The 'Within' Journey: Assessment of the Online Indigenous Australian Cultural Competence Training Programme at Charles Sturt University

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This paper explores the impact of self-reflective processes of staff at Charles Sturt University (CSU) while undertaking an online Indigenous Cultural Competency Program (ICCP). The ICCP was designed for completion by all university staff to enhance their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures, histories and contemporary realities. Staff were requirement to complete and submit answers to an online quiz, and a written reflection on their learning. This paper reflects on the responses of 64 volunteers and indicates large positive shifts are self-reported knowledge and understanding. The reflective texts of staff provide a rich source of information on the 'journey within'. In-depth thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) identified three key themes: evaluation, the mapped learning journey and the personal learning journey. The participant feedback, not only pointed to the cognitive, attitudinal and emotional impact of the content and pedagogical approach of the programme, but also identified barriers and issues for programmes aimed at complex change in a contested space. Our programme assessment relied on self-reported individual perception that surfaced hidden assumptions about Indigenous cultural competency (Kumas-Tan¸ Beagan, Loppie, MacLeod, & Frank, 2007). We acknowledge in the longer term a range of comprehensive outcome measures are needed.

■ **Keywords:** Indigenous studies, Indigenous cultural competence training, staff development, programme assessment

In 2010, the National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (2011) was fully endorsed by all Vice Chancellors in the country. The framework calls for comprehensive change that is ongoing and resilient:

> Indigenous cultural competence requires an organisational culture which is committed to social justice, human rights and the process of reconciliation through valuing and supporting Indigenous cultures, knowledges and peoples as integral to the core business of the institution. It requires effective and inclusive policies and procedures, monitoring mechanisms and allocation of sufficient resources to foster culturally competent behaviour and practice at all levels of the institution. Embedding Indigenous cultural competence requires commitment to a whole of institution approach (Universities Australia, 2011, p.3).

The framework suggests that a commitment to ensure that all students are on the journey to cultural competence should be underpinned by the training and development of university academic and professional staff in Indigenous cultural competency, including appropriate pedagogy for teaching Indigenous studies and Indigenous students.

Universities Australia (2017) launched the Indigenous strategy (2017–2020) which provides a renewed push to foster university cultures that lift Indigenous participation, excellence and contribution. Among the aims of the actions in the executive summary is to 'have current executive staff and all senior staff complete cross-cultural training programs from 2018', and 'to have processes that ensure all students will encounter and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content as integral parts of their course of study, by 2020' (p. 14).

As suggested by Hill et al. (2016), the translation of policy to practice and the complexity of what constitutes cultural competence pose challenges for our emergent

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evaluation of change. Cultural competency is more than academic knowledge; it is, among other concerns, to do with attitudes, with reflexivity, with openness and sensitivity to other cultures; in this case, Indigenous Australian cultures in all their diversities. The development of cultural competency is, in many ways, a psycho-socio-cultural journey, influencing our ways of being in the world. Our programmes, evaluations and interpretations 'require special sensitivity: our responses must be unerringly tactful, ethically nuanced and safe' (p. 6).

The CSU Approach

CSU is a regional, multicampus university with a focus on educating for the professions. The history of the organisation, as it sits firmly within the Wiradjuri Nation, is well known in the sector as serving its rural communities and has developed a distinctive focus on Indigenous Australian cultural competence. As part of its development of strategies for strengthening the University's journey towards being a culturally competent organisation, an online training resource was developed for all staff. The Indigenous Cultural Competency Program (ICCP) is a resource comprised of eight online 'learning places' that aims to provide individual staff with an orientation towards knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures, histories and contemporary realities. The programme structure, core text and quizzes were based on student resources developed by Indigenous staff members in the then Centre for Indigenous Studies. Embedded within the programme was a curriculum design component, an online student resource called Cassie's Story, *Dyan Ngal,* (Hill et al., 2016) that provides linkage to the goal of developing student cultural competence. The ICCP was designed to be visually engaging and rich in supporting stories, images, video, documents and academic articles. All CSU staff are required to undertake this training. To meet completion requirements, a staff member completes and submits an online quiz, as well as a written reflection on their learning. This data is linked to institutional data for compliance monitoring at the individual and organisational unit level and has been approved by the CSU Senior Executive. The emphasis on developmental journeys rather than destinations led to building ongoing reflection as a key component of learning. Reflective writing can serve as a developmental activity, a glimpse of intimate transformations and a form of emergent evaluation and feedback.

This current research aims to move beyond internal institutional analysis to a formal study of programme impact, enabling sector-wide and international sharing of CSU's experience in the development of staff members' Indigenous cultural competence. Programme participants were offered the opportunity to be part of an additional programme evaluation. In agreeing to participate anonymously in the research project, staff responded to pre and postprogramme evaluation questions and gave permission for a final reflection to be used in qualitative discourse analysis, and quoted in externally published reports and articles.

Methodological Choices and Research Scope

Our research focus and methodological choices for this study into participants' experiences of an online learning programme aimed to be holistic and person-centred, consistent with the pedagogical approach of the ICCP. Two forms of data offered usable evidence about the nature and quality of individual learning experiences, through their pre and post self-reports and reflective writing. This study was not an evaluation of online learning through comparative, survey-based or case-based methods (Bluic, Goodyear, & Ellis, 2007), and we did not aim to explore participant understanding of cultural competency and their transfer of knowledge to practice. Rather, the pre post quantitative comparison only claims to compare self-reported knowledge and understanding, not to provide evidence of culturally competent practice. Cultural awareness and cultural orientation offered through the ICCP were viewed as necessary building blocks towards cultural competence.

Data Collection and Analysis

Of the staff members who had completed the ICCP during the research period, 64 staff members took the additional step of giving informed written consent agreeing to be part of the research project, responded to both pre and post-programme questions, and provided a written reflection.

Participants were presented with a pair of pre and post-programme evaluation questions via an external survey research tool enabling a separation of the training and research projects. Before answering the survey questions, staff were advised of the purposes of the research, that the survey itself was voluntary and did not form part of the compulsory online training modules. The survey asked two questions: one of the participant's experience at the beginning of the training and one at the end of the resource and was based on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = good, 5 = excellent). Staff were asked to answer the following: 'How would you rate your current knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian cultures?' The post survey question was 'After experiencing this resource how would you now rate your understanding of specific cultural and historical patterns that have structured Indigenous lives in the past and the ways in which these patterns continue to be expressed in contemporary Australia?'

Quantitative Analysis

Participants' pre and post ICCP ratings of their knowledge and understanding reflect their broad self-perception of

the impact of the programme. Before the programme, 36% of respondents rated their understanding as good or excellent; after the programme, this increased to 91%. Only one respondent continued to rate understanding as very poor. Of the 41 participants who rated themselves average or below on the pretest, 85% rated their understanding as good or excellent after completion of the programme. This simple quantitative data indicates that respondents perceived change but it does not directly assess their knowledge and understanding. The reflective data does provide evidence of learning and how participants evaluated and experienced the learning process.

Thematic Analysis of Reflection Data

The reflective texts varied considerably in length, complexity and style. The median length was 180 words but a few were only one or two phrases or sentences and the longest was over 1300 words. The set of texts was analysed using thematic analysis through a six-step procedure described by Braun and Clarke (2006), Robinson (2013) and Clarke and Braun (2017). Each extract was entered into the NVivo software which enables flexible classification while retaining the context of excerpts. All the coding and reviewing was conducted by members of the research team. Following a process of familiarisations with the texts, an initial coding sought to identify 'patterns of meaning' evident in the data *corpus* (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). These elements were then grouped into preliminary themes (the form and the content of resources, respondent characteristics, programme evaluation, the learning experience and future orientation) each with further subthemes. In the fourth and fifth phase of the analysis, 'reviewing themes' and 'defining and naming themes', the elaborate overlapping map was simplified and shifted from a less descriptive, to a more analytic level. Three key themes were identified: evaluation, the mapped learning journey and the personal learning journey, drawing on three key roles: providing feedback, forming connections, thinking reflexively (see Figure 1). The analysis is based on critical realist assumptions (Willig, 1999) which acknowledge each text as a meaning-making process that can reflect and unpick the surface of 'reality' within both a specific institutional and a broader social context.

Resource Evaluation: Providing Feedback

As staff of a higher educational institution, many of them teachers, respondents were very familiar with the discourse of quality assurance/improvement through the institution's student evaluation practices. Such feedback, while initially aimed at the teacher/learning resource creator, has an institutional level quality assurance role. It is evaluative; learners offer praise, thanks and criticism. They identify pedagogical, technical and process facilitators and barriers to learning and suggest enhancements.

The majority of the feedback was very supportive. The resources were praised for their quality, richness and accessibility; the approach for being respectful and engaging, thus contributing to a powerful learning experience. Frequently, the language of quality assurance was used: 'professional', 'high quality' and 'excellent resources'. Several participants engaged in a more personal discourse directly addressing the creators of the resource: 'thank you', 'you've much to be proud of'. Generally, there was strong support for the pedagogical approaches used including the carefully structured, self-paced interactive journey, the effective use of video clips and seeing and hearing directly from Indigenous elders.

Two concerns were identified by several respondents. As a pedagogical strategy, the use and type of multiple choice questions was critiqued as militating against higher order thinking. A more fundamental challenge was that of balance. In its most extreme form, one respondent stated that the ICCP 'offered bias and unbalanced information'. A more nuanced critique argued that the resource focused too much on negatives and there was a need for more positive stories: 'I wonder if sometimes it might be have use to demonstrate and celebrate the good aspects of being an Aboriginal person, and highlighting those who are successful in many different ways'. There were also differing views about the compulsory nature of the programme. One respondent saw mandating participation as diminishing its importance and value, another affirming it as essential for all staff. Institutional support was requested to ensure all staff were given sufficient dedicated time to work through the programme properly.

A final overall evaluation moves beyond the quality discourse to frame the impact on the learner, 'The use of individuals' personal stories is very powerful - this combined with the data provides a well-rounded resource which reverberates with head and heart'.

The Mapped Learning journey—Making connections

What one respondent characterised as 'an incredibly rich learning journey' travels through eight learning places, visually established in the introductory *Call to Journey* map. The theme of a mapped learning journey addresses how participants respond to, and learn from, these content areas. This journey was not only structured sequentially but, to a significant degree, temporally. Examination of responses suggests that content modules could be combined into four subthemes: precolonisation, colonisation, contemporary social issues and human rights. A further subtheme of Indigenous agency connected the responses across these domains.

Responses to the Indigenous culture prior to white settlement was marked by positive emotions as well as new knowledge. Participants 'marvelled' and were 'moved' and 'fascinated' by 'how ancient and significant Indigenous
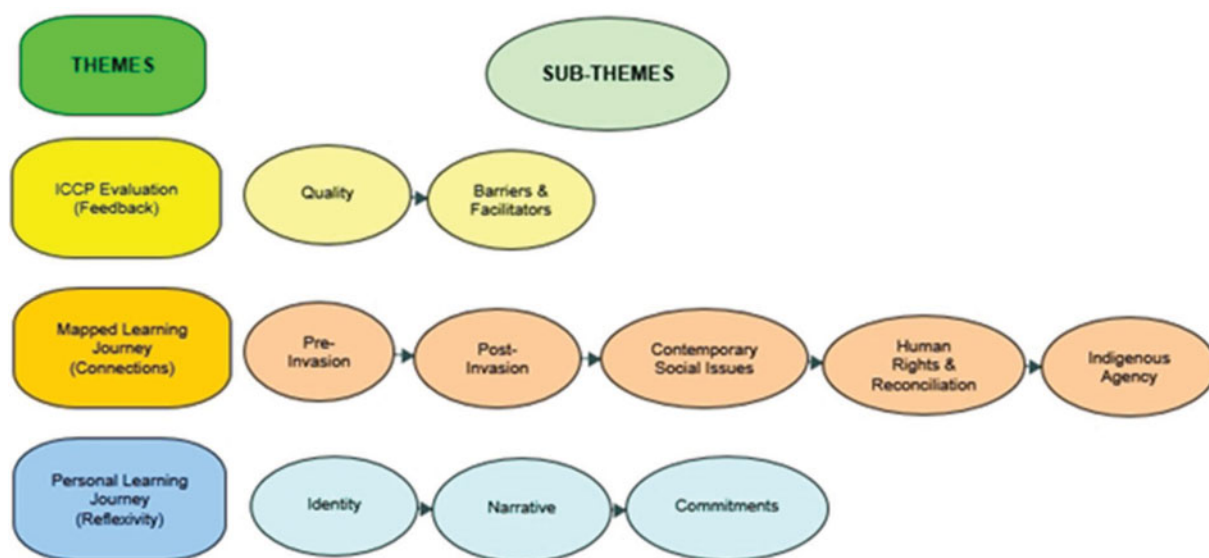
FIGURE 1

(Colour online) Indigenous cultural competency programme themes and subthemes.

Australian history was'. The richness and longevity of Indigenous culture was, 'something we should be celebrating and providing opportunities for all Australians to understand'. Skilled land management practices were contrasted with current environmental degradation. Connection to country was seen as a belief system, creating a much clearer understanding of the intimate relationship between country, wellbeing and physical and mental health. It was also felt: 'I loved seeing her spirit fly as she tells the camera "I am home"'.

The topic of colonisation and especially that of the Stolen Generation created a high level of emotional impact as participants grappled with the experiences of invasion and the trauma of loss. Hurt, harm, cruelty, heartbreak, horror, anger and pain were among the words used. Sometimes it is a very specific detail that is remembered: 'to be separated from your people as the authorities were too lazy to check if families were on the same truck'. A mother who recently discovered that her teenage daughter, visiting her father overseas, was now living with an unknown stepmother, and was 'hit very hard' by the stories of the Stolen Generation; her temporary loss of parental control created an emotional connection with the catastrophic loss of Indigenous parents. Respondents spoke of their inability to comprehend the forced removal of children; how recently these practices continued and how long-term the impact, 'dislocation, lack of knowing who they are, the effects of white institutionalisation. The pain of it all. The loss of Aboriginal culture and oral history.'

Reflections on contemporary social issues highlighted the interconnection of past history and present multiple disadvantage: 'Learning about how the themes of history, health, criminal justice, education and employment intersect in the lives of young Indigenous people was really

valuable for me'. Specific disadvantage is layered and multiplied: 'literacy levels and remoteness impacting ability to get a driver's licence and increasing the chances of incarceration was a great example, and how someone might come to be labelled and lost along such a trajectory'. The story of Malcolm Smith, a major component of the Criminal Justice learning place, was the focus for two respondents' reflections on the impact of individual judgment and action:

> Everyone has a story. And a story like his, with so many negative experiences, so little connection, is a great reminder of why judgement is the least helpful thing you can give a person. If one person stood up and helped him... who knows how the story would've ended.
>
> You can think your action is a small one - not even thought about, "I'm just doing my job" ... it's all contributing to wasting the life of a good man... Stop and think.

Here, the failure to connect is interpersonal, but for others the discourse related to a broader issue of social justice. Many respondents talked about deeper understanding of issues:

> ... the extent of the gaps which exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia with respect to health, education, criminal and social justice and employment outcomes and the need for Aboriginal people to be more self-determining in addressing these issues. Solutions exist in pockets but these need to be supported and more widespread. We still seem to take a paternalistic approach which says we know best.

Greater respect for culture has the potential to empower and support Indigenous approaches.

The final learning place on Human Rights and reconciliation was marked by a focus on the national

political and public sphere. There were frequent references to key individuals: Charlie Perkins, Faith Bandler and Eddie Mabo, all who projected a sense of agency and potential for change. Yet, the treatment of a current Indigenous figure, Adam Goodes, was identified as a continuing legacy of disrespect and evidence of the interconnection of past and present, 'For non-Indigenous Australians it isn't the past. It's in their lifetimes. It's today. It's every day'. Paul Keating's Redfern address was affirmed for acknowledging our white agency in damage and dispossession.

An important question about the impact of the discourse of dispossession and disadvantage is how these reflections position Indigenous people into the future. Although some participants evinced a sense of intractability 'there's lots of talking, but not much action', the more dominant theme was of empowerment and agency: 'The program helped me to see how the determined and persistent actions and campaigns of people (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) have brought about significant changes for the better.' Partnerships of non-Indigenous with Indigenous Australians were further explored within the personal journey theme. The theme of Indigenous agency focused on the strength of Indigenous culture, the important role of Indigenous Elders, and other Indigenous leaders and academics in developing solutions for their communities. Indigenous emergence on the national stage was 'a formidable part of the Australian landscape, politics, way of life', 'entering a new era of self-expression, assertion and prominence in society that will benefit not only their communities but the whole of the nation'.

Taken as a whole, these reflections provide insight that learning in such uncomfortable spaces is not just about knowledge, or even connectedness and depth of understanding, it is also an emotional journey, an aspect that 'seems to me to be an important feature of the learning'. One respondent indicated the difficulty of getting back to work after the programme as a small signpost to its emotional impact. The journey was 'reverberating with head and heart', and raising many questions and challenges. 'I think the most significant aspect of this resource was its cumulative power and the holistic nature of it'.

The mapped journey theme demonstrates the shared and differentiated experiences as participants work through the spaces of the learning journey promoting a deeper, more integrated understanding of Indigenous issues connecting the past and present, the multiple spheres of disadvantage and the complementary role of thinking and feeling in the learning process.

The Personal Learning Journey

A personal journey through the ICCP may be framed as part of a lifelong learning: 'One of the key understand-ings I'm developing is the idea that cultural competence doesn't just happen when you complete a course; that "competence is a continuous process, not a single event"'. Alternatively, the journey may never really begin. 'I was uninspired to undertake this program and felt it offered bias and unbalanced information'.

Every learner approaches any new learning experience with accumulated knowledge, attitudes and experiences. Many learning resources and subsequent assessment tasks are designed to facilitate and evaluate achievement of very specific learning objectives. The process of open-ended reflective writing in the ICCP programme served not only to encourage reflection on the resources but provided an opportunity for self-reflection. That personal journey was summarised under the themes of identity, narrative and commitments.

In discussing the impact of the ICCP resources, many participants drew on aspects of their life experiences to position their engagement with the resources. Three aspects of personal identity emerge as subthemes: country of origin/ethnicity, education and professional experience.

Identity

A quarter of respondents explicitly drew on their overseas origins or particular aspects of their Australian upbringing in accounting for their knowledge and understanding. Those from New Zealand identified a marked contrast with their own experience and others commented on the ignorance and racism in Australian society. A respondent from the European Alps drew a link with Indigenous connections to country and her own sense of land and community, seeing it in contrast to Anglo traditions. Another participant reflected on experiences of colonialism which were shared with Australian Indigenous peoples. Some Australians drew on their experience living in or close to Indigenous communities as a basis for their understanding of disadvantage and racism. One respondent reflected both with sadness at her grandmother's denial of her Indigenous heritage, and with delight at how her Aboriginal nephews' school celebrated their culture.

Many referred to their education: sometimes as a source of foundational knowledge; in other instances, highlighting the absences:

I grew up in Bathurst where we learnt all about Governor Macquarie coming in 1815, but Windradyne and the struggles of the local Aboriginal people were never mentioned.

I had studied the Mabo case years ago but was not well aware of the whole context . . . its meaning in relation to reconciliation and other significant events.

I have studied Australian History as part of a BA... I was unaware as to how advanced Australian Indigenous culture was before European occupation.

Professional practitioners bring to the learning journey not just personal but professional experience. For instance, they reflected on the realism of the health video scenario based on drunken stereotyping, 'as a registered nurse in a rural setting, I have witnessed the misrepresentation of Aboriginal people'. 'I've seen many CCTV footage from police stations of exactly this scenario'. A teacher reflected with interest on what makes for success or failure in Indigenous Education programmes including the inclusion of Indigenous Elders, 'I have continually seen these programs working effectively within school settings'. Respondents bring to their personal learning journey, their identity as experts and learners. It 'confirms what I had already known', 'has really sharpened my knowledge', 'has shown me a great deal I wasn't fully aware of and there are a lot of questions remaining that I need to explore'.

Narratives of Change and Reflexivity

Whereas within the identity theme, personal information was used to account for and explain positioning, narratives of change chart personal shifts in perspective. The ICCP resource has a strong element of personal storytelling with 'yarning' a key element of oral Indigenous culture. Respondents also told stories to explore their journey. Narratives of change involve a level of self-questioning that moves the participants from cultural knowledge towards cultural awareness through reflexivity of values and attitudes (Ranzijn, McConnochie, Day, & Nolan, 2006). Recounting these stories can be viewed as reflexive, 'an act of turning back to discover examine and critique ones claims and assumptions in response to an encounter with another idea, text, person or culture' (Qualley, 1997).

Story 1 The learning journey intersected in challenging ways with one respondent's experiences as a 'white Indigenous' person in the country of origin:

I think this program has changed my mind towards my own heritage as an Indigenous 'white' person who has lost his language, never been given the opportunity to learn it, and therefore a large part of my identity, as this was the policy of the government in the country where I come from. It has given me the strength to 'come out' and declare my own heritage but it has also open up wounds I didn't knew existed, particularly as a migrant to Australia, far away from my own land and country. Obviously the connection to my land was a lot stronger than I thought it was. The program has also further enhanced my conflict of being "white" while being Indigenous and how to explain this to people I interact with.

The programme enhanced the respondent's knowledge of Australian Indigenous issues and created a way forward through Indigenous/ non-Indigenous partnership. The journey was a painful and conflictual yet empowering one, engaging with a previously suppressed aspect of identity.

Story 2 For another migrant new to Australia, words like 'boomerang' and 'Uluru' characterised a limited knowledge of Indigenous Australia:

While living in Sydney, I had the chance to enrol my daughter in a school for the Indigenous community of Redfern which also accepted international students. It was a very rich experience for her but also for us as it was our first contact with the Indigenous community. However, which seemed like a great opportunity to engage with a different culture ended up as a reality check as we soon realized the serious problems affecting this community as alcohol and drug abuse, and domestic violence. We realized that these families lived on social welfare, didn't have a job and refused to engage with the school community especially with "strangers" like us. At that time, I couldn't understand this situation which seemed not to make sense with the fact that Indigenous Australians culture are such an important part of human History in this planet.

This is a story of someone whose positive orientation to cultural diversity was disrupted by experiences s/he did not understand:

Only now I dedicated time to actually learn the facts, how it happened . . . I was shocked with the amount of time it took for people to start healing the wound and to acknowledge that change is needed. Things make sense now. I'm not sure yet how I can be part of the solution but I'm definitely in a better place to contribute.

The words reflect a move through knowledge to understanding in which the learning resources come together to make sense of the lived experience and orient for the future.

Story 3 One respondent revisited childhood attitudes and experiences:

As a child, our school bus used to do a loop into an aboriginal community [on NSW coast] and I remember wondering why people would choose to live in such squalor and why "they" were so poor, didn't appear to have to go to school but then always seemed to have money for the tuckshop when I did not. That there was an "us" and a "them" for me at the age of 7 reflects the wider societal judgement given to Indigenous Australians. That what I witnessed as a kid growing up was the continued ripples of such cruel and faulty 19th Century policy gives me much to think about . . .

The utter pointlessness of removing him [Malcolm Smith] from his family at the age of 11 (for stealing a bike) made me think about the time I stole a handful of lollies aged 7. Had I been an Indigenous child, would this naughty thing I'd done have been enough to have me sent away? How would I have coped without my parents and my four brothers and sisters and my grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins? Badly is the answer.

Here the non-Indigenous child that judged 'them' is juxtaposed, as a result of a new perspective on that Indigenous context, with a hypothetical self, separated from family for a minor offence and coping badly. As a form of

reflexivity, this moves beyond empathy to a grasp of social inequality and injustice.

Story 4 One respondent's transformative personal journey juxtaposes an elaborated sense of personal security, identity and opportunity with recent and current discriminatory behaviours and gap statistics encountered in the ICCP:

> I think I have quite naively parked a lot of it as "that's history and before my time..." and maybe I have unconsciously allowed that to let me off the hook in the sense of having any emotional sense of ownership, responsibility etc. However where I really felt things changing for me and kicking me in the guts as it became more real and confronting when I engaged towards the end of the journey of learning in the 1970s ...to current time the data and stories around the despicable attitude to aboriginal kids being so locked out of schools; to think the manner in which those being interviewed during the freedom ride spoke in such a demeaning dismissive manner I found staggering and shameful. As it was in the 60–70s I was a teenager: a well-loved, well protected, well taken care of teenager, encouraged to have the belief and confidence that if I was to work hard I could do whatever I set out to do and achieve. I was fortunate to have a real sense of who I was, who my family was, to never doubt my identity and to know if I was prepared to work hard and respect what I was provided with that there would be the means to be well educated, to have choice, and thus the capacity and the foundations to follow the path my passion and capability was to take me. I have always had a profound appreciation of that; however this program has put things with a different perspective now. The feeling I felt when reading the staggering stats around education, health, incarcerations, deaths in custody, all getting worse in MY lifetime as a young and now older adult has really given me pause.

This excerpt is rhetorical in nature, it deploys sharp dichotomies of me/them and history/MY lifetime. The divide is linguistically self-evident, between the well-loved, well-protected and well-cared-for teenager, and the despicable, demeaning, staggering environment of Indigenous people warrants the 'kick in the guts', both real and confronting that personally challenges an evasion of ownership and responsibility and promotes reflexivity and change.

The above participant narratives have been presented in such a detailed way to show through these stories, how 'the journey within' is constructed and communicated. Cultural awareness is not an appreciation of the 'other', it requires a reflexive challenging of one's own assumptions and values.

Commitments

The impact of the ICC programme which is aimed to underpin institutional change needs to involve changes not just in thinking but in action: 'The structure of the resource left me with numerous trigger points for reflection and further action... It certainly made me think more about what more I could do, and how I might do that'.

An anonymous reflective study cannot chart individual actions but a substantial amount of discourse involved future-oriented commitment to action. At the individual level, commitments were both personal and professional. A commitment to further learning to keep abreast of current issues was identified by a number of participants. Others committed to counter racism, in order to 'Ensure I'm never a part of practices and attitudes that just repeat what's happened in the past but in new ways'. 'I must not stand by silently when I see or sense injustice, racism, exclusion or ignorance'.

For many, their plans were professional, involved in supporting Indigenous students and colleagues, as well as creating a more inclusive working environment. Commitments were made to incorporate Indigenous issues: 'at the forefront of our subjects, not just as a contrived add-in'; 'it will shape our curriculum in Law and Justice Studies', 'to work with Indigenous Australians to improve the content in my subjects'. Another focus was the University's role in professional education:

> I see the importance of our role as a university in ensuring the professionals that leave our campuses, real and virtual, leave as leaders who won't repeat past practices . . . but proactive in how they will contribute to a change of culture and attitudes in Australia.

The use of 'we' and 'our' is also a personal commitment. The writers see themselves as part of a collective, dynamic journey.

Conclusions

Thematic analysis of the final reflections of participants who agreed to have their data included in the research process provides an understanding of the change-making potential of a programme to develop and enhance Indigenous cultural competency. The ICCP was designed with the premise that organisational change in such a 'challenging' area requires of staff a personal journey, 'the journey within'. The 'within' journey uses an emancipatory methodology to achieve deep self-awareness. Through a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 2008), the journey becomes revelatory; participants' experience of the cultural competency content in the learning spaces, moves them through 'inward' layers of self-appraisal towards deep self-awareness and a pedagogy of hope (Freire & Freire, 2004). On several levels of engagement, the journey is revelatory and transformative (Mezirow, 1991).

The pre and postprogramme ratings revealed the majority of respondents reported a significant change in knowledge and understanding of Indigenous issues. It was the thematic analysis, however, that enabled an insight into multiple respondent positions within three overarching themes capturing the scope of reflections. In the evaluation theme, the respondent role was feedback. On the mapped learning journey, a holistic integrative theme

was interconnecting the past and present, emotion and evidence with the multilayered landscape of disadvantage and resistance. The shifting pattern of emotional responses at various points on the journey resonates with the challenge from some respondents to provide more positive examples of Indigenous achievements in recent times. The ICCP focused on Indigenous roles in social intervention programmes but there were, for instance, no resources around Indigenous creativity or business initiatives, areas that may have particularly engaged staff working in these fields.

The personal learning journeys go further to reveal how particular life trajectories and experiences intersect with the learning experience. A number respondents positioned themselves within a reflective account that revealed quite personal information. Ranzijn, McConnochie, Day, Nolan, & Wharton (2008) present the initial stage of the journey towards cultural competence as a move from ignorance to awareness and understanding. Here, Indigenous culture, history and contemporary issues are the object of study. The move to cultural awareness, however, begins the process of self-examination, first as an individual, later as a critical professional. The analysis of personal stories of change map a shift from reflection to reflexivity where values were challenged and attitudes changed. The audience for these stories seems as much the writer as the reader; forming part of a journey of self-discovery. Thus, storytelling is not just a strategy to connect the learner with the resource, it becomes a way whereby learners can position themselves particularly at a point of transition. It could be expected that there may be other participants who would not be comfortable with the process of public sharing such personal stories, with the majority educated in disciplines that do not encourage personal disclosure. To support this situation of discomfort, it is acknowledged that lengthy reflections were provided by some respondents who did not agree to be part of the public facing research process.

Reflexivity and commitment are an integral part of the journey to cultural competence, and experienced by the researchers authoring this paper. As Clarke and Braun (2017) emphasise, thematic analysis is an active process which demands users' reflexivity about their role. As part of the creative team developing the resource, the writers were highly invested in the efficacy of the programme. Two forms of selectivity are involved here. The selection and interpretation of reflective text involves judgment. First, the authorship team approached this challenge through dialogue, an iterative process of shaping and reshaping interpretations. Second, there is the question of the degree to which the research respondents reflect understandings and attitudes of the broader staff participants. Participants willing to agree to the use of their data in the research phase may well be a more dedicated subsample of participating staff. Two-thirds of these respondents, however, initially described their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous issues as being at, or below average, and not an indication that they were already part of a committed minority. Moreover, the data collected for internal auditing contains a body of reflective accounts similar to those made available for research purposes and these indicate an overall base of staff committed to making a difference. In addition, the research dataset does contain information from some individuals who chose not to engage with the programme or felt they were already sufficiently knowledgeable, suggesting a diverse if not representative sample.

The ICCP was designed to underpin the development of CSU as a culturally competent organisation with further resources and follow-up at the organisational unit level. Two additional resources have been added to the suite of online resources to facilitate effective teaching and learning and professional development in this space. To progress that aspiration requires further collective action to enhance staff skills in areas such as curriculum development, teaching effectiveness and Indigenous student support. The capacity to share experience and discuss issues raised by the programme is critically important to undertaking change. Objective measures of the efficacy of the complete programme are appropriate only after the collective phase has had time to be implemented and embedded. A more nuanced study into the efficacy of online professional development within a suite of resources and culturally focussed events may provide indicators towards organisational cultural transformation that also translate into realities for graduates.

Acknowledgements

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About the Authors

Barbara Hill co-ordinates Indigenous Curriculum & Pedagogy at Charles Sturt University (CSU) and leads Gulaay, the Indigenous Australian Curriculum & Resources team. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (UK). As a non-Indigenous woman, her extensive experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and community has been involved with student support and advocacy in higher education for over two decades. She worked very closely with Associate Professor Wendy Nolan as a co-investigator on Universities Australia's National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Australian Cultural Competence in Australian Universities (2011). This work has been acknowledged with a National Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning in 2014.

Marian Tulloch is an Adjunct Professor of Educational Development at Charles Sturt University. Previously, she was the Executive Director, Division of Learning and Teaching Services and later an Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Learning). Her publications and conference presentations have stretched across education and the social sciences. She has an ongoing research interest in the interrelation of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in studying substantive educational and social issues.

Susan Mleck's interests reflect her teaching and learning qualifications and experience, including Andragogy — the science of helping adults to learn. At the heart of her academic practice lie two influences: the significance of her Indigeneity and her engagement with Andragogy. From an auto-ethnographical stance, the influence of being Māori-Indigenous with its spiritual and tribal connections, and her ongoing quest to address the 'science of helping adults to learn' (Eduard Lindeman 1927, in Brookfield 1987), is woven through personal pedagogy that privileges inclusive practice, which is also about working within a social justice framework of equity, access, participation and rights of people.

Melinda Lewis recently joined the Division of Teaching and Learning in the Gulaay team at CSU as the GLO Courses & Resources Lead, Indigenous Cultural competence. Her most recent role was in the Educational Innovation team at the University of Sydney coordinating a university-wide strategy to embed and measure cultural competence through curriculum, teachers and students.