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# TOURING *the* INDIGENOUS or TRANSFORMING CONSCIOUSNESS? REFLECTIONS *on* TEACHING INDIGENOUS TOURISM *at* UNIVERSITY

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## ■ Abstract

The role of the non-Indigenous educator and researcher in education on Indigenous issues is becoming the subject of critical scrutiny. Indigenous academics are successfully turning the gaze on non-Indigenous peers and practices. This paper narrates some of the experiences of a non-Indigenous educator teaching an undergraduate elective Indigenous tourism course. The educator has attempted to respect the principles of an evolving Indigenist paradigm in the development, running and review of the course. In particular, the educator consulted with Indigenous academics and leaders in the development of the course and its curriculum; privileged Indigenous voices throughout the curriculum (in readings, audio-visually, guest lectures and tutorial exercises); and facilitated student interaction with the local Indigenous community and land.

My work as a non-Indigenous educator in the new academic field of tourism studies is currently pivotally important because Indigenous academics are not yet asserting their claim to this field. In my attempts to adhere to an Indigenist paradigm I aim to create important opportunities to ensure appropriate discourse and encourage Indigenous academics into the field. In relation to appropriate discourse and learning, student feedback so far indicates important transformations in consciousness are occurring. However, the problematic of the non-Indigenous educator speaking for Indigenous peoples as “essentialised Others” remains a key concern. While the tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous in the conduct of Indigenous education are real and important, this work in the teaching of Indigenous tourism suggests that the resolution of tensions require alliances and shifts in power.

## ■ Introduction

As the Indigenous rights movement has gained headway and leading Indigenous academics have effectively asserted the right of Indigenous people to articulate and theorise their own experiences in academia, the role of the non-Indigenous educator and researcher in Indigenous research is beginning to receive concerted attention from the reversed gaze. While some believe it is time for non-Indigenous academics to leave the field of Indigenous studies to Indigenous academics, others articulate that non-Indigenous academics can engage but not to the exclusion of Indigenous academics whose Indigeneity imbues them with certain responsibility over Indigenous knowledges. This negotiated sharing of academic space can become mutually respectful and nourishing. However, up to now the field of tourism studies has received little formal academic attention from Indigenous academics despite the fact that it represents a unique site of engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (this is perhaps explained by the fact that the health, law and education disciplines are higher priority areas of attention). This paper narrates how a course on Indigenous tourism has been developed founded on an ethos of respect for Indigenous rights and attempting to model how a non-Indigenous academic can engage with Indigenous communities and academics in order to provide students with a learning experience that fosters transformations in consciousness. While the course has had some level of success, the attempt to get students to engage in self-reflexive analysis particularly on whiteness has had limited success. It is important to persuade Indigenous academics that tourism is an area in need of a stronger Indigenous presence.

## ■ Non-Indigenous academics in Indigenous research and education

After a long history of exploitation and abuse, the contemporary era is experiencing a shift in exclusive power from non-Indigenous ontologies and the practitioners of these ontologies – non-Indigenous

academics. Indigenous Australians have been assertive of Indigenous rights in order to overturn this legacy of exploitation and exclusion. In the field of anthropology, for example, research about Indigenous peoples has been used to promote racial theories that historically have supported the dispossession and institutionalisation of Indigenous peoples. As a result of Indigenous activism and theorisation in conjunction with responsive support from some people and parts of the academy, research protocols have been developed to guide researchers on appropriate, ethical practice in Indigenous Australian research (e.g., Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2000; Kauria Higher Education Centre, 1993; National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003). The key principles asserted in the National Health and Medical Research Council protocols include: spirit and integrity, reciprocity, respect, equality, survival and protection, and responsibility (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003).

In such a context, self-reflexive non-Indigenous academics must justify their role in Indigenous research to both themselves and Indigenous communities. 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?

Indigenous Australian academic Lester-Irabinna Rigney (1997) has developed a conceptualisation of an Indigenist research methodology which he has derived from the liberation epistemologies of the feminist movement and which clearly asserts the need for Indigenous work to be done by Indigenous academics. Rigney's conceptualisation of Indigenist research is based on three "inter-related principles":

- resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research;
- political integrity in Indigenous research; and
- privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenist research (1997, p. 118).

Rigney (1997, p. 120) asserts that Indigenist research must be conducted by Indigenous Australians, using Indigenous Australian informants and in support of the liberation and self-determination of Indigenous Australians. This is imperative because "Indigenous Australians have to set their own political agenda for liberation" (Rigney, 1997, p. 118). However, Rigney (1997, p. 118) also accepts a role for committed non-Indigenous researchers: "We are indebted too to the research contributions of non-Indigenous Australians to this struggle. It is, however, inappropriate that the research contribution to the political cause comes solely from non-Indigenous Australians".

It is important for non-Indigenous academics to understand that this articulation of an Indigenist paradigm means that it will no longer be possible for non-Indigenous to define, lead and control the nature and content of research on Indigenous peoples. For non-Indigenous researchers to build careers in this field, we have to adapt ourselves to a status which redresses our white privilege, with an inevitable attendant diminution of our power and autonomy. This will be uncomfortable to those who have never had to interrogate their own white privilege.

My perspective and approach has been shaped by the invitation of some Indigenous academics for non-Indigenous people to engage with Indigenous knowledges with a spirit of respect and solidarity. Maori academic Stewart-Harawira (2005) argues that our very future relies on Indigenous peoples sharing Indigenous knowledges and lifeways with non-Indigenous peoples in order to arrive at societies which are cooperative, less-destructive socially and environmentally and accepting of vital diversity. She claims "traditional indigenous knowledge forms have a profound contribution to make towards an alternative ontology for a just global order" (2005, p. 32). Stewart-Harawira perceives the promise of Indigenous ontologies as offering an "eco-humanism" that is grounded in an "awareness of the spiritual reality of existence", "the interconnectedness of all existence" and a "recovery of the sacred" (2005, pp. 250, 256). Stewart-Harawira advocates "the most pressing challenge for indigenous leaders and educationalists is to recentre the relevance of traditional indigenous ontologies and epistemologies in the construction of inclusive, sustainable and pluralistic forms of governance" with a goal of "moving beyond resistance to the study and application of traditional ontologies of being within multicivilizational frameworks" (2005, p. 249). Similarly, Blaser (2004, p. 35) advises that Indigenous "life projects" can "trace a possible path towards the idea of unity in diversity" and oppose the "universalist pretensions of development". Stewart-Harawira offers:

Those teachings handed down by our ancestors, one of the most important being the interdependence of all existence ... is articulated by indigenous scholars as the key to political and social transformations for indigenous peoples and, by extension, is postulated here as central to a globally transformative framework (2005, p. 200).

Non-Indigenous qualitative researcher Norman Denzin has reflected at length on the role of the non-Indigenous researcher in Indigenous research and has provided principles that could guide the development of a meaningful dialogue between non-Indigenous and Indigenous academics. He thereby hopes to enable the

non-Indigenous researcher to become an “allied other” (2005, p. 936). In engaging with the complex issues of tourism and Indigenous interests, I have tried to adopt an “allied other” position focused on Indigenous rights in tourism. However, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith has well argued, our current circumstances in the engagement between non-Indigenous and Indigenous on Indigenous issues has us standing on “tricky ground” (2005). She suggests “qualitative researchers ... must be more than either travellers or cultural tourists” (Smith, 2005, p. 103) because qualitative research offers an important tool for Indigenous communities that can:

- wage the battle for representation;
- weave and unravel competing storylines;
- situate, place and contextualise;
- create spaces for decolonising;
- provide frameworks for hearing silence and listening to the voices of the silenced;
- create spaces for dialogue across difference;
- analyse and make sense of complex and shifting experiences, identities and realities; and
- and understand little and big changes that affect our lives (Smith, 2005, p. 103).

In my Indigenous tourism course I have explicitly tried to construct a curriculum that encourages students to participate in the study of Indigenous tourism not as mere “travellers” or “cultural tourists” but rather to seize an opportunity to be critically reflective and challenge the very foundations of their understanding of tourism. This is a very important responsibility of the tourism educator because tourism studies and the tourism industry have been instrumental in casting Indigenous peoples as the exotic “Other” for profit and exploitation. Additionally, the curriculum is designed to offer students key opportunities for wider critical reflections on the dynamics of contemporary societies and their roles within these, with an opportunity to expand and transform their consciousness as a result. Nonetheless, educators like myself need to be cognisant that we stand on “tricky ground” and must therefore engage in continuous reflexive practice, a subject returned to below.

#### Indigenous tourism and Indigenous rights in the curriculum

One of the key features of Indigenous tourism as an industry, as an experience, as a research area and as an academic study is the narrow focus on its cultural aspects. As a result, Indigenous tourism is perhaps a case of “Othering” personified, as Indigenous peoples are only recognised in their engagement with tourism when they perform as exotic Others. A study of the historical and contemporary use of Indigenous cultures and imagery in tourism marketing would reveal just how valuable a resource they have been

in the promotion of tourism to Australia in a very competitive international market and how integral they have been to the formation of Australian identity in the domestic sphere (see Redwood, 2001; Waitt, 1997). While the elaborate consultations and policy formation that accompanied the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Industry Strategy (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission & Office of National Tourism, 1997) tried to address this problem and gear tourism to the economic, social, cultural and environmental interests of Indigenous Australians, currently the focus still remains on Indigenous Australians performing culture. Queensland is the rare exception where efforts have been made to move away from the exclusive focus on culture, perhaps not only out of a rejection of stereotyping, but also because surveys revealed the domestic market believes little remains of authentic Aboriginal culture in all but the remotest and most northern parts of Australia (see Miller, 2000; Tourism Queensland, 2002). Currently, a national Indigenous tourism research agenda is being developed in order to improve support for Indigenous Australian tourism enterprises; however, its focus is almost exclusively on businesses selling Indigenous Australian cultural experiences.

If Indigenous tourism is approached from an Indigenous perspective, however, this exclusive focus on performing culture does not stand. From an Indigenous perspective, tourism is viewed in a variety of ways. Most frequently, tourism has been a source of conflict as its drive for development has threatened Indigenous lands, resources, cultures and lifeways. In the contemporary era of economic fundamentalism, tourism has been viewed as a force for assimilation of Indigenous peoples. The tourism industry has been seen as one of many exploiters of Indigenous peoples and their cultures. But, more positively, Indigenous peoples also see tourism as an economic opportunity that can provide one component of a diversified economy which can complement other economic, social, cultural and environmental goals. In a time of changing and uncertain government funding, tourism may represent a hope for sustainable economic benefits and employment for Indigenous Australians that does not require one to leave country or abandon cultural values and pursuits. Lastly, Indigenous people use tourism as an opportunity to educate non-Indigenous visitors and transform their consciousness in ways that help ensure the continuance of Indigenous lifeways. For instance, I have written about the Ngarrindjeri community’s use of Camp Coorong Race Relations and Cultural Education Centre to foster reconciliation through tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2003). Additionally, Diana James (1994) has written about how the Anangu use their Desert Tracks tour to educate non-Indigenous visitors about the Tjukurpa and thereby enhance respect for Anangu culture and country.

		Indigenous control	
		Low degree of control	High degree of control
Indigenous theme	Indigenous theme present	Culture dispossessed	Culture controlled
	Indigenous theme absent	Non-Indigenous tourism	Diversified Indigenous

Figure 1. Butler and Hinch’s Indigenous tourism model (Butler & Hinch, 1996, p. 10).

The Indigenous tourism course under discussion here uses Butler and Hinch’s characterisation of Indigenous tourism as “tourism activity in which Indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction” (1996, p. 9; see Figure 1).

Butler and Hinch’s second parameter, Indigenous culture as attraction, frequently places Indigenous peoples as an object of tourism as they are “in demand” from interested tourists, a useful marketing tool for tourism agents and a tradable resource for governments. However, a key theme of the course is Indigenous control as it places Indigenous peoples as active subjects capable of shaping, resisting, rejecting or coopting tourism for their own needs.

This Indigenous tourism course has focused on a theme of Indigenous rights in order to emphasise that Indigenous self-determination is a prerequisite for successful engagement with the opportunities presented by tourism (see Table 1). In particular the concept of Indigenous rights in tourism advocated by Indigenous Tourism Rights International is a key focus of the course content (see Johnston, 2000, 2003; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2007, for discussions of Indigenous rights in tourism). This is done in a number of ways throughout the curriculum. For instance, a case study of the experience of Indigenous Hawaiians discussed in study topic three demonstrates how the demand for Hawaiian sovereignty has grown in the face of a

genocidal tourism impact on the Hawaiian Islands (e.g., Trask, 1993a, 1993b, 1999, 2000). A contrasting case study of the Kuna of Panama recounts how the Kuna General Congress ratified a Statute on Tourism in Kuna Yala in 1996 in order to control tourism and direct its benefits to the Kuna nation and thus exemplifies the spirit of Indigenous rights in tourism (e.g., Snow, 2001, p. 2).

This spirit is also evident in the statements from Indigenous authors included in the curriculum that cite the goals Indigenous peoples hope to achieve through tourism. For instance, Maori tourism academic Shirley Barnett writes:

Maori want to be autonomous, they want to run their own show “... not just be the last 3 seats on the bus, the optional extra, the clip-on, add-on, tear off-the-coupon sideline event. We do not want to provide tacked-on plastic Maori experience in the venue of the facilities belonging to others. We want to provide authentic experience, learning experiences, through which we learn too, interacting with out guests” (Barnett, quoting a Maori tourism professional, 2001, p. 84).

Additionally, in the course curriculum I include Indigenous documents, declarations and statements such as the Oaxaca Declaration from the International

Table 1. Study topics in the curriculum of “Indigenous Tourism” TOUR 2007.

TOPIC 1	Indigenous Tourism: Introductions, definitions, catalysts and contexts
TOPIC 2	Indigenous tourism: Why is it hot? Tourists, governments, industry and Indigenous peoples as catalysts
TOPIC 3	Current state of play in the global arena: Types of involvement, what’s out there, comparative cases
TOPIC 4	Introduction to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism
TOPIC 5	Management issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism
TOPIC 6	Issues in marketing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism
TOPIC 7	Ecological and sociological issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism: Focus on sustainability, ecotourism and reconciliation
TOPIC 8	The policy context: The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Industry Strategy and beyond
TOPIC 9	Conflicts in Indigenous tourism
TOPIC 10	Issues in control of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism
TOPIC 11	Indigenous rights in tourism
TOPIC 12	Research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism
TOPIC 13	Futures and concluding remarks

Forum on Indigenous Tourism in 2002 and the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and encourage the students to critically analyse their potential impact on contemporary tourism. For instance, the Oaxaca Declaration asserts:

Indigenous Peoples are not mere “stakeholders”, but internationally-recognized holders of collective and human rights, including the rights of self-determination, informed consent, and effective participation. Tourism is beneficial for Indigenous communities only when it is based on and enhances our self-determination (International Forum on Indigenous Tourism, 2002).

This reading is reinforced by a video from this forum in which Indigenous attendees express their demand for recognition of Indigenous rights in tourism.

It is evident from this brief survey that the curriculum for this course on Indigenous tourism is qualitatively different in focus, content and intent from studies of Indigenous tourism that propagate the stereotype of Indigenous peoples as cultural performers in a commodified tourism arena where they must act as exotic Others in order to gain visibility and attention. This Indigenous course also stands out in its development and running. The following discussion is based on an analysis of my professional journals kept during the periods 2004 through 2006, student evaluation surveys of the course collected in 2004 and 2005 and student reflective journals submitted as assignments for assessment (and used only with written permission of the student).

#### ■ Teaching Indigenous tourism at university

The course under discussion here is an undergraduate elective run by the tourism programme of the School of Management at the University of South Australia. The course has been offered in both internal, face-to-face mode as well as external, off-campus mode during the summer school study period; 43 students enrolled in 2004-05 and 25 students enrolled in 2005-06.

The planning for the Indigenous tourism course (TOUR 2007) began in 2002. This course grew out of extensive consultations between the Division of Business (in which the School of Management sits) and the Unaipon School (focused on Indigenous studies), which had created a committee to try to strengthen the links between the two units and improve the Division of Business' contribution to the university's equity goals. I had recently joined the university and I expressed an interest in developing a course focused on Indigenous tourism. Through extensive consultations with the members of this joint committee I developed a course that would assist in meeting some of the objectives they set. This course was planned as a leading course in a

specialised stream to be offered by the undergraduate tourism programme which in addition to Indigenous tourism also included three Indigenous studies courses from the Unaipon School. Equity concerns were a key concern of the curriculum for the Indigenous tourism course and during the extensive consultations that occurred during the curriculum development phase I drew on the advice and recommendations of members of the Unaipon School, other staff throughout the university, members of Yungorrendi First Nations Centre at Flinders University, staff of Tauondi College (an Aboriginal community college) at Port Adelaide and Kurna and Ngarrindjeri elders. These consultations were both formal and informal discussions, sharing of the draft curriculum and requests for participation in the teaching of the course. These consultations resulted in revisions to the curriculum incorporating greater critical scrutiny of issues from Indigenous Australian perspectives and vital support for the course which has been demonstrated by continued Indigenous Australian contributions to lectures, tutorials and fieldtrips. Additionally, in recognition of this commitment to extensive community consultations this work on course development received the inaugural Equity Award from the University of South Australia.

A key principle for running the course as a non-Indigenous academic is to ensure that Indigenous experts, academics and community members are funded to provide guest lectures and tutorials. This is the only way to ensure that the course does not succumb to the tendency to speak about or for Indigenous Australians as “essentialised Others”, to use Denzin's phrase (2005, p. 935). This necessitated making a petition to the Division of Business and the School of Management for ongoing funding for this course, which breaks the current tight-fisted model that rationalisation of universities has fostered. In a first year report, I explained why such a policy is justified:

Any course that wishes to include Indigenous content in its curriculum in order to foster equity outcomes must make it possible for Indigenous Australians to participate as key informants in the learning context. While Indigenous Tourism includes readings from Indigenous leaders and academics from around Australia and the world, it is also vital to fund Indigenous presenters to provide guest lectures and tutorial instruction in order to ensure that this course does not perpetuate the practice of academia (mis)appropriating and (mis)representing Indigeneity once again.

This appeal was supported by the division's Dean of Teaching and Learning and seems to have secured recurrent funding from the School of Management.

It has been a key commitment to invite many contributions from Indigenous guest lecturers and experts, from as many nations, beliefs and experiences as possible, to show students the diversity of Indigenous Australia and demonstrate that generalisations and stereotypes are equally as useless here as they are for any other people. Guest speakers have included Indigenous Australian academics, Indigenous Australian government employees from a national parks authority and a tourism commission, Indigenous representatives of Indigenous agencies such as the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and a legal rights agency, an Indigenous activist opposing inappropriate development and Indigenous elders. Indigenous participation has not been as great as I would have liked because the course has so far only run in the summer school period, which is impacted by the annual holidays of Christmas and New Year when many academics and professionals seize an opportunity for their annual family holiday. In 2007, the course will be offered for the first time in a regular semester spread over 13 weeks and this should improve the amount of Indigenous participation I can organise for the course and thereby improve the impact of the course.

In the course content, I have tried to demonstrate the inappropriateness of casting Indigenous people as this essentialised Other at key points in the curriculum. In the introductory seminar, when introducing the various ways that Indigenous people have been defined, I introduce the key concept that "Indigenous peoples define themselves". This has led to a confrontation of stereotypes as students' prior learnings that particular skin colour, clothing or geographic location are the defining markers of Indigeneity are challenged. Secondly, in defining Indigenous tourism, two often forgotten facets of the phenomenon are focused upon: Indigenous people are in fact tourists themselves at times and Indigenous people offer mainstream (non-cultural) products and services to the tourism sector, including running cafes, roadhouses and adventure tours. The invisibility of these two important phenomena is a symptom of the pathological focus on the Indigenous performing of culture that is an outcome of the Othering that the tourism industry and tourists wish to inflict on Indigenous people.

This course also works to challenge the invisibility of Indigenous Australians in Australia's metropolitan and non-rural regions. Many students, particularly the international ones who are a key component of the Division of Business' student body, are unaware of the Indigenous presence in Adelaide. The funding secured from the division and the school has been utilised to provide fieldtrips within the metropolitan area to emphasise to students that they live and study on Kurna country, which can best be interpreted to them by Kurna people. Success on this has not been complete, as one student suggested in course feedback that improvement could come from "maybe a field trip

a bit further away to a more significant spot where the students could get better insight". This shows the persistence of stereotypes of where "authentic" Indigenous tourism experiences are available and where "authentic" Indigenous Australians can be found. The fieldtrips are also intended to assist the university to honour the spirit of reciprocity, which is a prerequisite of equitable relations, by spending some of its funds and resources on the services of Indigenous Australian enterprises at all possible opportunities.

The course opens with a traditional "welcome to country" provided by Uncle Lewis O'Brien who is an elder selected by the Kurna Meyunna to do such activities; he is also an adjunct at the university's Unaipon School. The students are informed that observance of such welcomes is a minimum requirement to secure respectful protocols that are considered vitally important to Indigenous Australians. Uncle Lewis' welcome indicates to students that they are studying and living on Kurna country and that the traditional owners welcome them to their country when they show respect for and acknowledge the Kurna people. This is a very important opening for the course because many of the enrolled students have never heard about the Kurna people (despite having studied in Adelaide for three years or more in some cases) let alone ever met a Kurna person. Although it takes students time to make meaning of this official welcome, some have indicated being surprised that a metropolitan place such as Adelaide has traditional owners who have protocols that need to be observed to build respectful relationships. I take this opportunity to connect the Kurna welcome with a long-standing call from Indigenous leaders for the tourism industry to incorporate acknowledgement of traditional owners in their brochures and marketing campaigns and to include a welcome to country in their events. Lewis O'Brien views this welcome as an important task among his many commitments and he has presented challenging openings to the course, demanding student attention to Kurna people, culture and country and admonishing them to understand the importance of their studies in this topic and the tasks ahead.

While the course was expected to attract a large number of non-Indigenous Australians and a small number of Indigenous Australian and international students, the current experience has been a large number of international students particularly from the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, greater numbers of tourism students were expected to enrol, but instead a variety of students from a range of study disciplines have enrolled so far. Student feedback on the course indicates a profound impact upon their awareness. Perhaps most startling has been the raised awareness of the Asia-Pacific students of their own Indigenous peoples and their circumstances. Additionally, many students have indicated that their long-held stereotypes

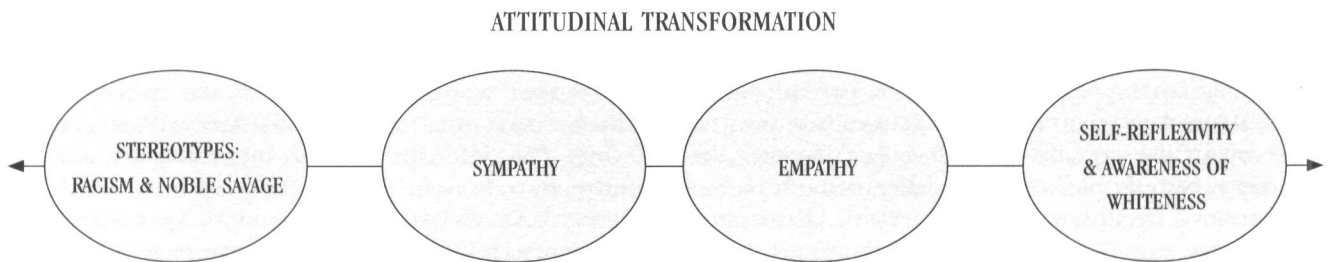


Figure 2. Range of possible attitudinal change in students of Indigenous tourism.

have been undermined. For instance, students have stated “this course has given me a broader understanding of indigenous people and I will be less judgemental” and the course “helped me disregard some of the harsh and very common stereotypes of these people”. Comments from some students seem to suggest also that they have developed some capacities for sympathy and even empathy with Indigenous peoples following their studies in this course. For instance, one student stated “I feel much more educated and compassionate in my understanding of Indigenous issues”. In a handful of instances, valuable critical analysis was evident; this is exemplified by an analogy formulated by one student who argued that Indigenous Australian tourism founded on Indigenous Australian dispossession “is as if real estate agents promote my house to sell without my permission, and they use certain things which are of sentimental value to me to sell it and when I complain they allow me to conduct the tours – see the irony”.

However, what the comments also reveal is that few students have moved fully beyond Othering yet (illustrated in the quote above by the use of the words “these people”), nor have they moved to a self-reflexive position of their own roles and power in the marginalisation and exploitation of Indigenous peoples (see Figure 2 for a continuum of possible attitudinal transformation anticipated from the Indigenous tourism course). However, it must be realised that many of these students have had no interest in Indigenous issues. Anecdotal evidence suggests these students are taking this course because it is a Broadening Undergraduate Elective, it has no exam, it runs in Summer School and it sounds entertaining (some have dropped out after the first session when they realise the course is quite demanding and academic). Therefore, most are not predisposed to the learning content of this course. In such circumstances attitudinal change in a matter of a few weeks of study may be the highest that can be expected. It is possible that this course will lay the seeds for transformations in consciousness at a latter point in these students’ lives as they pursue further learning and experiences. To expect that such students can move to a self-reflexive position in which they contemplate the power and privilege of whiteness may be an over-

ambitious goal but it will remain an ideal nonetheless, and at the very least it will remain a starting point to further informed self-reflexive learning and practice. In future offerings of the course, I will take advantage of the longer duration of the course that running it in a regular 13 week semester provides to consider new ways of encouraging students to contemplate their own power and privilege and attempt to gain deeper transformations in their consciousness. One idea under consideration is to utilise Jane Elliott’s video *Indecently exposed*, which shows her running her “Blue eyes/brown eyes” diversity training exercise in Canada particularly focused on racism against First Nations Canadians. This could be followed with tutorial exercises asking students to reflect on how this resource illuminates the dynamics of Indigenous tourism and its study.

For the final reflections on running this Indigenous tourism course, it is appropriate to return to the issue of self-reflection as a non-Indigenous educator teaching mainly non-Indigenous students about Indigenous tourism. I have elaborated in the preceding paragraphs my philosophy and practice of respecting an Indigenist paradigm in my teaching pedagogy for this course. However, despite my best efforts and critical self-reflection, I still found myself at times in an uncomfortable role of explaining “them”, i.e., Indigenous peoples, and “their issues” to my students. Uncomfortable moments arose when for instance the tour guide for the metropolitan fieldtrip cancelled his appointment with us on the morning scheduled for the excursion. I did find an alternative guide and the fieldtrip proceeded as scheduled, but students wanted to know why things occurred as they did. Knowing that this incident could confirm stereotypes of unreliability often cast on Indigenous Australians, I chose to focus on the small-scale nature of most Indigenous Australian tourism operations and their fragility due to dependence on a few, often over-extended individuals. Other narratives could have been told and perhaps I should have offered them all of these possible explanations (or perhaps no explanation at all) and let the students thereby form their own judgments. I felt compelled to act as I did as an “allied other” bridging the gaps between Indigenous contexts and non-Indigenous learners with



a commitment to improving understanding, respect and empathy. In fact, this points to the reality that I am a learner myself and trying to navigate “tricky ground” guided by a commitment to Indigenist methodologies and continuous self-reflection. I will continue to encourage Indigenous colleagues to join me in this important work on Indigenous tourism and through alliances and collaboration we may be able to shift tricky ground to common ground in shifting power and reshaping tourism more vigorously through the work done in this Indigenous tourism course.

### ■ Conclusion

This discussion suggests that work by a non-Indigenous educator can create important bridges that otherwise are unlikely to be made, as Indigenous Australian academics are not yet asserting their claim to the academic space of tourism studies. Student feedback indicates that transformations in awareness have occurred, exceeding my initial expectations. However, the problematic of the non-Indigenous educator speaking for Indigenous peoples as essentialised Others remains a key concern despite efforts to incorporate the voices and expertise of Indigenous people throughout the curriculum. While finding that the tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous in the conduct of Indigenous education are real and important, this work suggests that there is scope to create alliances in the teaching of Indigenous tourism. Tourism may appear as a less important arena for Indigenous focus than health, education and law. But when tourism is examined in its full potential to transform understanding and relationships between people, and thus to foster the continuance of Indigenous lifeways while promoting opportunities for economic independence, it would appear that the presence of Indigenous academics in the tourism field is long overdue in Australia. The experience of this non-Indigenous educator of a course focused on Indigenous tourism suggests that partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics can build important bridges to overturn the Othering to which tourism is prone and create learning opportunities that transform student consciousness in important ways.

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