Second Podcast 2.0

Transcript with references for Podcast 2: Discussing the challenges of introducing an Indigenist approach to learning and teaching.

Welcome to my second podcast.

In this podcast I'll reflecting on the challenges I've identified when it comes to bringing Indigenist learning and teaching practice into a university setting.

In the previous podcast I talked about the potential of an Indigenist learning and teaching approach using examples from my work delivering education to undergraduate and postgraduate social work students in an Australian university.

To quickly recap on that, I have been part of a teaching team that has endeavoured to utilise Indigenist teaching practices to improve the experience for learners and teachers, to deepen the learning outcomes during the time the subject is taught but very much in consideration of the longer lasting impact these experiences will have on developing the capacity of social work practitioners to provide better services to those they work with and to better support the human rights and social justice based approach the profession is committed to.

Based on my PhD research findings, moves to engage and incorporate Indigenist approaches to learning and teaching must be done through a rights-based approach. This means that these practices and processes must be Indigenous led and managed.

The recognition that Indigenist approaches are intrinsically of First Nations knowledges must be made clear. This message was echoed by the yarning participants and is broadly supported in the literature I have engaged that discusses the intersection between Indigenous and Indigenist practice. This includes the obligation to engage and involve Country via First Nations custodians and communities of Country on which Indigenist practice is taking place.

Indigenist practices are borne of collectivist, relationally developed and expressed knowledges that are given their deepest and most significant expressions in place, in context, on Country. So the rights of Indigenous peoples and the rights of Country are inextricably linked and intertwined, however we are yet to see anything in policy or legislation within Australia that reflects this.

This is a very different way of thinking in comparison to how rights are understood via a Western paradigm. From a big picture Indigenous world view, knowledge is shared to maintain a clearly defined and agreed upon approach regarding what our roles, responsibilities and obligations are. Not just to what we can see and touch in our immediate physical world, but to all that we can imagine and beyond.

The integrity and maintaining of collectivist knowledge is based on investing in and relying on the building, securing and maintaining of relationships and relatedness. This was clearly shown in the findings of my my PhD research.

It seems there are significant differences in how rights are considered, pursued, experienced and maintained from an Indigenous and Western viewpoint. The Indigenous concept of collective custodianship of knowledge and relational responsibility to maintain and share knowledge is a very different one to the western concept of individual ownership of knowledge and individual rights to control how knowledge is used (Redvers et al, 2020).

This makes for a very challenging negotiation at the cultural interface, as defined and discussed from the Indigenous perspective by Dr Martin Nakata. And that's assuming any genuine negotiation is going take place at the cultural interface.

As I've previously discussed, there is not a lot of evidence that universities in Australia are ready, willing and able to move beyond their culturally hegemonic approach to engaging with those that seek to share Indigenous knowledges and practices.

Based on my 25 years of lived experience working in the Australian university space, including working at an executive level, it would be naive to assume that there is anything close to any official, policy-based recognition that First Nations peoples have a right to be involved in learning and teaching in the academy beyond that of a homogenised group seeking equitable access to what's currently on offer.

This includes universities employing Indigenous people to deliver Indigenous content and to add Indigenous perspectives, within existing curriculum. I suggest that the most recent Australian university sector policies and priority statements confirm this.

There are statements about the recognition and inclusion of 'Indigenous knowledge' but this doesn't amount to much if those knowledges are not informing the design of curriculum and are not delivered via Indigenous or Indigenist learning and teaching practices.

This is a phenomenon I have witnessed over twenty five years of being involved in university based education and research in Australia, and in particular being involved and committed to the establishment of First Nations support, teaching and research spaces within Australian universities since the late 1990's. I might be considered part of the second generation of Indigenous academia in Australia, quickly following on from the first generation that emerged in the late 1970's and early 1980's.

Looking back to those early days I can see that this was a time of a unified, collectivist tertiary education activism coming from Aboriginal and Torres strait Islander peoples and their allies. This activism, focussed on demands for culturally safe inclusion as part of a broader assertion of First Nations rights to land and social equality. In retrospect things tended to happen fast as the significant politically and socially progressive left-wing movements of the 1960's and 1970's began to have influence in mainstream social policies.

Well into the 1970's there was virtually no Indigenous academic staff within universities and moves to recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into Australian universities as students or faculty did not start happening until the early 1980's. By the late 1980's Indigenous student support centres were emerging within universities and Indigenous studies, delivered by Indigenous academic staff was starting to take shape. It's important to point out that these changes were typically the result of rights focussed Indigenous activism and not an outcome of progressive policy making within universities. The formal policy making that followed via government and from within individual universities was framed around the inclusion of Indigenous students and staff as one of a number of disadvantaged equity groups. It was fundamentally welfare orientated and assimilationist. It did not reflect an Indigenous rights based perspective and arguably this is how policy has continued to be focussed.

All this was happening well before any significant international level policies or statements about Indigenous rights via the UN or any other international forums. I become keenly aware of the growing international Indigenous collaboration on asserting Indigenous rights when I started

assisting some of the Indigenous Australian representatives within the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in 1998. On reflection I believe that I was mentored into academia by Indigenous rights activists, so I have always associated First Nations involvement in Australian education as a rights based issue. I can certainly see that for many non-Indigenous policy makers and academics in Australia, the focus was not on a First Nations rights based argument but rather from an equity based inclusion perspective that whilst 'well-meaning' was, and remains to be significantly tone deaf to the premise that First Nations peoples have an inherent right to be part of the systematic human services landscape in Australia, and that recognising such a right means that the systematic human services landscape, including tertiary education will be experienced differently for all concerned as First Nations approaches effect and reshape what was previously a culturally hegemonic, settler colonial defined experience.

Focussing in on learning and teaching in Australian universities, without a tangible experience of engaging with an authentic Indigenous or Indigenist process students will simply experience Indigeneity as content, via a Western ontological lens.

let's revisit some definitions here in regard to what Indigenist theory and practice is because I believe that a focus on an Indigenist approach can help provide a much needed conduit between what might appear to be intractable epistemological differences at the cultural interface.

Dr Michael Hart is an Aboriginal Canadian social work scholar who has engaged extensively with the theory and practice of an Indigenist approach within the social work space. Dr Hart makes the following critical point about the Indigenist approach.

" Indigenist social work is based on Indigenous philosophies, knowledges and ways of being, as well as the political and social contexts that Indigenous peoples face….To develop a deeper understanding of colonial oppression, racism and privilege, Indigenist social work relies on Indigenous knowledges as well as critical theories and literature on social justice."

Hart, M. A., Burton, A., & Hart, K. (Eds.). (2016). International indigenous voices in social work. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

The way I see it, taking an Indigenist approach allows us to bring a rights based, social justice perspective focus to the critique of the ongoing colonising practices of the university sector whilst remaining directly connected to the integrity of Indigenous philosophies and knowledges, which guide us in developing a truly decolonising approach to the current political and social contexts. It's still all about process.

This point is much more important than an argument about the semantics between using the term Indigenous or Indigenist. It's about making it clearer as to what differentiates an Indigenous approach and an Indigenist approach and therefore why my choice to identify an Indigenist approach in this context is important.

In saying that, having attempted to rationalise the Indigenist approach ontologically and epistemologically within the academy, I need to be as clear. In my direct professional experience and the experiences of many Indigenous people in Australia, that have shared their experiences with me privately and publicly, discussions about Indigenous rights in an Australian university context can often be a highly frustrating experience at best that may lead to an experience of significant marginalisation and career isolation.

I have tried having these conversations within the academy over and over again. Despite having a compelling benchmark for a rights based approcah via the United Nations Declaration on the Rights

of Indigenist Peoples, of which Australia is a signatory. The notion of a rights based approach does not seem to be something that is taken seriously by university executives. To my surprise it has also not been a topic or initiative that has been clearly supported by senior Indigenous executive staff that have increasingly been present within Australian universities.

Perhaps not surprising given that the standards and measures of the Indigenous rights declaration have not found their way into legislative and policy making culture within Australia in any context. This stands in stark contrast to our neighbouring State of Aotearoa New Zealand where the rights of Māori peoples have long been part and parcel of legislative and policy making. In fact, right now the New Zealand government is consulting with Māori on how New Zealand can implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples into national political process.

Remember my reference in the first podcast to the T shirt slogan “because racism”. This is where I need to start unpacking my thesis around that.

Is it possible that in critically evaluating what does and doesn’t happen in Australian universities in regard to Indigenous people’s participation, we may have consistently played down the underlying ideological drivers at work? I think this is absolutely the case.

Let’s start with some fundamental historic facts that we teach undergraduate social work students in the first few weeks of the First Peoples and Social Justice subject. The colonising project perpetuated on this continent and its peoples, represents one the most violent and sustained land grabs in modern history.

At no point in this process was consent from First Nations sought, there was no negotiated outcomes and not a single treaty entered into between First Nations and the British Crown, nor with the Australian Government and First Nations since Federation in 1901. The rationale for all this was founded on the notion that Australia was a land of terra nullius until the High Court of Australia deemed that to be a legal fiction in 1992.

It was deemed a legal fiction because of the overwhelming evidence presented by First Nations peoples to the contrary. It seems incredible and absurd that a decade’s worth of meticulously gathered and presented evidence had to appraised by the most powerful legal authority in the nation for a decision that basically said First Nations Peoples were legitimate unique human societies at the time of colonisation and continue to have legitimate unique human societies, unless of course and I quote the “the sands of time have washed them away”.

That is perhaps the most sanitised, cognitively dissonate, and base explanation of the impact of ethnic cleansing and state sanctioned genocide that I can imagine. And this is very important to consider, regarding just how desensitised the colonial settler public are to such a grievous absolving of responsibility on behalf of the nation state.

Despite this incredible formalisation of the obvious by the High Court, the Australian Governments response was far from a rights-based consideration. There was no mention of the need for treaties to resolve what was now a clear-cut case of violent dispossession and centuries of racist governance on a grand scale.

There was no consideration of reparations for ethnic cleansing and genocide. Instead, we got the now problematic and ill-conceived Native Title Act (Young, 2008.).

It’s a startling fact that this piece of legislation was based on creating a second-tier form of land title that provides little more than rights of access to crown land for government sanctioned ‘Traditional

Owners', and places the rights of pastoralists and their cattle above the rights of First Nations native title holders. It's also a form of land title that can be quashed by any state government as it sees fit, as evidenced in the Adani mine project in Central Queensland.

To sum it up, it's a hegemonic colonial settler response to managing the perceived threat of First Nations peoples enjoying their unceded and therefore ongoing rights, and to avoid the colonial settler state being called into account in ways that it cannot dictate.

I see strong parallels with this outcome mirrored and echoed in mainstream agencies and institutions throughout Australia, including the universities I work in and have worked in.

The underlying ideology at work here is White supremacism. Just don't bring that up in meetings with university executives, and maybe not with most of the non-Indigenous colleagues you work with. That's going too far beyond the pale at the cultural interface.

On the other hand, with the universities approval, do bring it up with students in classes that critically reflect on and analyse colonisation, the making of whiteness, and how Australia stands out within the cultural Anglosphere as a nation that has gone to extreme lengths over it's relatively short colonial history, to socially engineer and maintain a racially privileged white society.

Do ask students to critically reflect on the ongoing legacy of this within the structural and systematic processes at play today and the impact this has on First Nations peoples in particular.

I continue to marvel at how quickly students can grasp all this when given a series of facts, some examples of sound anti-oppressive theory, process that supports them to critically reflect in a safe way, and a new awareness that there are alternatives to tinkering at the edges of ideologies whose foundations are built on profoundly discriminatory and irrational concepts of racial supremacy.

In a matter of weeks students of diverse sociocultural backgrounds will move from being unaware of the dominant paradigms of oppression they live within to arriving at a realisation that these paradigms cannot support the human rights and social justice principles that their chosen professions require them to live up to in practice.

It's a truly an experience of deep frustration when the university that is paying you to deliver subjects grounded in anti-colonial theory and practice is not willing to commit to anti colonial practice in it's own systematic practices and within it's workplace cultures.

The message I get is that it's OK to teach this stuff to social work students because the AASW wants it taught, but it's definitely not OK to challenge the way the university operates by applying an anti-colonial analysis to their practice. This is not a culturally safe space to work in if you are an Indigenous academic who expects their employer to practice what they preach via curriculum.

As I've said I am certainly not the only one pointing this situation out and calling for change. There has been far more written about the culturally unsafe, colonising and racist practices of academia and universities in the 21st century than what has been written about Indigenist learning and teaching in action. (Gunstone, 2009; Povey et al, 2023; Bunda et al, 2012; Bond, 2014; Asmar and Page, 2009).

For example, Dr Martin Nakata's book Discipling the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines back in 2007 and most recently the powerful work of Dr Chelsea Watego via her book Another Day in the Colony (Nakata, 2007; Bond, 2022).

From my perspective, I see this as a continuation of the process versus content issue. Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowleges continue to be subjugated as content within a hegemonic culture of whiteness, whereby the ways of doing and what is valued are not negotiable.

I believe this non-negotiable stance is driven by an overarching ideological belief that white cultural processes and practices are logically and rationally the only way to approach the governance, administration and delivery of education in Australia, as they are quite simply the most sophisticated and superior. This is by definition a racist approach.

I am not suggesting that those who support this approach are intentionally and consciously colluding to utilise racism as a process, nevertheless there is collusion on a grand scale, which may be for the most part unconscious, but that doesn't make a lot of difference to the outcome. What's more the lack of conscious thought amongst those colluding makes challenging it much harder.

When ideologically driven people in positions of power and authority are the unconscious champions of a white supremacist approach the opportunity to openly challenge and debate that approach is unlikely.

In my experience, what's more likely to happen, is that the person challenging a white supremacist approach is cast as an aggressor making unfair and even derogatory personal accusations about those who collude to enable the process. Such critiques of process and practice may be re-defined by those in authority as misconduct whilst subconsciously confirming racist beliefs about the moral and intellectual weakness of the racially imagined and colonially established native subaltern (Moreton-Robinson, 2015 p 154-172).

Chelsea Bond talks directly to this scenario within her recent book "Another Day in the Colony".

This situation echoes the historic theocratic governance processes of Western Europe, whereby the criticism of the all-powerful unquestionable processes and practices, informed by ideology, is deemed to be blasphemous and warranting sanction or worse. These are the foundation ideologies of White supremacism.

This situation is exactly why we are educating social work students to understand their positionality coming into a situation in which you will be empowered to have authority over others.

We support students to develop their capacity to critically analyse power structures and the systematic expressions of these structures, and to apply anti-oppressive solutions to imagine and create alternative approaches to oppressive hegemonic practices and to avoid the impacts of oppressive practices.

In short, we are supporting students to become conscious of ideologies and practices that legitimise discrimination, including those that may be personally held. Of these ideologies white supremacist ideology looms large.

This is a student learning and teaching experience that is far more challenging and transformative than the more typical 'cultural competency' training favoured by university executives and managers in which 'Indigenous culture' is once again made the content whist the process, typically conducted in less than a whole day, is designed to present essentialised information that will help the essentialised non-Indigenous successfully engage with the essentialised Indigenous, such that incredibly complex issues and circumstances stemming from hundreds of years of colonial violence, can be confidently addressed. This is the application of magical thinking at best and has been

extensively critiqued for the past two decades (Abrams and Moio, 2009; Beagan, 2018; Carey, 2015; Carpenter et al, 2007; Fisher-Borne et al, 2015; Kirmayer, 2012.)

Yet in 2023 cultural competency training for executive staff has been deemed the way forward as the most effective way to supporting First Nations staff in an Australian university.

If we are going to try and introduce and implement Indigenist learning and teaching approaches within universities, as a pathway to the decolonisation of tertiary education in Australia, we will need to develop a critical mass of Indigenist practitioners and a policy platform that clearly supports the approach.

As it stands there are arguably a small number of Indigenous academics and their allies flying under the radar and utilising Indigenist approaches based on their personal commitment to social justice and improved learning outcomes.

This is not a culturally safe and sustainable strategy and there is compelling evidence via the literature that Indigenous academic staff are vulnerable to experiences of racism and marginalisation generally within universities but especially so when hegemonic systems and practices are questioned and challenged. This is a situation I have personally experience throughout 25 years of involvement with tertiary education in Australia (Bullen and Flavell, 2020; Bunda et al, 2012; Fredricks, 2009; Gunstone, 2009; Rochecouste et al, 2014).

I want to reflect on some personal experiences within Australian universities to emphasise how these discriminatory and unsafe white supremacist ways of thinking play out in everyday academic life and at what cost.

These experience should be contextualised around the recognition via the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy (2022 – 25) that universities should acknowledge additional and often unseen work undertaken by Indigenous staff and recognise this work when negotiating academic staff workloads and that Indigenous knowledges should be engaged within teaching and research activities.

In response to the policy-based call to recognise and respond to the additional and unseen work myself and other Indigenous academic colleagues put forward an evidence based case that we were experiencing high levels of emotional labour on a number of fronts. This included managing the ongoing impact, over and over again, of course content that discussed in depth, the traumatic impacts of colonisation, including genocide, on the First Nations societies and communities we are all variously from. It included supporting Indigenous and non-Indigenous students through this experience. It also included supporting our non Indigenous academic colleagues to develop curriculum that included First Nations content and perspectives that they did not have the depth of knowledge and critically understanding to do well.

Our request was not that we should not have to do this. On the contrary, we were clearly committed. Our requests were that we get relatively small amounts of additional time factored into our workloads to do such things as provide quality feedback to students assessments, provide quality support to other staff and to engage in peer supervision.

Whilst executive staff acknowledged that we had provided an evidence-based case. Their response signalled something else entirely. In short, it was suggested that Indigenous staff could be replaced with non-Indigenous staff and that we could be moved into teaching courses with no First Nations content.

We rejected this proposal. Equivocally rejected it. Regardless the proposal was forced on us. This resulted in some Indigenous staff leaving the university in distress. Yet again I felt I was faced with a situation in which I had to have a fight with executive staff I did not want.

Whist there was recognition from executive staff that emotional labour in this context was a genuine issue, the decision that was made to address it was beyond what I had imagined would happen, and not in a good way. I recall how deeply impacted I was as this process played out.

The most obvious thing to those of us involved was how absurd it was to assume that critically reflecting on issues of colonial violence, systematic discrimination and ongoing racial oppression would not have an emotional impact on a non-Indigenous academic. I mean, what sort of racialized logic was at play here, in such an unconscious way, that someone would confidently put it forward in the guise of being in any way supportive.

For me this was the definition of a culturally unsafe space, I could barely think straight through this time.

Regardless of what these executive staff members imagined that they were doing, I felt that I had just been subjected to racist decision making. Not that it was the first time.

I was determined not to abandon my commitment to delivering the courses I was committed to and employed to teach, so I began the push-back against these decisions, seeking support from other academic colleagues and threatening to make this situation a public story.

The concession I gained was to remain as the convenor and facilitator of one postgraduate course I had designed and written, and to team teach into others with newly appointed two White identifying staff who had no experience with the process nor the content. At no point was the consideration of the student experienced factored into this decision making.

In another example, I had proposed, along with other Indigenous colleagues, that the faculty recognise First Nations Knowledges and Practices as a discipline, amongst the multiple disciplines that were already formally recognised. Our team were consistently engaged in cross disciplinary work with the other disciplines as we were sought out to support them in engaging with First Nations knowledges and content within their own curriculum development and teaching practices.

Again we put together a detailed, evidence based argument for this recognition. Whilst it was initially considered at executive level, the final response was that we re-consider our proposed role as more like an advisory group. It was literally suggested that we could be like the proposed voice to parliament. Despite our rejection of this option, it was the only option deemed possible by executive. There was no rationale whatsoever put forward as to why. It was not an option we could accept whereby once again First Nations Peoples are subjected to a powerless and subservient status within the structure.

These and other events such as this have happened to me and around meover my entire career . Recently I have had to come to terms with an acceptance that the commitment to a rights based relationship with the academy has taken its toll on me. I have developed significant depression. If it was not for the support of my family, good friends and supportive colleagues I would not have been

able to push back against what I believe is a deeply entrenched colonising culture for as long as I have, but, after 25 years, it's neither sensible or sustainable to continue to do it.

I'm relating these stories to provide a sense of the human impact that plays out every time these culturally unsafe and discriminatory processes occur. And they occur frequently and readily for Indigenous people within the academy, as has been clearly documented within the literature.

So where do I go with this discussion about the challenges we face when trying to introduce Indigenist process into spaces and places that appear to be so deeply stuck in colonising practices, borne of white supremacist ideological beliefs. The cruel irony is that an Indigenist approach provides a solution to this situation.

In her book "Another Day in the Colony" (Bond, 2021), a reflective work that talks directly to what I have discussed in this podcast, Dr Chelsea Watego has titled the final chapter "Fuck Hope". In this chapter Dr Watego makes the point that we should not continue to cling to hope as a rational response to these systematic processes of oppression. She makes the point and I quote

"They will never realise our humanity, no matter how many reconciliation action plans, race discrimination cases or special research funding rounds they establish. And there is a real danger in entertaining any of the performative illusions of Indigenous inclusion or appreciation, either aspirational or actual in the colony"

Dr Watego makes the point that the nihilism of this analysis should be considered a positive grounding experience and a commitment to being unapologetically Black. I think such a philosophical stance will be easily misunderstood by white colleagues and allies who might encourage their Indigenous colleague not to give up hope, whilst all the while never having to gamble their own place in the academy on such an ephemeral and powerless concept.

My takeaway from Dr Watego's concluding chapter in this book, is that hope is what the oppressor offers as a distraction whilst conspiring to undermine aspirations that will never be permitted to be realised.

This analysis resonates very deeply with me, as a person who shares a lot of common ground with Chelsea Watego, within the world of work at a university. As someone trained and practiced in critical studies, it seems rational to abandon hope in the face of my experience over the best part of a quarter of a century.

And in agreement and solidarity with Chelsea Watego I'm not equating the giving up of hope with abandoning my right to champion and demand better practice at the cultural interface.

So where to from here in moving beyond the dominate paradigm?

If we move away from the confines of the institution and out into a broader public space, and the broader world of popular public literature, there is a developing theme around the significance of First knowledges and First Law that I believe should be considered in connection to theme of process being more important than content, and what place and Indigenist approach to sharing knowledge might play.

Recent publications such as "Sand Talk", by Dr Tyson Yunkaporta; "The Dreaming Path" by Paul Callahan and Uncle Paul Gordon; "Law: The way of the Ancestors" by Marcia Langton and Aaron Corn; "gigorou: First Nations wisdom and womanhood" by Sasha Sarago, and "Journey into Dreamtime" by Aunty Munya Andrews.

These are all books that present First Nations Knowledges and practices as contemporary relevant and important to all people, as a guide and inspiration for how can see we see the world and each other outside of and away from ideologies of separation and oppression.

These books represent much more than hope. They present decolonising options and are an invitation to consciously engage change.

My belief, based on my practice experience, is that many people resonate with the need to move away from colonising and oppressive ways of doing and being, Indigenist process is the conduit.

Indigenist practice represents a conscious synthesis of knowledges in response to the impacts and outcomes of colonisation. It offers those engaged in learning and teaching for change, an embodied experience of what decolonisation is as process and how that process can be further developed and shared in a wholistic context, that includes but is not limited to the way we work as professionals with others.

I believe it's accurate to say that there is compelling evidence that many universities and other institutions within Australia, responsible for delivering education, are not engaged with Indigenous peoples, Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous practices from a rights-based perspective, even if they go so far as to suggest they are.

There is still an overarching deficit paradigm that locates Indigenous peoples as a homogenised welfare group that should be included within the equity of access mix. Indigenous knowledges are reduced to content whilst Indigenous and Indigenist processes and practices are ignored at best and actively rejected at worst. Indigenous academic staff are often the objects of performative justice , profiled as evidence of success via virtue signalling policy outcomes.

Meanwhile within Australia, the socioeconomic circumstances and life outcomes for First nations peoples and communities outside the academy show no significant signs of positive shift as a result of what is happening within the academy. This fact should be the motivation for those within the academy to look beyond current practice.

Throughout my 25 years of working within Australian universities, my hope has always been that the tertiary education sector would take a lead in the recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples to be equal participants in the shaping of the education cultures, practices and professions within Australian education spaces. My experience has been that this has only happened within the teaching and research practices of a small number of isolated individuals and teams within a limited number of institutional spaces and may have come at a cost to career progression and wellbeing for those Indigenous academic staff and their allies as they have struggled to implement and champion Indigenous and/or Indigenist approaches and practices.

There are some notable examples that provide evidence of what could and should be happening on a far broader scale, if a rights-based approach was recognised within the academic community and formalised via policy and outcome, relevant to tertiary institutions throughout Australia. One such examples is The Indigenous Knowledges Systems Lab at Deakin University (Deakin, 2019), established by Dr Tyson Yunkaporta, who I have referenced extensively throughout this Ph.D. study. Another is the Centre for The Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS, 2023). Both these universities have recognised the rights of First Nations Peoples to develop and share their knowledges within the academy.

The fundamental challenge to the inclusion of an Indigenist approach to learning and teaching within Australia universities is not that an Indigenist approach is systematically incompatible with current

practice. I have proved this via the learning and teaching experiences I have enabled and supported over the years. Systems are simply an artefact of the cultures of those who design and operate them. The challenges are based around the philosophies and beliefs those of us who learn and teach within the academy bring with us, and how willing we are to critically reflect on those philosophies and beliefs, against the rationale that First Nations knowledges and practices stand alongside any and all other knowledges and practices within the academy as contemporary, relevant and quite possibly the better option in leading the shift from unsustainable approaches to evidenced based sustainable approaches.

I am not abandoning my own right to hold the academy accountable or my resolve to deepen my commitment to Indigenist learning and teaching practice. I feel that my PhD study has given me a deeper, more nuanced understanding of what it means to take an Indigenous and Indigenist approach to learning and teaching in Australia.

I hold a firm belief that a new generation of First Nations scholars, education activists and their allies will continue to build on the work that those of my generation have contributed to and I look forward to continuing to support that process for as long as I am able to do so.

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