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MĀORI AND MUSEUMS
THE POLITICS OF INDIGENOUS RECOGNITION

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Museum Studies
at Massey University,
Palmerston North**

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**This thesis is dedicated to
my father, Lesley James Butts, and
my mother, Angelina Marea Butts (née Gargiulo)**

ABSTRACT

As a result of colonialism indigenous peoples have been marginalised within their own customary territories. In an analysis of the politics of cultural recognition Tully (1995) proposes the reconceptualisation of the ‘common ground’: sites, including public museums, within which different cultures negotiate their relationships within the modern nation-state, where the rights of indigenous peoples can be recognised on the basis of the principles of mutual recognition, continuity and consent. This thesis examines the impact of the politics of indigenous recognition on the evolving relationships between Māori and museums, focusing on Māori participation in the governance of regional charitable trust museums in New Zealand.

The international context is explored through an investigation of indigenous strategies of resistance to museum practices at the international, national and local levels. The national context within which Māori resistance to museum practices has evolved, and subsequent changes in practice are then outlined.

Two case studies of regional charitable trust museums, which began to renegotiate Māori participation in their governance structures in the late 1990s, are examined. The different governance models adopted by Whanganui Regional Museum, Whanganui, and Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, both effected major shifts from the historical pattern of limited Māori participation in the museums to the representation of all tangata whenua iwi on the new trust boards. The governance negotiation processes and the responses of interested parties are analysed. The case studies demonstrate the importance of understanding the historical context within which public institutions are embedded and the forces that lead to contemporary adjustments in power relationships.

Both new governance models have resulted in genuine power sharing partnerships between tangata whenua and the museums. Finally, the extent to which the two institutions have subsequently moved towards becoming ‘common ground’ where the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples can be realised is analysed.

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Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou.
Nā koutou tēnei mahi i tautoko, i āwhina.
Nā koutou i whakaae ki te whai wāhi o tēnei mahi

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