the ground, and the importance of places where these issues can be openly discussed so that deep understandings and change can take place.

2.9 Decolonising Linguistics

These new ways of working and the relationships between non-Indigenous linguists and Indigenous linguists, language activists and communities is a

***highly positive change that support the agenda of human rights, dignity
and equality.***

Leanne Hinton 2010

There are very limited opportunities for Indigenous linguists, language activists,
language workers and non-Indigenous linguists, to have discussions around areas of
ongoing concern (Bell, 2010). Bell talks about a conference she attended when
discussions took place in an unplanned manner, and these became heated because
there had never been a forum prior to this for concerns to be aired let alone for
resolutions to be found. She says that while some non-Indigenous linguists became
defensive when confronted with the frustrations and anger of Indigenous people at
the conference, many chose to hang in and engage in discussions.

It is clear from the literature that there is a great deal of goodwill on the part of
many non-Indigenous linguists to address and move towards the resolution of the
issues. It is clear that there is also great deal of frustration, resentment and mistrust
among Indigenous communities and language activists due to many decades of being
mistreated in the research context and to the ongoing trauma of the impacts of
colonisation. There is no escaping the fact that in the Australian context, as in many
other parts of the world, working with Indigenous people involves having to deal
with the impacts of colonisation to the present day. Many non-Indigenous linguists
often feel as though, despite their best efforts to assist in finding solutions,
Indigenous people are constantly attacking them. This is in most part not personal
but a result of the fact that there are currently no real and genuine opportunities for
Indigenous people to have their voices heard around the issues and for the two
groups to work together to address the issues on the ground.

Opportunities for non-threatening discussion between non-Indigenous linguists and
Indigenous linguists, language workers and language activists, has to be a high
priority. Unless you are studying linguistics with a particular concentration on ethics,
which in my experience is not at all usual, one would not come across the many

great publications, of which only some of which are listed in the bibliography, that non-Indigenous linguists themselves have written in their efforts to contribute to a constructive conversation of the issues.

Conferences really are the only place where we all get together and enjoy opportunities to have formal discussions; but it must be on the agenda with plenty of space and time for these to occur. While there is always the potential for the situation to become heated, it must be understood that what can be perceived as a personal attack is usually not personal at all; what it is really about is the need to speak out, the need to be heard and, if we can all remain grounded in the knowledge that we are allies with many shared goals, then I feel we can find our way to the other side.

Jeanie Bell talks about her role as an Indigenous linguist being seen by non-Indigenous linguists as a bridge between the Indigenous community and the linguistic community and, says that this is a common and sometimes uncomfortable role for Indigenous people in her position (2010, p. 93). I agree that it is a very uncomfortable position. Bell points out, and again I agree, that we can then be seen by the community to be standing too close to the 'academic' linguists. Bell says that some people within her own community refused to work with her because they believed she might take away the language and 'give it to the university'. Importantly, she talks about the personal strain of being an academic and the challenge of maintaining her moral and cultural responsibility both to herself and to her community, and points out that she is committed to ensuring she maintains the standards that her community expects of her in her roles as a teacher and a researcher. Again, I agree; my first priority is to my community and to the broader Indigenous community.

The situation outlined above speaks to the deep distrust that Indigenous people have for the academy and the delicate balance that Indigenous linguists must strike when studying or working in the academy. Often, when Indigenous linguists raise issues of ethics, we do so at great personal costs to ourselves in no small part

because the issues of ethics in linguistic research serves to retraumatise us and further our voices are often silenced or ignored. The issues raised here also speak to why linguistics is currently not a culturally safe discipline for Indigenous people to engage in and, possibly why there are so few Indigenous linguists in Australia. Charity Hudley et al (2019, p. 23 & 24) say:

> *Compared to many other fields, linguistics remains predominantly white, even twenty years after Rickford exposed this shameful fact as "an academic limitation for our field as well as a socio-political embarrassment" (1997: 171). It may be more comfortable to convince ourselves that linguistics just isn't for everyone, but to do so is to abdicate our professional ethical responsibility to make the discipline an equitable and inclusive place for students and scholars of all backgrounds, and particularly for those whose communities provide a disproportionate amount of the data that advance linguistic knowledge.*

The end result is that the literature from Indigenous linguists' perspective in the Australian context is almost non-existent; while some Indigenous scholars aim to address the issues of ethics in research more broadly, to date there are only a handful Indigenous linguists and activists, who have contributed to the literature of ethical research in linguistics.

While I feel a real responsibility to do that bridging between the two groups, I believe that there is huge impetus here for the broader community of non-Indigenous linguists. The challenge now is to actively engage with Indigenous people and communities on the ground, face to face and be proactive in providing real opportunities for discussion and resolution of the issues. Clearly there are some non-Indigenous linguists already doing this in small pockets around the country but we now need to see a holistic approach from the field of linguistics more broadly. Charity Hudley et al (2019, p. 24) say:

Linguists—and especially white linguists, who bear the greatest responsibility for dismantling white supremacy in the discipline (Bucholtz forthcoming b)— can use our scholarly expertise and our institutional access to work for greater social and racial justice (Charity Hudley 2013). If linguists are to take seriously our responsibility to undo the racism and colonialism that were a founding motive of our discipline and that continue to do damage to our research, we must begin a process of critical, race-conscious self-examination and reparative and restorative work—for racialized language communities as well as linguists from racially minoritized groups, for practicing linguists as well as linguists-in-training.

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