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INTRODUCTION: ISSUES *in* (RE)CONTESTING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES *and* INDIGENOUS STUDIES

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The formalised naming and positioning of Indigenous Australian standpoint within the academy is relatively new and borrows from feminist traditions (Nakata, 2002; Rigney, 1997). Articulating one's own standpoint is recognition of one's subject position and proponents of standpoint contend that one's own identity and subject position is implicated in one's practice within the academy.

The ready acceptance of Indigenous Australian standpoint is testimony to the discontent experienced by Indigenous Australians and Indigenous peoples from other places in relation to the disciplines that formerly held principal authority in relation to knowledge-building about Indigenous peoples, chief amongst these is of course anthropology and other social sciences.

Off the back of this, Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous Studies are gaining traction, incremental change is revolution without the "r", and today's academics who are Indigenous have got the space to centre Indigenous knowledge in our work within the academy. Academics who are non-Indigenous to Australia and other places have also got the opportunity to consolidate their position within the academy on shifted ground.

This special supplementary edition of *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* offers a significant new contribution to this shifted ground and is guest edited by Sandra Phillips, Jean Phillips, Sue Whatman and Juliana McLaughlin of the Oodgeroo Unit of the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). The edition is the published outcome from the inaugural (Re)Contesting Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous Studies Conference hosted by the Oodgeroo Unit in 2006, and the papers bound in this supplementary edition have been blind-refereed and revised for publication. Authors for this Volume submitted from across Australia, South Africa, Norway, Thailand and Canada. This 2006 conference was the first of a series of international conferences planned around the themes of Indigenous studies and Indigenous knowledge. The second conference is being hosted by Jumbunna House of Learning, University of Technology Sydney, in July, 2007, with a third slated for 2008.

In centering Indigenous knowledges, academics and thinkers who are Indigenous Australians are not only challenging the previously-unchallenged authority of

the old disciplines but also the newcomers who are positioning Australian identity as incontestable, benign racially and ethically restorative of what it means to be Australian (Moreton-Robinson, 2000). This new positioning requires perpetuation of human objects as “traditional Aborigines” as if Aboriginal peoples sit outside the human project of life, that we are unable to be who we are and participate in the new society spread across our territories.

When the Oodgeroo Unit invited peers to present on their teaching and research experiences within the academy in relation to “Indigenous knowledges” and “Indigenous studies” at the 2006 (Re)Contesting Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous Studies Conference, we wanted them to position their presentations in relation to particular cultural interfaces. For this, we drew upon Nakata’s (2002) definition of the “cultural interface”; that is, “the intersection of the Western and Indigenous domains ... the place where we live and learn, the place that conditions our lives, the place that shapes our futures and more to the point the place where we are active agents in our own lives – where we make decisions – our lifeworld” (Nakata, 2002, p. 285).

We defined four cultural interfaces upon, within and through which we believe all stakeholders participate in when undertaking knowledge-building in relation to Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous studies:

- Indigenous educators and Indigenous communities;
- Non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous communities;
- Indigenous educators and non-Indigenous educators; and,
- Indigenous standpoint theory and pedagogy.

This special issue of *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* brings 19 of these papers to their new audiences, revealing emerging and established thinking around issues of teaching, research and theory-building in relation to Indigenous Australians and Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous Studies within the academy.

This emerging and established thought is informed by some cutting-edge practice and insightful self-reflection on practice. These papers deliver articulations that integrate theorising with practical engagement, with some offering practical suggestions for further achievement in this domain. They also deliver further depth to ontological, epistemological, theoretical and methodological issues of concern.

This edition begins with conference keynote speaker Professor Martin Nakata’s paper, which builds upon his well-known definition of the “cultural interface”, as mentioned above. Nakata theorises the relationships between important concepts such as Indigenous knowledge, contested knowledge spaces, the locale

of the learner and Indigenous standpoint theory in the quest to establish foundational principles for Australian Indigenous Studies. He argues, for example, that Indigenous standpoint “is not a simple reflection of experience and it does not pre-exist in the everyday waiting to be brought to light. It is not any sort of hidden wisdom that Indigenous people possess. It is a distinct form of analysis and is itself both a discursive construction and an intellectual device to persuade others and elevate what might not have been a focus of others”. Nakata demonstrates that Indigenous academics around Australia are now more than ever in control of emerging understandings of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous Studies.

Bronwyn Fredericks in her paper, “Utilising the concept of pathway as a framework for Indigenous research” draws on Gregory Cajetes’ (1994, p. 55) explanation of “Pathway” – Path denoting structure, Way implying a process – to establish a research framework that explores Aboriginal women’s experiences and perceptions of health and health services. In doing so, Indigenous postdoctoral fellow Fredericks engages with critical and contemporary texts and thought, and displays a fine ability to articulate her own values and experiences as a researcher while attending to the structural and practical concerns of conducting research.

Deanne Minniecon, Naomi Franks and Maree Heffernan in their paper, “Indigenous research: Three researchers reflect on their experiences at the interface” wrestle with unintended dilemmas encountered in the setting of research priorities and questions, in reconciling institutional ethics processes, and in integrating the role of non-Indigenous researchers in Indigenous research. These early career researchers, the former two Indigenous and the latter non-Indigenous, will help others anticipate some areas where there can be a lack of fit between the institution and its processes and the community of interest and its values and priorities.

Continuing with the methodology theme, Jan Stewart in her paper, “Grounded theory and focus groups: Reconciling methodologies in Australian Indigenous education research” explores the meaning, usefulness and persistence of grounded theory with Indigenous participants. Stewart explores how grounded theory juxtaposes with focus groups, and suggests implications for the reciprocal integrity of the research for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and specifically non-Indigenous researchers like herself. She describes her particular research challenge as demonstrating how she has “acknowledged the call by Indigenous peoples for more culturally appropriate research approaches that recognise Indigenous methodologies and demanded respectful relationships”.

The so-called privileged position of Indigenous scholars and researchers within Western academia is critiqued by Priscilla Settee and Shelley Thomas-Prokup in their paper “Community University

Research Agreement". Settee and Thomas-Prokup problematise the roles of Indigenous researchers and scholars, and analyses the complexities of engaging Indigenous communities in a research project as a form of capacity-building. This research focused on a Canadian Aboriginal project in Saskatoon. Settee and Thomas-Prokup also attend to the compounding effect of the issues and demands of being women researchers, Indigenous women in Western academe, and the alliance between university and Indigenous community. Settee and Thomas-Prokup argue for genuine partnerships in research as a venue for true community development.

Jennifer Houston in her paper "Indigenous autoethnography: Formulating our knowledge, our way" continues the challenge taken by renowned scholars and researchers such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2000), bell hooks (1981), and Manulani Meyer (2001), just to name a few, in critiquing the research ethics and systems of representations of Indigenous people and other peoples of colour. Houston, a Palawa woman and academic, critiques the roles of Indigenous women researchers in relation to their sense of respect and responsibility to Indigenous communities and their positions as insider researchers. Houston argues for Indigenous autoethnography as a form of scholarly resistance to the imperialist depiction of the "Other", particularly the Indigenous female "Other", and celebrates the role of Indigenous women in storytelling.

Decolonising Western knowledge in university curriculum is highly problematic for all educators, particularly for non-Indigenous educators. Jane Williamson and Priya Dalal in their paper "Indigenising the curriculum or negotiating the tensions at the cultural interface? Embedding Indigenous perspectives and pedagogies in a university curriculum" critically analyse a teaching and learning project aimed at embedding Indigenous perspectives in undergraduate programmes in an Australian university. The research into the embedding processes revealed the complexities of non-Indigenous educators engaging in negotiating Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in Western oriented disciplines. Key pedagogical approaches useful to renegotiating such curricula include recognition and implementation of levels of engagement beyond the intellectual, a consistent unsettling of Western authority, acknowledgement of Indigenous positions/positionings and ongoing critical self-reflection. Williamson and Dalal, non-Indigenous Australians, conclude these approaches recognise other levels of engagement as they challenge Western systems of knowing but are profoundly challenging for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators.

Steve Dillon, also a non-Indigenous tertiary educator, grapples with issues and consequences for embedding Indigenous perspectives into mainstream

university and school music curricula. In his paper "Maybe we can find some common ground: Indigenous perspectives, a music teacher's story", Dillon illustrates that the process of embedding Indigenous perspectives into tertiary curricula begins with the self and he recognises "a growing awareness of the embodied understanding that stems from an open, continuous and critical discourse with Indigenous people". Too often when non-Indigenous people embark on the process of "embedding" Indigenous perspectives, the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are responsible for the perspectives and knowledge is severed when the "project" is perceived to end. Dillon's paper serves to illustrate that these relationships must be robust and ongoing.

In "Sensibility: A new focus in Sámi health care education", Sámi woman Randi Nymo considers the ways that non-Sámi health professionals impact upon the healing of Sámi patients. Nymo interrogates the presumption of a universal, non-Sámi, cultural framework and maintains that Sami patients experience specific "cultural vulnerabilities" not shared by those for whom the cultural frameworks of the health care system are familiar and culturally relevant.

Nymo positions sensibility as the "ability to sense the Others expressions", a central feature of the cultures of Aboriginal peoples of Norway and surrounding regions which she recommends as a "new focus" for mainstream health care providers. The detail with which Nymo illustrates the historical and contemporary colonial relationships between Sámi and non-Sámi is striking. Readers are encouraged to consider the explicit and multiple ways that the cultural frameworks of dominant cultural groups impact on the Sámi of Norway. The over-riding conclusion that can be drawn from Nymos' analysis is that the answers to problems experienced by Aboriginal peoples within non-Aboriginal contexts continue to reside in Aboriginal knowledge and cultural contexts. Nymo's paper in English as a second language has been written without professional translation and retains some idiosyncratic expression, which the editors believe does not detract from the author's intention or the reader's capacity to interpret.

In "Big worry: Implications of anxiety in Indigenous youth", non-Indigenous authors Jenny Adermann and Marilyn Campbell discuss their research framework around the incidence of anxiety in Indigenous youth in an Australian context. They state that "knowledge about Indigenous research needs to be created between non-Indigenous researchers and Indigenous participants" and discuss what they position as "obstacles" to quality research in the complex issue of "anxiety" as it pertains to Indigenous youth. They acknowledge the difficulties with applying Western definitions and using mainstream research instruments suggesting the presence of "cultural consultants" as a means of redressing this in administering the research.

The interface created between non-Indigenous researchers and Indigenous participants is always fraught. As other authors in this volume attest, ensuring primacy is given to Aboriginal voices not just as participants but as authors of their own research, cannot only reveal the imposition of dominant cultural constructions but also in part mitigate the obstacles which these constructions create. Ultimately, the aim of research with Indigenous communities should be first and foremost about Indigenous community benefit.

Dharug language custodian and song man, Ricky Green and non-Indigenous teacher and linguist Amanda Oppliger reveal in explicit ways how effective collaborations between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people require establishing a strong initial foundation to anticipate and avoid the tensions due to the different systems of knowledge of participants. In "The interface between Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of knowing and learning: A report on a Dharug language programme", Green and Oppliger recognise the complexities involved with communicating within and between cultural interfaces and report on what they describe as "the two steps forward, one step back" collaborative process where they "felt and dealt with the emotional and intellectual demands incurred". Green and Oppliger position their process as one of reconciliation and reconstruction, where Indigenous knowledge and perspectives are being centred alongside Western knowledge and perspectives, and additionally resulting in the establishment of processes for revitalising and teaching the Dharug language. Green and Oppliger highlight the advantages to be gained from the difficult but necessary task of decentring Western worldviews and processes as the only ones assumed to be available for Indigenous programmes or research.

According to Xuefang Peng, there has been much research on gender issues as they apply to "majority Thai women" but little has been done with minority Thai women such as the Hmong. In "Education for Hmong women in Thailand", Chinese academic Peng discusses the traditional economic positioning of Hmong women where status was, and continues to be attached to "marriage, child-bearing and having as many children as possible". Peng makes specific links between gender issues, human rights and socio-economic status and discusses these within contexts of cultural change, placing the traditional conventions of the Hmong women as "obstacles" to continuing formal education. The connections between the uptake of education by the Hmong women of Thailand and the potential for shift in the socio-economic conditions of Hmong women is investigated, citing examples of Hmong women who are now active in business and economic development.

Loretta de Plevitz in her paper "Testing the social justice goals of education: A role for anti-discrimination law" analyses three social justice

strategies which appear to be race-neutral and to apply equally to all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and argues that they may in fact be undermining the social justice they set out to achieve. de Plevitz's paper is thought-provoking and posits argument worthy of further consideration.

Freya Higgins-Desbiolles in her paper "Touring the Indigenous or transforming consciousness?", challenges herself and other non-Indigenous Australians to be self-reflexive. As a non-Indigenous educator in the field of tourism studies she writes: "We have chosen to move into a contested terrain that has historical legacies that we can no longer ignore and to find a place inside of this space we must acknowledge the ongoing impact of this history and be part of building a way forward. What are the contours of the choices?" Higgins-Desbiolles goes on to examine these contours.

John Maynard in his paper "Circles in the sand: An Indigenous framework of historical practice" takes us inside his own motivations for becoming an Aboriginal historian. Maynard has an interesting take on the discipline of history and the place it holds and can hold in our lives.

Principles and protocols for conducting Indigenous research in the field of health research and health delivery are further explored by Leilani Pearce and Bronwyn Fredericks in their paper, "Establishing a community-controlled multi-institutional Centre for Clinical Research Excellence (CCRE) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health". Drawing from the experiences of the development of the Centre for Clinical Research Excellence (CCRE) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health which has a focus on circulatory and associated conditions in urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the authors reaffirm the necessity and vitality of strengthening partnerships between universities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations. Pearce and Fredericks problematise the positions of Indigenous knowledge and argue Indigenous researchers are both subjects and objects of research. The establishment of this CCRE under a community-controlled model of governance is unique and this paper is essential reading for those who research with and about Indigenous Australians.

Malawi man and Australian-based academic Jonathan Makuwira's paper "The politics of community capacity-building: Contestations, contradictions, tensions and ambivalences in the discourse in Indigenous communities in Australia" forms a critique of capacity-building. Makuwira deconstructs the theoretical principles of community capacity-building by drawing on principles and theories of development and empowerment and attends to the politics of community capacity-building by asserting that forms of government community capacity-building initiatives are informed and reinforced by power imbalances between the "builders" and the "beneficiaries" that result in many

tensions. Makuwira posits some alternative strategies for more effective community capacity-building in and with Indigenous Australian communities.

The theme of non-Indigenous people and Indigenous communities undertaking capacity-building projects is continued by Cat Kutay in her paper "Knowledge management as enterprise". Kutay outlines the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a rich and expanding area of enterprise development which supports the development of knowledge and its use in enterprise. Reporting on projects being developed at the University of New South Wales, Kutay proposes two main benefits of utilising ICT to commercialise selected, in-context aspects of Indigenous knowledge. She posits these two main benefits pertain to increased opportunity for Indigenous community control over access to their knowledges and that a corollary benefit to increased control is community development.

Rob Toms in his paper "The sustainable harvesting of edible insects in South Africa, with reference to Indigenous knowledge, African science, Western science and education" reports on research to redress unsustainable edible insect harvesting in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. This research is motivated by addressing this decline in the edible insect industry and by the need for food security, which provides as he writes "a strong incentive to investigate possible causes of problems using different knowledge systems. Any solution to these problems needs to take Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into account if it hopes to be successful and sustainable". This is an important paper that takes us forward to the intersection between Indigenous knowledge systems, Western science and real world applications.

For non-Indigenous Australians, the formalisation of Indigenous knowledges, Indigenous Studies and Indigenous perspectives within the academy in Australia means that the ontological ground is shifting. The non-Indigenous academics here have written of the tensions they experience on the shifted ground and some insight to resolution is offered. Indigenous standpoint encourages them to recognise their own subject positions in the development and presentation of and interaction with our Indigenous knowledges.

For many Indigenous Australians – those in pursuit of scholarly and other community objectives – the consolidation of scholarship in the field of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous Studies is inherently linked to issues of cultural survival, human rights, and economic and political self-determination (Oodgeroo Unit, 2006). The academics who are Indigenous to Australia and other places reveal here the tensions they experience through their work in the academy and offer some clear signposts to anticipation and resolution.

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