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MEDIA RELEASE

Māori scholar to research indigenous challenges to property law

University of Otago law academic Jacinta Ruru (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Maniapoto) has been awarded this year's Fulbright-Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga Senior Scholar Award, to undertake research into indigenous challenges to Western property law at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon and the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University in Tempe.

In her research, Jacinta aims to explore the potential for property law to be recalibrated to support indigenous claims to own and/or govern Crown or publicly-owned lands (such as within national parks) and natural resources like fresh water. Her work addresses the conflict between Western and indigenous worldviews and concepts of ownership, and how the "cultural monopoly" inherent in Western law has been challenged in recent decades by a resurgence of indigenous law in current or former British colonies including Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States of America.



Fulbright-Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga
Senior Scholar Award recipient
Jacinta Ruru

This project bring together strands of Jacinta's previous work on national parks, water, Māori freehold land and the foreshore and seabed issue, and comparative studies of New Zealand, Australia and Canada. Her Fulbright exchange will inform Jacinta's knowledge of indigenous legal challenges to property in the USA, and she looks forward to learning from her Native American counterparts.

"Gaining this knowledge through spending time with Native American peoples and legal scholars will enable me to better understand the challenges and desires to bring about transformative change for our peoples," Jacinta says. "I hope, by spending extended time in the USA, that I will have a better appreciation of the lived experiences of indigenous people in that country and the strong legal theoretical frameworks being developed there."

This will be Jacinta's second Fulbright exchange to the United States of America. In 2002 she received a short-term Fulbright New Zealand Travel Award to give presentations on Māori participation in the management of publicly-owned lands, at the University of Nevada and to local Native American and environmental groups.

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Fulbright New Zealand was established in 1948 to promote mutual understanding through educational and cultural exchanges between New Zealand and the United States of America. The Fulbright programme offers a range of prestigious awards for New Zealand and American graduate students, academics, artists and professionals to study, research and teach in each other's countries. Fulbright New Zealand offers over 70 exchange awards each year – half to students and half to scholars – and more than 1,400 New Zealanders and 1,100 Americans have benefited from a Fulbright award to date. The programme is mainly funded by the US and New Zealand governments with additional funding from award sponsors, private philanthropists and alumni donors.

Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga (NPM) is a world-class Centre of Research Excellence consisting of 16 participating research entities and hosted by The University of Auckland. NPM conducts research of relevance to Māori communities and is an important vehicle by which New Zealand continues to be a key player in global indigenous research and affairs. Its research is underpinned by the vision to realise the creative potential of Māori communities and to bring about positive change and transformation in the nation and wider world. Visit www.maramatanga.ac.nz

See www.fulbright.org.nz for details about Fulbright awards and how to apply, or download a Media Fact Sheet of further background information here: www.fulbright.org.nz/about/mediafactsheet.pdf

Andy Mitchell, Communications Adviser, Fulbright New Zealand
email: andy@fulbright.org.nz | phone: +64 4 494 1502
www.fulbright.org.nz