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the CULTURAL INTERFACE

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■ Abstract

For a while now I have been researching and writing about Australian Indigenous education issues. Like you all, I have seen much good work and learnt much from what is going on across the country and internationally to improve outcomes for Indigenous learners in formal education processes. And still we go on with the struggle and with the limitations that Western sciences and practices place on us in the process. This paper draws together theoretical propositions from the work we have been progressing for the higher education sector over the past decade and to point to some foundational principles that can help establish some early beginnings with Indigenous education as a discipline in the higher education sector.

■ Indigenous knowledge

Renewed interest in Indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices is widespread and global (Nakata, 2002). This interest has emerged in times of “new configurations in global relations ... [where] the centrality of knowledge ... [is] the emerging currency in that relationship” (Hoppers, 2000, p. 283). The global discourse on Indigenous knowledge thus runs into and across a range of interests such as sustainable development, biodiversity and conservation interests, commercial and corporate interests, and Indigenous interests. It circulates at international, national, state, regional, and local levels in government, non-government, and Indigenous community sectors, and across a range of intellectual, public, private, and Indigenous agendas. It is dispersed across various clusters of Western intellectual activity such as scientific research, documentation and knowledge management, intellectual property protection, education, and health. It is politically, economically, and socially implicated in the lives of millions of people around the globe. To gain a sense of the global reach, do a Google search on the term “Indigenous knowledge”, and see what turns up.

Much of this emerges from the basis of practical concerns in development contexts and practical engagement with peoples’ local knowledges on the ground and for varying purposes. The focus on ecological, environmental, resource management and agricultural practice reflects this, as does the concerns for knowledge maintenance, knowledge management in digital environments, and legal protection. Through an even more complex set of intersections, this emerging trend is mingling with, building on, responding to, contesting, and shaping in turn, a much longer, institutionalised set of discourses with their own socio-historical and discursive practices, including objectified knowledge about Indigenous societies and cultures, and other knowledge production that explains our historical and contemporary positions.

Included in this discursive realm is what some call “the archive”, but which I prefer to broaden and call the corpus; viz., that body of knowledge, both historical and ongoing, that is produced by others “about us” across a range of intellectual, government, and other historical texts. In the academy, this corpus was once primarily the domain of the discipline of anthropology, but now extends across a range of disciplines where Indigenous concerns, or concerns

about Indigenous peoples and issues, intersect with the established disciplines. Slowly, this corpus is incorporating a discernable “Indigenous voice” as Indigenous people insert their own narratives, critique, research, and knowledge production into the corpus. The emergence of revalued and revised “Indigenous knowledge” for inclusion into programme and course content excites some people who see it as a source of “unmediated” knowledge. But we need to be very careful here. Things aren’t just white or black, and things cannot be fixed by simply adding in Indigenous components to the mix. This is a very complicated and contested space.

■ Contested knowledge spaces

In their differences, Indigenous knowledge systems and Western scientific ones are considered so disparate as to be “incommensurable” (Verran, 2005) or “irreconcilable” (Russell, 2005) on cosmological, epistemological and ontological grounds. Although these philosophical concepts are not elaborated here, it is critical that those who have an interest in drawing in Indigenous knowledge into curriculum areas understand these concepts and have some understanding of how differences at these levels frame possible understanding and misunderstanding at the surface levels of aspects of Indigenous knowledge. The literature in this regard is growing internationally and is a worthy area for analysis and assessment. It is emerging out of a range of interests, sectors, and projects across the globe. It criss-crosses from critique, to caution, to advocacy, to theory, to innovation, and to examples in practice (e.g., Agrawal, 1995a, 1995b, 1996; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Christie, 2005; Ellen & Harris, 1996; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Langton & Ma Rhea, 2005; Russell, 2005; Smith, 1999; Verran, 2005). It is important to read it critically enough to situate the arguments of various positions taken in this literature.

Differences at these levels mean that in the academy it is not possible to bring in Indigenous knowledge and plonk it in the curriculum unproblematically as if it is another data set for Western knowledge to discipline and test. Indigenous knowledge systems and Western knowledge systems work off different theories of knowledge that frame who can be a knower, what can be known, what constitutes knowledge, sources of evidence for constructing knowledge, what constitutes truth, how truth is to be verified, how evidence becomes truth, how valid inferences are to be drawn, the role of belief in evidence, and related issues (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001, p. 57).

One knowledge system cannot legitimately verify the “claims to truth” of the other via its own standards and justifications (Verran, 2005). So incommensurable are the ways these systems “do” knowledge, that even with understanding of epistemological and ontological

differences and endless descriptions of them in various sites of knowledge production, we cannot just “do” Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum. In universities, we subscribe to the institutional arrangements and practices of the Western and scientific knowledge traditions. Learning and “doing” knowledge in this context is mediated by the disciplinary organisation of knowledge and its discursive and textual practices. In this context, we deal with representations of Indigenous knowledge already circumscribed by the English language and the discursive positioning of various disciplinary practices, including scientific paradigms, historical understandings, particular sets of interests, various theoretical positions, technologies of textual production, and so on. These representations may carefully and usefully describe the application of different approaches of each knowledge system to a common point of focus to generate understanding. But the way we come to know and understand, discuss, critique and analyse in university programmes is not the way Indigenous people come to know in local contexts.

However, in the academy and on the ground, the talk of Indigenous knowledge systems, rather than of cultures, does bring Indigenous knowledge, its systems, its expressions, and traditions of practice into a different relation with Western science than was possible through the discipline of anthropology. Initially, anthropological studies of Indigenous societies and cultures were used to provide the evidence for disciplinary theories of human evolution and development. Knowledge production in this area served to rationalise an array of practices and activities of liberal capitalism as it expanded across the globe. But, despite a shifting basis of enquiry over the last century, all knowledge production about Indigenous people still works within a wider set of social relations that rationalise, justify, and work to operationalise a complicated apparatus of bureaucratic, managerial, and disciplinary actions that continue to confine the lives of Indigenous people.

We can argue that interest in Indigenous knowledge systems begins in a different place but we have to concede that Indigenous knowledge is similarly positioned within discursive fields as any other knowledge production “about us”. Still, this does not deny the argument that the current interest in Indigenous knowledge is emerging at a different historical moment where Indigenous peoples are much better positioned within the legal political order where issues of rights, sovereignty, self-determination, and historical redress provide a better base for the assertion of Indigenous interests.

So, even though it is still predominately non-Indigenous or Western parameters that give shape to the Indigenous knowledge discourse, it does ask questions that relate to its usefulness and value in a variety of contexts, including Indigenous contexts. This brings a focus in some (but by no means all)

contexts to more collaborative and locally-generated practice on the ground (Christie, 2005; Gumbula, 2005), more opportunities to preserve and maintain Indigenous knowledge within communities (Langton & Ma Rhea, 2005) both through documentation processes and through reinvigorated interest in its future utility (Anderson, 2005, Hunter, 2004), and especially for strengthening Indigenous social, economic and political institutions (Ma Rhea, 2004). It also brings a focus to sharing and transferring aspects of Indigenous knowledge across contexts for much wider human benefit. In best practice circumstances, the transferring and/or integration of Indigenous knowledge (IK) across knowledge domains provides due recognition and legal protection to those aspects and innovations of knowledge that are Indigenous in origin. In worst practice, of course, global interest in Indigenous knowledge threatens its integrity and exploits it on an even greater scale.

In the academy, and in Australia – whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, lecturer or student – most of us develop our general and/or detailed understandings of Indigenous knowledge, traditions and practices via the interpretations and representations of it in the English language by Western knowledge specialists or scientists. This is not to deny that some Indigenous students and lecturers develop knowledge in situ in Indigenous contexts. But it is to suggest that the larger conceptualisation and characteristics that describe and situate Indigenous knowledge vis-à-vis Western knowledge, comes to us through the filter of its discourse. What aspect of Indigenous knowledge gets representation, and how it is represented in this space reflects a complex set of intersections of interests and contestations: from what aspects of knowledge are recognised or valued; what can be envisioned in terms of representation or utility; what sorts of collaborations are practical or possible; the capacity of current technologies to represent aspects of IK without destroying its integrity; to what research projects are funded; to the quality of experts in both knowledge traditions; to the particular interests of scientists or disciplinary sectors; to what is finally included in databases, or published and circulated in the public or scholarly domain. And importantly, the negative of all of those: what is not of interest, or value; what is not able to attract funding; what is not investigated, documented or published; what is misinterpreted during the process of abstracting Indigenous knowledge; and what remains marginalised at the peripheries and at risk of being written out, not recognised as valid knowledge, or forgotten.

■ The cultural interface

In this contested space between the two knowledge systems, the cultural interface (Nakata, 1998), things are not clearly black or white, Indigenous or Western.

In this space are histories, politics, economics, multiple and interconnected discourses, social practices and knowledge technologies which condition how we all come to look at the world, how we come to know and understand our changing realities in the everyday, and how and what knowledge we operationalise in our daily lives. Much of what we bring to this is tacit and unspoken knowledge, those assumptions by which we make sense and meaning in our everyday world. On the ground, in practical contexts where Indigenous knowledge experts are in direct contact with scientific experts, this is the space of difficult translation between different ways of understanding reality (Verran, 2005). But, in the intellectual discourse, translation has already occurred. Indigenous knowledge is re-presented and re-configured as part of the corpus “about” us and is already discursively bounded, ordered and organised by others and their sets of interests.

In the academy, then, we come to learn “about” Indigenous knowledge in similar ways to how we came to learn “about” Indigenous cultures and issues via the established disciplines. It is important for those wanting to bring Indigenous knowledge into teaching and learning contexts to understand what happens when Indigenous knowledge is conceptualised simplistically and oppositionally from the standpoint of scientific paradigms as everything that is “not science”. It is also important to understand what happens when Indigenous knowledge is documented in ways that disembodies it from the people who are its agents, when the “knowers” of that knowledge are separated out from what comes to be “the known”, in ways that dislocates it from its locale, and separates it from the social institutions that uphold and reinforce its efficacy, and cleaves it from the practices that constantly renew its meanings in the here and now. And it is also important to consider what disintegrations and transformations occur when it is redistributed across Western categories of classification, when it is managed in databases via technologies that have been developed in ways that suit the hierarchies, linearity, abstraction and objectification of Western knowledge – all of which are the antithesis of Indigenous knowledge traditions and technologies.

In the rush to document and database Indigenous knowledge, it is also important to understand the effects of documentation both positive and negative. There is a growing literature around these issues that should inform how we draw in Indigenous knowledge for teaching and learning purposes, particularly in undergraduate teaching (Agrawal, 1995b; Christie, 2005; Langton & Ma Rhea, 2005; Verran, 2005). So, in incorporating understandings of Indigenous knowledge into curriculum areas, in asking our students to read accounts of it, or to discuss its potential applications in a range of professional contexts, or use it in applied ways, it must be acknowledged that we are screening it through a filter that positions it to serve

our educational objectives, and which draws on our own prior theoretical investments in knowledge and knowledge practice. But apart from understanding these issues, there are other considerations of the contested space, which need some reflection before we discuss any content and methods of Indigenous studies, or teaching and learning in higher education. These revolve around the location of Indigenous learners in this space.

■ The locale of the learner

For many Indigenous students and lecturers, regardless of their distance from what we understand as “the traditional context”, the Indigenous epistemological basis of knowledge construction and the ways of “doing” knowledge are not completely unfamiliar. These are embedded, not in detailed knowledge of the land and place for all of us perhaps, not perhaps in environmental or ecological knowledge, but in ways of story-telling, of memory-making, in narrative, art and performance; in cultural and social practices, of relating to kin, of socialising children; in ways of thinking, of transmitting knowledge, even in creolised languages; and in that all encompassing popular, though loosely used term, “worldview”, and so on. But we are all also grounded in Western epistemology, through historical experience, through Christianisation, through the English language, through interventions of and interactions with colonial and contemporary institutions, through formal education, through subscription to the law, through subscription to the world of work, to democratic values, through everyday living, through use of technology, through popular culture, and so on. This is also familiar and recognisable, and we may accept it, refuse it, assimilate it, domesticate it, use it, subvert it, but nevertheless are constantly engaged with it, as we move forward in a constant process of endless and often unconscious negotiations between these frames – or reference points – for viewing, understanding, and knowing the world.

Negotiating between these is a transforming process of endless instances of learning and forgetting, of melding and keeping separate, of discarding and taking up, of continuity and discontinuity. We participate in these ways of viewing, being, and acting in the world, often in quite contradictory, ambiguous, or ambivalent ways. We subscribe with varying degrees of commitment, both in time and space, to various positions depending on the moment, depending on what experiences, capacities, resources, and discourses we have to draw on, according to what is at stake for us, or our family, or our community, and so on, and according to past experiences, current realities, aspirations, and imagined futures.

Indigenous people have a long experience of being located in this space of contested positions at the cultural interface. In this locale, Indigenous

students are discursively constituted as subjects vis-à-vis that “matrix of abstracted discourses that constructs a consciousness of ourselves which is outside of the local, outside of how life is experienced” (following D. Smith 1987, 1990, 1999). And it is via understanding what constitutes and is constitutive of Indigenous experience in this locale that lecturers need to retheorise Indigenous students as prospective learners.

Let’s now try and bed down the position of Indigenous learners in this locale. Whatever the particularities of their prior experiences, learners come into university programmes already variously constituted and positioned discursively to take up the knowledge, which has inscribed their position. The socio-historical discourses which have constituted their position are, in this learning context, organised and given their order through the disciplines and the corpus, through a Western order of things. Some of the theoretical framings within this order have come to form a commonsense and consensus position about the Indigenous community. Contestation of knowledge is easier for students at content and ideological levels within these accepted positions. Contestation is also easier if sites of interrogation are considered in terms of simple intersections.

But, Indigenous students often feel the contradictions and tensions within having to align to one or the other, especially when they see weaknesses in examples and arguments on both sides of the divide. It is more difficult to problematise the major theoretical concepts and pursue intersubjective mapping of our many relationships at the cultural interface because these demand explication of broader sets of discursive relations beyond the literal interpretation of the text or the theoretical framings within a particular approach to a topic. For example, when we deploy the concept of sovereignty or of self-determination, how are those situated within wider sets of discursive relations of colonial discourse, legal discourse, rights discourse and so on? How has it provided a priori conditions to our thinking? How does it frame thinking in a range of implicated areas of practice? How does our subscription to it allow or not allow certain sorts of discussion about it? And when is it possible that we can talk of something else to achieve our goals? For instance, when legal-political concepts work through and are constituted in complex relations with anthropological discourse and on into health or education, and are then further complicated by the apparatuses of policy and managerial and bureaucratic discourse, how are these all to be brought to the surface? How are students to suspend accepted thinking in one area without suspending allegiance to Indigenous interests? Can they take up other positions without being tagged essentialist or assimilationist? If so, what are they?

Not opening up theoretical positions for more complicated discussion means that the dynamics of the

cultural interface is sutured over in favour of the Western order of things and its constitution of what an Indigenous opposition should be. Indigenous learners also often do not have a fully articulated experiential basis for contesting knowledge. In that much cultural practice is implicitly understood it is often difficult for Indigenous students to contest the interpretations of the corpus on the basis of what they know of their own culture. For example, the inner workings of customary adoption are not always revealed to young students. They may know enough to be uneasy with a textual interpretation but not certain enough of their own knowledge to make some sort of counterclaim. This uneasiness has to be suspended to make sense of legal discourse. The choice becomes one between silence or laying themselves open to challenge from the more authoritative elements of the corpus. How are Indigenous learners to be supported to explore their experiential knowledge beyond the classroom and to bring it in to inform how particular Indigenous positions are contested via engagement with the corpus?

The learner, in reaching a position under these conditions must suspend one or the other. They cannot easily forge understanding without being called into alignment with one position or the other. The learner does not have opportunities for developing ways of reading, ways of critically engaging within accepted Indigenous discourse, as this is itself constituted within wider sets of social relations, without betraying accepted positions within the Indigenous body politic. Thus it is difficult to work through the inherent tensions of the everyday world. Currently professional preparation is inadequate in terms of equipping graduates to work two knowledge systems together in the interest of better practice. So how can we navigate the complexities of this contested space?

■ An Indigenous standpoint theory

Since the early 1990s, I have investigated possibilities with standpoint theory and, in particular, an Indigenous standpoint as a theoretical position that might be useful – something from the everyday and not from some grand narrative. However this has not been easy. The term “standpoint” is often substituted for perspective or viewpoint, but these do not adequately represent the use of the term in theory, which is quite complex and contested as a theoretical approach. Feminist standpoint theory emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in an attempt to deal with the problem of articulating women’s experience of their world as organised through practices of knowledge production, and which theorised women’s positions as rational, logical outcomes of the natural order of things, when in fact they were socially constructed positions that were outcomes of particular forms of social organisation, that supported the position and authority of men over women (Smith, 1987).

As a method of enquiry, standpoint theory was utilised by a diversity of marginalised groups whose accounts of experience were excluded or subjugated within intellectual knowledge production. However, analysis from the standpoint of people’s everyday experience is not the aggregation of stories from lived experience. It is not the endless production of subjective narrative to disrupt objectified accounts. According to Polhaus, it works off the premise that

first the social position of the knower is epistemically significant; where the knower is socially positioned will both make possible and delimit knowledge. Second, more objective knowledge is not a product of mere observation or a disinterested perspective on the world, but is achieved by struggling to understand one’s experience through a critical stance on the social order within which knowledge is produced (Pohlhaus, 2002, p. 285).

Standpoint accounts, then, depend on reflexivity and the distinction between experience and standpoint (Pohlhaus, 2002). Bringing the situation of ourselves as “knowers” into the frame does not make ourselves the focus of study but will “involve investigating the social relations within which we as ‘knowers’ know” (Pohlhaus, 2002, p. 287). This will also involve knowing where to look, and which social relations might be informing our knowledge. Importantly, and to borrow again from Polhaus, “being ... [an Indigenous knower] does not yield a ready-made critical stance on the world, but rather the situation of ... [Indigenous knowers] provides the questions from which one must start in order to produce more objective knowledge” (Pohlhaus, 2002, p. 287). Standpoint, then, does not refer “to a particular social position, but rather is an engagement with the kinds of questions found there” (Pohlhaus, 2002, p. 287), and this engagement moves us along “to forge”, following Harding, a critical Indigenous standpoint.

An Indigenous standpoint, therefore, has to be produced. It 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 attention by others. It is not deterministic of any truth, but it lays open a basis from which to launch a range of possible arguments for a range of possible purposes. These arguments still need to be rational and reasoned; they need to answer to the logic and assumptions on which they are built. Arguments from this position cannot assert a claim to truth that is beyond the scrutiny of others on the basis that as a member of the Indigenous community, what I say counts. It is more the case, that what is said must be able to be accounted for.

This, then, is not an Indigenous way of doing knowledge. Rather, it argues for what Harding calls “strong objectivity” (Pohlhaus, 2002, p. 285) by bringing in accounts of relations that “knowers” located in more privileged social positions are not attentive to. It is a particular form of investigation. It is the explication and analysis of how the social organisation and practices of knowledge through its various apparatuses and technologies of the textual production organise and express themselves in that everyday, as seen from within that experience. People’s lived experience at the interface is the point of entry for investigation, not the case under investigation. It is to find a way to explore the actualities of the everyday and discover how to express them conceptually from within that experience, rather than depend on or deploy predetermined concepts and categories for explaining experience.

Standpoint theory has not developed as a singular theory but has congealed around different interpretations of other theories associated with Marxist approaches, poststructuralism, and postmodernism. It has come under a lot of criticism and has fallen somewhat out of favour (see Moore & Muller, 1999; Walby, 2000). Criticisms have been levelled at its weaknesses: the defeatism of what some call the tendency to “epistemic relativism”; the endless fragmentation across categories of difference; an unfortunate emphasis on “who can know” rather than “what can be known”; the preoccupation with politics of identity and location that reify boundaries between groups who also have common concerns; and the containment of politics and action to recognition and location rather than redistribution and transformation. These weaknesses need to be engaged with so that accounts can be produced that articulate forms of agency created in local sites through the social organisation of knowledge and its technologies, and which give content to how people engage and participate in and through them.

Standpoint theory in my mind is a method of enquiry, a process for making more intelligible “the corpus of objectified knowledge about us” as it emerges and organises our lived realities. I see this as theorising knowledge from a particular and interested position, not to produce the “truth” of the Indigenous position or the awful “truth” of the “dominant” colonial groups, but to better reveal the workings of knowledge and how understanding of Indigenous people is caught up and is implicated in its work. This to me is a useful starting point for a first principle of an Indigenous standpoint theory; viz., that Indigenous people are entangled in a much contested knowledge space at the cultural interface. It would therefore begin from the premise that my social position is discursively constituted within and constitutive of complex sets of social relations as expressed through the social organisation of my everyday. As an interested “knower”, I am asking to

understand how I come to understand – to know within the complexities at the interface where our experience is constituted in and constitutive of the corpus.

A second useful principle for an Indigenous standpoint theory would recognise Indigenous agency as framed within the limits and the possibilities of what I can know from this constituted position – to recognise that at the interface we are constantly being asked to be both continuous with one position at the same time as being discontinuous with another (Foucault, 1972). This is experienced as push-pull between Indigenous and not-Indigenous positions. That is, the familiar confusion with constantly being asked at any one moment to both agree and disagree with any proposition on the basis of a constrained choice between whitefella or blackfella perspective. For me, this provides a means to see my position in a particular relation with others, to maintain myself with knowledge of how I am being positioned, and to defend a position if I have to.

A third and connected principle that may usefully be incorporated is the idea that the constant “tensions” that this tug-of-war creates are physically real, and both informs as well as limits what can be said and what is to be left unsaid in the everyday. To factor this tension in helps us to get beyond notions of structuralist power and the resultant causal analyses. This will allow us a more sophisticated view of the tensions created between Indigenous and non-Indigenous dualities, not as the literal translation of what is said or written in propositions, but the physical experience and memory of such encounters in the everyday, and to include them as part of the constellation of a priori elements that inform and limit not just the range but the diversity of responses from us.

These three principles allow that, although I have knowledge of my experience at the interface and can forge a critical standpoint, I am not out singularly to overturn the so-called dominant position through simplistic arguments of omission, exclusion or misrepresentation, but rather out there to make better arguments in relation to my position within knowledge, and in relation to other communities of “knowers”. We see and act on things in these ways all the time. If you think of something like Indigenous humour, it emerges from this locale where we form a community around some shared inter subjective understanding of our experience, where we can understand the jokes. Witness Mary G’s poor guests, they are the outsiders in this world of experience and they must fathom our accounts of it and feel what it is like not to be a “knower” of this world.

Humour and satire are particular forms of social analysis and comment. Comedians like Mary G are right in there “doing” social analyses that illuminate our way of looking at our experience, which drag into the analysis our experience of dealing across a space where our shared subjectivities have been constituted.

Indigenous humour is a way of making sense from within this experience. It recognises the tensions and complexities of everyday life and reflects this back into this space and the fact that we all "get the joke" provides evidence of our knowledge of how complexities in this space emerge in our everyday experience. The joke doesn't resolve anything but it does articulate something known but unsaid. We laugh because it expresses something we recognise, something we already know. In that we often send up ourselves, humour reveals our incomplete understandings of how the world beyond us works and the mystery of its ways. But in that, it also captures an important dimension of our experience in this locale.

Indigenous humour also reveals the ignorance of outsiders of how we operate in and understand our world, and many a merry laugh we have all had at whitefellas' expense in this regard. In humour, there is scrutiny of ourselves as actors in our world and acknowledgement of that world beyond that is omnipresent and often not coherently logical from our point of view. This is why we need a standpoint theory that can generate accounts of communities of Indigenous people in contested knowledge spaces as its first principle, that affords agency to people as its second principle, and that acknowledges the everyday tensions as the very conditions to what is possible between Indigenous and non-Indigenous positions, as its third principle. In these ways we can deploy an Indigenous standpoint to help unravel and untangle ourselves from the conditions that delimit who, what or how we can or can't be, to help see ourselves with some charge of the everyday, and to help understand our varied responses to the colonial world. So what will this mean for Indigenous education?

■ Indigenous education

First, in the higher education sector we must maintain focus on a flexible approach to gaining the best fit between students, learning, teaching, and future professions, and allow ourselves liberties to use everything at our disposal to achieve the best result for our students. It is radically dumb to discard or not explore things that we know to work but not use them because they come from white traditions. Second, we need to recognise that our students live in a very difficult and complex space, and ensure that we do not conflate our understanding of this here and now with an imagined distant past that can be brought forward to reconfigure a simpler traditional future bounded off and separated from the global. Third, we need to keep in focus that future graduates into professions must be able to work in complex and changing terrains. And let's start with the fact that Indigenous learners are already familiar with complexities of the cultural interface. Fourth, we need curriculum designs to build on these capacities and to create opportunities

for learners to achieve a balance of knowledge, skills and processes for exploring disciplinary boundaries, and not deceive ourselves that the right content will produce better outcomes of itself. And fifth, and very importantly, educators need themselves to develop their scholarship in contested knowledge spaces of the cultural interface and achieve for themselves some facility with how to engage and move students through the learning process.

If we hold on to some of these basics as we move forward with our work, come together annually to discuss what works and what doesn't, we would have begun the first steps towards establishing Indigenous education as a discipline, with its own practices for engaging with and testing knowledge.

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