

Melanesian Wisdom Unveiled

Part 2: My Story


Introduction into my sacred space

- ▶ “Papu tell me a story”

Search for Knowledge

Indigenous Methodologies: Indigenous methodologies refer to research approaches and frameworks that center on indigenous perspectives, values, and ways of knowing. They often prioritize community engagement, respect for oral traditions, and the inclusion of indigenous voices in research processes.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Indigenous knowledge systems encompass the traditional wisdom, practices, and beliefs of indigenous communities. These systems are deeply rooted in the environment, spirituality, and cultural heritage, and they offer unique insights into sustainable living, land management, and holistic well-being.

- ▶ **Indigenous Female Scholars:** Indigenous female scholars play a crucial role in reclaiming and revitalizing indigenous methodologies and knowledge systems. Indigenous female scholars often question the usual Western ways of thinking and bring attention to how gender and cultural differences come together and affect research. They show that there are important things to consider beyond what is normally thought about..
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- ▶ It's also a good idea to engage with indigenous scholars and community members to gain a deeper understanding of the issues at hand.

Indigenous methodologies

Chalmers 2017	Ray 2012	Lubett 2021	Motivated or influenced by
Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM)	Convergence Indigenous Methodologies (CIM)	Proactive Indigenous Methodologies (PIM)	Rooted and influenced by traditional/tribal/indigenous knowledge systems
Decolonising Research Methodologies (DRM)	Strategic Indigenous Methodologies (SIM)	Reactive Indigenous Methodologies (RIM)	Guided by a discourse of anti-oppressive and anti-colonial ideas and influenced by critical theory


Name	Origin	Authors	Fields	Key ideas	Metaphor/concepts
Fa'afaletui	Samoa	Tamasese, Peteru, & Waldergrave (1997); Tamasese et al (2005); McCarthy, Shaban, and Stone (2011)	Mental health, Health	Communal knowledge creation through consensus; weaving knowledge together through grouping and regrouping	Fale (Samoan house), tui (weaving)
Kapasa and Yavu	Tonga, Fiji	Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2017, 2018)	Policy development and community engagement	Strengths-based approaches encouraging inclusive and mutually-beneficial relationships	Kapasa (compass); yavu (roots)
Tauhi va	Tonga	Ka'ili (2005)	General research	Nurturing sociospatial ties through geographical and genealogical connections	Reciprocity, relational spaces
Teu Le Va	Pasifika community in Aotearoa/NZ	Anae (2010, 2016)	Education	Practices to engage stakeholders, collaborate, coordinate, accumulate knowledge, understand different kinds of knowledge, engage knowledge brokers	Reciprocal relationships
Va'a Tele	Samoa	Si'ilata (2014)	Education	Evidence-based strategies for bilingual or bicultural Pasifika learners' success in English-medium schools and classes	Va'a tele (double-hulled deep sea canoe)
Vaka	Niue	Nelisi (2004)	Education	Significance of the indigenous values, knowledge and approaches brought by Pacific teachers to their pedagogy	Canoe
Vanua	Fiji	Nabobo-Baba (2021)	Education	Conceptions of place, people as custodians of land, holistic views of spirituality: protocols used when researching Indigenous Fijian knowledges, skills and arts	Land
Varvateten	Papua New Guinea	Lubett (2021)	Societal healing and reconnection	Use of kinship mapping and storytelling to recover wellbeing (a bona kini)	Tabu (shell money)

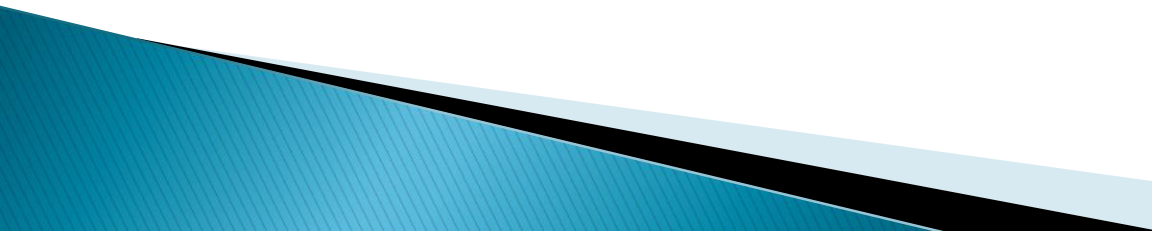
Genesis of my research

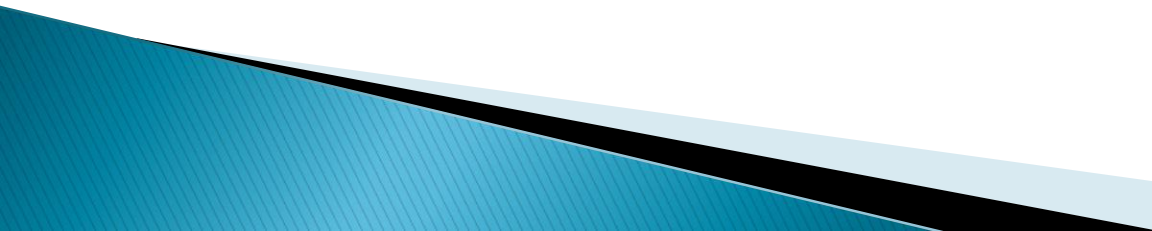
- ▶ Asked by a community member in my village last year: “Where did you get the idea or What influenced you to do your doctorate?”
 - ▶ My response was: “Through the **Varvateten (methodology)** when I was a girl growing up in the village”
 - ▶ My Worldview was and is the genesis of who I am plus
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The experiences that have shaped me

- ▶ Living outside my community
 - Border at high school
 - Going to Unitech
 - My conversion and faith in God
 - My education and interaction with the international scholars
 - My marriage into another culture
 - Our living in other countries, learning languages etc
 - My culture, pasin long peles
 - My family

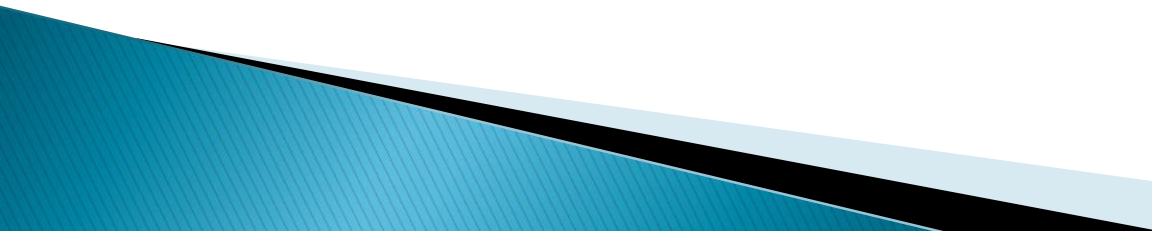
- ▶ Your worldview, or the way you see and understand the world, can be shaped by various factors beyond just your personal life experiences. Here are some other factors that can influence your worldview:
 - ▶ **.Culture and Heritage:** The culture you are born into, including traditions, beliefs, values, and practices, can significantly shape how you perceive the world around you.
 - ▶ **Education and Knowledge:** The information you learn through formal education, reading, and exposure to different subjects can impact your perspective on various issues.
 - ▶ **Media and Communication:** The media you consume, such as news, movies, TV shows, and social media, can influence the way you view different cultures, events, and ideas.
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- ▶ **Religion and Spirituality:** Your religious or spiritual beliefs can provide a framework for understanding the purpose of life, morality, and the nature of reality.
 - ▶ **Socioeconomic Background:** Your family's economic status and social background can affect your perspective on social issues, opportunities, and inequalities.
 - ▶ **Geography and Environment:** The place you live and the environment you are surrounded by can influence your values and attitudes towards nature, sustainability, and community.
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- ▶ **Peer Influence:** Interactions with friends, peers, and social groups can impact your opinions, values, and behaviors.
 - ▶ **Personal Beliefs and Values:** Your individual beliefs about what is right, wrong, important, or meaningful play a significant role in shaping your worldview.
 - ▶ **Political Ideology:** Your political beliefs and affiliations can influence how you view power dynamics, social structures, and governance.
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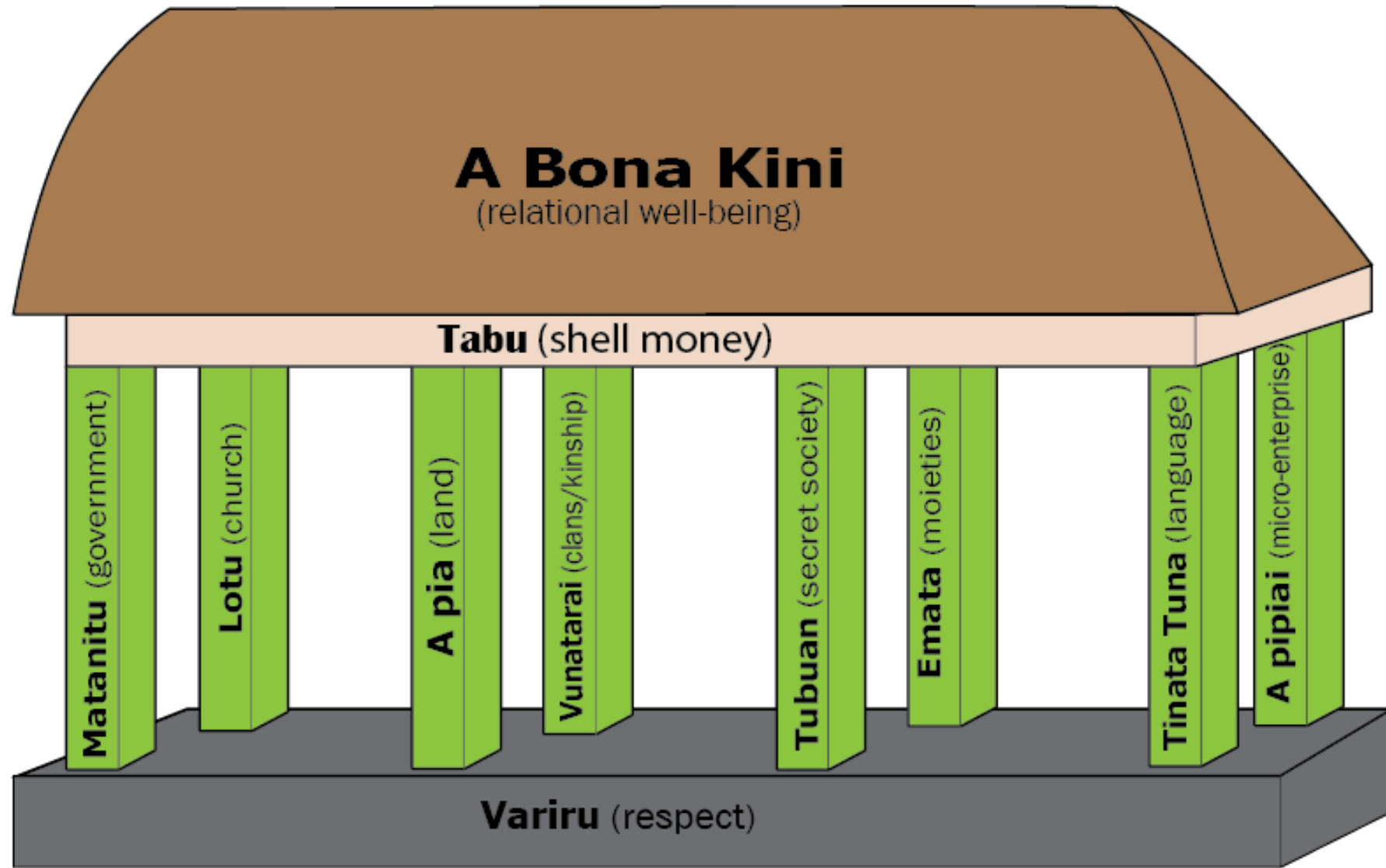
Varvateten as an Emerging Methodology

- ▶ The Tolai have a strong resilient culture.
- ▶ Methodology: from concept to practice, from research to action
- ▶ *Varvateten*: Philosophical rationale
- ▶ Dimensions of *varvateten*
 - Knowledge
 - Wisdom
 - Communicating'
 - Corrective dimension
 - Regulatory dimension
 - Educational
 - Connective and restorative dimension

- ▶ *Varvateten*: The Process (a working methodology)
 - ▶ *A tena varvateten* (instructor, teacher, mentor, enabler, listener, communicator, negotiator, mediator, reconciler and holder of traditional knowledge.
 - ▶ The *varvateten* process becomes the responsibility, first of the family and *vunatarai* (clan) and if necessary, of the broader community and its systems such as *varkurai*, (village court) the pastor and lualua will be involve also.
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Tabu as a metaphor for the methodology

- ▶ *Tabu* is the physical action of putting the final seal to bridging relationships to maintaining *a bona kini (gut pala sidaon)*
- ▶ *Tabu* contextualises varvateten
- ▶ *Tabu* is used for reconciliation, mediation and for forgiving narapala, and use for restoring relationships
- ▶ *Tabu* paves the way forward
- ▶ *Tabu* is used to buy things at the town markets, village markets and trade stores
- ▶ *Tabu* is used for bride price



A Pal Na Bona Kini (house of wellbeing)

- ▶ The house of wellbeing is in fact represent to Tolai ontology (our reality). It is not an abstract, academic concept, but a lived reality involving the whole of life and actions.
- ▶ The theoretical perspective of *bona kini* can be thought of as the roof of a house, supported by a foundation (respect), eight pillars, representing eight pillars of the society, and a top plate connecting or tying down the whole structure.
- ▶ The roof (a bona kini), varmaliurai (care) and variru (respect) are the central foundational elements of the Tolai systems of values,
- ▶ It's all about **relational wellbeing**

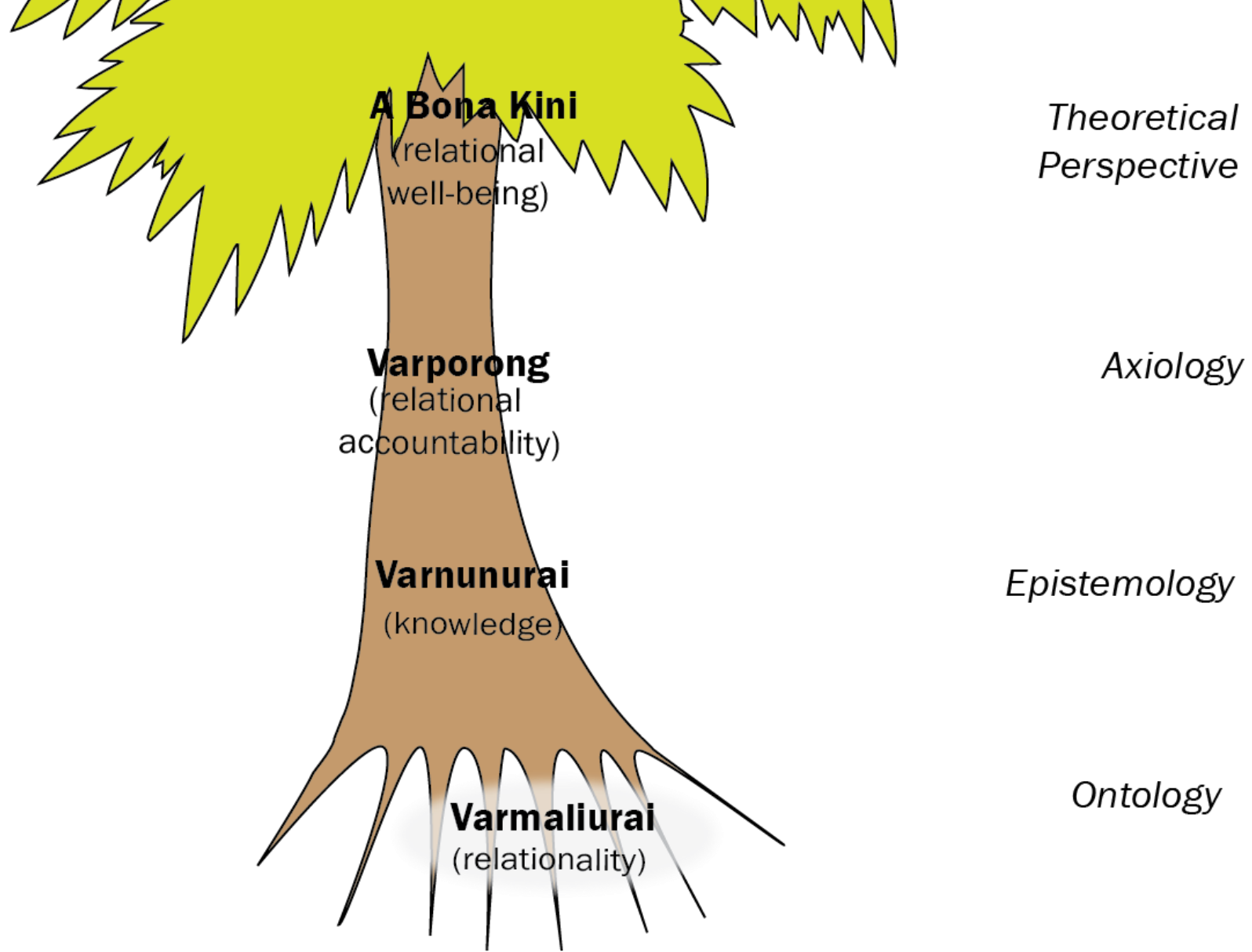
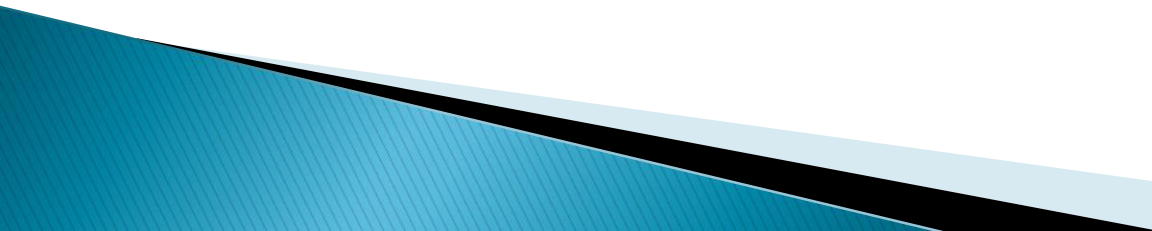


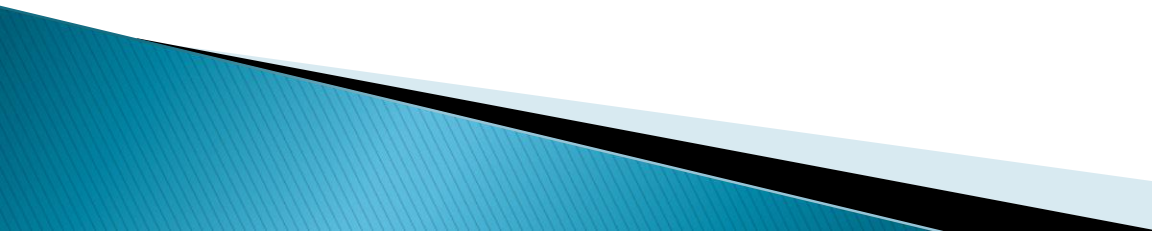
Figure 3: A proposed Tolai research paradigm

Ontology (*Varmaliurai*) state of relatedness


- ▶ Ontology: implies relationality: a respectful, caring, understanding relationship with other humans, land, habitats, etc
- ▶ The ontology of *varmaliurai* (relationality) represents the Tolai society's overall view of their reality, priorities and issues.
- ▶ This reality is represented in the model of *a pal na bona kini*, the house of wellbeing

Tolai Epistemology – *varnununurai*

- ▶ The Tolai epistemology represents a cultural group's way of theorising knowledge.
 - ▶ Epistemology is a theory of knowledge
 - ▶ Epistemology maps out what we believe.
 - ▶ We must design research strategies that are grounded in Melanesian Epistemologies.
 - ▶ Epistemology refers to both theory of knowledge and theorising knowledge
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- ▶ Epistemological agents are communities rather than individuals, in other words knowledge is constructed by the communities.
 - ▶ Epistemologies and worldviews are concepts that deal with how we know and understand the world around us, as well as the underlying beliefs and perspectives that shape our understanding
 - ▶ In essence, epistemologies delve into the methods and theories of knowledge acquisition, while worldviews encompass the broader set of beliefs and perspectives that inform how individuals and societies understand and engage with the world. Both concepts play a significant role in shaping how we make sense of our experiences and navigate our interactions with others and the environment.
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Is there a place in theology to use indigenous/Oceania/Melanesian methodology?

- ▶ Yes, there is certainly a place for using indigenous, Oceania, and Melanesian methodologies in theology. Incorporating these methodologies can enrich theological discourse by bringing diverse perspectives, cultural insights, and spiritual values into the conversation. Here's how you might go about incorporating these methodologies:
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Respectful Engagement:

- Begin by approaching communities with respect and a willingness to learn from their perspectives. Seek permission, build relationships, and ensure that your research is mutually beneficial.


Cultural Sensitivity:

- Take the time to understand the cultural context, traditions, and values of the communities you are engaging with. This knowledge will inform how you approach and interpret theological concepts.
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Collaborative Research:

- Collaborate with indigenous scholars, community leaders, and practitioners. Their insights can provide valuable guidance and ensure that your research aligns with the lived experiences of the community.

Indigenous Methodologies:

- Integrate indigenous research methodologies that emphasize community participation, storytelling, oral traditions, and holistic perspectives. These methodologies can provide new ways of approaching theological inquiry.
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Storytelling and Oratory:

- Embrace storytelling and oratory as methods for sharing theological insights. Indigenous cultures often convey deep spiritual and philosophical ideas through narratives and oral traditions.

Integration of Indigenous Values:

- Identify areas within theology where indigenous values, such as interconnectedness with nature, communal well-being, and respect for ancestors, can offer fresh perspectives and challenge traditional interpretations


Community Involvement:

- Engage indigenous communities in dialogue about how theology can address their spiritual and social needs. Allow them to shape the direction of the conversation and contribute their insights.

Ethical Considerations:

- Prioritize ethical considerations throughout your research. Obtain informed consent, protect intellectual property, and ensure that your work benefits the community rather than exploiting it.

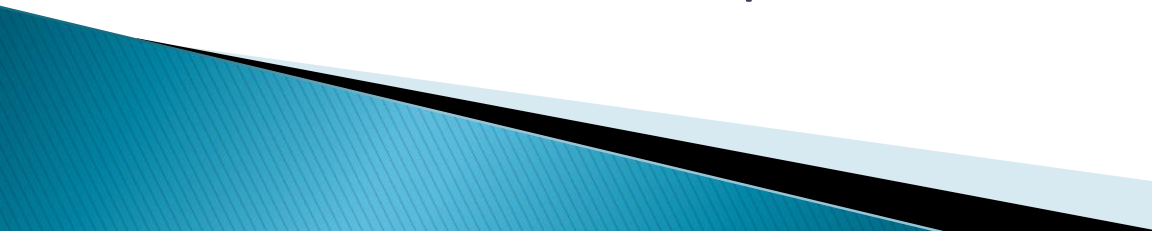
Education and Advocacy:


- Share your research findings with wider audiences, including theological institutions, churches, and policy makers. Advocate for the integration of indigenous perspectives in theological education and practice.
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Intersecting Worldviews:

- Look for intersections between indigenous cosmologies and theological concepts. Explore how indigenous understandings of the divine, creation, and spirituality might resonate with or challenge existing theological frameworks.

Liberation Theology and Justice:

- Incorporate indigenous methodologies to examine how theological concepts relate to social justice, equity, and decolonization efforts within indigenous communities. Explore the potential of theology as a tool for liberation and empowerment.
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- ▶ Incorporating indigenous, Oceania, and Melanesian methodologies in theology requires a genuine commitment to understanding and valuing these perspectives. It's a collaborative and ongoing process that involves building relationships, respecting cultural differences, and centering the voices and values of the communities you engage with.
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Questions for discussion

- How can indigenous methodologies, rooted in community participation and cultural context, reshape the way we approach theological narratives and concepts?
 - What are some specific indigenous research methodologies that can be applied to theological studies to ensure respectful engagement and inclusion of indigenous perspectives?
 - How might the intersection of theology and indigenous cosmologies lead to mutual transformation, where both theological concepts and indigenous worldviews are enriched through dialogue and engagement?
 - Can this intersection provide a space for theologians to reflect on the limitations and biases of traditional theological frameworks and explore more inclusive and holistic understandings of the divine?
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