

IFSAM 2023 Award

IFSAM Award for Excellence in Indigenous Management Scholarship

Winner: Prof. Jason Mika

Interviewed by Ying Ying Zangh Zang

Professor Mika, thank you for joining us today. Can you share with us your journey in the field of Indigenous management scholarship? What's motivating you to embark this path?

Kia ora Ying Ying. First of all, thank you for the honor of the Award for Indigenous Management Research.

Thank you for the prestigious award that's been given and really appreciate the opportunity to talk today. First of all, I just want to acknowledge our ancestors and Mother Earth and Sky Father and all of our ancestors and also our Indigenous people from all around the world and all of the work that they do to provide for their families, their communities, their waterways, their lands, to retain those for the benefit of future generations. So, I come from two main tribal areas, Mataatua and Takitimu are the ancestral canoes in which I come from and I guess the research that I focus on in terms of Indigenous management research comes from who I am and where I come from as a Māori person in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

I guess I've been interested in, and I was raised by my grandparents, my grandmother was a huge influence on me and so I have a lot to be thankful for in terms of my grandparents who come from the Tuhoe tribe. I guess what's really interested and why I've been really interested in management research and Indigenous management research in particular is based on that Indigenous identity and aspirations that we have for a good life and what that looks like from an organizational management perspective. I've always been interested in management research but particularly big questions around, I guess, what is a Māori business, what is an Indigenous business, how do Indigenous people do business and what does economy mean for them and those questions have taken me in all sorts of directions.

It's not just about sort of, I guess, developing profitable enterprises but enterprises that do business on a sustainable basis, a culturally sustainable basis, so how business can be conducted in a way that's consistent with our values and aspirations as Indigenous people and utilizing all the strengths and capabilities and the knowledge that Indigenous people possess and wish to share. So I guess that's sort of really got me interested in business and particularly working with small businesses, small Māori and Pacific firms in New Zealand, the opportunity to work alongside these entrepreneurs who want to develop their enterprises but also to incorporate Indigenous values into the way in which they do business and how those businesses benefit communities

Are you considering this as a kind of critical success factors that contribute to your achievement in the Indigenous Māori scholarship or any other elements you think that need to be added to this achievement process?

I think in terms of factors that have been helpful in terms of my research as an Indigenous business researcher, a kaupapa Māori researcher, I would say in New Zealand is all of the Indigenous entrepreneurship and Indigenous business researchers who have gone before me and who are still present, who are still doing amazing research. And in particular, I have to acknowledge Dr. Ella Henry, well, Professor Ella Henry, Professor Jarrod Ha, Professor Kālehau Kāmau, and Professor Leo Paul Dana, Professor Ana Maria Pereira.

All of them and many others have really laid the foundation for Indigenous entrepreneurship, Indigenous management research, and provided a pathway for other scholars. And so the priority for me now is pretty much doing what they did for me and others, which is to support, you know, the next generation of Indigenous business and management scholars to come forward and to pick up the baton and to continue the work because it's important work. And so rather than being attracted by corporate life and business is hopefully some of these Indigenous talented students can lend a hand in the academic world.

Can you tell us or share with some of these biggest challenges as well, that you have come to during your research career in this Indigenous management?

Sure, I think there's two. One is the inability to say no.

It's difficult to say no to research opportunities that are presented to me. And it's been really sort of what that means. The good side of that is I've sort of been involved in lots of research, but the downside is that it gets spread a little too thin sometimes and impact is less than desirable.

But then in terms of, I guess, the other challenge, it's probably is the sort of going, it's not really a challenge, but it's part of the process, which is getting the PhD. The PhD experience is sort of for a lot of Māori in New Zealand, it tends to be later in life rather than sort of as a younger person. What that means is that you're doing a PhD, you're studying full time on low income with family responsibilities.

So you've got to work, teach, research and write and look after family all at the same time, which becomes a challenge. But it's probably one of the best periods of my life in terms of intellectual development and personal development as well, being able to do that. Wow.

So how do you overcome this challenge? So any tips? What's a strategy approach that's more effective for you? So teaching, research and practice are all basically part of the same process. And the research informs teaching, the practice in terms of whether I'm working with government, agencies advising on indigenous trade or indigenous business policy making and so forth. All of that feeds into the teaching, which feeds into the research ideas and practice, which also informs advice to government or business and to support what they're trying to do.

So there's kind of like a cycle of just a continuous process of knowledge sharing that goes on between teaching, research and practice.

Interesting, sounds like ecosystem well set. Reflecting on your journey, what are some of the most significant lessons that you have learned or any aspects of your career where you wish you could have done things differently or doing better?

I guess possibly the only thing that I could think of is, I guess, sort of coming into academic life a bit sooner.

So I think it's just such a really great experience and a great opportunity to be able to conduct research and to teach and to engage in practice as well. So probably, yeah, would have liked to have got into it sooner. But now that I'm here and I'm doing this kind of work, I'm very grateful.

Any advice would you give to other Manama scholars, particularly those interested in Indigenous Manama research? How can an emerging scholar make a meaningful impact in the field?

I think it's important for emerging Indigenous management scholars to join networks, to join other Indigenous management scholars and to be supported to do so by the non-Indigenous supervisors, colleagues and so forth. And so at Academy of Management, there's an Indigenous caucus, which provides a forum for Indigenous management scholars to get together and talk about important

directions for research. And similarly, with ANZAC, the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management, there's an Indigenous special interest group, which has been running since 2030.

And again, that's a great place and forum and network for Indigenous management scholars and non-Indigenous management scholars to get together, to work together and to support one another to continue the research, the teaching and the practice that they do.

In your research, you have been making quite a lot of impact on your community and society. How do you evaluate the impact of research on Indigenous management and to the broader community beyond academia? Any suggestions do you have for measuring or enhancing this influence of Manama scholars in the future?

Sorry, can you repeat the question?

Basically, how would you evaluate the impact of your research on Indigenous management and broader society? And what suggestion you would like to give for the impact, measure and influence of Manama scholars?

Sure.

In terms of, I guess, measuring impact, one of the most important ways is ensuring that Indigenous firms have new knowledge and insights and frameworks and tools that enable them to develop their approaches to entrepreneurship and business. And that's one aspect. And those can come in many forms in terms of theoretical frameworks or practical tools and guidelines that they might use and draw upon, but also examples of businesses and enterprises that they can look to that are doing things differently, but also in a way that resonates with them.

So it's important that we provide that guidance. The other way is in terms of education and training. So when we are able to offer Indigenous business courses, programmes, or whether it's an MBA with a Māori or an Indigenous focus or an undergraduate business degree with a Māori or an Indigenous content and also approach to teaching, which is more engaging for our Indigenous community, but also has something to offer for non-Indigenous students and practitioners and policy makers as well.

I think that's important. And then probably the third aspect is contributing to policy making and debate around what is the purpose of our economy? What's its structure and function and how does it benefit everyone? And how do we incorporate Indigenous thinking and models and approaches to economy, to industry development? And so making a contribution when the occasion is before us is important as well. That's probably the other area of impact.

And the example that I'd point to is the trade development. So when New Zealand is engaging in trade with the world through free trade agreements and other policy making measures, it's important that Indigenous Māori voices and perspectives are part of that. And that's part of the research that I'm involved in now.

Great insights. Thank you very much, Johnson, for joining us to this session and congratulations again for being the awardee of the 2003 Award for Excellence in Indigenous Management. Your insights not only for the particular Indigenous management research, but also for the general management scholars.

Thank you again very much and looking forward to seeing you soon.

Thank you. Kia ora.

Thank you.