

Learning in Community: Reflections on Seventeen Years of Visiting Kuntri

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Abstract The process of engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities should be grounded within a human rights context, whereby it is the responsibility of those with agency and opportunity within universities and other institutions to recognize, support and action the rights of Indigenous peoples to be included and involved at the highest levels of education design and delivery. In keeping with an Indigenous human rights approach, this inclusion of Indigenous peoples in higher education design and delivery needs to occur via equitable, negotiated and culturally safe terms for all concerned. Further to this, facilitators and participants must understand and challenge the influence and impact of inappropriate, inaccurate, misleading and discriminatory notions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and authenticity that are generated in a myriad of forums outside of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consent and control. The process of successful and sustainable engagement is facilitated by building meaningful interpersonal, inter-organizational and intercultural relationships beyond those that the Western university typically acknowledges or supports. Staff and students of the university will need to have a keen appreciation for the fundamental philosophies, values and customs of Indigenous peoples and groups they are engaging with, including the significance of relationships to kuntri and the importance of reciprocity and sustainable process. This chapter presents a personal reflection on these topics. I discuss the process and outcomes of designing and facilitating student engagement experiences with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and hosts since 1997. In doing so, I present some of my own key lessons and make suggestions that may help develop and improve other peoples' experiences in the future.

Keywords Collaboration • Human rights approach • Value of exchange with community

This spelling is based on Aboriginal and Islander Kriol spelling of this term. It gives it a uniquely Indigenous meaning and context whereby “kuntri” is not just a geographic location but also a social and cultural location.

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1 Reflecting on Past Experience

In offering a reflective narrative regarding service and community based learning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, hosts, guides and mentors, I acknowledge that my social connectivity to, and cultural capital within, a number of Indigenous Australian groups, organizations, communities and families has played a significant, perhaps essential role in my capacity to successfully co-design and implement off campus teaching and learning experiences. I hesitate to say that my actual ancestry has been as significant a factor as some people might assume or imagine. I say this because I am consciously trying to move away from the notion that one's so-called race should play any significant role within a space that is inspired and guided by Indigenous philosophy, values, ways of being and vision. A particular ancestry, ethnicity or so-called race should be neither a passport nor a barrier to developing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, nor to becoming a family or community member within an Indigenous Australian context. Based on the Indigenous belief systems that inform me, and that I take into my academic work, race is a foreign and imposed notion that does not serve any significant purpose. Indeed it is my belief that the all too familiar division of our collective society into races has successfully created completely artificial and destructive barriers that exist in no place other than our imaginations, although our imaginations certainly draw on hundreds of years of exploitation and social engineering predicated on the significance and importance of one's 'race' (Yancy, 2008).

I have been taking students to meet and learn from people on kuntri since I started academic teaching in 1997. I have taken hundreds of students to a diverse range of communities and locations that would be geographically considered as examples of urban, rural and remote locations in Australia. These locations have ranged from Sydney NSW to the Kimberley region of WA and many places in between. My main objective was, and continues to be, to introduce students to both people and kuntri that they would not get to learn from in the on-campus, classroom style environment.

Based on my life's experience prior to my academic role, I felt a very clear need to make the connections between the cloistered world of the academy and the people and places that had such a positive and influential role in my life and thinking. I already knew that, intentionally or not, these teachers and mentors were not accessible to students or academic staff. I had been a university student myself but now that I had some access to the agency and resources that academics enjoy, or at least should enjoy, I intended to create opportunities for students to experience some of what I had experienced in my life outside of the university. In my mind, the main task was in introducing the university to communities. Who knew where this could lead people once they were no longer strangers to one another.

When I first started thinking about and organizing student trips onto kuntri, I was not familiar with the term 'service learning' nor was the institution where I worked offering such experiences. My motivation was more intuitive than theory based and this way of working/being/seeing has shaped the form of the narrative I offer here

for others. I felt it was important for students to connect with the people and places that we were talking about in the lecture theatre and classroom. These learning experiences were generally termed ‘field trips’ and typically involved going to a location for anywhere between a day to a week. The focus, length and circumstances of the particular trips tended to shape how immersed students became in a community setting and subsequently how much time students spent with community members in social rather than organized ‘learning’ settings. Whilst these trips may not be considered as service learning in and of themselves, due to a lack of deliberate focus on serving communities, they certainly provided opportunities for reciprocity and service to occur. Indeed reciprocity was a key underpinning of all of the trips which I discuss later in the chapter. The trips also offered some opportunities for spontaneous “service” to occur for some students across a range of locations, contexts and circumstances. An example of this was when students were able to get involved in a project or task that was happening at the time, such as helping to organize the information technology (IT) set-up in the community office or paint a building project.

As previously mentioned, my initial motivations to take students out of the university and onto kuntri were not broadly or specifically informed by academic discussion regarding the potential benefits, opportunity or importance of doing so. There may have been such discussion and publication taking place at the time, although my current research reveals that much of this discussion began to emerge during the 2000s. Having said this, a significant influence on this emerging discussion has been the developing recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples in regards to participation in, and ownership of, policy and practice that involves access to and sharing of Indigenous knowledges (Smith, 1999). This was certainly a discussion I was active in at the earliest stages of my academic and community work.

Indigenous Australians, along with representatives of many Indigenous peoples throughout the world, have been at the forefront of the campaign to have Indigenous rights understood and recognized globally (Thornberry, 2002). At the time I first started taking students to meet and talk with Indigenous teachers and hosts I was certainly aware of this. At this time the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was a draft that was being developed via the UN Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, set up via the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1995 (Foster, 2001). I had a number of colleagues and heroes involved with this working group. I was informed by the discussion and developments at this forum and very keenly and clearly inspired by the ethos of self-determination. I firmly believed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had a right to be included as designers and practitioners of contemporary education practice, not just as a process of equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, but more broadly as a point of reference and knowledge development for all Australian students.

Today I am even more convinced and committed to this process as a fundamental recognition of human rights, particularly given that Australia is a signatory to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2007). Indeed I believe that

all Australian students have a right to access education experiences that will contribute to the broadest and deepest development of their intellectual, social and professional capacity. To this end I believe it is critical that Australian students have access to the scholars, teachers and philosophers that embody Indigenous Australian knowledges and understandings.

2 ‘Looking to the Future’: Some Lessons to Consider

On reflection, it’s fair to say that my early forays outside the academy were ambitious and a little naive. I tended to overestimate the willingness of students to put up with long journeys, Spartan conditions and very full agendas. I realized that my own sense of familiarity and even comfort outside of the academy was not always shared by those I took on the adventures. I had spent many years prior to my life as an academic camping, living rough in outdoor work and mixing with a variety of Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters that would be unlikely to turn up in a lecture theatre or tutorial session. I was aware that the safety of a documentary or other forms of media may provide more appropriate modes for students to experience those characters. However, these modes often presented shallow and unflattering stereotypes, sometimes as distant and exotic: the noble savage. In fact that was, and remains to be, a key motivator for me in regards to community based or other experiential learning: for people to meet other people and start to get a sense of each other’s humanity, complexity, realness and, usually, sameness.

In terms of experiential or service learning, the opportunities available within the surrounding First Nations communities were many and varied; catering to arts based learning, caring for kuntri initiatives and practices, health and human services delivery, language and cultural maintenance and more. My overall sense is that the students often had very valuable, sometimes life changing experiences as a result of these opportunities. Just as importantly, so did significant numbers of the Aboriginal people that hosted, shared with and guided students. Unfortunately I do not have volumes of meticulously recorded and archived data to prove this, save for the formal and very limited student feedback surveys conducted by the university. I do have many, many photos, some video recordings, personal communications and my memories, which I’m told may actually be considered legitimate research evidence within some research methodologies.

2.1 Defining Kuntri

First and foremost in my approach to any community based or immersion type learning experiences is to make it clear to students that they are always on someone’s kuntri, even in the most urban environments. It’s clear that there are Traditional Owners of kuntri present or close by in every major town and city in Australia

(Sutton, 2003), yet there remain some very powerful perceptions and myths that act against the recognition of this fact by many people in the mainstream, even within schools and universities (Hollingsworth, 1992; Paradies, 2006). I recall students at Southern Cross University (SCU) in Lismore, New South Wales (NSW) being disappointed when they learnt that their Indigenous studies field trip would be within an hour's drive of the university, rather than to a remote location "up north" or "out west" (see Chap. 13 in this volume for a similar account). This is despite the fact that this area of NSW has one of the highest per capita Aboriginal populations in south eastern Australia.

Aside from people that are the direct descendants of Traditional Owner groups there are many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in urban centres who continue to maintain values, beliefs and cultural practices that are uniquely Indigenous and representative of culture and tradition that has survived even the most intense attempts at colonization. Indigenous academic Vicki Grieves has discussed this in her paper, "What is Aboriginal Spirituality" (Grieves, 2009). Having looked at the maintenance of spirituality and practices amongst Aboriginal people in the most urbanized community in Australia she has identified the "enduring nature of this belief system, despite more than 200 years of colonial rule in NSW that has discouraged Aboriginal spirituality and practice" (Grieves, 2009, p. 1).

2.2 Respecting Kuntri: At Home and Away

Another concept I wanted to bring home to students and the academy is that we can choose to make relevant decisions about where to be and why with the guidance of Indigenous customs and protocols. My first lesson here is that you should acknowledge and respect the kuntri you are on. This means acknowledging and respecting the traditional owners, the Indigenous custodians of the kuntri you are on. As things currently stand, it's hit and miss as to the extent the academy itself may be leading the way in this regard. Some universities have clear statements of recognition of the traditional owners of the kuntri the institution sits on. Some have made space and opportunity for Indigenous community involvement in the university. It is often unclear as to how seriously the institution takes these relationships, particularly when it comes to the core business of teaching and learning. Nevertheless I feel nothing short of obligated to share my own understanding and values regarding the importance of these customs and protocols.

I believe there are important benefits to this lesson. First and foremost, it demonstrates to students that that the space they call their own has a social and cultural history that pre-dates Anglo and Celtic settler occupation, enterprise and suburbia. It's a place that has been occupied, named and loved for hundreds of generations. More importantly it shows that this place continues to be a space that is claimed and defined by Aboriginal people as their home. It's not 'out there' somewhere. It is a place that co-exists with the cultural hegemony, despite all attempts to ignore it. The

invisible can become visible. No need to spend valuable time and money trekking into the 'outback'. The 'real Aborigines' may even be living next door.

This brings us to the obvious question, Why go off kuntri? That's a really important question. It certainly won't be to find and interrogate some 'real Aborigines'. However there could be more relevant and genuine reasons. I would name the most important reason to be based on invitation or request from an Indigenous community or organization. Alongside of my deeply rewarding and productive work on kuntri, in my own backyard, are the relationships and opportunities that have come from responding to invitations to get involved with community based and controlled projects and programs in various parts of the kuntri. An example that stands out for me is based on education and cultural mapping projects and programs in the Kimberley region of WA. To cut a long story short, this initial engagement led to the establishment of relationships that have opened up opportunities for me to co-design and facilitate community based learning experiences for students from within and outside Australia over the last fourteen years. During my time with SCU in the Northern Rivers region of NSW I was also able to help facilitate and support many events that introduced students to people of the Bundjalung Nation, on whose kuntri the university campuses sit. This involved a broad range of learning focuses and experiences, from camps and community visits to service learning type placements in various organizations. I developed extensive and ongoing learning and teaching relationships with local Elders, communities and organizations that would not have been possible to grow and maintain at a distance.

2.3 Overcoming Myths and Stereotypes to Engage People, Place, and Culture

In stark contrast to the reality of the Aboriginal presence in urban areas many non-Indigenous and even some Indigenous students tend to buy into the notion that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in these locations have either 'lost their culture' or have made some sort of decision to abandon their traditional Indigenous values and beliefs in favour of adopting those of the hegemonic society and 'assimilating'. It's hard to pin down exactly where people get these ideas. No doubt the media plays a big role (Meadows, 2001), as does the influential yet often misinformed and misguided approach of educators in various settings (Nakata, 2006).

One of the most recent and telling examples of media generated propaganda about Aboriginal identity can be seen via the maliciously conceived and ill-fated series of Andrew Bolt articles, published by the *Herald Sun* and online (Human Rights Law Centre, 2014) In these articles, Bolt engages in a bigoted interrogation of the authenticity of various well-known Aboriginal people who mainly live and work in urban locations. His overall thesis is that these people are not real Aborigines based on their ancestry, physical appearance, professional status and lifestyle (Human Rights Law Centre, 2014). Whilst the Aboriginal people targeted and

defamed by Bolt were successful in taking legal action against him via the Racial Discrimination Act (ABC, 2011), there was little public challenge to Bolt's racist analysis from the non-Indigenous media audience at the time these articles were published. More than likely it simply added to what many non-Indigenous people thought they knew: that the real Aborigines are very dark skinned and live in the bush (see Chap. 13). Perhaps with some sort of upward scale of authenticity the further you move away from a major metropolitan or regional centre. The primary measure seems to be a combination of physical and geographic distance from whiteness. Paradies (2006, p. 355) comments, "The essentialized Indigeneity thus formed coalesces around specific fantasies of exclusivity, cultural alterity, marginality, physicality and morality, which leave an increasing number of Indigenous people vulnerable to accusations of inauthentic" (Paradies, 2006).

2.4 Expectations of Community Participants

It was always my intention that community members other than those people I had negotiated with as presenters or hosts of the trips should not be expected to play host or cultural informant to a random group of students. I also emphasized that students should not have expectations placed on community presenters and hosts outside of what they had signed up for in terms of the field trip criteria. Of course if conversations started in the course of these trips and opportunities developed as a result of this then that was then the prerogative of those individuals to pursue that, depending on the constraints of set agendas and time. Indeed I found this often happened, particularly when trips took place over a longer period and there was time outside the 'schedule' for people to get to know each other. However, I feel it is important that there is clear understanding at the outset as to who is officially involved, who has responsibility to participate and who will be remunerated or held accountable for outcomes. In a sense, it conforms to some of the important protocols around kinship relationships and the conducting of socially based business in this space.

Further to the above, there is a long history of various agents imposing themselves on Indigenous communities in Australia, many of them in the name of research and enquiry (Rigney, 1999). I believe there has historically been little consideration by the Western agent of the impacts of their behaviour. There seems to have been scant regard for the individual and communal right to privacy, nor intellectual property (Rigney, 1999). Indeed it seems the Western agent believed that they simply had a right to know. In my interactions with students over the years I certainly detected this sense of entitlement to information. I wasn't willing to compromise the integrity of the relationship building process during a visit by having a bunch of strangers running around communities interrogating anybody they considered to be likely informants. Further to this is the long history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people providing vast amounts of information and knowledge without equitable, immediate and ongoing remuneration (Rigney, 1999).

I also believed that placing students into any new social or cultural setting may initially prove too confronting. I didn't want students to retreat 'into their shells' and miss out on the core experiences being offered. I was aware that some community settings would not be the easiest of places in which to drop a group of students. Perhaps more than this, my concerns were that the social and cultural behaviour of university students 'at large' may offend or affront people in particular communities. Decision-making was ultimately concerned with balancing the cultural safety of all concerned against opportunities for people to meet and interact on their own terms. The process needed to be organic but not completely uncontrolled.

Much of my opinion about this has come with experience and hindsight. Initially I was more into the "throw them in at the deep end" approach, I don't think I was familiar with the term "cultural safety" (see Williams, 1999) at that stage and over the years my concerns were certainly realized from both perspectives, but never to the level of complete debacle or disaster. I have learnt that you can only control so much and that too much control can stifle the amazing potential of these experiences for all concerned. You can get a bit carried away with all the anxiety about protocols and cultural safety. I have found that Indigenous people that host visits by students are generally very understanding and generous when it comes to this stuff.

In saying this I don't mean to play down the importance that social protocols and cultural safety play in this space. I believe I had an advantage regarding the trips and experiences because I arguably had a strong sense of what cultural safety meant for all involved. It might be called a 'multicultural fluency', gained as an outcome of my own multicultural life's experience rather than something I had been able to study more formally. Perhaps more important than that cultural fluency was my relationships with the people and places I introduced students to. My relationships enabled me to more quickly get beyond the uncomfortable hesitations and stumbling confusions that can often occur in new and unfamiliar settings. This also supported me to help broker relationships between participants.

2.5 Balancing Cost with Sustainability

Throughout all the years of taking students outside the academy to meet with and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and community members, there has always been a consistent and regulating factor outside and above issues of learning and teaching. That is the issue of cost: the harsh reality of the financial cost of offering learning experiences outside the academy. The types of trips, programs and experiences I have been able to help design and facilitate have been absolutely regulated by cost and what resources have been available at the time. It's fair to say that in the early days of this experience there was a lot more money and resources readily available to me as an academic staff member via the school or even my personally controlled course/subject budget to take students out on field trips. In retrospect it seems like a 'golden age' that rather rapidly declined throughout the 2000s into the much harsher reality of having to source financial and

other resources for activities outside the academy from other, harder to get, sometimes completely external sources.

There is only so much time and opportunity you can find once funding dries up. The bigger picture issue that needs consideration here is how well the academy understands and values the inclusion of these community based, on-kuntri learning experiences. I believe we need to be documenting and evaluating these field trips, service learning programs and immersion experiences far better so that we can make far more compelling evidence-based arguments for their inclusion as core aspects of quality teaching and learning practice at the tertiary level. At this point in time, great opportunities are being lost because they don't fit within current budgeting and academic priorities. There may be rhetoric within institutional policy that seems to suggest such experiences should be happening, or even that they are happening. As many academic staff and learning facilitators know, the opportunities for these experiences are not likely to happen unless rhetoric can be translated into design, resource and planning commitment.

To this end we may find ourselves with some tough decisions to make about what off-campus, on-kuntri experiences we are able to support. Do we do the big trip to a remote area community for 2 weeks or do we organize to meet Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community members, individuals and/or organization representatives locally or at least within easy day commutes from the campus? Should we be aiming for both? Well, it depends. I have grappled with this over the years and raise now some things to consider before committing to a particular approach.

2.6 The Importance of Relationships

The above discussion of cost and sustainability brings me to my next important lesson for students and the academy in regards to being guided by Indigenous philosophies and values. The establishing of good relationships based on reciprocity and respect are the foundation of meaningful and sustainable interactions. Indigenous people from within and outside Australia have very clearly and consistently identified the importance of these relationships, and relationship building, in many forums (Behrendt, 2003; Davis, 2010; Dockery, 2010; Graham, 2008).

So what has my twenty years of engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and community away from kuntri taught me about the value of the experience? As with the more local experiences the feedback from hosts and participants after these events has been overwhelmingly positive. Once again I've mainly got digital images and memory to call on in terms of my evidence. My colleagues and I have witnessed students relocating to these regions to do postgraduate research or take up voluntary and professional work after being involved in these initial trips and projects. I still keep in contact with students more than ten years later based on these events. There are plenty of examples of successful learning and life changing experiences as a result of the big off campus adventure. It can also be a really enriching and educational experience for people in remote communities to meet and

spend time with people from other parts of Australia and beyond. I feel that it's particularly important for people in these communities to experience their own spaces, places, values and knowledges being shared with people who are listeners and learners rather than experiencing non Indigenous visitors as expert investigators or project managers.

It may be that you are working in a topic or subject area that requires students to develop an awareness and understanding for how things work in rural or remote regions. You may be looking at traditional fishing rights in the Torres Strait. We may want to provide opportunities for students who have never set foot outside the urban landscape to literally get another perspective. There may be a land use dispute happening in a particular place that needs to be experienced to be understood. It can be valuable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to connect with other Indigenous people outside their own kuntri. These are all reasons I've chosen to look for learning opportunities away from the academy and off kuntri, in someone else's kuntri. The integrity of the experience for all participants should be at the front end of planning. At the end of the day, there are opportunities for students to connect with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures everywhere across Australia, some just cost more.

2.7 The Importance of Reciprocity

But what about the reciprocal value for the Indigenous people that host student visits? This is a critical aspect when considering, planning and reflecting on an off campus experience. Reciprocity is a fundamental value and protocol in most cultures and relationships, even if it is not always spelt out and formally acknowledged. From Indigenous cultural perspectives however it is often formally acknowledged and spelt out via kinship and other relational structures and agreements (Ellis & Early, 2008; Harris & Wasilewski, 2004). This is certainly my understanding in terms of the Indigenous cultures in which I am connected. In retrospect, I think that the benefits from the service or immersion experience for all people involved should be part of the overall intention. The process can then be developed and planned around this. It should be quality conversations rather than assumptions. Perhaps the nature of the reciprocal process will mean that one particular experience will need to be followed-up with another. I have seen this happen when students who have visited communities have returned to fulfil more of a service role.

When the experience is on kuntri and relatively close to a university campus there is opportunity for a more regular and fluid sense of reciprocity to develop. This might be the sharing some of the relatively privileged resources that the university offers such as physical spaces to meet and gather, access to multimedia and communications technology, access to expert advice and advocacy or many other possibilities. I have certainly been involved in brokering and supporting reciprocity that involved all the possibilities mentioned here on behalf of people who have supported and hosted student learning experiences. Sometimes that was with the

express permission and blessing of the university executive and sometimes I chose to make the decision on their behalf, taking into account of course the rhetoric of such things as Reconciliation Statements and recognitions of kuntri. I decided in these cases that it was my responsibility, as both an agent of the university and a community member, to action this important rhetoric. There were times when my various campus 'superiors' didn't see it that way, which I believe served to demonstrate their lack of both understanding and respect for the importance and value of these relationships (Kuokanen, 2007).

During my time at a regional university in NSW I worked within the Indigenous College. This part of the university was predominantly staffed and managed by Indigenous Australians and included the School of Indigenous Studies and the Indigenous student support centre. What is clear to me, on reflection, is the way that college staff seemed to understand and respect the notion of reciprocity in regards to Indigenous people not formally enrolled or employed at the college having access to both resources and staff support. This was particularly the case when it came to supporting local Elders. Whilst staff, and particularly senior management staff, from other sections of the university were rarely willing to try to stop this process, they were often confused at best and generally disapproving. The non-Indigenous perspective on these relationships with community was that they were outside the approved process and therefore inappropriate or even corrupt. The Indigenous perspective was that good relationships with community were important and had to be demonstrated via the sharing of resources and privilege. Indeed Indigenous staff with access to resources felt obligated to share with community. Subsequently an unhealthy tension often developed, which tended to feed negative stereotypes and cultural hostilities. It was not a culturally safe environment for Indigenous staff.

3 Conclusions

In summary, my own cultural positionality and the myriad experiences of working to create opportunities for reciprocal exchanges between higher education students and community have enabled the development of key lessons that guide my practice and the practice of others. I end by addressing each of these lessons in turn.

Work from a human rights based approach to engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Make it clear that you are supporting and actioning this approach in respect of the standards that Indigenous peoples globally have determined and the United Nations has recognized and implemented. Australia has acknowledged these rights by signing up to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is therefore a responsibility rather than a courtesy that individuals with agency and privilege within institutions recognize and respect these rights.

Ideally the facilitators of exchanges between students and community should utilize and take advantage of their relationships within community to broker exchanges. It may be that you have colleagues within the university who have these

relationships you can partner with. This does not mean that any Indigenous person on staff will be in a position to do this, nor should there be an expectation that they do this unless they are specifically employed in a community liaison role. There may be non-Indigenous staff members who have good relationships, it's not about race and ethnicity. If no such relationships exist with community, time, resources and energy should be put into this process. The integrity of this process may be what makes or breaks valuable teaching and learning opportunities well into the future.

Acknowledge and engage with the Traditional Owners of the kuntri the university is on regardless of where the university executive sits in this space. Work towards a process of inclusivity and reciprocity with community as a way to demonstrate a commitment to the building of relationships. This will mean going well beyond the typical 'formal' recognition such as NAIDOC Day or Sorry Day. Every day is an opportunity for inclusivity and recognition. Ask the community what it wants from the university. This might not be typical professional services or places in courses and programs. For many people within the institution this may mean stepping outside of their comfort zones and becoming advocates or even activists, such are the dynamics of contested and privileged spaces.

Make sure you are clear about the type of programs and exchanges that will benefit all people involved. This needs to be thoroughly discussed with potential Indigenous facilitators, hosts and teachers. Make sure there are enough resources, funding and capacity to action the process once there is a consensus on how things will take place. It's better to start small, demonstrate success and look for further support than to embark on a one-off venture that can't be sustained. Good relationships need to be ongoing and sustainable beyond the life of any one particular project or program.

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