Chapter 1
Working with Respect and Working with Cultural Safety

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Words from the Elders

This book covers a lot of territory and landscape, literally, physically and we argue as Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders, spiritually as well.

We as Elders who have the Cultural Authority to speak for Country in both Wiradyuri Country and Ngiyeempaa Country are the Traditional Owners and Knowledge Holders of *our* Nations. We have never ceded our sovereignty of our lands.

We always work with cultural respect and use our cultural manners and we expect that of others if they are to walk with us and to work with us.

In Wiradyuri we work with the sacred lore of *yindyamarra*; we go slowly, we show respect, we are gentle, we are polite and we do everything with honour.

In Ngiyeempaa we work under the Ancestral beings and ask for *Guthi Guthi mookamigadar ngalia*; we ask the Sacred Ancestral Beings to watch over us all.

Many ask of us what cultural competence is. We as Elders know that the journey to cultural competence begins first with a conversation about cultural safety.

Cultural safety is based on our cultural practice and philosophy. As Wiradyuri Elders we are guided by the lore of Yindyamarra. As a Ngiyeempaa Elder our Ngiyeempaa peoples are guided by Guthi Guthi, the Ancestral Creator Spirit that carved out the lakes, rivers and mountains, and Ngurri, the emu, who looks after the people and brings guidance and warns us, and whose meat we can eat, but only if it is dug into the ground and no juices spill on the earth.

Cultural safety means an environment which is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity.

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It is about shared respect, shared meaning, knowledge and experience, of learning together with dignity and truly listening.

The impact that an acknowledgement of country conveys is the message that one's link to Country is acknowledged as an important part of Aboriginal life and signals that the link is understood and held in esteem.

These are the words of the Elders of Gunhigal Mayiny Wiradyuri Dyilang, Mallyan, Werribee, Dinawan Dyirribang and Yanhadarrambal and Ngyieempaa Elder, Aunty Beryl Yungha Dhu Carmichael-Philp, 2019.

Calls for Change

The calls for change in Aboriginal and Torres Strat Islander education have been many and varied. In this we all sit on the shoulders of giants. As Associate Professor Wendy Nolan recorded[1] these are some but not all of those calls: *Education for Aborigines: Report to the Schools Commission* (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975), *Access to Education: An Evaluation of the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme* (Watts, 1976), *Aboriginal Futures: A Review of Research and developments and Related Policies in the Education of Aborigines* (Watts, 1981), *Aboriginal Education* (House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, 1985), *Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs* (Miller, 1985), *Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force* (Hughes, 1988), *A Chance for the Future: Training in Skills for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Community Management and Development* (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1989), *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Johnston, 1991), *Review of the Training for Aboriginals Program* (Johnston, 1991), *Review of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy* (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, 1994), *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Yunupingu, 1995), Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council Strategic Plan 2006–2008, *Improving Indigenous Outcomes and Enhancing Indigenous Culture and Knowledge in Australian Higher Education (IHEAC, 2005),as well as the Bradley Review of Higher Education* (2008), *The National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (2011), Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People* (2012) *and finally Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy* (2017–2020). These were and are calls for including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and knowledges into Primary and Secondary education and all University curriculum.

Despite all these calls we know that generally in Australia there is still an uneven exposure in all curriculum to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge

[1]Nolan (2009). Personal and professional teaching notes. Cited and used with permission. Psychology, University Learning and Teaching, Exercise Science, Health and Physical Education, Communication and Advertising, Health Services Management and Nursing.

systems, epistemologies and ontologies, and that over 320 000 graduates each year emerge from our institutes of higher education ill-equipped in any cohesive way to engage intellectually, morally, ethically or politically with the emerging debates and thinking around such matters as constitutional change and constitutional reform and are also ill-equipped to understand the essence of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the Makarrata that underpins it. Meanwhile, the Gap between socio-economic determinants and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples still remains and in some cases only widens. That graduates may carry a lack of knowledge and skills into their professional and personal lives as the change makers and citizens of the future is alarming.

Teaching Aboriginal Cultural Competence: Authentic approaches addresses a multitude of discipline areas including Allied Health, Law, Social Work, Physiology, Arts, Education.

The Journey: Answering the Call

The authors of these chapters grapple with these ideas and concerns from their own cultural, personal and professional standpoints. Everyone involved in writing these chapters has had the opportunity to engage with Elders, not only to see and discuss their own cultural viewpoints but to try to understand the view points and cultural standpoints of the Elders and the communities they lead and care for in cultural perpetuity. Some of the relationships between Elders and authors are long-standing; some are more recent; some are personal; some are professional; and many are both. Regardless, every one of us represented in this book is on the journey of Cultural Competence. Some just beginning and some further down the road (and some possibly around the corner too) but no one ever arrives. This is a never- arrived at destination—but it is a journey that must be embarked upon and it is the movement forward that matters.

Universities Australia's (2011) national documents guiding this work view 'Cultural awareness' and 'cultural safety' as sharing common elements with that of 'cultural competence'. It has been argued that cultural competence encompasses yet transcends notions of cultural awareness and safety to include critical reflexivity of self and profession, capacity building of skills and decolonisation of organisational paradigms, policies and procedures (Nolan, 2008). We suggest all these elements are as important as the other.

One of the reasons we embarked on this book was a lack of stories from our Elders, our staff and our students about the experience 'at the chalk face'. We know about the national push and the institutions working hard to embed cultural competence—about governance and aspirations to governance and leadership—but what is happening in the classrooms and in the lives of those who are working in this space? What is happening to our students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal; what is happening to our staff as students, our undergraduate and postgraduate students—while on this journey? What does a lived experience look like in this space?

Who We Take on Our Journey: From the Editors

To go on a journey you need trusted friends and colleagues. In times of learning, testing and intrigue on a journey—it is always good to have company to share those moments with.

These chapters embrace Wiradyuri and Ngyieempaa Elders, Elders from other Nation groups who support this work, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal university academics as well as Aboriginal students at varying levels of attainment. It is from the latter—our students—that we as editors were most challenged and transported. We all agreed our futures are in good hands.

We begin and end the book with chapters written by Aboriginal students. Sharman Okan's chapter *Who are the Experts? Where the 'self' and the 'other' meet when Building Relationships with Aboriginal Elders* uses the work of Parker (2004) to examine an academic reflexivity process for qualitative research in Aboriginal contexts. Sharman urges us not to lose the art of perceiving and understanding the ineffable, unmeasurable interactions between people, both in clinical and naturalistic settings. She also uses the work of psychotherapist Dr. Ann Jauregui (2003) to explain moments when transmission of an experience and/or feeling occurs, the commonplace drops its disguise, and life becomes saturated with deeper meaning, creating an epiphany (a sudden grasp of meaning and/or reality). In her experience listening to Elders, really listening, leads regularly to epiphanistic moments. Okan also cites Ralph Waldo Emerson, the nineteenth-century philosopher, who explained it thus: 'There is a depth in those brief moments which constrain us to ascribe more reality to them than all other experiences' Emerson (1884, p. 219).

Yaliilan Leanne Windle's *When the Elders Govern Your Learning* was written as part of a Life Writing subject, and charts her journey, through her experiences of higher education, towards a place of strength and power in her identity as a Wiradyuri/Dharawhal woman.

Leanne courageously lays bare her struggles and triumphs in an intimate, personal and deeply reflective way.

In the discipline of Psychology Jillene Harris, Uncle Mallyan Brian Grant, Aunty Wirribee Leanna Carr-Smith, Simone Gray and Leonie Miller in their chapter, *Authentically modifying a first year psychology subject,* consider how a first year foundational psychology subject was modified to make it more culturally safe. It considers the way that Wiradyuri ethics; Yindyamarra, and Wiradyuri pedagogy; yindyamaldhuray yalbilinya mawang were used to redesign this subject from its existing Western framework towards a decolonized approach. The chapter considers the modification of the subject as a journey rather than an end point. It makes the point that seemingly big changes in teaching approach can start with quite small changes to activities and assessment.

Lloyd Dolan, Barbara Hill, Jillene Harris, Melinda Lewis and Bruce Stenlake in their chapter *The benefits of In Country experiences at the tertiary level* discuss, from their various cultural viewpoints and perspectives, some of what they feel, both personally and professionally, Learning *in* Country can bring to the academe as a key

aspect in building authentic and meaningful relationships with Indigenous Australian peoples.

In *Exploring identities: challenges in the classroom*, Ruth Bacchus describes teaching a subject called Politics of Identity. The subject explored various facets of collective and personal identities, including gender and sexuality, class, culture and ethnicity, 'race', national and global identities, embodiment, and technology. Of these, issues of 'race', and of relationships between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians seemed to be the most confronting and difficult for students and the most challenging to 'teach'. Partly because of this, but equally importantly because of Ruth's growing and valued personal relationships with members of the Wiradyuri, Ngiyeempaa and Biripai communities, she decided to emphasise and strengthen the subject's focus on the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This chapter describes how she drew increasingly on material that reflected and respected the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and more specifically on the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars, to help students begin developing skills in cultural competence.

Annette Gainsford, Alison Gerard, and Kim Bailey in '*Yindyamarra in Action': Indigenous cultural competence as core business within legal education and law schools* challenge us to think about how law and the institutions that teach law have remained traditional and elitist for too long. The realities of the legal need and incarceration rates in Australia show there is a desperate need for lawyers who are trained to think and act in culturally competent ways. The legal profession has failed to address the problems of Indigenous offending, youth incarceration, access to justice, rural/regional/remote legal need and social change. This has been acknowledged by the NSW Department of Justice and in repeated Royal Commissions. The authors describe an alternative; a degree that is unique because, unlike any other law programme, it has embedded cultural competency throughout as a whole pedagogical approach. Charles Sturt University's LLB programme is producing graduates who can now work cross culturally, and who are committed to social action and policy change in corrections, justice and government.

Dave Ritchie's chapter, *Doing what is right: Behavioural change in service delivery at the higher end of cultural competence. A psycho-socio-cultural model for undergraduate and postgraduate health care professionals*, uses a simple framework of define: measure: value: choose to address some of the differences in thinking and reasoning that can be used to better understand the roles played in improving the health status of individuals, families and communities. The content of this chapter should encourage a reconsideration of the significance of a bio-medical model and a greater engagement with a more complex psycho-socio-cultural model.

Natalia Bilton, John Rae and Tyson Yunkaporta in their chapter, entitled *A conversation about Indigenous pedagogy, neuroscience and material thinking*, describe how the 8 Ways of Indigenous Knowing can inform the design of learning activities to support student engagement with anatomy and physiology across a broad range of educational settings. Their chapter provides a unique framework and starting point where academics can foster creativity in their teaching practice and help build on the discourse of Indigenous andragogy in the tertiary education sector.

Linda Ghys and Simone Gray critically reflect, in their chapter *Practicing what we preach: reflecting on culturally competent practice in the teaching of Indigenous Australian content*, about how to think about our teaching practice and the ideas surrounding and informing it. The challenge, they argue, is to take step back and consider thinking through a series of questions related to the reflective act. The complexities of this are added to when teaching outside of a culture that is not our own. So specifically, they critically reflect on their own positions as non-Indigenous women teaching Indigenous content to students from a variety of disciplines.

Chelsea Litchfield and Jaquelyn Osborne, in their chapter *Using developments in sport in Australia to promote cultural competence in higher education courses at CSU*, examine how a number of sporting and accrediting bodies have recently recognised the importance of education in this space for athletes, coaches, sport journalists and exercise professionals. One example, they remind us, has been the implementation of reconciliation action plans by sporting associations (such as the AFL, NRL and the 2018 Commonwealth Games).

Recognising the importance of cultural competence in sporting spaces provides a pertinent context for teaching cultural competence in the discipline of sport and exercise science at the tertiary level.

Caroline Robinson's chapter *Curriculum to scaffold the students' journey of cultural competence: whole-of-program approach in allied health* examines the continuum of cultural competence and its relevance to assessment tasks across the entirety of an undergraduate allied health course. She forcefully argues that a whole of programme approach to assessment offers the opportunity to design a curriculum which frames the students' experience of their developing cultural competence and enhances the quality of learning.

In *Reflections on a nursing curriculum: lessons learnt* Jessica Biles examines Indigenous Australian morbidity and mortality as a significant national concern within Australia. She discusses how various strategies have been implemented within healthcare, all with limited success and cites that one major inhibitor experienced by Indigenous Australian peoples engaging with mainstream health services is racially motivated care exhibited by healthcare professionals. She argues that in Australia, nurses represent 57% of the healthcare workforce and ensuring that undergraduate nursing curricula are tailored to the development of culturally competent care is paramount.

Denise Wood and Greg Auhl in *Course and subject design facilitating Indigenous cultural competence* explore how the embedding of cultural competence can occur as part of a disciplined, consistent approach to course design, ensuring that Graduate Attributes and the Graduate Learning Outcomes of the university form a part of the guiding framework. Their work describes how a transparent process based on feedback from stakeholders across the institution and supported by a bespoke software system empowers course teams to have input at all stages of design and development.

In *The biases we bring: 'Debiasing' higher education curriculum through the dynamics of implicit and unconscious bias* Melinda Lewis and Bruce Stenlake argue that cultural competence can be challenging for teachers because both student and teacher are embedded in their own cultural context. They discuss how personal stories

built upon everyday experiences may risk reinforcing narratives that counter cultural competence. Instead they call for debiasing, or surfacing and uncovering one's own biases through reflective activities to offer liberating experiences. Ultimately they ask, 'How do we work towards managing the dynamics of curriculum to mitigate the unintended consequences of bias?"

In her chapter, *The place of individual spirituality in the pedagogy of discomfort and resistance*, Susan Mlcek discusses cultural competence in the context of social work education. Susan describes the many fascinating ways a spirituality derived from her Maori identity can lend power to a fight against 'the overpowering whiteness of everything as a contemporary process of erasure; whitewashing history and current events in order to rub out the subtleties of oppression on so many levels'. She discusses the idea in the work of Audre Lorde (1984) who wrote in 1983, 'I cannot afford the luxury of fighting one form of oppression only. I cannot afford to believe that freedom from intolerance is the right of only one particular group. And I cannot afford to choose between the fronts upon which I must battle these forces of discrimination, wherever they appear to destroy me. And when they appear to destroy me, it will not be long before they appear to destroy you' (n.p.). An overwhelming sense of despair is evident in the above refrain, but there is also a pedagogy of hope that comes from a galvanising depth of social action.

Anne Llewellyn, in writing *Scaffolding students' cultural competence through unstructured learning*, recounts how her final year advertising students were briefed for an assessment item in their course to develop a marketing communications strategy to encourage Indigenous student enrolments in Bachelor of Communication courses. Students were required to research attitudes of potential Indigenous students to develop their campaign recommendations. Low student numbers, student entry, student retention, racism and cultural ignorance were issues that had to be considered. The impact this experience had on the students was significant. They were deeply moved by learning about problems facing Indigenous students. A far greater understanding of the experience of Indigenous Australians in general, and Indigenous students in particular, was achieved as a result. Their campaign recommendations reflected a deep and emotional connection to the issues surrounding Indigenous Australians. In a second example, another cohort of marketing communications students was briefed by an Indigenous organisation to develop recommendations to promote an authentic Indigenous education programme for school children. Their investigation into the market reinforced to them the importance of the authentic education programme being offered by the Wiradyuri Elders, and the cultural significance of the programme. Additionally, students' understanding of Indigenous issues and cultural competencies was maximised by this authentic experience.

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