

# WORKING AS ALLIES

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BRCSS Seminar Series: Constructing and  
Contesting Dominant Identities in Aotearoa.

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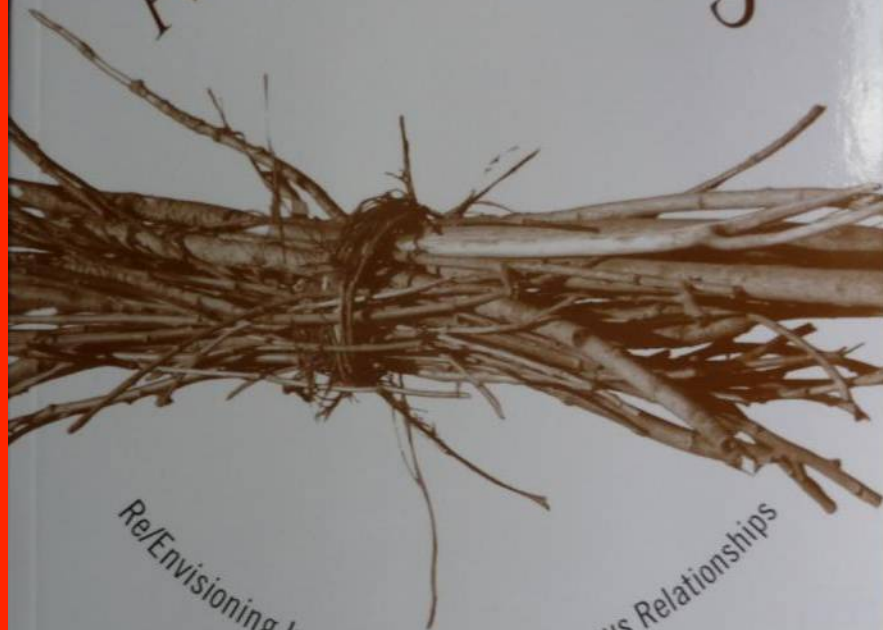


# PROJECT AIM

- ❖ To meet with groups and individuals in North America who are non-indigenous / white allies working to support the issues and struggles of indigenous peoples or doing anti-racism work.
- ❖ To learn from them about their approaches and how they respond to the particular challenges inherent in this work.
- ❖ To use this learning to inform the development of resources to support this work in Aotearoa / New Zealand.



# ALLIANCES



*Re/Envisioning Indigenous-non-Indigenous Relationships*

EDITED BY LYNNE DAVIS

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ❖ Language
- ❖ Role
- ❖ Challenges and responses
- ❖ Qualities

# LANGUAGE

- ❖ Positive role
- ❖ About relationship
- ❖ Connections with other allies
- ❖ Meaningless if not aligned with action. A practice not an identity.
- ❖ Solidarity / supporter / accountable relationships / ‘standing with’

# THE ALLY ROLE

- ❖ Relationship based and contextual
- ❖ Working with ‘our own’ and with indigenous people
- ❖ Supporter, leader, potato peeler...
- ❖ Who leads?
- ❖ Getting feedback
- ❖ Listen, respect, reflect



If you have come to help me,  
you are wasting your time.

But if you have come  
because your liberation is  
bound up with mine

Then let us work together.

*Aboriginal activists' group,*

*Queensland, 1970s*

# CHALLENGES AND SOME RESPONSES

- ❖ Addressing power imbalances
  - ❖ Recognise complexity, acknowledge privilege, be mindful of how power is working
  - ❖ Issues in leading vs following direction – maintaining accountability
- ❖ Ignorance of white settler population
  - ❖ Education - unraveling the myth of benevolence, moving beyond a charity model, speak out
- ❖ Analysis paralysis
  - ❖ Work alongside others
- ❖ Working cross culturally
  - ❖ Issues of knowledge to engage vs appropriation
  - ❖ Sitting with discomfort

# CHALLENGES AND SOME RESPONSES

- ❖ Building trust
  - ❖ Takes time, be reliable, maintain continuity
- ❖ Respecting different / conflicting expectations
  - ❖ Don't expect unity or exacerbate internal divisions
- ❖ Juggling / balancing interests of indigenous communities and constituents
- ❖ Balancing work with 'own' and relationships as an ally
- ❖ Judging each other
  - ❖ Allowing for a diversity of approaches + having space for critical feedback
- ❖ Sustaining a lifetime commitment

# QUALITIES

- ❖ Humility
- ❖ Ability to listen
- ❖ Sense of humour
- ❖ Patience
- ❖ Being useful
- ❖ Knowing yourself – your stories + being grounded

- ❖ A thick skin
  - ❖ Endurance – ‘messing up, picking up and keeping on’
  - ❖ Long-term commitment
  - ❖ Letting go of knowing and of being right
- “Being passionately aware that you could be completely wrong.” – Budd Hall
- ❖ Being open to constant learning







# RESOURCES

[www.awea.org.nz/allies](http://www.awea.org.nz/allies)