

waka kuaka

The Journal of the Polynesian Society

VOLUME 134 No. 4, DECEMBER 2025



The Polynesian Society

Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland, New Zealand

FROM THE EDITOR

OUR COMMITMENT TO INDIGENOUS DATA SOVEREIGNTY

The *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (now *Waka Kuaka*) was created in 1892 to extract and control data about Māori and Pacific peoples, places and cultures, in the conviction that we would fade away in the face of European dominance (Smith 1898: 138). Over 130 years later, we as a journal are grappling with the issue of extractive research again, and how we can work as a journal to honour the principles of Indigenous data sovereignty. In 2022 we changed our name to *Waka Kuaka* and re-visioned the scope and focus of the journal as a more inclusive space to “showcase the exciting ways that Māori and Pacific scholarship continues to be rewritten and reimagined” (Pouwhare *et al.* 2022: 352). We called for scholars of the Pacific, from the Pacific and in the Pacific to consider *Waka Kuaka* as a space that is safe for our Indigenous communities. We have sought to recognise these aspirations, but also know that we have some way to go.

As a journal, we have received a complaint from multiple parties about a paper we published in 2024 that breached the principles of Indigenous data sovereignty and did not recognise the community ownership of the data included in the article. This is a serious matter that the Society and the editorial team have discussed thoroughly, developing a process of review that allowed all voices to be heard. We are also adjusting our submission protocols to ask specific questions about Indigenous knowledge access, data sovereignty, research ethics and community involvement. We would like to apologise to those communities who rightfully requested we retract the paper and apologise for the harm it has caused. We apologise to:

- (i) The members of Kahalu‘u ‘Ohana and the restoration team:
Dr. Kalei Nu‘uhiwa, Kalaniola Kahulamū Hamm, W.D. Māhealani Pai, Lelemia Keoho Irvine, Mitchell Mikiala Fujisaka, Elizabeth Velma Kauahi, George W. Fields, Edward Halealoha Ayau, Keone Kalawe;
- (ii) The Edith Kanaka‘ole Foundation (Huihui Kanahēle-Mossman, Executive Director); and
- (iii) The signatories: Professor Davianna Pōmaika‘i McGregor, Associate Professor Rosanna ‘Anolani Alegado, Professor Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, Associate Professor Noelani Puniwai, Edward Halealoha Ayau, Dr. Pualani Kanaka‘ole Kanahēle,

Hui Iwi Kuamo‘o, Assistant Professor Noe Noe Wong-Wilson, Professor Marie Alohalani Brown, Professor Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, Chadd ‘Ōnohi Paishon, Associate Professor Pauline Harris, Dr. Konia Freitas, Mehanaokalā Hind, Bruce Ka‘imi Watson, Professor Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa, Professor Noa Kekuewa Lincoln, Associate Professor Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio, Professor Noenoe K. Silva, Assistant Professor Kaleialoha Lum-Ho, Professor Candace Fujikane, Kawena Komeiji, Dr. Kealoha Fox, Assistant Professor J. Hau‘oli Lorenzo-Elarco, Michiko Joseph, Kelley Lehuakeaopuna Uyeoka, Associate Professor Cathy Kanoelani Ikeda, Associate Professor Faith Kahale Saito, Assistant Professor Steven Mana‘oakamai Johnson, Associate Professor Kekuewa Kikiloi, Roxane Keli‘ikipikāneokolohaka, S. Mā‘ele Norquist, Brenda Lima, Tyler Sonnemaker, Diamond K. Tachera, Keku‘iapōiula Keliipuleole, Kehaulani Lum and Assistant Professor Aurora Kagawa-Viviani.

Retraction of an article is unprecedented in our journal and not a decision we made lightly. We believe this is an issue of conflicting academic norms and a lack of understanding about what it means for a community to have ownership over ancestral and traditional knowledges and how people have access to them. With the increasing abundance of big data and the rise of AI, data sovereignty is an issue that scholars across the globe must address. Academia is also moving on from the idea that information is a free-for-all. Even if you can access information, it is not necessarily yours to use. Knowledge ownership, who should and should not use information, is an important discussion that should be had by all, not just those who are Indigenous—especially since Indigenous knowledges are governed by the community from/in which it is situated or collected. The CARE principles for Indigenous data are useful guidelines: collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility and ethics. These are concepts that must be understood to even consider doing research with Indigenous communities. But this is about data that is connected not just to individuals or communities, but also to the land and culture within which Indigenous peoples live. AI and technological developments now allow us to gather global data at the press of a button, but we as academics have a responsibility to understand how that data is collected and whether it is data that we should have access to without explicit permission from the communities that own it. These are big questions, and they need to be explicitly understood by those who seek to research with Indigenous communities or access their knowledges.

While this process has been a difficult one for all involved, it has been invaluable for us to reflect on the aspirations we made for the journal in 2022.

We regret the harm that this has caused and recognise the mana of the communities it has affected, remaining committed to honouring the principles of Indigenous data sovereignty and the rights of Indigenous communities to have ownership over their own knowledges and how they are used.

Marcia Leenen-Young and the *Waka Kuaka* editorial team
Marama Muru-Lanning and The Polynesian Society

REFERENCES

- Pouwhare, Robert, Marcia Leenen-Young, Lisa Uperesa and Marama Muru-Lanning, 2022. The call of the waka kuaka: New directions for the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*. *Waka Kuaka: The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 131 (4): 347–53. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48745059>
- Smith, S. Percy, 1898. Hawaiki: The whence of the Maori: Being an introduction to Rarotonga history. *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 7 (3): 137–77. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20701511>

