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# Reviews

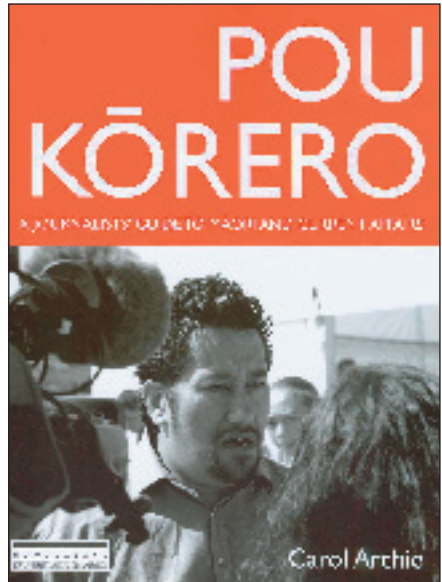
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## Fine job at the interface of Māoritanga and journalism

*Pou Kōrero: A journalists' guide to Māori and current affairs*, by Carol Archie, 2007. Wellington: Journalists Training Organisation. 174 pp. ISBN 0958205876.

IN the introduction to her journalists' guide to reporting Māoridom, *Pou Kōrero* author Carol Archie, a Pākehā and a journalist, agonises over how to describe non-Māori and comes up with 'other New Zealanders'. "Pākehā" won't do,' she says, 'because it has come to mean New Zealanders with European ancestry. 'Non-Māori' is negative and says what we're not, rather than what we are ... and tauivi (meaning



foreigner) can offend those who aren't tangata whenua but who still feel we belong to nowhere else but Aotearoa New Zealand."

Should we care? *The Reed Dictionary of Modern Māori* equates 'Pākehā' with 'Caucasian', meaning all of us unfortunate enough in this ozone-lacking land to have been born with light skins: surely 'Pākehā' is today so ingrained in our language it rolls off even pale-skinned tongues with alacrity. Then again, as the ethnic landscape of our country changes so rapidly...

Fortunately, any fears that *Pou Kōrero* might descend into a skein of fussy worrying are quickly allayed as Archie, charged with writing a

sequel to the late Michael King's *Kawe Korero: A guide to reporting Maori activities*, does a fine job in tackling the myriad of issues hovering at the interface of Māoridom and journalism. King's 1985 version is a tightly-written, single-person account of what all journalists should know, from protocol, to iwi detail, to relevant history. Though a much shorter work, it was at the time a groundbreaking production guiding students and working journalists—those that would be led from within essentially monocultural newsrooms—in the complexities of reporting and understanding Māoridom.

Standing on the shoulders of King and with the benefit of two further decades of at least some movement toward greater understanding, Archie does considerably better. For a start, she has wisely adopted a tone of discussion and reflection rather than just teaching, beginning with a measured, articulate description of the Treaty of Waitangi, its legal implications, and its relevance to journalists.

Journalists must look with a critical eye at every topic—including those about the Treaty and the settlement process. But it must be informed criticism. This means digging behind the easy headlines and common clichés to try to understand some of the complexities. If you are aware of

the underlying dynamics you will be in a better position to explain Treaty stories more clearly to your audience. (p. 11)

Good start. These are sound words for the reporting of any subject, let alone Māori.

Archie goes on to build on King's analysis of relevant history, leading new readers into a 21st century with a great deal of optimism as growing Māori self-belief is reflected in impressive achievements in news media, as well as politics and leadership. Some readers will disagree strongly with her stark assertion that the recent foreshore and seabed legislation overrode Māori rights as citizens and dishonoured the Treaty. Archie has the right to draw her conclusion, though would have served all her readers better by prefacing it with argument.

She is similarly sparse later, in her positive exposition of the reporting model, development journalism. Is it really sufficient to have broadcaster Willie Jackson wrap up a debate on Māori development journalism with the assertion that his staff have to be 'Māori' first and foremost? 'Otherwise they are just another journalist,' he says. 'The few Māori journalists in the mainstream are overwhelmed by the influences there and lose their integrity. They are never reminded of their obligation to their people'

(p. 62). But Fairfax NZ for one has embarked on a strong drive to recruit more Māori journalists. Is the suggestion that they will be subsumed and token?

Having said that, the very best of this book is the very thorough canvassing by Archie of the diverse wisdom and war stories of respected Māori journalists. Former television current affairs broadcaster Maramena Roderick recalls angrily firing off emails to colleagues guilty of mangling words such as pōwhiri or Ruapehu. ‘My argument is, “surely, you want to get it right?” They can pronounce the name of a French official perfectly, but they can’t say Manukau correctly ... they are happy for their work to be below grade.’ But Roderick sensibly refrains from tarring all Pākehā journos with the same brush, in some instances recommending that Māori approach Pākehā journalists. ‘Just because you are Māori does not mean that you will do [Māori stories] better.’ Similarly hearing from the likes of long-standing print and broadcast reporter Paul Diamond, broadcaster Ana Tapiata, journalism tutor Queenie Rikihana and numerous other respected journalists, gives the advice in this book plenty of meat.

Serious consideration should be given to a section headed ‘negativity’, a term commonly thrown rather

loosely at the news media by all hypercritical sections of the community. But Archie dispassionately points to the obvious, that Māori issues can be presented in a way that implies a sense of threat to ‘the public’, evoking a strange ‘them and us’ stage as if the two worlds are in isolation. Most journalists are likely to empathise with her observation, sporadically a talking point in news rooms, especially in relation to the too-ready identification of ethnicity with criminal offenders. The criticism, she indicates, can also be applied to mainstream coverage of Māori poverty and under-achievement in the education system, to name a few. Archie might easily have added the recent, ill-considered rush to label child abuse as a ‘Māori problem’.

The inequity of the Māori place in society is rammed home with the inclusion of a Denis Welch *Listener* column which reads in part:

Now here’s a good look for New Zealand, that bicultural jewel of the South Pacific. Māori are dying younger than Pākehā. They die younger, on average, because they’re poorer, colder, sicker, more socially disadvantaged, less likely to get help and—not least—because they live in a predominantly Pākehā world. That’s not news. Nor is it news that the mortality gap between Māori and non-Māori has widened in recent years ... (p. 122)

These are all important points to ponder. Of course, all things protocol get a thorough and necessary exposure in this book, including advice on how to reply in Māori to a mihi invitation, advice that, if taken, would save many a reporter from abundant embarrassment. Some of the information may be surprising, such as the adjunct to the legal provenance that you cannot defame the dead. Archie points out that it is unwise to write insulting comments about Māori tūpuna: 'It will be taken very seriously indeed if you do. The descendants may not be able to sue you, but they will have long memories about you, your story and probably your news organisation, too.' Just as useful, is her highlighting of the qualities Māori admire in their leaders—humility, dignity, inclusiveness and kindness.

For icing, *Pou Kōrero* includes maps showing iwi and waka, language glossaries and pronunciation guides (including a CD) and tips on the appropriateness of using Māori words in English reporting. All useful stuff. It also bravely attempts to look into the future of New Zealand journalism, from the starting point of Māori Television's much-lauded 2006 Anzac Day broadcast fronted by Judy Bailey and Wena Harawira.

Māori words and concepts popped up naturally; there was no imperative

to translate or interpret. Although cultural differences were affirmed, the kaupapa for the day was 'tātou tātou' without a sense of 'otherness'. And the overall impression was an Aotearoa New Zealand identity more robust than two cultures presented in isolation. (p. 147)

*Pou Kōrero* is a welcome and timely addition to the training arsenal available for all working journalists and journalism students. Despite the glaring absence of an index, it will faithfully serve its readers, perhaps for another two decades. Not all of it will, or need be, agreed with. Certainly, not everybody will accept Archie's take that it is the journalists' role to tend the 'ethics of inclusiveness' and help New Zealanders develop their sense of identity. But it is hard to argue with her call for a future news media that takes the best of both cultures to create 'a new, more expansive form of journalism—one that includes and inspires everyone living in this country.' It's a lovely aspiration to conclude with.

### Reference

King, M. (1985). *Kawe korero: A guide to reporting Maori activities*. Wellington: NZ Journalists Training Board.  
*Alan Samson is also a sitting member of the NZ Press Council, although he has written this review in his capacity as a journalism lecturer.*