



University of
**Southern
Queensland**

**INVESTIGATING THE STATE OF INDIGENOUS
KNOWLEDGES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND**

A Thesis submitted by

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GCPS

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Masters of Professional Studies (Research)

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ABSTRACT

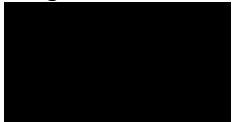
Many Australian Universities have begun exploring the use of Indigenous Knowledges and how they apply in various industries and educational settings. This may become increasingly vital as social, political, and environmental systems all around the world become subject to rapid decline. The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) is verging upon a new chapter of teaching, learning, education, and research, and therefore it is critical to examine the past and current framing of Indigenous Knowledges within the institution. The aim of this is to gain an accurate understanding of its place and position, and to pave exciting and innovative ways forward. This study sought to determine the current state of Indigenous Knowledges within the University of Southern Queensland using one-on-one qualitative interviews or ‘yarns’ with UniSQ Indigenous academics. The findings suggest that, since the 1980s, several ways of including Indigenous peoples, histories, languages, and cultures within the University have been tried with varying levels of success, and Indigenous student support initiatives and study programs have taken various forms over that time. Previously, Indigenous Knowledges were reduced to a series of artefacts on display in a glass cabinet, signifying a static culture. Today, Indigenous Knowledges is a dynamic talking point within the institution, albeit in mild, inadvertent, or arbitrary ways. Most of the work in the space of Indigenous Knowledges within the University is covert, rather than overt, with much work to be done to ensure that Indigenous Knowledges are appropriately classified, included, respected, and protected in current efforts across the institution. These ongoing efforts to raise the profile of Indigenous Knowledges should be supported by a set agenda or clearly articulated goal for identifying *what Indigenous Knowledge is, how it is defined, who can use it, when, and in what ways* within Schools and departments. It is anticipated that this study will provide further support in generating new ideas and discussion points into how UniSQ can answer those questions, with the overall aim of continuing the dynamic use and expression of Indigenous Knowledges, while contemporaneously bringing ideas out from *behind the glass cabinet* and embedding them into the everyday life of the institution. A series of recommendations has been provided for further exploration and capacity-building, and for supporting broader inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in all areas of the curriculum.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I, Joshua Waters, declare the thesis entitled *Investigating the State of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Southern Queensland* is not more than 40,000 words including the quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices references and footnotes. The thesis is the work of Joshua Waters except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged. This work does not contain any material previously published, written, or expressed in any other ways including cultural practice by another person, except where due acknowledgement and attribution has been provided. I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work, and that, unless stated, all work and ideas are uniquely my own.

Date: 20th May 2023

Signature of Candidate



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This thesis was written on the unceded lands of the Jarowair, Giabal and Western Wakka Wakka peoples. I acknowledge that these lands and waters have been under the care and custodianship of their Elders and ancestors for more than 65,000 years. I wish to also acknowledge the support provided by my supervisors both administrative and personal. My Elders, teachers and community have also played a critical role in shaping and guiding my thoughts and perspectives through conversations over the years, and this is reflected throughout this work. Finally, participation in this degree course program was also supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship (RTP).

DEDICATION

I firstly would like to express my gratitude for this Country, holding and nurturing my family and me over the course of this degree, and for many years prior. Undertaking this research required time and energy that I may never be able to repay to those nearest and dearest to me, and in that, I am truly thankful to be surrounded by such unconditional and unwavering patience and love. To my partner Kerry, to whom I owe so much, I wholeheartedly appreciate the continued support and care. You are now and have been a shining light for all those around you, and I look forward to sharing in the experience that graduation brings and beyond. This is your success also. To my supervisors Associate Professor Renee Desmarchelier and Professor Karen Trimmer, for their time, effort, investment, and belief in me on both a personal and professional level, and for their knowledge and expertise as outstanding leaders in their field and within the academy, I am truly appreciative. To my cousin/brother/uncle Associate Professor Marcus Waters for the yarns and cultural guidance, which to me, was invaluable and important for my development all around. Finally, I would like to thank my immediate and extended communities for their faith and trust in me to carry out this study. I hope that I have done your words, thoughts, ideas, and futures justice, and wishing you many powerful returns from this study, as our ways of knowing come to the fore.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AE	Aboriginal English
ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous and People of Colour
CAIK	Centre for Australian Indigenous Knowledges
CIKG	Centre for Indigenous Knowledge Governance
CISER	College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
EVPAB	Elders and Valued Personal Advisory Board
FNA	First Nations Australia
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
ICIP	Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property
IHEPP	Indigenous Higher Education Pathways Program
IIR	Indigenous Insider Researcher
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
IKs	Indigenous Knowledges
IK/s	Indigenous Knowledge/s
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
IKSL	Indigenous Knowledge Systems Lab
IPM	Indigenous Process Method

IRM	Indigenous Research Methodology
KNL	Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag
MPSR	Masters of Professional Studies Research
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee
OATSIE	Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UniSQ	University of Southern Queensland
UTS	University of Technology Sydney

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Position Statement

Yaama ngindaay gaba? Gali-galgaa gayrr ngayya. K/Gamilaroi dhawundhi dhurra-y ngayya. Giirr yilaadhu warraldanha ngayya nhalay dhawundhi, ngayya winangalawaanha ngaandi dhaay yananhi gamilu ngiyanyina.

For tens-of-thousands-of-years, Indigenous peoples, languages and cultures have presided over many diverse landscapes across Australia and the globe, living in deep relationally-bound networks designed to connect people and place across countless generations. Nested within greater bioregional models of kinship and governance, these complex structures have managed to sustain an ongoing presence in such localities for lengths of time which far pre-date modern Western industrial and colonial paradigms. These were some of the most sustainable cultures and societies on Earth, and their longevity, despite changing landscapes, climatic shifts, natural disaster, rising sea levels, and inhospitable conditions may serve as ample evidence of this. These communities and systems have also withstood European colonisation, disruption, and destruction over the past few centuries. In contrast, Western societies engaged in industrial and colonial practices particularly, which no less seek to dominate people and landscapes are relatively short lived and are generally seen as unsustainable due to such extractive and exploitative relationships. It could be said that the systems of knowledge which were developed in co-evolution with ancient land, water, sea, and skyscapes undoubtedly played a critical role in the lengths of time that Indigenous peoples and communities were able to remain present and survive despite the

harshness of the climate and all of the environments which they have been forced to endure.

In more modern contexts, Indigenous peoples and cultures continue to face many struggles both in the form of environmental destruction, land degradation, and ecological collapse, along with ongoing oppression through current and historical sociopolitical tensions within mainstream social and structural domains. This includes but is certainly not limited to academia, for many reasons, which are generally grounded in past treatments and depictions of Indigenous peoples by early settlers as primitive, savage, and uncivilised (Anderson & Perrin, 2007). Indigenous researchers in modern, and even postmodern, higher education contexts now generally reside within a nexus between Indigenous and Western histories, cultures, languages, and knowledges, being forced to navigate the complexities of what is said to be a highly contested, multi-dimensional and multi-layered space which encompasses many different systems of thought, philosophy, language, socioeconomics, and sociopolitical organisation and discourse (Nakata, 2007; Smith 2021). As such, Indigenous researchers are expected to also manage the conflicting ideals that simply come with *being Indigenous* in research spaces and academic domains (Fredricks et al., 2019).

With all of this in mind, before continuing, it is essential that I state my position as a K/Gamilaroi man, in honour and recognition of the cultural protocols which are present within Indigenous community contexts, but also to position myself in the context of Indigenous research including the considerations, operations, reflections, and

expectations of working with Indigenous peoples and communities and these factors must precede the functions of any research. This combined within an Indigenist standpoint (Rigney, 1999, 2017) will serve to provide a complete system of ethical responsibilities which ultimately seeks to ground actions and behaviours in 'Country', while upholding the integrity of all things in Creation including Indigenous communities and their voices and orienting oneself within the wider 'ecology' of relations across the globe. While protocols can vary across Indigenous cultures and communities globally, there is always a consistent thread which emphasises the importance of right relationships developed and maintained through the three R's: 'Respect, Reciprocity and Relationality' (Weber-Pillwax, 1999; Wilson, 2008; Kite et al., 2020; Radley et al., 2021; Yunkaporta, 2019).

My name is Joshua Waters, and I am a proud K/Gamilaroi man from the First Nations of what is now commonly referred to as the Northwest Slopes and Liverpool Plains areas of New South Wales. Truly, as I stand on these lands, I remember all those who came before me. I pay my deepest respects to the spirit of this place, and to all Elders and ancestors and descendants of them, across all time. I pay respect to my own Elders and ancestors whose sacrifices have made it possible for me to be present in this place. It is to them I am accountable in my work and study, and I seek to ensure that their values and perspectives are held firmly in all that I do. My families across all of my extended Aboriginal communities including the Waters, Orcher, Bennett, Moodie, and Bird families have shaped me today and provided a foundation for my approach within this study.

1.2 Finding Positionality in the Academy

It is important that Indigenous researchers particularly, understand the importance of positioning and locating themselves within the greater ethical sociocultural boundaries, actions, behaviours, and conducts (Nakata, 2007). By announcing their ‘credentials’ they are associating themselves with all aspects of the research along with any implications of the research findings over deep time, along with subsequent impacts on their families, their communities, and their ancestors (Yunkaporta, 2009). To make such a proclamation and not adhere to the mechanisms which are designed to protect people and Country from harm, can bring ‘shame’ on the person, their families and their communities (Yunkaporta & Bryden, 2022). This is especially the case where accuracy in representing stories and events is exaggerated or compromised, or where personal social or cultural responsibilities are neglected. Therefore, this means that Indigenous research protocol – and thus research, generally – is not only for *ngay* (my) individual protection, benefit, and relationships, but also for *ngiyaniya* (us-all) to protect and provide for community networks and relationships also. This level of understanding applies to both human and non-human kin and more-than-human kin, keeping them safe from further harm whilst emboldening collective autonomy and determination at all levels.

1.3 Structure of Study

This study seeks to investigate the current state of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ). Through the use of qualitative methods such as individual participant interviews with UniSQ Indigenous academics, while also reviewing key strategic documents and analysing emergent themes within the data

collected, the study will provide a detailed overview of the current state of Indigenous Knowledges in 2023, along with important recommendations for progressing and exploring future possibilities within the context of Indigenous Knowledge teaching, learning, education, and research.

As this study is for the award of Masters of Professional Studies (Research) within the University of Southern Queensland's Professional Studies program, it will also provide final chapter outlining considerations for increased knowledge and capacity of the researcher participating in the study, along with contributions to the research area and addressing knowledge gaps. Finally, the conclusion of the study will discuss the inclusion of a work-based learning project in association with enhancing professional practice on a broader level.

1.4 Background, Scope, Purpose and Aims of Study

Since European colonisation in Australia, Indigenous peoples and their knowledges have been seen as inferior (Foley, 2003). However, over the past few decades the profile of Indigenous Knowledges (IK¹) has increased greatly in different global educational contexts. In Australia particularly, there is now more recognition of IK's potential contributions to national and global issues such as sustainability, land management, ecological restoration, and counteracting the effects of global warming than ever before.

¹ Indigenous Knowledges will be generally abbreviated to 'IK' in the initial part of the study, however, will evolve with further context in subsequent sections.

In 2023, The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) is in the process of implementing a number of key measures to increase the engagement, participation and inclusion of Indigenous students and staff, and through multiple structural changes to the College for First Nations over the years, has sought to ensure that Indigenous education, knowledge and scholarly development is a priority within the University. However, these key ideas - Indigenous Knowledges, especially - have not been clearly and consistently defined in how they pertain to a localised UniSQ context. More specifically, the future of IK at UniSQ has not been concisely articulated in a way that allows individuals, faculties, and internal governing bodies to set long-term goals, visions and strategies around its potential uses and functionalities across the university, throughout the region, and across the globe.

This study will seek to investigate how IK is currently recognised or utilised in the University of Southern Queensland's strategic direction, along with curriculum development and implementation, and current and future research initiatives. More specifically, the study will examine closely the state of IK at UniSQ to establish a clear understanding of what it is, where it is, what it does, how it works, and what can be achieved through its ongoing use and development across the university.

1.4.1 A Brief History of Indigenous Knowledges at UniSQ

Although UniSQ had begun including Aboriginal studies as a subject in the mid-1970s (Brimblecombe, 1996), it had not made its first official structural commitments to increasing the profile of Indigenous peoples, histories, cultures, and knowledges until

the 1980s when the first Aboriginal Research Management Training Programme was established in the School of Business Studies. In 1986, UniSQ launched the first of what would become many variations of a UniSQ 'Indigenous Support Unit' called The Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Indigenous Education (OATSIE). OATSIE was situated within the Faculty of Arts and was designed to support Indigenous students through a special admissions program and Indigenous student support scheme. In the early 1990s, OATSIE transformed into *Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag* (KNL) meaning 'place of learning' in the Kamilaroi and Kala Lagaw Ya language of the Torres Strait Islands, which was described by Clarke & MacDonald (2007, p. 25) as 'an autonomous entity within the academic division' but also held a collection and glass cabinet display of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artefacts. KNL later introduced a pre-tertiary pathway program specifically targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This element of the movement towards a culturally inclusive institution saw the implementation of the Jilalan Project which would assist in the development of culturally appropriate preparatory curriculum material, which served as a precursor for the Indigenous Higher Education Preparatory Program (IHEPP). Due to these structural changes and attempts to effectively recognise Indigenous peoples and knowledges in the UniSQ context, the next two decades saw many positive student outcomes, including the first Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander² student to graduate with a Bachelor of Engineering in 1999, the first distinguished honorary awards in 2003 and 2008, and the first Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander PhD graduate in 2011.

² The term Aboriginal "and/or" Torres Strait Islander is used here as a means of distinguishing the differences between "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" which might suggest the individuals are of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, when this may not be the case.

Following on from these successes came many more internal processes to appropriately support the contributions from UniSQ Indigenous student and staff cohorts. This included scholarships for Indigenous students at UniSQ, cross cultural awareness training for staff, the establishment of key committees and groups such as the Elders and Valued Persons Advisory Board (EVPAB), and the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to strategically guide the University in closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, while increasing the visibility of Indigenous expertise, excellence and contributions of Indigenous peoples, as well as acknowledging the rights to inclusive environments free of racism and discrimination whilst attending the University in any capacity (UniSQ Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2021).

1.4.2 Conceptualising Indigenous Knowledge at UniSQ

The first formalised structural mention of 'Indigenous Knowledges' as a serious cultural concept, came in 2007 with the move to combine KNL with the Buallam Jarl-Bah Education Centre to create a semi-research focused Centre of Australian Indigenous Knowledges (CAIK). 'Indigenous Knowledges' at this time was based on a vague interpretation of IK, however, this was seemingly not the direct focus of the Centre anyhow. A UniSQ Annual Report from the same year stated that CAIK was formed 'to assist Indigenous students across each USQ campus along with organising relevant events and activities' (University of Southern Queensland, 2007 Annual Report, p. 27). It also suggested that CAIK, as a tailored student support program:

encouraged Indigenous students to consider their own personal circumstances, both in the short and longer terms, to identify and itemise the types of financial, academic, and study related issues that would impact on their progress and retention over the life of the program in which they were enrolled (p. 27).

In consideration of these circumstances, CAIK would assist in the development of a study package for students, to ensure they received appropriate support by working with CAIK staff in both individual and group settings throughout the course of their studies. The staff members allocated to support these clusters of students would report back to the Centre Management Team on the implementation and success of the program.

In a study conducted by Hossain et al. (2008) CAIK was listed as a place that encourages and assists education of Indigenous students by:

- actively supporting a network of Indigenous students undertaking tertiary studies at the preparatory, undergraduate and/or postgraduate level;
- promoting Indigenous cultures and assisting communities to develop their economic and cultural independence through research and consultancy study;
- acting as an advocate for Indigenous students when meeting educational, social, economic and cultural difficulties in a tertiary institution, and
- undertaking research and consultancy study that will address education and other issues that affect Indigenous people at all levels (Hossain et al, 2008, pp. 1-2)

Despite the use of 'Indigenous Knowledges' in this case appearing to be almost entirely aspirational with little consideration for the greater depth and insights that Indigenous Knowledges offers, and what it constitutes as being in accordance with more modern

definitions, the Centre would undergo another structural change in 2014, relinquishing its name of CAIK and adopting a new name, which was the Centre for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research (CISER). CISER in this regard was designed to foster and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities to develop a strong sense of independence, as well as to advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who may be experiencing difficulties in navigating the cultural complexities of higher education, and to undertake research and consultancy in areas that seek to address social, cultural, and political barriers to Indigenous education.

1.4.3 Setting strategic intent and direction

While these movements over the years and across varying levels of the University along with its ongoing development of strategic direction and initiatives seem to have occasionally touched on the peripheries of IK, each occurring at different times, there still was no direct commitment to the future prospects and ongoing development of IK at the University of Southern Queensland, at least outside of generalised student support mechanisms, historical and structural information embedded within curriculum programs, and the implementation of strategic incentives to attract and retain students. In 2021, however, the University of Southern Queensland appointed its inaugural Pro-Vice Chancellor (First Nations Education and Research) who would lead a refreshed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and research portfolio that included yet another structural change for the College which subsequently became the College for First Nations in early-to-mid 2022. This change was reflective of a strong push to promote and include Indigenous peoples, histories, cultures, and perspectives at a strategic and structural level, while highlighting the heterogeneity of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander peoples as diverse and distinct cultural groups with deep and unencumbered roots in the Australian landscape.

The College for First Nations today maintains a similar scope and purpose to its predecessors despite the name change, in that Indigenous student attraction, engagement, support, retention, and completion is of rather immediate importance. However, it is also evident that the College seeks to support broader and more distributed initiatives across the University in accordance with a refreshed First Nations education and research agenda. While this is a time of substantial change and transience between the old and the new, it is hoped that overall the College for First Nations will be a figurehead in supporting active movements across the University and wider mainstream and Indigenous communities through program implementation, hosting of Indigenous events, leadership, engagement, cultural capabilities and 'empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to take their rightful place in teaching, research and enterprise' (University of Southern Queensland Strategic Plan 2021-2025).

Bearing all of this in mind, and to further support, encourage, affect, and inform movement in the space of Indigenous Knowledges especially at UniSQ, this study asks, firstly, 'what is the current state of IK at the University of Southern Queensland?' Further, it will seek to explore how IK is defined at UniSQ in relation to contemporary global, national, and regional definitions. Some areas of the study will also seek to gauge the 'place' of IK in the wider university context, and the visions of what

Indigenous Knowledge systems can provide in terms of strategic direction, operating protocols, research techniques, technological innovation, and academic/scholarly development. Lastly, as a result of the study, a series of recommendations on how UniSQ can take a highly informed global, national, regional and localised approach to understanding the potential of IK in all of its varying cultural and higher education contexts, and these recommendations will be submitted to the Pro-Vice Chancellor (First Nations Education and Research) for further review and consideration.

1.4.4 Aims of Study

Indigenous Knowledges are being given greater priority in Australian higher education spaces and although this can in some ways be problematic and contentious (Acton et al, 2017) more organisations and institutions across Australia are recognising the importance of IK in varying contexts. Therefore, in order to gauge an appropriate understanding of UniSQ's current stance and position in relation to IK, the study asks, 'What is the current state of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Southern Queensland?'. The findings from answering this question will allow a crucial and timely conversation to unfold on how UniSQ as an institution can advance the movement towards better recognising and promoting the voices, perspectives and knowledges of Indigenous peoples and communities across the institution, respectfully. The researcher recognises that this is an ongoing, long-term process, however, this research and the consequent series of recommendations may indeed prove to be an important step in that process.

1.4.5 Purpose

The overall purpose of the study is to investigate the current state of Indigenous Knowledges at UniSQ through qualitative analysis, and to formulate a series of recommendations for exploring IK in greater depth as part of UniSQ's strategic direction and future initiatives to be determined by key executives within the University. The study will seek to define and outline what IK is from a UniSQ context, along with where and how it is or can be taught and by whom, and how its current state at UniSQ aligns with global, national, and regional definitions.

1.4.6 Significance, Scope and Definitions

According to Hart et al. (2012), it “remains a highly questioned discipline in relation to what counts as Indigenous knowledge” (p. 706), and while definitions will vary in relation to place, time, individual perspective and collective interpretation, Indigenous Knowledge is “part of the collective genius of humanity” (Little Bear, 2009, p. 8) and thus should be held in higher esteem than what it has been in the past at UniSQ.

Today, while all of UniSQ's key First Nations documents are entering into a transient renewal phase, there are only a small number of explicit references to ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge systems’ or ‘Indigenous Knowledges’ within UniSQ's strategic documents. Also, there is no clear definition of what any of this means, and at times the terms are absorbed into sections which propose cultural capabilities for staff or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in a general sense.

In regard to the difficulty of formulating a ‘standard’ academic definition of Indigenous Knowledge, according to Christie (2006) this comes with the serious risk of further colonising, appropriating and marginalising Indigenous epistemologies which are

“governed by ancestral laws of representation” that are still alive and well in many Aboriginal communities (p. 78). Aside to this, Morgan (2003) says that even on occasions when western knowledge institutions appear to be accommodating Indigenous wisdoms and knowledges, it is usually in ways that are “largely limited to those which can be defined on western terms” (p. 45) which can problematise the use, functionality, and integrity of IK. Alternatively, it can commercialise intellectual property that belongs to communities of people, and not individuals (Nakata & Langton, 2005).

Despite all of this, there are several scholars who have managed to develop and authenticate the use of certain academic definitions of IK. Denzin, Lincoln & Smith (2008) state that Indigenous Knowledge “embodies the cosmologies, values, cultural beliefs, and webs of relationships that exist within specific indigenous communities” (p. xiv). Kovach (2010) says that “Indigenous knowledges comprise a specific way of knowing based upon oral traditions of sharing knowledge” (p. 40). In an academic paper by McGinty (2012), Indigenous Knowledges refers to:

the ontologies (the nature of reality for Indigenous people) and epistemologies (the way Indigenous people come to know and understand their realities) and methodologies (the way these Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies are enacted) (p. 5)

The Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education (2009) suggested that:

It is critical that Indigenous knowledge is recognised as an important, unique element of higher education, contributing economic productivity by equipping

graduates with the capacity to work across Australian society and in particular with Indigenous communities. (p. 33)

Bradley et al. (2008) go on to suggest that the incorporation of IK should go beyond the provision of Indigenous courses and subjects to including Indigenous cultural competency into the curriculum which serves as a mechanism for ensuring university graduates are culturally competent and have a good understanding of Indigenous histories and cultures.

Universities Australia (UA) also emphasises the importance of IK in their Indigenous Strategy 2022-2024, with members endorsing that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people possess unique knowledges and systems “which are foundational and fundamentally important to Australia’s intellectual, social and cultural capital” (Universities Australia, Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025, p. 24). Due to this increased interest and recognition, many Australian universities have taken approaches to implementing IK-related projects and initiatives, with many universities such as the University of Queensland, James Cook University and Southern Cross University now offering courses in Indigenous Knowledges, to name a few. Other places such as Charles Darwin University Northern Institute have gone a step further in establishing a Contemporary Indigenous Knowledge and Governance (CIKG) program in 2020, the Batchelor Institute are now exploring the implementation of Indigenous Knowledges in Doctoral Education which “will be used as an exemplar model that recognised key First Nations concepts as the basis of knowledge building and sharing” (Gilbey, 2021, np), and Deakin University in 2021 launched their Indigenous Knowledges Systems (IKS) Lab which Yunkaporta (2021, np) says is “based upon traditionally grounded Indigenous

methods of inquiry, protocols and knowledge production processes” and serves as a place where:

Indigenous thinking can be applied to the issues that complexity scientists and technologists are currently working on across economics, design, cybernetics, governance, evolutionary dynamics, environment, cognition and consciousness (np).

Bearing all of this in mind, along with the consideration of many of the global ecological and technological challenges that humans are facing and will continue to face in the future, it is important that UniSQ be a part of Indigenous Knowledges discussion that is in an emergent phase across all parts of the country. It is equally important that IK be given the serious thought and consideration within the University of being a legitimate base of intelligence that can be utilised to enhance knowledge, innovate thinking, and solve modern problems that we face collectively today. This study would be a starting point in facilitating the increased recognition and profile of IK at UniSQ, and potentially lead to not only incorporating more IK into the curriculum, but across the general life of the university.

1.5 Anticipated Contributions of the Study

It was anticipated that this research will provide contributions to current discourse regarding IK within UniSQ, but also in national and global contexts. The study attempted to capture a relevant interpretation of the current state of IK within the institution.

Concurrently, it also sought to measure the findings against a global context of IK, and loop back to the University environment to provide strategic directions forward in

highlighting the importance of IK, and developing effective ways to recover, implement, protect, and maintain IK. It is acknowledged herein that this level of change may require some structural adaptations within the University, to propagate discourse for potential incorporation and innovation through inclusion of IK into course curricula, teaching and research, professional development, and Indigenous education. Leading theories, concepts and philosophies related to Indigenous research methodologies were included to aid and enhance the effectiveness of the study, and demonstrate the influence of Indigenous knowledges in real-time.

Overall, the study shows through robust investigation new ways for how IK can be categorised and utilised in university contexts. This was not merely to dictate the outcomes of IK, or the study, but to allow for *emergent* ideas to take shape and feed into larger processes that can be applied at all levels in the future. In accordance with IK processes, the aim of the approach provided was to increase the possibility for relationality within Indigenous academic teaching, learning, education and research cohorts. Further it was to develop a series of frameworks and ideas for use by the wider public. This, as with many other industries and domains is an ongoing journey. However, it is anticipated that this study will be a worthwhile contribution to the global discourse on IK.

1.6 Methodology and Research Questions

IK is being given greater priority in Australian higher education spaces and although this can in some ways be problematic and contentious (Acton et al., 2017) more organisations and institutions across Australia are recognising the importance of IK in

varying contexts (Yunkaporta, 2019). Therefore, in order to gauge an effective understanding of UniSQ's current stance and position in relation to IK, the study asks, 'What is the current state of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Southern Queensland?'. Further questions may be explored such as:

- How has the current state of IK been shaped by previous attempts at inclusion within UniSQ, and how can this knowledge be used to determine a positive trajectory for IK teaching, learning, education, and research in the future?
- What are the overall perceptions, perspectives, and barriers of IK within the institution as it pertains to Indigenous academics?
- How can IK be refined and developed through the strategic use of IK-related approaches, methods, and philosophies within the University?

1.7 Conclusion

The aim of this research is to understand the current state of IK at UniSQ, and how this is related to current and future prospects of IK teaching, learning, education and research. This will be done by gathering data in regard to current national and global contexts, and in correspondence with past attempts of including IK within the institution. This information will be utilised and harnesses to exact a position on IK at UniSQ and propose future strategic directions in supporting the overall recognition, inclusion, protection and maintenance of IK-related agendas and plans. As the world becomes more familiar with IK and how it can be incorporated into contemporary settings, the University has an opportunity to become a key figure in innovation, resourcing, researching, and applying IK in varying domains and industries. This research will

provide a platform for continued discourse and investigation into ongoing work in this area.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review will seek to analyse the current literature relating to IK in varying contexts. Given that IK is a globally recognised concept within higher education, and a key objective of the study was to investigate the state of IK at UniSQ relative to global definitions and interpretations, it was seen as imperative to take a ‘scaled’ approach to interpreting the literature, commencing from global literature, then scaling down to national literature in Australian, then to local UniSQ perspectives. A section is also provided for Indigenizing the Curriculum as this is a growing area of research which may be seen as highly relative to the study.

2.2 Indigenous Process Method (IPM)

The Literature Review conducted in this study follows an Indigenous Process Method (IPM) which incorporates a highly robust and explicit cultural ontological process for reviewing resources and materials which provide scope, context and evidence for sound inclusion, analysis, and review of literature in the context of this study. The literature review from a Western standpoint serves as the basis for the study and informs a researcher's position on the topic, along with how they will go about addressing the research question. In this regard, it is imperative to seek out related topics and to familiarise oneself with the work that has gone into advancing research across the discipline/s to “identify gaps, contradictions, relationships and inconsistencies in the literature” (Krupinski, 2019, p. 200). Failure to properly locate, analyse, process, and interpret existing knowledge in the most current context a study or area of research can

lead to what Randolph (2009) refers to as a “faulty literature review” which can derail a dissertation (p. 3).

The IPM in this context follows a distinct cultural pattern, which has the purpose of systematising a series of general protocols for engagement which will be used to guide the literature review as a cultural practice process. Figure 1. demonstrates the method in further detail by showing the overlapping protocols for both how the literature review should traditionally be approached to ensure academic integrity and scholarly authenticity, and how a cultural practice process metaphor can be used to create an artefact (carving a boomerang, or weaving a basket, for example) in culturally relevant and appropriate ways. These protocols are:

1. Ethics
2. Reflexivity
3. Resourcing and Research
4. Refine
5. Align

The protocols reflect the importance of the processes listed on either side of the diagram, which in turn, gives additional context to the practical elements contained within each cultural paradigm. This is not intended to be a checklist but rather a guide.

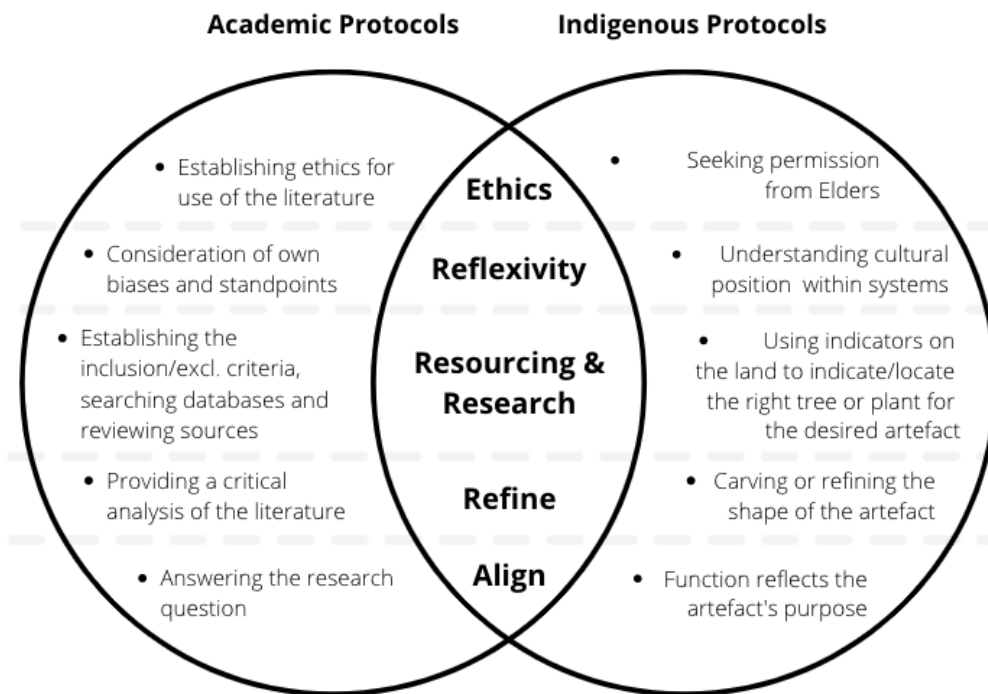


Figure 1: An Indigenous metaphor for writing a literature review.

Therefore, the process employed for reviewing the literature within this study, draws on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous domains to ensure an ethical, reflective, transparent and prudent approach which is highly inclusive of academic rigor and cultural integrity.

2.2.1 WRP9020 Publishable Paper A

As part of the requirements for the Masters of Professional Studies (Research) at UniSQ, the researcher was required to develop a publishable paper. The paper was used to outline and demonstrate the IPM in praxis, and specifically, how it can be applied to the process of conducting a literature review in higher degree research.

Fundamentally, the literature review in the context of higher education is considered an important part of research operations and serves as a basis for good scholarly practice.

For early career researchers and established scholars alike, the process of reviewing literature can shape and inform a position on a particular subject, and aid in identifying and addressing knowledge gaps to advance our understanding of how the world works. Although, few researchers have explored how this process relates or can be translated across varying cultural and epistemological domains.

The article entitled 'An Indigenous Process Method for conducting the Literature Review' therefore seeks to inquire what kind of impact an Indigenous Process Method (IPM) can have on the procedure and outcome of a literature review, and if the IPM can be replicated and contextualised across different cultural practice areas such as dance, art, song, wood carving and weaving but also to non-Indigenous practices as well. The aim in proposing this method, is to support the ongoing inclusion of Indigenous worldviews in research practices, processes, and methods. Further, it may serve as a key point of reference for Indigenous scholars and researchers participating in higher degree research, offering some relief from standardised academic procedures which are often deeply grounded in Western epistemologies and ontologies.

The article was accepted for publication by the Journal for Australian Indigenous Issues on the 16th of July 2023.

2.3 Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts

Despite being a core feature of global Indigenous people's lives and worldview for tens of thousands of years, Indigenous knowledges have only recently become accepted by the academy and mainstream society as a legitimate form of knowledge.

Epistemological differences between Western and Indigenous definitions of knowledge, as well as how it is formed, who does it, through which processes and with what outcomes is still a point of contention. However, the profile of IK is slowly finding its place within institutions. This is in part due to the work and reputation of key Indigenous scholars from across the world such as Sefa Dei (2000), Meyer (2008), Nakata (2002), Battiste (2002, 2009), Royal (2002), Littlebear (2009) Yunkaporta (2019) and Kimmerer (2013).

In the past few decades since the popularisation of IK, no clear definition has since emerged, with Kurtz (2013) going as far to say that “there is no one definition of Indigenous knowledge because it is a holistic perspective” (p. 220). There are, however, fundamental principles which have been spoken of consistently in the literature regarding IK. Firstly and foremostly, many scholars argue that IK should not be perceived and/or defined in opposition or comparison to Western knowledge systems and that IK exists in its own right, on its own terms (Battiste 2002; Urion et al., 1995). However, in some cases both systems can interact in positive ways (Hobson 1992). The former claim is emphasised by Chilisa’s (2019) argument against intellectual imperialism which refers to the tendency of Western systems to exclude and dismiss knowledge that is embedded in the cultural experiences of historically oppressed and marginalised groups.

Moreover, in regards to capturing IK in globalised contexts, many interpretations include notions such as the accumulated experiences and understandings developed over time

by living in deep, harmonious connection and relation with the natural world, the cosmos, reality, and phenomena, which have formulated over many generations and are continuously re-emerging in present contexts as a means of knowing and being for Indigenous peoples and societies (Cajete, 2000; Kaniki & Mphahlele 2002; Ndubisi et al. 2014). IK is also said to be holistic rather than reductionist (Hart 2010; Held, 2019; Inoue & Franco 2016), it is relational instead of isolated (Dei, 2000; Singh & Major 2017), and according to Battiste (2002), IK captures insights and empirical information which is often recorded through song, ceremony, symbols, and artworks. Battiste goes on to add another layer to this by stating that IK “comprises the complex set of technologies developed and sustained by Indigenous civilizations” (p. 2) by which body movement, land management practices, yarning, and memorisation techniques can all constitute as.

In this regard, IK is applied globally in both traditional and modern contexts to provide key insights into areas such as climate change studies and sustainability (Alexander et al., 2011; Smith & Sharp 2012; Whyte, 2017), conservation (Fabre et al., 2021; Gadgil, 2021) natural resource management (Kurashima et al, 2018; Jackson & Moggridge, 2019), along with more nuanced efforts in artificial intelligence (AI) (Lewis et al., 2020; Williams & Shipley, 2020), engineering (Kutay, 2021), and more.

2.4 Indigenous Knowledge in Australian Contexts

IK has also gained currency in a number of different areas and contexts in Australia, although with more of an emphasis particularly on climate, biodiversity, genomic sequencing, ecologies, archaeologies, astronomy, disaster recovery, and natural

resource management, to name a few. Due to this influence, CSIRO in 2019 implemented the Two Ways Science Integrated Learning Program (Deslandes et al., 2019) which incorporated many elements of IK in an Australian Indigenous context. However, this almost exclusively scientific approach leaves much to be desired. Especially, in terms of how general ideas associated with Australian Indigenous cultural governance frameworks, kinship structures, and Aboriginal protocols embedded within IK systems can be used in multidisciplinary ways to solve modern problems in areas such as AI, economics, leadership, business, research, and professional development.

According to Christie (2006, p. 79), IK in Australia 'is possibly different from many other Indigenous knowledge systems around the world' due the great interface of language, land, identity, and culture, along with well documented (albeit by non-Indigenous scientists and anthropologists, which provides other layers of problematisation and complexity) levels of psychism, ritual, ceremony, and memory (Elkin 1945; Hume 2002; Kelly 2016). This unique interdependence is distinctive to an Indigenous Australian cultural worldview. Therefore, while the scientific literature is broad and numerous, it is still yet to be decided where these other elements of IK fit into the wider conversation. Those such as Yunkaporta (2019), Kelleher (forthcoming) and Abdilla & Fitch (2017) are beginning to expand on notions of IK which can be applied to areas that have not previously been associated with an Indigenous worldview, such as Complexity Theory, blockchain technologies, and robotics. In this context, it would certainly appear that IK in an Indigenous Australian context is still very much in an explorative phase, constantly unfolding and adapting in accordance with the constantly shifting social and political context. Higher education is no exception to this, still with much work to do to combat

outdated ideologies, colonial worldviews, racism, and other sociocultural barriers. If we can be sure about anything, it is that IK in Australia indeed has a future that is not confined to a series of artefacts locked behind a glass cabinet only to be preserved and admired, but IK systems are living, complex, adaptable knowledges that have as much relevance today as they did 250-plus years ago.

2.5 Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Southern Queensland

Indigenous Knowledges more formally, are not currently an explicit part of UniSQ's strategic direction. While there has been some discussion about incorporating aspects of IK into the University's curriculum and teaching and learning frameworks, to date there has been no attempt to fully formalise or operationalise an approach that includes the broader multidisciplinary elements of IK systems across the whole university and all of its components. The researcher acknowledges that knowledge-building particularly in culturally sensitive spaces is a process within itself, however, this investigation may potentially serve as a seed-planting exercise that could reap benefits in the future for the University, and the greater communities and stakeholders across the regions that UniSQ currently services.

Through the recent appointment of the inaugural Pro-Vice Chancellor (First Nations Education and Research) in 2021, new movements in the space of Indigenous education, teaching, learning and research have been proposed. Although, it remains to be seen how elements of IK will be incorporated into the University beyond predominantly aesthetic initiatives such as visual rebranding, building name allocations, including Indigenous content in the curriculum, and First Nations employment and

recruitment drives. While some of this work may be inclusive of varying levels of IK – where teaching into specialised components of targeted curriculum and course programs along with further training opportunities for students and staff across the University – these inclusions could be said to merely draw on cultural materials rather than cultural processes. Similar to the IPM used in this Literature Review, a teacher cannot simply throw a boomerang and say that they have “done culture” for the semester, but it is the *processes* of consulting with community before the artefact is made, reflecting on positionality while retrieving the materials, doing further inquiry into development, styles, patterns, and refinement of the boomerang to ensure the form reflects the function. Further, a teacher cannot teach their students about invasion and colonisation in rote ways which are void of critical and robust analysis, and which are not inclusive of protocols or cultural frameworks which guide the process of teaching sensitive content.

2.6 Indigenising the Curriculum

Many countries all across the globe are moving toward Indigenising their curriculum and educational programs (Mooney, 2021). However, there is no one-size-fits-all approach and communities are employing a range of techniques and strategies to effectively draw on the lived experiences and worldviews of Indigenous people, and to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their teaching and learning materials. Pedagogical approaches such as Yunkaporta and Kirby’s (2011) Eight Aboriginal Ways of Learning and Well’s model to Indigenise curriculum can be used to inform and guide curriculum planning frameworks and the development of teaching and learning strategies (McIver et al., 2022; Romano et al., 2023). Graduate employability programs have been

developed as a means to implement authentic, local Indigenous place-based values and perspectives (Bullen & Flavell, 2022). The overall aim for Indigenising curriculum is to support processes of truth-telling, addressing injustices, and promoting healing in ways that provide renewal, refresh and reinvigoration of ideas and knowledge (Williams et al, 2022). Further, as the notion of Indigenised curriculum is grounded in a theory of decolonisation, researchers suggest it is a critical first step to ensure that teachers and educators are making active attempts to “recognise how we have all been affected by colonisation” to find appropriate positionality in their approach to teaching and sharing (Dudgeon & Walker, 2015, p. 291). Working towards greater structural inclusion also requires consideration of the overbearing nature of colonial perspectives across subject areas. Within the notion of Indigenised curriculum in North American contexts, researchers are seen to employ a *Two-Eyed Seeing* approach. Two-eyed seeing is a concept first utilised by Eskasoni First Nation Elder Albert Marshall to frame Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges as complimentary to one another, rather than contrastive (Mooney, 2021). Where each “eye” represents a different way of seeing the world, Two-eyed seeing is a means of gaining a fuller and richer perspective of the world. Thus, in endeavouring to teach a wider and more equitable array of perspectives across Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies, this approach supports a deeper notion of connectedness and relatedness between the two cultures.

Indigenised curriculum, then, is manufactured at various levels which are interconnected and interdependent. For example, as espoused by Dudgeon & Walker (2015) the level of the teacher and practitioner generally depends on personal individual

cultural capabilities, although for this to work effectively, there must support at the level of the system to ensure that educators are supported in their resourcing and professional development and that expectations for the quality and quantity of content included within subjects and courses is reflective of the University's commitment to teaching and sharing Indigenous perspectives.

2.7 Summary

The notion of IK is in many ways varied and nuanced, and perhaps subject to further discussion. More specifically, there is much more work to be done in regard to understanding these nuances, such as how IK is defined within modern contexts. This is almost entirely dependent on when and where it is produced, where and how it is applied, who does it and under what guidance and supervision, and for what reasons. There are also several interpretations of whether it is local, or non-local, place-based, or non-place-based, and what its relationship is to Western knowledges and sciences. Finally, further clarity is needed to determine how IK differs between past, current and modern contexts, interpretations, and applications. A review of the literature shows that IK can be scaled at various levels, such as global, down to an Australian Indigenous context, and even further towards a university-level. It is evident in this that the conversation regarding IK at the global level is ongoing and has been subject to major reviews from international scholars. In Australia, the discourse relating to IK is also ongoing, yet premature, and many Universities have not sought to incorporate IK into the life of the University. Some Universities have certainly progressed much further than others and have undergone important processes to implement IK-related programs, research initiatives, governance projects, and curriculum and teaching support. UniSQ

however, can be seen as touching on the peripheries of IK compared to global and national contexts, and herein lies an opportunity for a more explicit approach to IK-related teaching, learning, education, and research, and embedding IK into the everyday life and structure of the University.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the methods that were used in researching the state of IK at UniSQ. The methods employed were carefully chosen in alignment with the objectives of the study and the intended participants. Considering all participants and the researcher were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples located within a Western institutional setting, it was important to ensure a high level of cultural integrity and security throughout the study. In this regard, acknowledging the epistemological and ontological foundations of the inherent worldview that each participant carries is vitally important. Therefore, to support the navigation of the tensions and complexities between Western mainstream knowledges and Indigenous processes and protocols, a qualitative method was employed that was inclusive of a series of Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM) including methods which are deeply grounded the researcher's K/Gamilaroi ancestry and cultural knowledge combined with other Indigenous philosophies and concepts from around the globe. The employment of IRMs in research spaces is said to be more appropriate in Indigenous research than conventional qualitative approaches as it acknowledges the interconnectivities between all things and ensures a high degree of ethics (Botha, 2011; Lavalee, 2009). It is in this regard, that the researcher was able to draw on some of the fundamental Laws and protocols that govern the ways that K/Gamilaroi peoples relate to and interact with the world and have done so for many thousands of years (O'Rourke, 1997). The purpose of employing such an approach was to drive the methodology appropriately and to uphold strong notions of

cultural and ethical responsibilities to not just all participants in the study but all things in creation, while still maintaining a high degree of rigour and robustness.

3.2 A Reflexive Approach

The notion of 'insider' research has been prominent in the academy for many decades. It is depicted in both negative and positive contexts. For example, some scholars have highlighted that a researcher's closeness to community can cloud their judgement and allow for potential bias in research findings, while others argue that their position affords them more contextualised knowledge of the community which allows them to pose questions that challenge preconceived notions and prevailing norms to expand scholarly knowledge (Innes, 2009). The term 'research' in Indigenous worldview is said to be "one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary" (Smith, 2012, p. 1) due to the past and ongoing legacies of research on Indigenous peoples globally. Porsanger (2004, p. 107) identifies research as "a tool of the colonization of indigenous peoples and their territories" and refuses to deny the notion of research as separate from colonialism. In this regard, however, there is some acknowledgement of the role of research within the decolonisation process and perhaps a powerful means of Indigenous peoples and communities in assuming their right to self-determination in areas of their lives from social, political, and economic, absolving themselves of the position of passive objects of Western research (Porsanger, 2004; Rigney 1999; Smith, 2012).

The notion of *insider research* within Indigenous contexts is critical. Not only must one acknowledge their position as a researcher within the academy – a place which has been a source of compounded oppression, exploitation and disadvantage for Indigenous peoples and communities – but also within the workplace. This can be a difficult space to navigate for an Indigenous person who is a scholar, researcher, and employee to conduct Indigenous research, within a workplace. Adding to the complexity is how the individual is expected to use tools of colonialism to acquire further knowledge and insights into the operations and activities of their environment. Therefore, insider research in this context requires a serious level of accountability to professional and academic standards, to avoid causing harm to employees through error or misappropriation. It also requires a strong approach to research ethics and integrity to avoid exploitation and misrepresentation. Porsanger (2004) adds that it is imperative the insider researcher possesses “a thorough knowledge of indigenous traditions and languages” (p.109). Failure to account for any one of these responsibilities can be damaging for one’s reputation along with the personal, social, professional, and at times cultural identities and levels of wellbeing of those participating in or contributing to the study. The personal and professional implications of such kind of error, even marginal, may signify a lack of qualification to carry out the task, and therefore impact the perspective of those in the academic and workplace environments. From a cultural perspective, this leaves relationships negatively impacted and the notion of ‘shame’ will be hung over the individual in their community. This will remain until they are able to repair or rectify the damage through rebuilding trust and regaining respect over time. *Shame* in a general sense is defined as “a painful emotion caused by consciousness of

guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety” (Merriam-Webster, 2011). Although this definition may be in specific reference to an *individual’s* ‘state’ at a particular time or after a particular event, and therefore does not capture the extended *collective* shame and guilt felt by the families and communities that the individual is part of. This *collective* emotion can be carried across several generations. For a person who has brought shame on themselves, their family and their community, their descendants will also carry the weight of their actions in the future. This can impact their reputation, responsibilities, and relationships for many generations, even after they have passed.

In this regard, it is critical for Indigenous insider researchers to identify and explicitly outline the most appropriate Indigenous methodologies which uphold Indigenous ethics and are considerate of the impact that their research and dissemination will have on both them and their communities (Smith, 1999). In this, key principles of respect, reciprocity and feedback are critical for ensuring that power relations are continuously examined and monitored throughout the research. The main aim of doing so is to avoid exploitation, appropriation, and potential harm caused by or in relation to the research project and its ongoing presence within the community. Smith (1999) suggests that any research on, with or about Indigenous people the following questions should be asked

Whose research is this?

Who owns it?

Whose interests does it serve?

Who will benefit from it?

Who has designed its questions and framed its scope?

Who will carry it out?

Who will write it up?

How will the results be disseminated? (p. 10)

Questions such as these provide a high level of accountability to the relationships that are embedded within the research and can support the development of the researcher on the one hand. On the other hand, they can support the community in healing, mobilisation, transformation, and decolonisation (Smith, 1999).

3.2.1 Indigenous Insider Research (IIR)

According to Robson and McCartan (2002) an insider researcher is “someone who holds down a job in some particular area and is, at the same time, involved in carrying out systematic enquiry which is of relevance to the job” (p. 534). Insider research is said to have both distinct advantages and disadvantages, which can either enhance or inhibit the researcher’s abilities to gather information. Some advantages have been outlined by scholars who suggest that being an insider researcher means having greater awareness and knowledge of the environment, along with access to resources and information and underlying issues present, making approaches and interactions more natural (Greene, 2014; Workman, 2007). Moreover, insider research can be beneficial in that it can practically support problem solving and has the capacity to support and bring about positive change and enhancement of workplace values and operations. On the other hand, there are disadvantages such as the fact that the individual along with their fellow employees hold membership within the organisation, which for a brief period is under scrutiny, and this may impact internal relationships with peers (Fleming, 2018). The question of subjectivity and bias also presents within critiques of insider research, and individuals must consider how their underlying beliefs, experiences, and emotions

can impact their role in data collection (Greene, 2014). Particularly, if an individual inadvertently becomes part of the data, they will be seen as 'going native' and compromising validity (Sikes and Potts, 2008).

Being an *Indigenous* Insider Researcher (IIR) more specifically, adds several additional layers which should be considered in all contexts of research, for one must consider the general elements of their research identities as they pertain to both work and study. An IIR must also consider their position in community and the complex nature of being a displaced Indigenous person within a colonised society. For example, while an Indigenous Australian person may have strong cultural ties to any number of the 200-400 different Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language groups which pre-date the arrival of Europeans in 1788, a person living off their 'Country' or ancestral lands in some instances will be considered an insider in the *general* context of the Australian Indigenous population, however, in regard to the *local regional* context they may be considered an outsider. Adding to this complexity, as that in their place of work and study they will be considered an insider, although depending on the department they work within and the quality of their relationships across key areas of their organisation or institution, they may be considered an outsider. This is so at least until they are able to establish a sufficient level of trust and respect. This dynamic relational context is then subject to maintenance or change depending on the behaviours and decision-making capabilities of the individual. One's entire reputation and sociocultural worth can shift majorly due to even minor disregard or failure to uphold cultural protocols. This can be in reference to the approach taken, language used, attempts to forcefully extract

information from people or places, showing impatience or lacking gratitude, being disrespectful towards important community members or objects, or ignoring kinship responsibilities.

In consideration of these ideas, it is important for a researcher to critically reflect on or examine the key intersecting identities from all perspectives including the individual and collective cultural standpoint/s. More specifically, in IIR, one should consider the impacts of their identity in relation to:

1. Social positions held such as gender, age, ability, and status, and how they can impact or influence relationships.
2. Cultural and political position/s within the Indigenous communities they are researching with, for, and/or on behalf of.
3. Professional position/s held within the organisation/s that they work in, or perhaps are affiliated with.
4. Academic position/s as a researcher or scholar who has the power to shape and influence the ways that information is collected, analysed, interpreted, communicated, and disseminated about particular individuals, or groups of people.

A thorough examination of these identities within the context of Indigenous research shows that they are subject to a particular *nestedness* where the notion of 'researcher' and 'insider researcher' sit within a larger integrated suite of identities. Most non-Indigenous researchers can perhaps choose to relinquish these identities if they wish, and the 'insider' nature of research for non-Indigenous peoples can change simply by no longer holding membership within an organisation or refusing to accept it in the first place. However, an Indigenous person is not afforded the same luxury because whether

the researcher chooses to acknowledge it or not, they are Indigenous all the time and at every stage of the research, and the expectations and protocols of being an Indigenous community member apply in perpetuity. Such expectations and protocols placed on them by their community are not only carried out at the peer-to-peer level, but also in regard to their lands, waterways, extended families, ancestors, and future descendants across many generations. Figure 2. shows how these identities are nested within the domain of Indigenous insider research and how they differ and apply logistically, as well as ontologically.

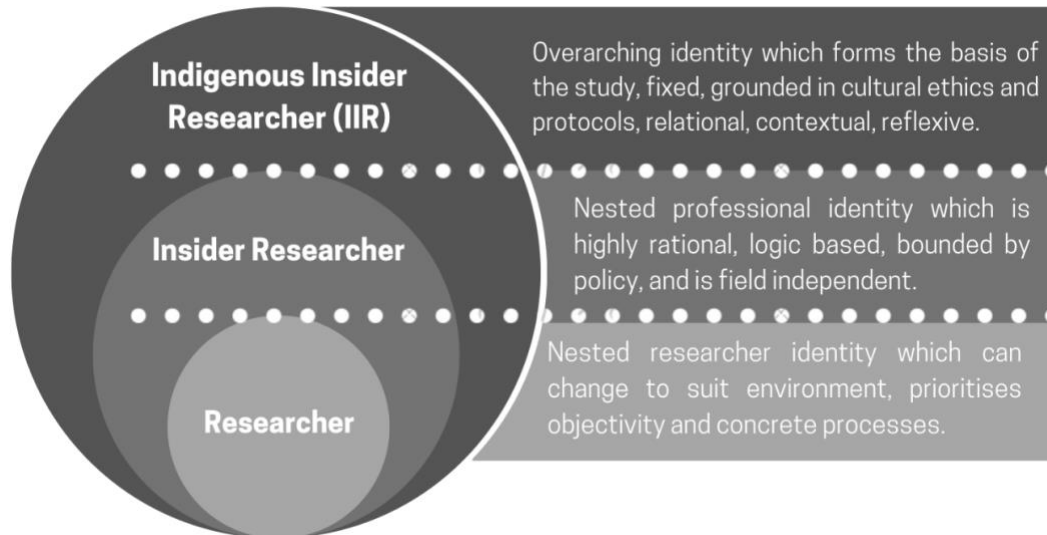


Figure 2: Indigenous Insider Researcher (IIR)

This figure shows the nested identities which Indigenous insider researchers must navigate in their research.

In this, it is important to openly declare my cultural position in accordance with the research being conducted, as I have done so in the beginning of this study.

Furthermore, it is also important to acknowledge my position as an IIR in that over the course of this study I am an unavoidably an Indigenous researcher conducting

Indigenous insider research. Therefore, it is critical to ensure that my approach is highly reflexive and grounded in cultural and community protocols to enable an understanding that *I am an Indigenous person doing research, rather than a researcher who just happens to be Indigenous*. Additional layers which stem from the foundations of my identity as a researcher are then considered and the notion of 'insider' takes on various meanings in accordance with differing contexts. For example, as the study is being conducted within UniSQ, of which I was a current full-time employee at the time of this research being carried out, I took on the "dual role of the worker as researcher" (Workman, 2007, p. 146) along with taking on the knowledge of the institution's organisational context, people, history, culture, knowledge, and systems. As mentioned, being an insider researcher can come with potential challenges and advantages, which can consequently impact the quality of the research. In such regard, this can not only include elements which may have positive effects such as underlying passions for the research topic, pre-existing professional relationships with research participants, knowledge of topic, and shared values, along with potential challenges such as managing prejudices and biases within the research and data collection, the lack of objectivity, and influence from peers (Saidin & Yaacob, 2016) but the cultural affordances and complexities that come with being an Indigenous researcher in the workplace which can include adhering to cultural protocols, navigating power imbalances, translating across socio-cultural and linguistic boundaries, while understanding the subject-object paradox in Indigenous social research particularly, which suggests that all research is subjective by its nature and that true objectivity is not real and therefore cannot be attained (Brayboy & Dehyle, 2000; Williams, 2006).

3.2.2 Code-switching, mixing, making and breaking.

Strategically navigating various social and cultural environments and adapting behaviours to suit shifting contexts is a reality in the lives of those situated at the margins of society. This can mean having to radically alter or configure your entire identity including the way you speak, dress, walk, talk, think, act, and behave, in order to fit into the dominant cultural paradigm, and to not be subject to epistemologically ignorant or violent effects of living within colonised spaces. In response to this, Black people, Indigenous peoples, and People of Colour (BIPOC) generally, are forced to “code-switch” between their own ontological worldview and the dominant cultural norms and proclivities, to be seen, heard, or simply to survive. While code-switching was originally created in reference to field-dependent bilingual or dialect shifts by an individual or cultural group, in many Indigenous communities it has come to capture and examine the full array of bicultural changes that an individual will undergo in response to social environmental exchanges and expectations. Molinsky (2007) refers to this as ‘cross-cultural code-switching’ and describes this form of cultural adaptation as “the act of purposefully modifying one’s behavior, in a specific interaction in a foreign setting, to accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behavior” (p. 623).

In the context of Australian Indigenous people’s social, cultural, and linguistic identities, it is a harsh reality that in their fullest expression they are not always welcome or understood within typical mainstream environments ranging from schools, universities, workplaces, and more. Therefore, cross-cultural code-switching is critical to avoid potential judgement and/or subsequent discomfort experienced by the individual, but equally as likely, to avoid conflict and physical, emotional, or psychological violence in

the form of assault, microaggressions and overt/covert racism (Stewart, 2022). In navigating these cultural complexities within everyday environments, which Indigenous peoples have little choice but to participate in or engage with, the ability to blend in to avoid these sociocultural and linguistic nuances or attacks has been optimised across several generations with parents teaching their children how to avoid or deter them. More specifically, providing targeted advice on how to navigate racism in their schools and classrooms, how to deal with misguided or misinformed peers, and how to talk to police so as to not be a victim of disproportionate police violence, brutalisation or deaths in custody. Although, as mainstream environments become more aware of Indigenous peoples, histories, languages, and cultures, and sensitive to the cultural needs and nuances of their worldviews, the notions of cross-cultural code-switching have evolved to accommodate for these changes. Code *mixing* in linguistic terms now refers to cases where “lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence” (Muysken, 2000, p. 1), however in a behavioural context, this can indicate the ‘mixing’ of culturally nuanced behaviours, actions, gestures, facial expressions, and tones, which accompany languages and dialects that are spoken by a person.

For Indigenous peoples in Australia this can mean either the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages or Aboriginal English (AE) where it is inserted into general mainstream contexts, and which are then mixed with behaviours grounded in Indigenous ontological domains. This perhaps is the more common element of adaptive behaviours in Indigenous communities located within mainstream social settings.

Although, further evolving points of reference may be *code-making*. Code-making can

be signified by the emergence of newer codes due to the mixing, experimentation, negotiation, and formation of Aboriginal cultural identities in contact with Western ontological environments, concepts, expectations, and norms. Sometimes referred to as a 'dialectical' in philosophy, or 'third space' within other academic contexts (Bhabha, 1994; Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006; Haig-Brown, 2008) and in this regard it is described as "where two systems of identity representation converge in response to global-local tensions" and "dialogically constituted identities, formed through resistance and appropriation" (Bhatt, 2008, p. 177). This concept has also been represented visually and metaphorically in Indigenous cultures, as "*ganma*" or "*garma*" in Australia's Northeast which describes the mixing of fresh water and salt water to produce foam which represents a kind of new knowledge (Yunggirringa & Garnggulkpuy, 2007), and the two-row visually coded Wampum Belt in North America (Goodchild, 2021) which holds a dialogical position as a means of emboldening relationships. Third space approaches are a powerful way of sharing space across different cultural contexts. However, it must be acknowledged that power dynamics within 'shared' spaces are not always proportionate to one another, and that the 'mixing' and 'making' of codes in this instance is instead usually a compromise made by the less-dominant culture to be seen, heard, and respected by the more-dominant culture. Therefore, the final layer of code-switching discussed in this section seeks not to mix and/or make codes in order to be accepted within mainstream environments but seeks to break free from the notion of codes altogether. In turn, this would require, to an extent, taking a more unapologetic approach to sharing and creating knowledge without the weight of social and cultural expectations and limitations imposed by colonial systems. Such an approach requires

deep understanding, awareness and experimentation of certain methods stemming from different ontologies. Further, one may use Western tools and 'mixed' approaches to 'make' their own third space/s in the initial course of developing and refining ideas. Although if the method proves successful in practicum, then it may be constituted as a *code-breaker*. In this, the individual may still choose to switch, mix, and make where required, having the capacity and ability to self-determine their own disposition in accordance with the environment they are situated within at any given time, but also may feel confident to break code to propose their own validated knowledge to achieve a task, or progress towards an individual or common objective.

This research featured several of these approaches from code-switching, to mixing, making, and breaking. Some of these processes have naturally evolved through each of the stages during the conceptual development of the study, while other areas of the research sought to *code-break* as an attempt to take greater ownership of the project and assert a position which argues and demonstrates the effectiveness of more culturally grounded methods and methodologies. This will not always be the case for many contextualised approaches outside of this study, and individuals must therefore continually (re)assess their approaches to collecting, analysing, and translating data to ensure robustness and rigour in their work. This holds true and will often feature as a process within Indigenous ontological sets, whereby a *coolamon* (bark dish) which has holes in it and continues to leak water will not effectively perform its function and will either require further work to patch the hole or it will be discarded completely.

Finally, worth noting is that there may be some issues in translating across cultural contexts, and some knowledges may be restricted within public domains and should not be shared. However, due acknowledgement, consideration and respect should be granted to these processes of moving through, around, and in-between the various *codes* to produce more diverse ways of conducting research, while promoting different ontological perspectives, and facilitating the creation of new/old knowledge.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

This study drew on several key existing ideas, theories, and philosophies to guide the research. As relationality is a critical component of Indigenous research, along with acknowledging the various dimensions within Indigenous worldviews, Wilson's (2001; 2008) work on Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies, will be utilised to reflect the overall importance of relational complexities interwoven within and throughout the research process. This is important because it recognises the inherent worldviews and dispositions of participants within the research, and the possible boundary conditions for exploration and investigation into IK from each perspective. The intent in moving IK-related conversations and discourses within this study, is about seeking to name "relationships rather than objects" and upholding "relational accountability" (Wilson, 2001, p. 177). This promotes a high level of accountability to all parties involved in the study, including the researcher, and ensures that through the research the group is answering to "All our relations" (Wilson, 2001, p. 177). Moreover, a combination of Third Space (Bhabha, 1993), Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Nakata, 2007; Foley, 2001), and general theories of decolonisation is included. The notion of Third Space will be explored in later sections, but in this regard, the selected theories

will guide the research constructively into contesting, creating, and allocating space to promote increased overall understanding of processes related to IK as “a growing field of inquiry” (Battiste, 2005, p. 1). Decolonisation theory in relation to this offers critical insights into the nature of colonisation, and how colonisation seeks to further subjugate IK (Semali & Kincheloe, 2002). As such, decolonisation in this context, not only is a key theoretic principle which undergirds the research, but this is taken with Tuck’s (2012) notion of ‘unsettling’ colonial paradigms by also seeking to apply processes associated with decolonisation, rather than just making it a metaphor. Tuck suggests that it is “too easy” to adopt decolonising discourses and can potentially inhibit transformative approaches and alliances (p. 3). Aside to all of this, there appeared to be only elements of other theories which support the theoretical domains and intentions of this study, rather than a singular theory. Fittingly, the notion of collective approaches and complementarity is further explored throughout the research, and serves as a feature within Indigenous contexts, and is therefore allowed to flow into the underpinning and overarching theories also. It is throughout this ongoing discourse that the theory underpinning the research is not made explicit, but rather, serves as an *emergent* property exemplified and modelled within all phases of the research, but also seeks to go beyond it.

3.4 Method

In ensuring that that the study was grounded in principles of cultural safety, security, dignity, integrity and authenticity, a Yarning methodology was used, combined with the K/Gamilaroi Australian First Nations Aboriginal concept of *guwaa-* (speak). While the term ‘yarn’ in English is originally said to have its etymological roots in the Old Norse,

High German and Middle Dutch word '*gearn*' which refers to fibre spun from cotton, silk, wool, or flax, its social and cultural roots rest in the idea that sailors would often use the term to describe the telling of a tale or (long) story (O'Conner & Kellerman 2015). It is likely that these terms were not seen as mutually exclusive by those who used them in the early 19th century, but potentially as far back as 1000 years ago when it was first recorded in print. Activities which involve small repetitive movements performed sedentarily in a small group over long periods of time are often fertile grounds for sharing story and building relationships and meaning. This is achieved through embedded or encoded narratives, recounts, informal sharing of ideas, and 'mapping' experiences in relation to their immediate environment. In this context, it could be said that while sailors were literally spinning the small fibres of yarn to generate a large rope or netting, which could be used to catch fish or perform tasks, they were also *metaphorically* spinning a yarn with their words to create complex stories and memories. These stories and memories in turn, had the power to shape, enhance, animate, and enliven social relationships and the overall human experience. In Australia, the term 'yarn' has evolved to possess different meanings to describe interactions between people which take place in varying contexts. In a general social context, telling a yarn can mean 'telling tall tales' or exaggerating minor details of an individual experience for social credibility, gain or reputation. The term 'yarn' in Aboriginal English can be used a means to describe complex structures and strategic processes of knowledge-sharing, cultural maintenance, political decision-making and negotiation, problem solving, reconciling difference, building relational dexterity of the community, and supporting the intergenerational transfer of information (Barlo et al,

2020; Jones et al. 2014; Frazer & Yunkaporta, 2019; Singh & Major, 2017, Yunkaporta, 2019). However, in another context within the same Aboriginal communities, the notion of a yarn can also mean sharing information about a person which is based on false pretences in order to damage or deconstruct elements of their social or cultural identity or reputation. What this ultimately means is that along with the many layers that a yarn can take (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) there are also many *dimensions* to what a yarn is and its underlying context and the motives of the person telling the yarn or doing the yarning.

In any case, whether the intentions are positive or negative, there is a fundamental idea which can be extrapolated from all descriptions of the notion and function of a yarn, including its original uses and descriptions, along with any underlying social or cultural contexts. This idea is to produce a body of information which scales by orders of magnitude with each word spoken and each sentiment made. The words and sentiments included in a yarn can be accompanied by gesture such as facial expression, hand movements, symbols and patterns drawn in the air or on the ground, along with objects which serve as representations of characters within a story such as leaves, stones, or other physical objects (Green, 2014). Whether it is an individual telling the story, or a small group of individuals, as a yarn unfolds, layers of complexity emerge at varying levels of the conversation. Such layers can in turn contribute to a greater overall understanding of events, activities, people, places, environments, and relationships. Each level of knowledge and understanding becomes evident only due to the interactions between words and ideas at relatively 'lower' or earlier levels. However,

all of these layers still preside over their own laws and principles which are unique to their time and position in the greater concept of the yarn. The complexity of the yarn and its emergent properties increase when ideas at each level come into deeper relation with other ideas to produce new emergent wholes. With new ideas and knowledges that emerge at 'higher' levels comes the possibility of newer, deeper, emergent relationships that further increase the complexity of the yarn, and the system of relations within which the yarn is stored and maintained over time.

3.4.1 Application of the Method

The current literature that exists to capture the cultural foundations, concepts and principles of yarning demonstrate the multilayered elements of 'yarning' from an Australian Indigenous perspective. Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) describe how yarns may take on various forms and where due flexibility is provided within Indigenous communities for different approaches that are taken to yarning based on social and environmental context. Particularly within the frame of research, they propose the following different types of yarning: that there will often be elements of discussion which can take place or intersect at different times including:

- *Social yarning*, which generally occurs prior to the research topic yarn and is an informal means of establishing or reinforcing some level of positionality. While most yarns in this context might begin with exchanging personal, family, or cultural information such as your community connections, blood lines, and/or ancestral homelands, this may not always be the case where those relationships and protocols are already established.
- *Research topic yarning* can follow a slightly more rigid path and can often be referred to as unstructured or semi-structured interviews which are aimed at gathering information or perspectives about a particular topic. The research topic

yarn may be relaxed and interactive but it also time-dependent with defined beginning and end points, as opposed to a social yarn which is more relationally dependent and fluid in terms of structure.

- *Collaborative yarning* is primarily based on interactivities and information sharing between two or more people in regard to a research project, which usually includes unstructured or semi-structured discussion about a series of ideas which aim to increase understanding and awareness of the topic.
- *Therapeutic yarning* can take place when individuals express deeply rooted emotional stories or traumatic experiences held within their personal or family histories. The researcher in this case takes on the role of listener as the individual discloses information. (Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010)

Yarning as a research method is beneficial as it allows the researcher to facilitate in-depth discussions in “a relaxed and open manner providing a source of rich data and thick descriptions on a particular issue” (Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010, p. 47). Further, yarning enables the researcher to explore the topic in greater depth by harnessing the flexibilities that these informal arrangements provide, which results in “information emerging that more formal research processes may not facilitate” (Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010, p. 47). The quality of the data gathered however, is highly dependent on the quality of the relationship between the researcher and participant/s. Moreover, it is dependent on the researcher's ability and capacity to follow proper protocols and processes within the Indigenous community. Barlo et al., (2020) suggest that a successful research yarn is characterised by the following principles:

1. Reciprocity; involves honouring relationships and ensuring that power dynamics are acknowledge and balanced.

2. Respect; valuing the people and knowledges and information shared and using what is shared appropriately and responsibly, and this extends beyond the research.
3. Dignity; upholding the personal and relational dignities of people, communities, places and knowledges within the research.
4. Equality; every person is acknowledged as having the same rights and responsibilities within the yarning space.
5. Integrity; means understanding and viewing the wholeness of the individual and/or communities and cultures within the research and elevates trust-building.
6. Self-determination; making sure all participants are aware of their own freedom to choose to participate or withdraw at any time.

While these characteristics may be universal to many Indigenous Australian peoples and communities, it is important to note that the extraordinary diversity that exists within these groups with more than 250 different languages spoken on the continent prior to European invasion (Koch & Nordinger, 2014). Each group in this regard had its own unique social, kinship and governance structures. This essentially means that yarning can take many various forms depending on either the unique or shared cultural elements, philosophies and contexts of the people participating in the yarn (Barlo et al., 2020). Herein, it is critical that an Indigenous person approaching the yarn, employs a method (or series of methods) which pertain to their own cultural context, where possible. Although, as Indigenous research paradigms are still relatively underserved compared to mainstream literature and concepts this space is still subject to emergent critical and constructive exploration and discourse. Therefore, Indigenous researchers continue to explore their own conceptual, philosophical, and paradigmatic concepts embedded or encoded within their histories, languages, cultures, and landscapes as a

means of conducting research in their own ways, on their own terms. The aim in doing so, is to produce highly contextualised bodies of information and knowledge which are as robust, rigorous, and dynamic as Eurocentric, mainstream approaches (Geia et al., 2013).

Hence, in the context of this study, this is the importance of intersecting a general yarning methodology with the K/Gamilaroi concept of *guwaa-* (speak). This was not only important for the researcher as a K/Gamilaroi man, but it was critical to guide the yarn in a way that it became further conducive to generating insights, understandings and knowledges specifically. Similar to the general idea of yarning as it pertains to the literature (Atkinson et al., 2021; Barlo et al., 2020; Frazer & Yunkaporta 2019; Geia et al., 2013; Shay, 2021; Yunkaporta, 2019), *guwaa-* can take many different contextual forms. Although in this case, it does so by adding suffixes which denote tense, frequency, regularity and interactivity. In the context of approaching research interviews, the *-li* class verb suffix is applied to *guwaa-* so that it becomes *guwaa-li* and this means essentially that one will *speak in the future*. This stage is grounded in practices and protocols of the researcher who must consider and embody the proper procedures and ethics listed in previous sections as they approach the conversation. In moving towards physically conducting the research interviews, the *-li* suffix may change to a *-la* verb class suffix in combination with a *-y* verb class suffix, where it becomes *guwaa-la-y* to suit the *reciprocal* 'two-way' *nature* (context) of the conversation which will happen *in the future* (tense). Love (2019) places emphasis on the reciprocal elements of yarning, particularly in establishing mutual respect, sincerity, and trustworthiness in communities

where the research is taking place, and this is fundamental for building partnerships in practice. Throughout the interviews as they happen in real time, another change will take place where the –la and –y suffixes are joined by an additional –la suffix which signifies a non-moving-continuous context, and a –nha suffix which implies the conversation is present and ongoing. Like other global Indigenous languages, the prominent use and presence of verbs in describing key processes and ideas, is indicative of a worldview which sees the world as constantly in motion, and in a constant process of *becoming* (Johnson, 2015).

The concept of *guwaa-* in its varying forms promotes the establishment of rich discussion and cultural safety throughout the data collection phase of the research, by which it allows for highly intersubjective dialogical processes and storytelling in facilitating conversation between or within groups and individuals (Waters, Kamilaroi, 2021). Similar to the etymological foundations of the ‘*gearn*’ and the descriptions of sailors metaphorically ‘spinning a yarn’ as they were *literally* spinning yarn and twisting each small fibre to make rope along with other larger, more complex items such as nets, the notion of *guwaa-* sees speech and its encompassing patterns and processes as a complex dynamic system, possessing many relatively small components such as the *garaygalgaa* (words) that are spoken by each individual, although growing into highly structured, interconnected, overlapping parts at various levels which increase in complexity with each contribution. As the yarn continues to unfold over the course of the interview, more complex patterns of reciprocal dialogue and conversation, it is then the researcher’s responsibility to observe the growing patterns within the dialogue as it

scales from its initial interactive point of discussion, carrying the theme of the research question throughout the entire conversation, until a sufficient, coherent body of information is constructed. This although does not signify a ‘conclusion’ of the research, rather, it is anticipated that this ‘seed’ will continue to grow, blossom, and produce fruit over time beyond the interviews and completion of the study.

3.5 Data Collection

Five UniSQ First Nations academics participated in the study which sought to answer the question, “What is the current state of Indigenous Knowledge at the University of Southern Queensland?”. In this, participants were given the opportunity to reflect on and contribute to the discussion of the ways that IK has been seen, discussed, taught, learnt, and promoted within the University, while also shaping and guiding the conversation on what it is and where it is included (or not) within the University agenda moving into the future. In order to achieve this, a series of 30–60-minute one-on-one interviews with UniSQ First Nations academics from various areas within the University of Southern Queensland were conducted using a yarning methodology. The yarning approach used in the study was deemed as the appropriate method as it is a process that requires the researcher to “develop and build a relationship that is accountable to Indigenous people participating in the research” (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010, p. 38) and this approach is emphasised by the theoretical framework which is inclusive of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. Each of the interviews were conducted via Zoom in consideration of COVID-19 precautions and cultural safety of participants was prioritised in the approach, which was emphasised through full transparency and

gaining free, prior, informed consent from all academics to participate, record, and use the data provided by them.

3.5.1 Recruitment Process and Participant Summary

Participants were recruited from across all areas of the University of Southern Queensland. As an insider within the institution, some pre-existing relationships with colleagues were already established with participants and the high levels of trust within the relationship/s meant that some participants felt more comfortable than others in taking part in the research. However, this also meant that there was more at stake in terms of authentically advocating, representing and communicating findings within the research. Moreover, it is a point worth noting, that the higher levels of trust between researcher and participants in an Indigenous context can mean that participants may feel safer to express greater levels of discomfort or angst within their roles, within the University and/or within the academy. Therefore, it is critical to ensure such a high level of transparency but also responsibility, accountability, and confidentiality. Invitations to participate in the study were sent via an initial email invitation to all known UniSQ Indigenous academics after seeking approval from Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation). Information was provided to all participants regarding the nature, intent, length, commitments, and requirements of participating in the study, and it was heavily stipulated that participation was entirely voluntary and that there was no social, cultural, personal, professional, or political obligation to participate. Further, any decision to decline or withdraw from the study, along with retraction of any commentary would be of no disadvantage or consequence to the individual or their associated communities.

Participants were given the opportunity to review all contributions before publishing and to choose to edit or remove anything they felt identified them despite all attempts to maintain anonymity. In this, all participants were made aware of the associated risks and benefits of participating, to which there were minimal risks beyond normal day-to-day living and all steps were taken to ensure this was always the case throughout the study. Attempts were made to minimise any potential harm or distress by reminding participants that the aim of the research was not to identify *personal* investments, ideas, definitions, or experiences of Indigenous Knowledge *outside* of the University context, but rather, *professional* insights, interactions, observations from within the University. Acknowledging, however, that Indigeneity in these contexts is not simply dissolvable, nor is any affiliation or memberships within Indigenous community or language groups a 'title' that one can relinquish at a given moment. For example, while a Professor, Doctor, or perhaps an astrophysicist, teacher, or lawyer may choose to withdraw or disclose their professional identity in varying social contexts, and, to some degree may benefit from this disclosure socially. However, within the Australian sociopolitical context, an Indigenous Australian person despite their profession will almost always have their position and place determined foremostly by their Indigeneity. This can apply socially as much as it applies politically, and this is in many – if not all – cases unavoidable. In a social context, as mentioned previously, Indigenous individuals while having complete autonomy in their decision-making, are accountable to their relationships within their Indigenous community context. On the other hand, an Indigenous professional staff member is at all times potentially subject to the nature, implications and impacts of colonisation, where no matter how far into the academy one ventures and no matter

how much they achieve, they will always attract the tide of low expectations (Sarraf, 2014). Additionally, they can be seen through the lens of white superiority, or the pity and contempt of the white gaze (Pailey, 2020), intersected with epistemological violence, and institutional racism (Fredericks, 2009).

3.5.2 Criteria for Inclusion

In order to gain the most effective and impactful data from the interviews, the researcher needed to be strategic about the participating groups. In this, it was a requirement of the study that all participants met the following criteria:

- Identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.
- Be currently employed by the University of Southern Queensland in an academic capacity.
- The main target group was FTE staff although some casual staff were considered to allow for a wider range of specified data.

The aim in seeking to include participants who met these criteria was to ensure that the data captured was not only an empirical representation of the current state of IK at UniSQ, but also an intuitive sense which is inclusive of epistemological barriers, issues and intricacies. Such experiences may align or contrast with mainstream staff due to their deep(er) immersion in the coloniality and whiteness of higher education institutions. While this is not to say that those perspectives are not valuable, this leaves potential for further exploration and comparative analysis in the future about whether or not these perspectives do indeed align or contrast.

3.5.3 Participants

Interviews were conducted with a total of five Indigenous academics from various teaching areas within the University. The benefits of participating in the study were made clear to each participant, although it is important to note that there was some reservation in taking up the opportunity to contribute to the agenda of Indigenous Knowledge teaching, learning, and perspectives across the University. It became evident in these responses that there was a sense of frustration in communicating the needs of Indigenous staff, who, along with many other Indigenous academics across the Australian higher education sector were feeling the effects of burnout. This feeling perhaps stems from being part of a relatively small cohort who are expected to attend to a high frequency of mainstream boards, committees, and administrative groups. Another dimension to participant reservations which may have compounded these feelings was also a sense of hopelessness in the University having the actual interest or capacity to effectively embed Indigenous perspectives. Due to these feelings one participant initially declined the opportunity to participate in the research interviews, which was fully supported by the researcher. However, after further consideration chose to participate, citing reasons for the initial withdrawal as health-related at the time, which was in many ways being negatively impacted and compounded by cultural workload and expectations. This certainly is an exemplification of the delicate social and political nature of the research topic despite all efforts to objectify the study, drawing specifically on professional perspectives rather than personal experiences. Although, once more, it becomes increasingly evident that this is not a simple task for Indigenous peoples in the workplace due to the entanglement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities

and their experiences within each of the sociopolitical domains that make up Australian society.

Despite having commonalities represented by the selection criteria, the diversity of perspectives and teaching and educational expertise across the cohort meant that a wide scope could be applied to the study. This meant that each participant could speak into particular patterns and trends across the University. Some of the information provided pertained to structural perspectives on how IK as a concept is understood, governed and embedded (or not) within the university curriculum in key areas of teaching and research. Further, discussions led to sociocultural perspectives on how IK is perceived at the individual level by mainstream teaching and research staff on the ground and how this can be impacted by both internal and external factors. There were some concerns about how data could be obtained from areas where there was no Indigenous representation, although the fact that there were no Indigenous peoples in those work areas served as valuable data points. It was deemed that those work areas could be defined as much by who *isn't* there and what perspectives are *not* being taught as much as they are defined by who *is* there and what *is* being taught. In this, throughout the latter parts of the study, some assumptions will be made, and hypotheticals may be explored to deduce reasons for these omissions and/or lack of representations in these areas. Finally, all participants except one gave permission to record the interviews via Zoom, however, after realising that the recordings were in no way being shared outside the research team, the participant was happy to overturn their response. One can speculate the many reasons for the initial reservations, such as

possible implication for comments made whether they are positive or negative, or timidity can equally serve as a barrier. Either way, it is important to take all necessary precautions to protect participants from any potential issues or harm that may arise through their participation.

3.5.4 Human Research Ethics Approval

This project is being undertaken as part of the Masters of Professional Studies (Research) Program through the University of Southern Queensland, and as part of the University's internal process, Human Research Ethic's Approval was sought under the guidance and support of the Primary and Associate Supervisors of this project, along with a UniSQ ethics research officer, and the UniSQ Human Research Ethics Committee. The project was subsequently approved (see Appendix C).

3.5.5 Ethical Considerations

As a *mari* (Aboriginal person) conducting research on individual and collective perspectives on IK within the University, there is greater consideration of, and strict adherence to Indigenous community protocols. This includes upholding the personal and cultural integrity of all involved through navigating a complex web of interconnected relations with the aim of producing an 'artefact' which will be of use to the community/s involved. Such an approach aligns with Rigney's (1999) Indigenist research epistemologies, which suggest that research with Indigenous peoples should uphold and value the integrity of Indigenous Knowledges including Indigenous ways of knowledge and transmission, and Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. The researcher also has a series of operating protocols that will be followed at all times,

which are specific to his K/Gamilaroi ancestry, heritage and epistemology.

Accountability and responsibilities in alignment with these protocols were upheld by the supervisory mechanism that the researcher has in place. This arrangement featured a respected Kamilaroi scholar, Elder, knowledge-holder and language-speaker whom the researcher was accountable to in the processes of obtaining feedback, guidance, mentorship and maintaining a high level of cultural integrity throughout the study. The research component of the study was further undergirded by the AIATSIS Code of Ethics which guided the research process and ensured that margins for error and inadvertent harm were minimised.

All participants in the study are de-identified and perspectives shared are anonymous as much as possible through the use of pseudonyms. However, given the relatively small pool of Indigenous academics at the University of Southern Queensland at the time of data collection, an attempt was also made to ensure that participants were not identifiable by their commentary including name, gender, sex, university work area, length of employment, cultural heritage, taxonomies, terminologies, and theoretical approaches to their teaching and research, and the researcher in this instance feels this did not impact the data sharing and translation negatively.

Finally, a key ethical consideration was the process of acknowledging the fact that while there was a sincere effort to obtain strictly professional perspectives on the state of IK at UniSQ, the reality of this is that Indigenous professional perspectives are always laced with personal perspectives, due to the fact that Indigenous cultural identities are

constant in relation to professional workplace environments, and cannot be simply decoupled from the individual in promoting or stating an experience for the sake of research or otherwise. Therefore, an attempt was made to be completely aware of this, and seek out information pertaining to a relatively objective standpoint, in association and full consideration of underlying subjective dispositions, tensions and affordances.

3.6 Methodology

The methodology used in this study was grounded in a series of general research theories and paradigms, Indigenous research, and K/Gamilaroi languages and cultures. This approach not only took into account all of the key identities held by the IIR, but ensured a robust engagement with the aims, topic, content and purpose of the study. Qualitative interviews were deemed the most effective approach to understanding the state of Indigenous Knowledge at UniSQ. Interviews conducted in this way, allowed the intersubjective experiences of Indigenous academics to be gathered and collated in order to gain a greater understanding. Within this qualitative context sat an approach which borrowed elements of various research philosophies and theories. Due to the ongoing tensions between Western and Indigenous education, and the overall 'subjugation' of Indigenous knowledges worldwide (Semali & Kincheloe, 2007) elements of a critical paradigm were included and blended with a constructivist approach, which acknowledges that there is no single source of truth (Mackenzie, 2011). Rather, in this context, it was seen that 'truth' is primarily a collective sensemaking process with no end point, but served as a constructive, adaptive and responsive phenomena which was continuously evolving and being shaped by participants. Aside to this, the research drew on theories such as Standpoint Theory to ensure accountability in the research as

both a researcher, Indigenous scholar and an IIR. In complimenting both the critical and constructivist paradigms, a theory of decolonisation was also set in place to acknowledge and legitimate the cultural institutions and authority of the researcher and participants (Morrison et al., 2019). However, decolonisation, in alignment with Tuck and Yang (2021), is featured not solely as a theory in this instance, but as a ‘verb’ and this was exemplified by the active inclusion of Indigenous Research Methodologies, and K/Gamilaroi languages and cultures.

3.6.1 Indigenous Research Methodologies

Over the years, Indigenous stories have largely been ignored, neglected, or misrepresented (Smith, 1999). Only within the past few decades have Indigenous scholars emerged from the confines of our colonial histories and disenfranchisement, to reframe, reclaim and rename the journey into western academia, and conduct research in our own ways, on our own terms (Martin, 2002). This includes developing our own tools for exploring the domains of Western research and scholarship. The result of this exploration has led to a host of Indigenous researchers since the 1990s uncovering and activating the use of Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRMs) (Singh & Major, 2017). Due to remarkable diversity of Indigenous peoples in Australia and globally, each with their own cosmologies, epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies, Jackson-Barrett & Hammond (2018) describe IRMs as being ‘as varied as Aboriginal peoples, their community contexts and the ‘Country/s’ that ground them’ (p. 94). This range of diversity is also observed at an academic level with some differences in Indigenous scholars’ opinions on what IRMs do, who can do them, and whether they should be applied at global versus localised levels (Kovach, 2015; Martin; 2002; Rigney, 1999;

Wilson, 2008). In this, it should be noted that there is no one IRM which Indigenous communities settle on at this point in time. Although, this admission acknowledges, critiques, and resists the notion of a single universal (ontological) reality that most western research is seemingly hinged upon (Kwame, 2017). Further, it enables a platform for specific IRMs to be developed by Indigenous peoples using their own specific worldviews, to cater towards their own specific individual and community contexts, roles, accountabilities and responsibilities. Aside to this, many IRMs are said to share common characteristics which can be collated to establish Indigenous approaches to research. Martin (2003) for example suggests some key features of an IRM:

1. Recognition of our world views, our knowledge, and our realities as distinctive and vital to our existence and survival. This serves as a research framework;
2. Honouring Aboriginal social mores as essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Aboriginal people in our own lands and when in the lands of other Aboriginal people;
3. Emphasising the social, historical and political contexts which shape our experiences, our lives, positions and futures;
4. Privileging the voices, experiences, and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands;
5. Identifying and redressing issues of importance to us. (p.5)

The process of developing IRMs which are broad enough for usership among a general cohort of Indigenous scholars worldwide has been ongoing. Moreover, the development and cultivation of IRMs can be said to be largely dependent on researchers' knowing and understanding cultural protocols, values and beliefs within their own groups and the groups that they are studying or researching. This is particularly important as IRMs are

not merely about embedding Indigenous perspectives into research practices and processes but embedding research practices and process within Indigenous paradigms (Singh & Major, 2017). Along with the three R's - Respect, Reciprocity and Relationality, Weber-Pillwax (1999) suggests consideration should also be given for the following principles:

1. The interconnectedness of all living things.
2. The impact of motives and intentions on person and community.
3. The foundation of research as lived Indigenous experience.
4. The groundedness of theories in Indigenous epistemology.
5. The transformative nature of research.
6. The sacredness and the responsibility of maintaining person and community integrity.
7. The recognition of languages and culture as living processes (pp. 31-32).

It is important to outline that the use of an IRM in this study is grounded in many of these same principles, and how alignment with the principles and functions of IRMs signifies an active process of decolonisation. As mentioned previously, decolonisation in this instance is less of a noun or a theory and more of a verb and a practice which guides the research in cultural appropriate and significant ways (Tuck & Yang, 2021). Of course, as Chilisa (2019) suggests, IRMs and decolonisation theories are not immune to dominant Western paradigms and one can never operate outside the ontological domains of research within mainstream educational environments. Perhaps it is undetermined whether this is indeed the objective or not, although it is important to ensure that all research is grounded in research practices and process which prioritise the livelihood and wellbeing of all things in creation. All the while, upholding to the relational integrities and accountabilities of *all our relations* (Wilson, 2001) from the

smallest quarks to the largest and most distant quasars in the universe. Indigenous paradigms strongly suggest the notion of the animacy and interrelatedness of all things, and call us, as researchers, to act accordingly.

3.6.2 An Australian First Nations K/Gamilaroi Approach

In configuring the methodology to a more specific process of inquiry into the professional experiences and perspectives of UniSQ Indigenous academics, the qualitative approach and its incorporated elements of theory and paradigm will be combined with a K/Gamilaroi researcher identity. As such, the aim of this approach will not as much seek to ‘get inside people’s heads’ as mentioned by Aktar et al., (2020, p. 161) but rather, *giirr nhama ngamilaylanha ganunga-giirr*, which means ‘to see things from the eyes of those around us’. Riley & Hawe (2005) condone a similar notion within Narrative Inquiry stating that interest in the analysis of researching stories has increased, as researchers “endeavor to see the world through the eyes of others” (p. 226). In the context of this study, this will be further explored by employing the concept of *researcher as –dhaan*. In the language of K/Gamilaroi peoples, application of the suffix *–dhaan* to root words signifies ‘the one who is good at’ (Ash et al., 2003). For example, the word for any small bat (order: Microchiroptera) is *ngarraadhaan* which is broken down to the constituents *ngarra* (to see, look at, watch) and *-dhaan* (the one who is good at), meaning ‘the one who is good at seeing’. Contrary to the popular belief and misconception stemming from the idiom ‘as blind as a bat’, most bats, in fact, have a keen sense of eyesight, which in lower light conditions is complemented by echolocation and is utilised to build outstanding spatial memory and navigation skills (Salles, 2022). Therefore, it is likely that K/Gamilaroi peoples observed bats to be highly

competent in moving through environments and avoiding obstacles in all conditions using sight and other multisensory abilities. In a similar vein, adding the suffix *-dhaan* to root words such as *guwaa-* and its contextual forms provided by additional verb class suffixes mentioned in section 3.5.1, to form the word *guwaalayladhaan*, which means 'the one who is good at talking with others'. As effective data collection through qualitative research interviews is not *solely* about talking, this approach also requires a commitment to communicating within and across cultural contexts. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the talking component, *guwaalayladhaan*, is complemented by an ability to deeply and actively listen. In most Australian Aboriginal societies, the ear is believed to be the instrument and seat of intelligence and perception, with K/Gamilaroi people often referring to a clever or wise person as '*burrul bina*' which literally translates to 'prominent ear' (Ash et al. 2003). In this, the word *winanga-* can be applied with the same suffix pattern to make *winangayladhaan*, meaning 'the one who is good at listening with others'. However, in K/Gamilaroi *winanga-* not only means 'to listen' but it also has extended meanings which translate to English concepts such 'think, learn, know, understand, remember, love' (Ash et al. 2003). Leslie (2014) in this context, goes as far to distinguish a listening pattern which deviates from Western ontological domains to suggest that 'to listen' in K/Gamilaroi means the emphasis is not so much on the talker who says, 'listen to me' but rather the emphasis is on the listener, and therefore the more appropriate idea is to 'listen from me'. Perhaps this interpretation can be seen as complimentary to the statement *giirr nhama ngamilaylanha ganunga-giirr*, as in 'seeing through the eyes of those around us', to say *giirr nhama winangaylanha ganunga-giirr*, to 'listen through the ears of those around us'. Figure 4. gives an

overview of the relationships between these concepts as they stem from a *-dhaan* methodology along with some of the key principles which may constitute as being *one who is good at talking and listening with others* from a K/Gamilaroi perspective.

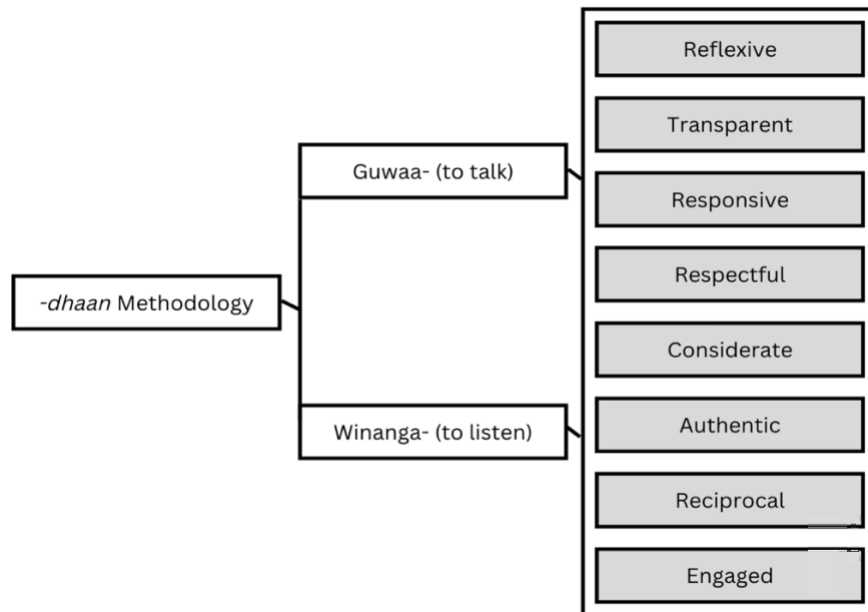


Figure 3: Researcher as -dhaan

This figure outlines the relatedness of key principles in accordance with the method and overall methodological approach to being *-dhaan*, or the one (or many) who are good at research.

Similar to the example of *ngarraadhaan* and its increased abilities to navigate complex environments and shifting terrain, talking and listening in this regard, and perhaps working in Indigenous community contexts in general, can require a strong multisensory component. This can include but is not limited to exercising intuition to observe, process and respond to changes in energy flows, tonality, body language, gesture, and comfortability. While many arguments have been put forward both in favour of and against intuition (Shirley et al., 1996), this process within Indigenous contexts is further

enhanced by deep connections to Country and relatedness to people, history, culture, and community. Therein lies further opportunities for research to capture greater awareness and understanding of intangible elements of communication within Indigenous community research contexts.

3.6.3 Yarning in Practice

The 1:1 yarning style interviews took place on Zoom incorporating each of the principles listed previously. The actual process of yarning was an effective methodology as it allowed the participants the space and flexibility to organically draw on ideas as they emerged throughout the conversation, rather than following a rote script. The multisensory element of the yarns also ensured that the researcher was aware of what was *not being said*, as well as what *was being said*. It also ensured that the research was attentive to other communicative modalities such as silence, gesture, facial expression, tone of voice, energy, conversational flow, and more. Opportunities for the researcher to share stories, or extend on stories that were heard by participants, demonstrated a level of reciprocity which would allow experiences and ideas to be articulated and discussed from multiple angles.

Yarning as an approach was considered a means of creating a culturally safe environment, where participants were free to share their views and make thoughtful, concise, and productive contributions to the study. A high-level of trust was indicated by the types of information shared. This was particularly evident in the sharing of information regarding participants' experiences within their areas of teaching and learning. The researcher in this regard understands the immense responsibility for

protecting the identity of the participants, particularly when expressing their views and opinions in a confidential and trusted space. The Yarning methodology supported the overall cultural safety and wellbeing of the participants, through ensuring that cultural protocols were always considered and adhered to.

3.6.4 Limitations

Several limitations were identified and expected to appear throughout the research. As an IIR it was important to always maintain a high degree of flexibility, responsibility, accountability, and respect, to ensure ample trust between key stakeholders within the research. There is often a fine line between creating a distrustful and/or dissociative environment in researching and working with Indigenous communities due to historical experiences with institutions. It is also due to this lack of trust that many Indigenous peoples are sceptical about sharing IK-related information with institutional spaces. Therefore, the researcher was required to not only create, but to *maintain* a high degree of trust with participants to ensure that the relationships between the research and the institution represented in the study was not extractive. While the objective of the study was to seek *professional* ideas on the state of IK at UniSQ, it was expected that there may have been times when participants willingly shared specific information or examples of their own *personal* experiences with IK and the research. Therefore, it was important to be mindful of Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights, and the researcher was considerate of this type of information being included in the study. Participants who disclosed such information were given the final say on whether or not this information was included.

Furthermore, as an IIR with interest and personal investments into the progression and advancement of IK, due care and diligence was required in the research process to ensure that any potential bias contained within the study was monitored and addressed effectively. This may have included sample and selection biases, as well as potential corruption in the data analysis stages of the research. As the recording of the data was highly technologically dependent and recorded via Zoom, there was much room for error in both translation and transcription of the research findings. The error was minimised by the development of good working relationships with study participants who had full autonomy and power to determine their own contributions and adjust any comments provided by them during or after the interviews. Moreover, some participants may have felt a sense of uncertainty about the future implications of the research, as it raises the profile of ideas and contributions by Indigenous peoples which in some cases have been subjugated from the institution (Semali & Kincheloe, 2011). In some cases, certain elements of IK have been deliberately kept or withheld by Indigenous peoples, so as to not be subject to contamination, exploitation, or bastardisation (McGonegal, 2009). While the research was seeking to uncover insights into the state of IK at UniSQ, the consequent assumptions and discussions that could have potentially arisen throughout the data collection process may easily have been informed by a pattern that Indigenous peoples worldwide are all too familiar with. There are many historical examples of institutions mistreating and appropriating Indigenous people, places, ideas and knowledges throughout history, and more specifically in this context, instances where institutions or their key stakeholder groups simply *take* what they want from Indigenous communities and implement processes without regard for Indigenous

contributions, representations, consultations or advices on culturally important or significant matters.

The researcher must therefore be mindful that they are representing an institution, and that this inadvertently carries various negative and positive connotations within Indigenous community contexts. The translation process and maintenance of relational accountability will be imperative to accurate data collection, recording and management, as well as the ongoing effects and impacts that this study may prompt into the future in terms of the advancement and progression of IK at UniSQ.

3.6.5 Data Analysis

The use, extraction, and exploitation of data in Indigenous communities by predominantly non-Indigenous researchers has caused much harm in the past in Australia. From phrenological experiments created to justify the inhumane treatment of Indigenous peoples, to measuring blood quantum as means to remove children from their families and place them into non-Indigenous homes and schools (Turnbull, 2007). Data unfortunately has been at the heart of several key events that have negatively impacted and continue to shape the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience. In this regard it is important to approach the analysis of the data with respect, along with an understanding of how even the most relatively simple data can affect the lives of the people it is taken from, especially when it is mischaracterised and misrepresented. This re-emphasises the use of an Indigenous methodological approach as it prioritises the safety and security of Indigenous participants by operating from a highly reflexive

standpoint. The further adherence to embedded cultural protocols which guide appropriate and ethically responsible behaviours supports this notion also.

In analysing the data within the study, a qualitative thematic analysis was employed to identify and address key themes emerging from the research interviews with UniSQ Indigenous academics. Thematic analysis is a method which is used for systematic organisation of information collected to identify patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This can involve a complete immersion in the data collected to induce a level of familiarity with the information, followed by an ordered *coding* process, which according to Braun and Clarke (2012) is a means to identify and provide labels for features of the data that are potentially relevant to the research question (p. 61). The coding of the data can be ordered based on complexity, ranging from basic to interpretive understandings of the information (Langridge, 2004). The employment of the qualitative thematic analysis allowed the researcher to make important connections across clustered data points (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to then extrapolate shared experiences, understandings and overall, an awareness of the state of IK at UniSQ. The data was then further investigated and processed to then develop a series of recommendations for the pathway/s forward in teaching, learning, researching, and communicating a vision for IK within the University.

3.7 Conclusion

The methods utilised in this study ensured a culturally safe and secure environment for each of the participants. Through incorporating several measures of qualitative research along with Indigenous research methods and methodologies drawn out of Indigenous

language and cultural contexts, continual refinement of research practice and conceptual approaches could be implemented to optimise the process of data collection and subsequent analysis. Within this cultural context, pertaining to both the researcher as an individual and as a member of extended Indigenous communities both within and beyond of the institution, a stable platform could be established to promote the overall safety, wellbeing, and comfortability of the participants. The presence and adherence to Aboriginal cultural protocols was considered a linchpin in creating and maintaining this environment and these protocols and processes were effectively interwoven throughout. Moreover, additional *novel* elements of the research context were given due recognition such as the multilayered components of *insiderness*, as it related to all participants within the study, especially the researcher. Failure to recognise these elements could have impacted the study negatively, particularly where bias, cultural nuance, sensitivity in initial conditions, and relational complexity may inhibit or skew data, and possibly lead to the destruction or fragmentation of Aboriginal and mainstream community relationships and partnerships. Each of these preceding markers, set a foundation for obtaining the most effective and insightful data, which is essential for analysing themes and producing an accurate series of recommendations.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The following section will outline the results of the data collection. Further, it will examine in greater detail the implications of the data obtained through UniSQ Indigenous academics' views, thoughts, opinions, observations, and experiences regarding the state of Indigenous knowledges within the institution. Analysis of the data has led to a series of recommendations for further investigation, possibilities, and opportunities for how IK can be better incorporated and recognised within the life of the University. This includes areas of the curriculum, teaching and pedagogical approaches, staff and student awareness, personal and professional development, and more. While there are several *external* perspectives relating to the overall importance of including IK in these areas, some of the internal perspectives provide a more targeted perspective on the reasoning and justification of IK not just as an educational or academic concept, but a tool for further interrogation into the nature of personal identity, reflection, purpose and meaning within broader social contexts also. For example, upon reflection of the importance of IK in this regard, Alex³ suggested that:

“...sometimes as academics we can get caught up in our egos and our publications, and trying to get ahead, and I think it’s really important to stay grounded, and by really valuing Indigenous Knowledges it brings us back and it

³ Pseudonyms are used throughout this study.

constantly reminds us of our responsibilities and our accountabilities and that we're part of something a lot bigger than our individual selves”

As mentioned previously, in Indigenous community contexts the notion of the individual is deeply rooted in its overall *relatedness* to the people, places, environments and species around them. This relatedness has the power to shape a more meaningful and impactful existence at the level of the individual, although can be scaled and applied to various levels of the University, especially as it pertains to individual departments and offices. Further, it can also apply to the University itself, as the institution sits *in relation* to all its surrounding environments and contexts. It is also critical in supporting Indigenous scholars to operate effectively in relation to their broader sociocultural and sociopolitical relationships, and self-determination. In any case, there are significant benefits for engaging both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff in IK teaching and learning opportunities. Alex continues:

“I think it’s so important for so many reasons; for our cultural survival and strength going forward but also for non-First Nations people who may be missing that opportunity to connect with something that really appeals.”

It is within the processes of understanding the greater connectedness of people, land, and cosmos, that Indigenous protocols are interwoven, and thus, these protocols provide a blueprint for how we sit, listen, think, behave, act, and formulate terms for the spaces and places that we occupy, which are inclusive of the rights and needs of all

things, not just ourselves. This arrangement is what has governed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for more than 65,000 years and continues to do so today (Clarkson et al, 2017). Hence, when participants refer to IK in the context of education, it is conceivable that they believe drawing on these ideas provides an important foundation for teaching, learning, and operating properly as an institution. Alex continues:

“...it’s amazing what that does to people because it’s something bigger than themselves. I think that’s what’s so special and powerful about Indigenous Knowledges is that they’re not man-made, they’re not open to change and corruption – they are written into the land and so they are there for everybody . . . I think there’s a real beauty in that and people could find a real solace and a real peace in that, because I think that’s what people are searching for, and I think a lot of people feel devoid of culture and spirituality”.

The past few decades have forced humans to stop and reflect on their place in nature. Centuries prior to this, Western countries canonically believed that nature was something to objectify, rule, and have dominion over (Kay, 1989). This meant that humans as a species were separated from their *real* ecological niche, which was, and still is to be in relation with nature through deep time connections facilitated through artistic and ritualistic mediums such as story, song, and dance. These mediums support the overall understanding of the custodial role of humans in natural ecological contexts.

We now live in a vastly different society which requires different approaches to facilitating greater connection to land, people, and place. As suggested by Alex

“...COVID and the recent things have made people realise how disconnected they are, and how vulnerable they are because of that disconnect, and people are starting to realise that big time . . . and so I think they’re looking for opportunities now, the spark is gone, and they’re sort of going, “Well, how do I connect with country?”.

Herein lies an opportunity to support a broader movement towards an Australian society and culture which values connectedness to the continent’s lands, waters, seas, and skies through meaningful and intentional acts of inclusivity and belongingness, notwithstanding First Nations peoples’ participation, leadership, and expertise. Furthermore, deeper investigation into individual and shared responsibilities of truth-telling, along with a wider recognition of the ongoing impacts of colonisation, and movements towards true reconciliation are still required to establish a firm base for effective teaching and learning. This would support the overall need for clarity regarding future priorities for sharing and protecting IK, and achieving a common understanding of where we have been as a nation and where we are going. Alex comments:

“So I think the more we create opportunities and invite non-First Nations people in to connect, I think the more they will be allies in terms of protecting cultural heritage, and understanding an Indigenous perspective about the urgency of land

rights and things like that. . . This isn't about trying to seize back properties and kick people off. . . it's not about that, it's about preserving what we have left, about honouring it, protecting it, and sharing it in the best way possible. . .”

In reporting the outcomes of the data collection, these ideas take precedence and serve as the foundations for understanding the importance of IK as a concept, and something worthwhile delving further into to locate the best and most suitable ways forward.

4.2 The State of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Southern Queensland

In investigating the state of IK within the UniSQ, it became evident that since the 1980s there have been ongoing attempts to include or incorporate some form of Indigenous perspectives within the University. The inclusion of Indigenous peoples, course programs, support teams, artefacts, and spaces over the past 40 years has ensured a steady flow of content and continual relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and UniSQ. In a more recent context, there have been many ebbs and flows in advancing toward higher levels of Indigenous content production, and procurement of Indigenous teaching, education, research, and professional staff through key strategic directions. Staff today continue to observe the efforts of the University in contributing to Indigenous education, while progressing towards increased capacity to support, foster and nurture Indigenous leadership and scholarship across several areas within the institution. Further, an overall shift in structure and culture within those teaching, learning and research environments is ongoing, and will continue to be explored for many more decades.

In reflecting on the research question, “What is the state of Indigenous Knowledges within UniSQ?” participants appeared to hold similar views. The common understanding was that while the University has made some progress in including Indigenous perspectives across several areas of the curriculum and staff education and awareness, there is still more that can be done to go deeper into the realms of IK teaching, learning, education, and research. One participant, for example, suggested that the University’s general inclusion of IK is “pretty low” indicating that further planning is needed to attract, recruit, and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees skilled in developing, directing, and delivering on IK-related agendas and course programs. According to participants, this would require more robust planning and meaningful engagement strategies that don’t just “fizzle out” after a few years of implementation, as has been the trend over the past two decades. In saying this, targeted efforts continue to take shape within the College for First Nations with recent re-accreditation of the Bachelor of Arts (First Nations Australia) course program taking a highly specialised approach to effectively teaching and navigating First Nations education within the University. This 8-unit Major is delivered out of the College, and promotes the ongoing awareness, education, and research into Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and supports the University’s commitment to meeting Graduate Attribute 6 – ensuring students leave the University as *Culturally capable individuals*. However, outside of the student context, there are several gaps which exist where IK is either not clearly observable or articulated, or on the other hand, seen as a more ‘obscure’ entity. For example, Cody comments:

“...it’s not overt in the University in terms of the curriculum, or teaching, or learning, or even research, I think It’s a little more covert...”

Closer examination of these gaps and perceived obscurities can serve as opportunities for broader engagement and more transparent efforts in staff engagement, awareness, recognition, and inclusion of IK at UniSQ. At the very least, moving beyond informal or arbitrary means of sharing information or knowledge, as Cody continues:

“...and I think where First Nations voices are involved in delivering that Indigenous Knowledge, or sharing that Indigenous Knowledge, that it happens almost accidentally sometimes, or conversationally, rather than formally... and I don’t mean that in a yarnning-type delivery, I mean that as kind of everyday experience of it being accidental, or being in that kind of way, in a conversation.”

Further insights provided by Cody suggested that IK “sits small”, and that there does not appear to any kind of collective efficacy in the approach to teach, communicate or research IK. Another participant identified that development and growth is happening relative to past instances, and while wider recognition has been afforded in some areas across the University, further learning could be incorporated into teaching and research programs, and opportunities for staff professional development. Overall, the state of IK at UniSQ operates relative to time, in that historically Indigenous perspectives and IK have held a place within the structure of the University and the curriculum, albeit, generally in some superficial form. Until more recently, Indigenous academics have

been allocated the space to develop a more robust and formalised suite of learning opportunities in the Bachelor of Arts (First Nations Australia). However, in relation to the broader movement of seeking out and including IK across other areas of the University, while also embedding IK into the structure and life of the institution, UniSQ remains in a growth phase.

The Blueprint for First Nations, released in 2022, outlines a plan for progressing these ideas, and prompting a bolder, and more responsive approach to First Nations education and research, and while attempts have been made to transcontextualise and diversify Faculties, Schools and Colleges within the University by including Indigenous scholars and teaching staff, there has been little success in this so far due to the difficulty of locating suitable applicants for these roles. Despite such difficulties, the notion of IK still is not a familiar concept and does not hold a formal enough position to galvanise or attract a critical mass of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars to produce more innovative and exciting outcomes in adjacent subject areas. It is true that IK may hold some place in mainstream Nursing and Education course programs, although IK is yet to be explored in the context of subject areas such as Engineering, AI and digital futures, Space and Defence Research, or business, as has been the case in other Australian Universities.

Thus, a significant opportunity exists for UniSQ to honour the path that has been forged by predecessors within the University, and to move *beyond the glass cabinet*, to proper IK production, application, transmission, and regeneration, as our collective future may

certainly benefit from the University's capacity to contribute to regional, national, and international discourse in regard to IK and unpacking mainstream systems from an Indigenous perspective.

4.3 Key Themes

In conducting the interviews with each of the participants, several key *themes* became apparent. These themes add further important context and nuance to the nature of the study, while assisting in the development of ideas pertaining the strengths, needs, opportunities, risks, and barriers of establishing a formalised commitment to IK at UniSQ. Before any further inferences or extrapolates can take place, it is important to examine the commonalities that were shared in the interviews, and which subsequently emerged throughout the data collection and analysis. This section will examine in greater depth the comments, opinions, and professional experiences of the participants in relation to IK at UniSQ. These perspectives are informed by real, first-hand observations of the teaching and learning environment at UniSQ, and are accommodated by individual anecdotal experiences to provide a current snapshot of IK within the institution. To support the flow of the section, the full list of themes has been synthesised into 10 key topics. The topics are as follows:

- 4.3.1 Classifying Indigenous Knowledge/s
- 4.3.2 Structural elements to systems change and inclusion
- 4.3.3 IKs in the curriculum
- 4.3.4 Teaching and embedding IKs, not just perspectives
- 4.3.5 Staff capacity building and fostering allyship
- 4.3.6 An emergent 'Third Space' for IKs teaching, learning and research
- 4.3.7 Protecting ICIP and supporting internal mobility and self-determination
- 4.3.8 Addressing Cultural Load as a barrier to Indigenous Teaching and Research
- 4.3.9 Truth-telling and righting wrongs
- 4.3.10 Recognising capacity for IK teaching support

4.3.1 Classifying Indigenous Knowledge/s

Over the past half-century that IK has emerged as a consistent scholarly concept and domain, there has been ongoing debate about its nature, place, legitimacy, relevance, utility, and its overall definition within Western institutional contexts (Sefa Dei, 2000).

While this study does not seek to solve or rectify these issues specifically, it is important to provide some boundaries which distinguish the characteristics, conditions, and key differences of IK as it pertains to the individual and the collective. For example, the notion of *Indigenous Knowledge* (singular) will be used from here to determine any kind of knowledge that is applied or relevant at the level of the *individual*, especially as it relates to the individual's personal Indigenous cultural identity. In many Indigenous communities worldwide, this sense of 'identity' is underpinned, and largely *informed by*, one's ancestral connections to place, language, story, art, ceremony, tradition, and Law, along with shared stories, genetic memories, and communal histories (Tacon, 2019). This in some ways contradicts Singh and Major's (2019) stance on post-structuralist ideas of identity, and while it is true in this paradigm that identity changes over time and across spaces, the notion of identity in Indigenous contexts does indeed possess a strong element of fixedness, and is tethered to landscapes, community, and culture over potentially thousands of generations. According to Sam:

“. . . there's Indigenous Knowledge and then Indigenous *Knowledges*. Indigenous Knowledge to me . . . is our own experience in our own cultural practice within our

own [Aboriginal language group⁴] . . . it's the positions from within our own [Aboriginal language group], and those knowledges stem through and are informed by cultural Law.”

The notion of cultural Law here is an expression of the cosmological, epistemological, ontological, and axiological elements of a particular Indigenous group who have lived and continue to live in deep relation with certain landscapes or bioregions for many generations. Further, it can apply to certain times and place-based contexts within Indigenous Australian cultural memory where an individual or their families and communities may draw inspiration from spiritual entities. Indigenous Knowledge in this regard is held and expressed through a person's behaviour, conduct, ethics, protocols, and extends to other areas of their lives such as interpersonal interactions, decision-making, presence/absence, and more. In the case of higher education, it may also be expressed through individual teaching practice, pedagogy, research, enterprise, and scholarship. This is generally deeply personal, although can be shared and networked throughout their community. Sam continues:

“...and only people within that cultural group are privy to that Indigenous Knowledge, because it has its own cultural structures, [and] political structures which informs responsibility within the cultural group.”

⁴ The actual names of Aboriginal language groups have been removed to protect the identities of individual participants, as they may be easily identified through their Aboriginal language group affiliations.

As mentioned previously, this identity as it pertains to Indigenous peoples in the workplace, does not operate in the same context as a professional identity. Rather, they are interwoven in many ways, and the Indigenous identity/s often will take precedence due its fixation. This means that in a similar context to the statement in Section 3.2.1, Indigenous academics are labelled as such because they are just that, *Indigenous people who are employed as academics, rather than academics who just happen to be Indigenous*. This is summarised by Sam:

“...that’s really important that for me as a [Aboriginal language group] person to understand what Indigenous Knowledge means to me because it informs my conduct, it informs my cultural protocol, it informs my ethics, it informs my practice...”.

Unfortunately, due to colonisation and its ongoing impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, and perhaps Indigenous people the world over, not all Indigenous individuals and groups still have access to their knowledge systems and cultural Laws. This section does not seek to suggest that having a firm grasp or understanding of Indigenous Knowledge is an essential part of Indigenous academic capacity to teach into this topic, and further, it does not suggest that having no stable or fixed Indigenous cultural identity equates to a *lack* of protocols or ethics. It is merely to help distinguish between the elements of Indigenous Knowledge teaching, learning, enterprise, and research. In this, it must be acknowledged that the process of

colonisation has been harsh, and the level of impact on individuals varies widely. However, each individual Indigenous person has something unique to contribute to wider IK conversations and this should be respected in the process of developing wider bodies of knowledge pertaining to broader Indigenous sociocultural and sociopolitical experiences.

This then brings us to *Indigenous Knowledges* (plural), which, alternatively, is organised around a series of shared subjective experiences that a majority of Indigenous peoples hold globally. This may include shared notions of ‘Indigeneity’ that Indigenous communities hold regarding connections to land, water and sky, spirituality, sacred areas, and ritual objects, as well as using story to describe environmental phenomena and to memorise key information, events, sequences, and contexts that pertain directly to the human experience (Kelly, 2016). Moreover, Indigenous Knowledges can also extend to include experiences and responses to colonisation, imperialism, capitalism, neoliberalism, Western supremacy, scientific racism, and patriarchy, by way of Indigenous adaptation, resilience, opposition, and resistance. The *aggregation* of this body of individual ideas can be drawn upon by staff to teach and share perspectives regarding Indigenous Knowledges, although the key distinguishments made between Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and Indigenous Knowledges (IKs) and both topics contemporaneously (which we may refer to herein as “IK/s”) can inform the development of a teaching framework which serves as a point of reference for effective deployment, as emphasised by Sam:

“Indigenous Knowledges to me is a collective of the common threads of what we all have in common across the State, across all of our Indigenous nations across the continent ... we can’t just focus on one cultural knowledge; it’s the collective. What are the common threads right across all Aboriginal nations and language groups? There needs to be a common agreement and understanding of a framework to work from, to inform cultural practice and behaviours, and then if things get a bit pear-shaped, we go back to it. It informs every element...”

This notion of a capturing and teaching a collective experience presented as a consistent theme in the data, with another participant suggesting that it is the *aggregation* of experiences, practices, beliefs and more, that inform a designated position on IKs. Alex states:

“For me, it’s the collective practices, beliefs, and learning or understandings of Indigenous people, and while of course there’s diversity within that, there are those elements that tie us together universally...so when I’m talking about Indigenous Knowledges, I’m not just talking about First Nations Australians but we’re talking about Indigenous or Native or Traditional peoples the world over, and the collective elements of our spiritual practices, our cultural beliefs, the way that we operate, and how that’s been developed over thousands of years in very close harmony with the physical environment; and that’s what sets it apart. It’s that intense understanding of the physical environment and respect for land...”

As such, it would raise some legitimate questions about who can teach what elements of IKs, and this will be explored in further sections. For now, we can proceed with the clear distinction between “IK” which applies to the individual feelings and expressions of cultural identity that pertain to people and groups associated with particular landscapes, histories, languages and more. On the other hand, we can reside on that “IKs” are the collective practices, beliefs, and learning or understandings of Indigenous peoples globally that tie them together universally.

Discussion

In reviewing the literature regarding Indigenous Knowledge/s, it is important to note the many variations of the term and concept both within the current literature and emerging within Indigenous knowledge spaces and places. This is a clear demonstration that Indigenous Knowledge/s is not a one-dimensional or unilateral idea when remarked by Indigenous communities. As Indigenous Knowledge/s continues to grow, evolve, and adapt to a rapidly changing world, more innovative ways of developing, applying, translating, and communicating Indigenous knowledge will be required. To bring the discussion fully up to date with the emergent properties of IKs, further distinction needs to be made between these variations. Table 1. outlines a number of differential modes that IKs are being trialled within for contextualised approaches to addressing global problems.

Concept	Meaning	Description
IK	Indigenous Knowledge	Group associations with a particular landscape or bioregion over successive generations, expressed at the level of the person or community in the form of behaviour, thoughts, perspectives, ceremony, rites of passage, and more.
IKs	Indigenous Knowledges	A body of collective and shared experiences regarding land, spirituality, beliefs, and customs, while also extending to capture responses to and effects of colonisation within Indigenous community contexts.
IK/s	Applicable to both Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledges concurrently.	Refers to any context where both IK as a singular context, and IKs as a collective aggregate of information pertaining to the global Indigenous experience may overlap, or apply equally and concurrently.
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems	The notion of how and/or where smaller constituents (parts) of IK/s operate in relation to other constituents (parts) through an interconnected network of information i.e., <i>an organised complex whole</i> . For example, how Australian Aboriginal Songlines criss-cross, overlap and connect across the entire continent, but can also be in reference to connections made through language, culture, art, symbols, gestures, etc. which exist within broader cultural and geographical contexts.
ISK	Indigenous Systems Knowledge	A nuanced perception of mainstream systems as they are perceived, analysed, and understood from an Indigenous standpoint. This can be referred to as Indigenous Thinking or collective sensemaking relative to mainstream governance, organisation, leadership, theoretical framing, practice, sociology, decision-making, and more.
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge	Represents an overall perspective and experience of humans living in deep relationship with the land over thousands of years and applying the knowledge gained in contemporary analysis of the local natural environment (Berkes, 1993).

Table 1: Variations of Indigenous Knowledges

This table outlines the key use and functions of, and/or variable representations of Indigenous Knowledges.

Over the coming decades, as the effects of climate change continue to worsen, economic instabilities become more frequent, and social fragmentation more prominent, many of these insights afforded by IK/s as a concept and pragmatic approach to understanding the situation in greater depth and nuance will be critical. It is important to note here, that efforts made to unpack and utilise seminal terms such as IKs and TEK along the philosophies and meaning behind them, as well as emergent concepts in IKS and ISK may serve as key leverage points for addressing global issues that humans are facing and will continue to face in the future. What this means above all, is that Indigenous peoples and cultures are not *of the past*, but rather they are peoples and cultures *with a past*, and it is not bold in any way to suggest that their “past” may be the key to a more sustainable future for all peoples and cultures on Earth.

4.3.2 Structural elements to systems change and inclusion

The notion of structural reform was remarked several times using different words and gestures to describe the process. As there was no unified way of describing this, it perhaps emphasised the need for any structural changes to be led by a co-creative and collective Indigenous voice across the University. This can be somewhat difficult, in a system that prioritises the ‘top down’ hierarchical model that most of Western societies have been built upon, and which many Australian universities still operate from. This is essentially a *chain of command* where power is distributed according to level i.e., position, rank, or “caste” in the hierarchy. In such a model, due to its downward flow of energy, higher levels are typically afforded more power than any of the levels beneath them, thus, this model chiefly operates from a position of inequality, dominance, and constraint (Rio & Smedal, 2009). Once the top-down hierarchy is established, value is

then attributed in accordance with one's placement within the overall structure. This, however, is not generally the case within an Indigenous community context, and therefore in the context of IK/s. Alex states:

“How we define authority, and authority to speak on things, is different Western hierarchical systems. It's not based on a title or a job role, it's based on community standing and that level of trust.”

Indigenous models of governance in this regard are *heterarchical* more than hierarchical. This demands that they are highly interpersonal, and as such, they are composed of many equal individual autonomous constituents interacting together to form a greater organised complex whole, that is usually egalitarian in nature (Yunkaporta, 2019). Further, heterarchical models tend to avoid ordering by rank or status, or where these elements may shift depending on context, such as situation, timing and/or location (Rosile et al. 2018). This model implies that there is no individual who is, in perpetuity, more important than any other, despite some members of the community carrying extensive knowledge and experience. Instead, they participate in the process as any other would, and can make valuable contributions that sit *in relation* with other community members' knowledge and experience, rather than working against it, in spite of it, or ignoring it altogether. As noted by Yunkaporta (2019):

“The whole is intelligent, and each part carries the inherent intelligence of the entire system. Knowledge is therefore a living thing that is patterned within every person and being and object and phenomenon within creation”. (p. 95)

The same can be said about Indigenous governance from an organisational perspective, that each staff member holds an ‘inherent intelligence’ of the organisation’s structure, functions, and patterns, and the collective understanding achieved by way of examining or discussing individual experiences can formulate an aggregate perspective. In theory, this unfortunately cannot be fully realised through a ‘top-down’ hierarchical approach. Rather, by adopting a heterarchical model, this can support the initial conditions for a ‘bottom up’ approach, whereby the heterarchical features within the model have the potential to increase the overall interactions of the individual ‘parts’ at lower levels to produce and influence new, more complex states at higher levels. These levels then, it can be said, do not hold power over the other lower levels, but rather, abide by the new, emergent laws which govern the level, while not contradicting the laws of any of the levels beneath it or which have come before it. The description of this process of structural reform as a complex system reflects the commentary made by participants, in that Cody suggested that:

“I don’t see it [as] dismantling the house from within, but . . . rather than looking at the institution as an umbrella kind of thing, and doing ‘this’, I’m more interested in doing ‘this’...”

In this instance, Cody used semiotic hand gestures to indicate the “umbrella shape” which informs a typical Western system’s general ‘overarching’ of a particular theme and logic at the top, and ‘sub-themes’ which reside beneath it, reflecting a top-down hierarchical approach as the energy flows downward. However, as Cody spoke directly into the topic of IK/s, they suggested using an *inverted* model to describe an “underlying” concept which “emerges” from a single point of reference, or substrate, and grows upwards and outwards. The image that Cody described so vividly was similar to a planted seed beneath the soil which grows into a tree moving upwards and sends its branches outwards. This semiotic gesture observed in the data collection, is representative of the way that IKs *emerge* from interactions or definitions at a relatively lower levels, growing into a bigger idea and philosophy at higher, more sophisticated levels, and where *the whole is more than the sum of the parts* (Holland, 2014). This model is also exemplary of the model of communication which can be used to broadcast IKs and its emergent properties from individual knowledge-based contexts, which we have referred to previously as IK (singular) scaling up through interactivity between constituents to establish shared, common experiences in relation to the land, and in relation to societal ideas, norms, interests, expectations, etc. which exist in Indigenous communities. This has been referred to as IKs previously. In the context of IKs, as they scale up, this has the capacity to then be distributed into course programs, activating change within student cohorts which have flow on effects and impacts across all of society. Cody continued:

“I’m probably not explaining this very clearly, but it’s about what you do in here (gestures toward lower level), because ultimately what I do here with my Indigenous Knowledges to my students or in conversations, it filters out into other spaces, so these people walk out into early childhood, into primary, into secondary, I’ve got people having conversations with their families, I’ve got people having conversations with their kids, I’ve got students rethinking things that they thought they knew that they didn’t actually know, seeing the world from a different perspective, looking at things that are everyday in a completely different way... So, it has to be about that complexity, and that heterogeneity of Indigenous peoples as well, that the knowledge can’t be singular. I suppose you could say that it’s collective”.

Seeing IKs as this type of complex adaptive system, also means that the fluidity and the dynamism within the concept are recognised, and while there are many interacting, potentially multi-functional co-evolving parts, the focus is (or should be) on the interactive ‘nodes’ of the Knowledge System which change, shift and influence each other. As a result of these adaptations, they continuously allow for and foster emergence within the system. As the narrative formed from the interactions increases in density and momentum over time, it will then permeate throughout the entire structure. In any case that the cause is lost then this may trigger a loop back to the collective body of knowledge, or any subsequent cultural framework built from it, to establish consistent approaches to locating information.

This approach may bring a powerful scope of Indigenous academic inclusion into the University's overall structure and function, and over time, could produce meaningful change across all areas of society. As Jamie would have it, this should be about:

“...looking at how Indigenous people can drive their own futures and not being dependent on generic platitudes, or more engaging them more in the University's processes...”

This would suggest that UniSQ Indigenous academics are committed to genuine and robust engagement with bringing IKs into the everyday life of the University through having their individual perspectives (IK, *singular*) diffused into a larger aggregated body of experiences, knowledges, perspectives, theories, and practices (IKs, *plural*). The aim in this regard would be to establish a cultural framework that can be looped into for reference and further information. This framework can then instruct organisational planning, reviewing, curriculum, teaching, learning, and research in ways that are not only important for increasing the University's scholarship and reputation in the context of IKs, but for society as a whole who will benefit from them in many ways.

4.3.3 IKs in the curriculum

The University curriculum has been described as contested space for knowledge (Bridges, 2000). Since the mid-1940s when the concept of “Indigenous Knowledge” first

appeared in a publication title⁵ (Nakashima & Nilsson, 1945), there has been great nuance regarding IKs in higher education. From there, IKs appeared sparingly in publication titles until the 1980s, perhaps signifying its overall ‘marginalisation’ during those years (Holloway, 1957). This is not to suggest that IKs were not a relevant body of information as Bell (1979) emphasised the importance of highlighting the exploitation of them. IKs then commenced a greater foothold by the mid-to-late 1980s and early in 1990s where they were being formally trialled and utilised by several agriculturalists, conservationists, and researchers trying to promote effective land management practices (DeWalt, 1994; Gadgil et al., 1993; Posey, 1990; Warren & Cashman 1988). In the early-1990s several non-Indigenous researchers had begun investigating protective mechanisms to better support Indigenous communities in keeping their knowledges safe from exploitation and appropriation. The following decade would see some of the first Indigenous scholars emerge to advocate specifically for Indigenous Knowledge production, theory, application, and maintenance (Battiste & Youngblood, 2000; Cajete, 1994; Dei, 1990; Dei et al, 2000; Nakata, 1999; Dei, 1990, 2000).

Years later, further attempts would be made to define IKs outside of the scope of conservation and land management, along with an expanded discourse on Indigenous ways of seeing the world as a legitimate source of information, insight, awareness, participation, and innovation (Agrawal, 2009; Aikenhead & Ogawa 2007; Battiste, 2005, 2009; Cajete, 2000; Little Bear, 2009; Semali & Kincheloe, 2002; Wilson 2004). This led

⁵ Google Scholar was the primary search tool used for this review.

to a Cambrian explosion of IKs-related articles and researchers throughout the 2010s along with the emergence of IKs as a multi-disciplinary scientific field spanning across areas such as land management, ecology, climate science and medicine, but also in a way that was inclusive of Indigenous scientific perspectives and principles. From the mid-2010s, and today, IKs have received continued interest and investment, particularly into areas such as conservation biodiversity and land management, but also into conceptual and technological paradigms such as language and culture preservation, systems thinking, complexity, design, and artificial intelligence (Abdilla & Fitch, 2017; Lewis et al. 2020; Little et al, 2018; Page & Memmott 2021; Yunkaporta, 2019). Interest in research areas such as Indigenised curriculum is expanding, and more progress is being made at formalising Indigenous content across all subject areas.

Participants indicated that they certainly see and value the opportunities to explore and include Indigenous perspectives across various subject areas. As mentioned by Jamie:

“It would be good to embed some of the Indigenous Knowledge[s] into the Western style of concepts that we teach. Indigenous farming and ecology, [and] tying them into some of the environmental degrees. Whether or not they’re separate majors or they actually fuel and become embedded in all subjects, so they’re all taught with a focus of the land in which we live.”

The notion of providing a targeted, inclusive approach to teaching and sharing IKs also holds importance, with some subjects serving as an entry point into sharing diverse

views and perspectives in space where IKs have been traditionally excluded. By making these approaches available and promoting them in a way that demonstrates their effectiveness in educating all students on Indigenous peoples and cultures, we can make further progress. As emphasised by Cody:

“I think until there is some sort of standardised Indigenous Knowledges curriculum, and training for staff and students, again, there’s local diversity but you can still talk to those universal elements that we were discussing in terms of Indigenous Knowledges”.

As IKs continue to evolve and transform in relation to the institution, maintaining conceptual relevance and currency should be prioritised in terms of curriculum planning, much the same as any other subject. Although, before that can be done most effectively, it is important to establish a series of underlying principles from which to operate from. Throughout the interviews several relevant sub-themes were observed which may be used to inform the University’s position on teaching, learning and research IKs.

4.3.4 Teaching and embedding IKs, not just perspectives.

The notion of promoting and sharing Indigenous *perspectives* within course content, curriculum and educational activities has been an ongoing discussion spanning across several decades (Fricker, 2017). In many ways this has been a powerful tool to explore the world through an Indigenous standpoint and may serve as a means of providing an additional narrative to existing literature which is either misunderstood or

misrepresentative of Indigenous peoples, languages, histories, and cultures. This is important in the scope of critical pedagogies in that it can support the transformation of oppressive relations of power in a variety of domains and encourage researchers and educators to perform deep exploration into the information that is available to them, prompting a more balanced or accurate discourse (Kincheloe, 2008). Further inquiry into teaching processes and embedding perspectives can ensure that teachers and scholars are not just seeking out *content* to insert into their curriculum with little or no context or meaning provided, but are also considerate of the *processes* that inform Indigenous worldviews, behaviours, planning, and responses (Yunkaporta, 2019). The latter approach may often times be a more authentic and robust approach to sharing Indigenous perspectives. Cody spoke about a recent personal experience which emphasises the importance of finding deeper meaning and concepts in teaching practice and learning activities:

“There was an awful story . . . where one of the activities was to look at the two-dollar coin. It was a maths activity, just [to] look at the two-dollar coin because there’s an Aboriginal man’s face on there. So, for me that’s Indigenous perspectives. That’s a real awful way of burying it down, but that’s it, it’s not even an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander perspective about the world; it’s an image, or it’s a name, or it’s a word, or it’s a resource, or it’s some language on a wall, it’s not [Indigenous Knowledges]. Whereas [Indigenous] “knowledge”, is about protocol, and process, and reciprocity and respect, and it’s about those things, being part of the conversation, and being a listener and a learner.”

Embedding Indigenous perspectives provides an opportunity to not only incorporate IK/s-based thinking, protocols, and processes into courses, but when done well, allows for deeper exploration the everyday procedures such as utilising Indigenous peoples, histories, and languages in the life of the University. Moreover, it can support Indigenous pedagogical approaches, connecting students with Indigenous concepts and philosophies, and more. Doing this well in the short term, could be simply reconfiguring current courses, or considering further development and implementation at various levels, as per Jamie's comments:

“I think the main thing would be the holistic approach. How do we embed the Indigenous knowledge and practices into the existing stuff? [We can] work on freestanding things, which is great, like an individual lecture . . . but how can we embed it into each course as a stream or a common thread through all of UniSQ, [so] that you're going to learn a little bit about Indigenous Knowledge[s]?”

All of this raises an important question: “Is embedding Indigenous *perspectives* the same as teaching Indigenous Knowledges?”. Cody went as far to distinguish between the two, by highlighting how this kind of model may be a starting point, although as the conversation on teaching and learning progresses it should be noted that effective and appropriate embedding of Indigenous perspectives can be dependent on how committed the institution is to IKs and Indigenous peoples and cultures. This means avoiding tokenistic ‘box-ticking’ or ‘traffic light’ exercises, where an institution or

organisation will include content or processes in less meaningful ways, just to fulfil reporting requirements and be seen to be doing good.

Of course, there are barriers to this degree of implementation, such as how IK/s are incorporated within the structure of the University and protected from harm, exploitation, and appropriation. Further, attention should be given to understanding the how trade-offs between IKs and Western knowledge systems can impact students, staff and communities that the university is servicing and supporting. Some of this will be covered in following sections and may be explored in future research.

4.3.5 Staff capacity building and fostering allyship.

Staff capacity building in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, languages and cultures is ongoing at UniSQ. While there are a number of valuable resources available for staff and students, it would appear that - not unlike most Australian institutions - there is further exploration required to understand the full extent of the knowledge gaps that exist at all levels. Several appropriate training opportunities for all staff have been incorporated both today and in the past, such as short courses in Indigenous Inclusion and 'Understanding the Importance of First Nations Cultural Capabilities' along with On-Country tours for staff, although these tours unfortunately came to halt in 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions. These opportunities are essentially designed to support the awareness, understanding, capabilities and sensitivities of all staff working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, there is still no clear, direct position on teaching and learning of IKs within UniSQ at a staff level. Key course programs are offered through an existing 8-unit First

Nations Australia (FNA) major which supports student learning, although these are delivered primarily by First Nations teaching staff located in the College for First Nations. The UniSQ Education Plan 2022-2025 sets the University's target over the next three years to become "a sector leader in First Nations Education" calling for "tailored approaches to embrace First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing" (University of Southern Queensland Education Plan 2022-2025, np). While this is evident at the student level in FNA course programs, again, there is no clear goal to educate mainstream staff on these topics. Previously, some affordance was given for adjunct learning and staff participation via external programs such as the University of Technology Sydney's (UTS) 'Supervising Indigenous Higher Degree Research' microcredential where staff had the opportunity to learn about Indigenous protocols, research ethics, and community procedures for including Indigenous perspectives in research projects, although the future of this program remains unclear due to budget and competing priorities in Indigenous workforce strategy. From an Indigenous academic staff perspective, it appears that UniSQ's attempts at raising achieving a higher level of knowledge, understanding and awareness are somewhat "hit-and-miss" due to the idea that:

"...they're little programs, or they're attached on as extras, or they seem to be only ear-marked for certain people who are involved in that particular content, but we have to think bigger than that. We are not confined to certain spaces anymore, Indigenous/First Nations people are everywhere..." (Alex).

The implication here is that there are perhaps bigger opportunities to take more systematic approaches to educating staff on the complexities and nuances of IK/s, and how they can benefit the overall position and objectives of teaching, learning, researching, and incorporating Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in the life of the University, as well as courses and subjects from across the university curriculum.

This is certainly not to give the impression that such a feat would be as simple as developing course content or training opportunities to increase the knowledge, awareness and understanding of non-Indigenous staff within IK/s-related contexts, although some themes in participant interviews suggest there are ways to distinguish between responsibilities in IK/s-related teaching and learning environments. One example is the notion of 'allyship'. According to Smith et al., (2016, p. 6) being an ally for Indigenous communities is not merely being "motivated enough to express minimal or no prejudice towards Aboriginal peoples" but rather, allyship is about actively supporting (not leading) social justice, while promoting and upholding the rights of Indigenous groups, and working to eliminate prejudice and inequities that impact them (Smith et al., 2016). Further, allies are expected to support Indigenous communities in the reform of unjust and inequitable systems and institutions, while establishing positive and meaningful relationships with Indigenous individuals and/or group to which an ally might be seen as accountable to (Smith et al., 2016).

The call for allyship was strong in participant interviews, and clear boundaries were emphasised about the role/s that non-Indigenous staff could potentially play in facilitating further inquiry in teaching and learning of IKs. Sam suggested that:

“Their responsibility is to be the ally, to be the conveyer and the communicator to create environments of freedom and liberation for First Nations peoples. They get to create an environment to free oppressed groups, but they don’t get to speak on behalf of oppressed groups, and they’re not the knowledge holders”.

In this regard, the call appears to be for appropriate support in developing and maintaining teaching environments where IKs can be accepted, included, and implemented into course objectives by Indigenous teachers and specialists. This includes taking an active stance against racism in all of its pervasive forms, while being a positive advocate for IKs without teaching into them, and being vocal and responsive to varying cultural contexts. On the other hand, Cody expressed their dislike of the word “ally”, replacing the concept with a desire for greater strategic supports to be delivered by non-Indigenous staff:

“I don’t like the word “ally” . . . I see an ally as someone who kind of, sits alongside you but is not really active in that role. I don’t need someone who just comes and sits beside me and supports me; I need someone to speak out, [and] speak up. I need someone to be there and have my back, and I need them to be active – so I like the idea of co-conspirators or activists, because I think that’s the people we need around us ...

Perhaps it is semantics – or rather, what the term “ally” has come to mean in this current context, due primarily to the notion of *performative allyship* which Kalina (2020,

p. 478) states refers to “someone from a non-marginalised group professing support or solidarity with a marginalized group, but in a way that is not helpful”. It could be argued that performative allies are perhaps motivated by the social capital, accolades or other rewards that may come with being seen as supporting disadvantaged or marginalised groups. In higher education, this can certainly extend to ways that non-Indigenous staff and supervisors engage with issues that affect Indigenous peoples and communities. This is not to say that performative allyship has been of no use to addressing issues such as racism and discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the past, although in modern times questions have been raised about levels of harm it can cause (Bennett et al., 2022; Thunig & Jones, 2022). A more impactful position could be what is called *critical allyship* which Bennett et al., (2022) define as “the act of leveraging power from a position of relative privilege and notoriety to cede agency to the subjects (discursive or otherwise) of the discussion” (p. 2). The inclusion of critical allyship in this higher education context calls for individuals who carry a degree of privilege relative to Indigenous peoples and communities (due mainly to social and/or historical factors), to “acknowledge, and, then, cede space in the academe and in Cultural Studies where Indigenous voices, pedagogies, and proto-discursive epistemologies could and should be” (Bennett et al., 2022, p. 2). This certainly resonates with further comments made by Cody:

“...if I am seeing the role of non-First Nations people in this process, it’s not about if you have a kind heart, or if you are nice . . . it’s people who prioritise First Nations people’s voices in the space, First Nations people on the ground, First Nations

people as the starting point, and they [allies] are there just to do some heavy lifting to support it, so that's how I'd like non-First Nations people in the process".

In this, it may be necessary to resource and implement mechanisms which promote more explicit ways of working as a *critical ally* into staff training opportunities, and more specifically, application of critical allyship into course programs and curriculum planning. Further training and awareness of general forms of allyship in the context of IKs currently holds no formalised position within UniSQ, so perhaps this along with further training opportunities for non-Indigenous staff to understand positionality in teaching, learning, resourcing, and researching IKs is something to build upon in future endeavours.

4.3.6 An emergent 'Third Space' for IKs teaching, learning and research.

The notion of a "Third Space" which can emerge from the interactions between Western knowledges and IKs has been a feature within Indigenous education for several decades. While the concept goes by other names as outlined in section 3.2.2, the notion of Third Space was popularised by Bhabha (1988) who initially described it as a "cultural positionality" between two distinct points where one may mobilise to produce further meaning and interpretation (Bhabha, 1988, p. 20). Later, he went on to conceive Third Space as a means of destroying enunciations of singularised cultural truths, along with the "mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 54). These definitions of Third Space are useful, although they rely heavily on the idea that throughout the process of intervention and interaction between two different cultures, they each purportedly

relinquish their *originary Past* as they translate and negotiate themselves into a new entity (Bhabha, 2012). Within the context of IK/s, however, it is important to teach and understand cultural truths before seeking to integrate them into any dominant cultural paradigm. This is because they can quite simply be overrun, absorbed, misunderstood, or misappropriated, and in turn, preventing any complex interactive processes where proper emergence can occur. Once the cultural truths in relation to both cultures have been established, then perhaps a more equitable discourse can take place, allowing the possibility for an emergent *in-between* and subsequent Third Space to take its place. In this regard, areas such as truth-telling, reconciliation and culturally informed and/or culturally responsive teaching practices are all critical. Sam suggests:

“It’s understanding the colonial impacts, and how do we create that Third paradigm? . . . The University, organisations, institutions are just as equally responsible for creating those Third Spaces for us all to come together through a co-existence and co-design”.

The current structure within UniSQ sees Indigenous education as mostly separate from other course programs, as the 8-unit Major in FNA Studies is primarily taught out of the College for First Nations. However, in recent times attempts have been made to ensure an Indigenous academic is employed in key areas such as the School of Education, School of Arts and Creativity, School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, the School of Nursing and Midwifery, and the School of Law with varied levels of success. Questions continue to be asked at national and international levels about the tensions

between reserving Indigenous teaching, learning and research only for Indigenous spaces, as opposed to distributing Indigenous teaching staff and content throughout all Schools and programs. This tension was captured by Alex:

“I’ve wrapped around the question, ‘Do we have to have separate facilities to do it our way, for it to really work?’ and time and time again I’ve come back to [the idea that] while that works maybe short term, it can’t be the long-term projection, because we’re not a segregated society. We have mixed families, mixed communities, and I don’t think pigeonholing people necessarily is the way to go, and so I do believe strongly in the Cultural Interface”.

The Cultural Interface, which is in principle similar to Third Space ideologies, is a complex space constituted by many points of shifting, complex intersecting values, interests, relationships and trajectories (Nakata, 2007). Moreover, the Cultural Interface features intersections of time, space, place, and distance, along with different systems of thought and competing discourse which emerge from different sociopolitical experiences, cultural affiliations, historiographies, languages, agendas, desires, conditions, and reactivities (Nakata, 2007). In the university context, each of these elements, and where or how they intersect at any given moment, can determine the behaviours, thoughts, interactions, decisions, and responses of all individuals. Particularly for First Nations peoples as a marginalised group, this can be especially problematic due to the overbearing nature of colonisation and how it commands a Western standardisation of teaching, learning, education, research, and scholarship at all levels.

Both of these systems and theories, Third Space and Cultural Interface, despite their semantic differences and academic nuance, offer an alternative model of operating which is in some way informed by or inclusive of both Indigenous and Western cultures in the initial sense, yet in emerging from the 'struggle' is different and new; which Dudgeon & Fielder (2006) refer to as "a radically hybrid space—unstable, changing, tenuous, neither here nor there" (p. 401). In this, there is no claim to cultural purity or innocence in either a dominant or an historically oppressed or marginalised group (Carnes, 2015). Rather, this approach provides an invaluable opportunity to examine both, any, and all cultural domains, along with facilitating further sequenced, multi-levelled inquiry into the following areas:

1. The role of *strategic essentialism* in unifying Indigenous peoples and communities under a collective, shared colonial or 'post-colonial' identity (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006).
2. Outlining the importance of educating society on the histories, languages, cultures, peoples, and protocols of Indigenous peoples in achieving social justice, liberation, and equity.
3. Key factors of adaptation, innovation, sustainability, and finally, critical processes of knowledge development, application, transmission, and regeneration.

Such domains can be rendered into specific categories which capture the intentions, motivations, aspirations, and impacts of strategic approaches to teaching and learning.

Table 2. outlines a possible logical sequencing to support a movement toward the equities required for positive engagement between dominant and non-dominant cultural paradigms in Australia.

	1. Closed Domain	2. Open Domain	3. Networked Domain
Priority Areas	1.1. Strategic unification occurs at the meta-level	2.1. Shared cultural space with a high-level of cross-cultural communication	3.1. Operates as a potential/hypothetical Third Space
	1.2. Targeted sharing of information to produce a specific outcome	2.2. Education occurs at a deeper level of nuance and propriety	3.2. Allows space for new ideas, concepts, and theories to emerge through interaction
	1.3. Sensemaking and meaning finding is prioritised	2.3. Place-finding is prioritised and support through inclusivity	3.3. Serves as a point of innovation and transformation
	1.4. Builds a sense of positionality in place-time	2.4. Exploration through 'flows' of information	3.4. Opportunities for collaboration and information sharing

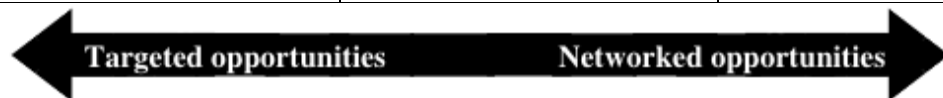


Table 2: Connected domains for progressing Indigenous Knowledge.

Shows a continuum of opportunities within IKs teaching, learning, education, and research situating approaches in various domains to produce specific outcomes. This model can be sequenced or used to map across domains to identify appropriate approaches to teaching.

The initial domain is 'closed', although only in regard to a particular body of *information* which is isolated from additional contexts, rather than being closed to a certain group of people. The aim of this is to ensure *strategic unification* at alternative fixed points. More specifically, unification occurs at the meta-level for both cultures. For example, where Indigenous peoples can find collective meaning and identity from a shared social,

cultural, political, and historical experience at one point, non-Indigenous peoples can contemporaneously locate themselves in accordance with these events and experiences and leverage a position to support formation/reformation of Indigenous cultural identities at the other. This may set a platform for positive relationships between Indigenous peoples and communities and non-Indigenous allies to form across the immanent sociopolitical chasm.

The 'open' domain then is a 'shared' cultural space which prioritises education at a deeper level. Furthermore, it supports the establishment of a profound sense of 'place' and locatedness for Indigenous peoples, languages, histories, and cultures by grounding interaction/s within Indigenous practice/s, processes, and protocols, and relating them to contemporary, educative contexts. These 'places' can feature in one way or another, as a tangible spaces *around the fire* (Burch et al., 2020), or presented as a paradigmatic space within course subjects, learning programs, cultural tours, staff development and awareness. Moreover, they may present intangibly through teaching and pedagogical approaches which are inclusive of Indigenous patterns, perspectives, processes, philosophies, and protocols. The openness of this level allows for exploration through flows of information relative to broader environmental contexts. This is perhaps where modern mainstream disciplines can meet, converge, and interact with IKs-related practices, concepts, and philosophies. For example, where IK/s relates to land and water management can support biodiversity and sustainability, or where Indigenous sky stories interact with concepts within astrophysics. While there are currently no formalised bounds that inhibit the teaching and communication of this information at

UniSQ, it is important that the processes of sharing are aligned with appropriate Indigenous cultural and community intellectual property rights and protocols so that information is not shared in a way that has a negative impact on relationships. More will be shared on this in later sections.

Finally, once adequate levels of knowledge and understanding have been gained regarding the dynamic role of Indigenous cultural identity along with the importance of allyship in attempts to reconcile Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and communities, this can lead to the establishment of a 'networked' domain. The networked domain serves as a Third Space that fosters emergent ideas and opportunities for collaboration, and where inevitable cross-cultural communication and dialectical transference of insights and ideas can present as a point of innovation and transformation of social, cultural, political, and technological values.

Without the presence and sequencing of these domains, Bhabha's Third Space as a theoretical concept is insufficient. This is mainly because IK/s as a 'subjugated' field of knowledge (Semali & Kincheloe, 2002) stands little chance of 'contesting' Western disciplines, discourses, and discussions in public and/or educational forums. This may be, in part, due to human social values, subjectivities and proclivities generally leaning toward more familiar, less 'primitive', and temporal understandings of the world (Denzin et al., 2008; Maurial, 1999).

Therefore, in re-visiting participant views on Third Space, it is certainly conceivable that incorporating different perspectives into a larger, more robust body of knowledge which is inclusive of several cultural ideas and influences is a process that is necessary and worthwhile. However, it is also important that this approach should seek to ensure there is a somewhat balanced narrative between the perspectives so that IKs do not simply get dominated by the overbearing nature of Western theory, knowledge, information, modalities, and pedagogies. This view effectively borrows but simultaneously pushes back against Bhabha's concerns of enunciation, and supports an 'expansive learning' process which progresses through the following modified cycle outlined by Fogarty & Schwab (2013):

1. Investigating and questioning existing practices.
2. Analysing existing practices.
3. Working together to build new models, concepts, and artefacts for new or emergent practices.
4. Examining and debating built or emergent models, concepts and material and immaterial artefacts.
5. Implementing products developed out of artefacts.
6. Reflecting on and evaluating the process/es and methods of construction
7. Consolidating the new practices.
8. Continuously reviewing and improving the model/s.

In this, several lessons can be learnt from Bhabha's theory of a 'Third Space', although to be truly brought into an IK/s realm, it may be useful to review this work through the ISK lens, outlined in Table 1. This essentially means taking time to loop back through an Indigenous land-based or cosmological/epistemological standpoint to initiate and substantiate the theory in accordance with an Indigenous set of values. This could

mean investigating how a particular theory aligns with Indigenous protocols, similar to how scholars have done so with artificial intelligence (Lewis et al., 2020) and other mainstream systems (Yunkaporta, 2019). Furthermore, as per an Indigenous method of inquiry, it can be seen as a test to discover if the pattern contained within the theory presents in naturally occurring systems, or within human-induced systems and frameworks only.

Such an approach may touch briefly upon the ‘cultural interfacing’ theorised by Nakata (2007). Although, in the context of Indigenous Australian peoples, languages, histories, and cultures there can be many ways of undertaking this process due to the vast differences between each of the many distinct cultural groups. One way specifically outlined by Alex, was translating across to natural processes and phenomena on the local landscape, reflecting on a similar notion of “*ganma*” or “*garma*” from their own individual IK perspective:

“I always bring it back to the analogy of an estuary . . . you’ve got fresh water, you’ve got salt water, they’re completely different entities, they have their own stories, spirits and lifeforms, but there is that special space – the cultural interface where salt and fresh water meet, and they form a [Aboriginal language word] or an estuary and there’s a whole new system there with new life and new potentials and possibilities”

In the Yolngu interpretation of this phenomenon, Yunupingu et al., (1993) in Yunkaporta & McGinty (2009) describe this space as a ‘magical source of creation’ (p. 58) and

according to Christie (2008) symbolises a bicultural or 'both ways' approach where traditions can 'come together, work together and agree together in the context of a particular place and a particular agenda without compromise to either of the contributing traditions' (p. 32). As mentioned previously, the idea of inequity through the grave imbalance and overbearing nature of Western systems is later mentioned within Alex's comments, albeit measured against a natural oscillatory interaction between unstable elements, where it is critical that systems sway and move to find and achieve an appropriate sense of balance:

"That's how I tend to try and look at it, and at the moment, the salt water is overpowering the fresh water, but nature has a way of balancing itself out. The tide will turn and I think we're starting to see that already, and I think as that tide turns, it starts to balance up a bit; that estuary, that area, that shared third space, could potentially become really strong and something powerful that leads us forward".

This could be perceived as a more true and honest sense of 'hybridity', where both/all systems are acknowledged for the values they carry and contribute. The aim of this process is not to attribute differences or similarities as a 'neither One nor the Other' (Bhabha, 2012, p. 313) because this can inadvertently provoke an 'us-them' or 'either/or' dualism. Whereas an IKs standpoint may provide a blueprint for cultural equity and understanding, which Meredith (1998, p. 1) suggests embraces a 'mutual sense of both/and' thus acknowledging differences but also affinities.

4.3.7 Protecting ICIP and supporting internal mobility and self-determination.

The notion of 'Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP)' was developed in 1992 as part of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This landmark document was designed to support Indigenous peoples worldwide in their endeavour to achieve self-determination, and according to Cambou (2019, p. 1) "by virtue of which they can freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development". The UNDRIP has been utilised in Australia to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander livelihood, equity and security, and as a tool to contest policies that contradict the UNDRIP (Dorfman, 2015). In the case of *intellectual property*, the Australian Government body known as Intellectual Property Australia refers to these properties as 'creations of the mind' and can include brands, logo, inventions, designs, artworks, or new varieties of plants. From an Indigenous perspective, however, intellectual property is inclusive of cultural practices and knowledge passed down through many generations but can also include photographs, stories, geographic contexts, genealogies, and traditional ecological knowledge. Janke (2021) states that:

"The elder ones taught the younger ones. They spent time in ceremony. They drew and painted information. They sang, danced, and told stories about the past, about the future, and about how to live and survive in the world. All of this still happens today". (np)

Knowledges, histories, events, and activities were transmitted multimodally using stories, signs, symbols, gestures, and more, over a vast amount of time within Indigenous Australian cultures (Green, 2014). This information has been used to shape the landscape and community relations for tens of thousands of years and is still used by Indigenous people in modern times to inform the ways that they teach, create, share, guide, discuss and promote ideas. Further, it also underpins the material objects they develop relative to their self-determination and participation in all areas of society such as social, political, economic, industrial, artistic, scientific, medical, and technological advances.

As the world's materials, resources and innovations continue to develop rapidly, and the global population seeks answers to many of the 21st century's problems, IKS become increasingly difficult to protect and maintain ownership rights and control over. Some scholars have expressed disdain about the "looting" of Indigenous Knowledge Systems through patents and intellectual property policies (Mashinyane, 2023) and this can at times include concepts such as biopiracy (Drahos, 2000), cultural appropriation (Vézina, 2019) and cultural imperialism (Kumar, 2019). Others such as Mgbefo (2014) have sought to amplify the decries against the "overwhelming asymmetry" regarding intellectual property rights and protections between industrialised nations and many Indigenous communities (p. 3). What this essentially means is that those who do not possess ownership of those intellectual properties, by legal or cultural necessity, are the ones who reap the social or financial gains from it. Similar concerns have been expressed within the UniSQ context, with comments highlighting how

Indigenous staff can often be subject to extractive or exploitative measures, even when approached with the purest of intent. Subsequently, those doing the extracting or exploiting may also go on to receive recognition or reward for their efforts, insights and innovations from the University or their peers. Alex in this regard states that:

“Aboriginal people can be misused, and Indigenous Knowledge can be badly exploited, and I’ve found that even in my experience, people want to pick your brains, or they want to borrow resources . . . I’ve been happy to do that in the past, and then what I’d found is that these people are getting the accolades and awards for the original work that I’ve done”.

This is not an isolated issue, as many universities across the country have begun to recognise the importance of protecting ICIP and the Indigenous staff who carry knowledge of their own peoples, histories, languages, and cultures. In the UniSQ context, this may be an important consideration, as reflected upon by Sam, who suggests:

“. . . you can’t just do things for the sake of education practices or educational purposes, for the sake of wanting [to] be a do-gooder, around, ‘Oh yes, we have this beautiful knowledge and everybody needs to have it’ but there needs to be a clear structure, and guidelines and guiding principles associated with the actual practice, and who’s entitled to do the practice.”

A designated strategy, policy or plan which outlines appropriate processes for accessing, sourcing, locating, respecting, and protecting ICIP within the institution would not only prevent these types of issues, but would provide a clear and concise guideline for enabling and deploying effective teaching, learning, education, and research of ICIP. Such an approach would also support the adherence to certain protocols that may be associated with resourcing knowledge, for example, who can speak on or represent important stories and information. As outlined by Alex:

“There needs to be some sort of checklist, some sort of process, or some sort of flowchart of who it needs to go through, because I think what often happens is they go, ‘Oh well, we’ll send it to any blackfulla’, and for all we know that blackfulla’s got bugger all experience in that particular area, they may have been in the system for a very short time, but because they tick that box, it’ll do . . . it’s not actually a good reflection or representation of the knowledge”.

Recognising ICIP rights in the most appropriate sense within university environments, is important for preserving, protecting, and maintaining tens of thousands of years of cultural intelligence. Further, it is important to ensure that cultural integrity of information held within stories, songs, dances, symbols, patterns, designs, and more, is upheld throughout its continuation and transmission across generations. It is clear from participant statements that this is necessary and important, and as per Janke (2021) who suggests, “With the proper protocols and rights recognition in place, and ensuring

that Indigenous people have access to benefit sharing agreements, there could be incredible outcomes” (np).

4.3.8 Addressing Cultural Load as a barrier to Indigenous Teaching and Research.

Indigenous people in workplace settings are often subject to cultural load or identity strain (Silversten et al., 2023). This is the real time strain or fatigue of having to do, cover and perform “all things Indigenous” in their roles (Thorpe, 2021, p. 12). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, this can range from organising NAIDOC Week, providing cultural training, holding, or hosting events, conducting and/or facilitating Welcome to Country ceremonies and activities, and having to educate non-Indigenous colleagues on racism (Nair, 2021). This adds further stressors to already stressful, fast-paced environments. In addition to these stressors, the same individuals may also be forced to do navigate racism themselves, while pushing back against harmful stereotypes, translating, and operating across sociocultural and linguistic boundaries, as well as avoiding the reality of being pigeonholed as a direct result of their Indigeneity (Thorpe, 2021). Accompanying all of this, is the feeling of having to contextualise, justify or explain oneself constantly, particularly if they are the only Indigenous person or peoples in majority non-Indigenous workplace environments. These kinds of situations can bring a sense of exhaustion, along with varying levels of frustration, even in some cases leading to burnout (Woodland et al., 2022).

In the context of IKs, this can impact the level of sharing and contributions that teachers, researchers, and professionals can make within their roles, even in spaces where

knowledge is protected or preserved. If cultural load and identity strain is left unaddressed then it can have implications on Indigenous workers. While several Australian universities have articulated a position on these issues, and how they continue to affect Indigenous individuals and communities in mainstream society, further work is needed to properly ensure recognition and alleviation.

Participants involved in this study also observed cultural load as a factor which can potentially inhibit IKs teaching and learning within UniSQ. As course programs are offered each semester, these tensions can continue to build until staff are no longer able to operate at their highest levels. Morgan here outlines that:

“[There is an] Expectation of sharing the knowledge, but we’ve got to be mindful of the knowledge bearers. They can't just take, take, take, take from them . . . what I see happening is it's kind of like they're taking so much from our knowledge bearers, and then [the] barrier to that is that there's going to be burnt out. Unable to cope. Poor staff. . . It's staff burnout.”

What is most devastating about this from an Indigenous perspective, is that within university contexts, there is often an implication for Indigenous staff who are subject to these types of issues and barriers. Where, rather than warranting a full examination into the social factors of mainstream workplaces which can lead to underperformance in Indigenous cohorts, Indigenous staff are instead perceived through a deficit lens – most commonly as lazy, or inept. Anecdotal perspectives in the literature highlight the fact

that Indigenous people will often remain silent about the effects of cultural load, due to being unfairly labelled as “troublemakers” (Thorpe, 2021, p. 12) or abrasive compared to their non-Indigenous colleagues.

Morgan’s viewpoint does well to denote the extractive relationships that can arise in higher education settings between Indigenous staff and the institutions they are a part of. Moreover, it emphasises the connection between these types of relationships, and the presence and effect of burnout within Indigenous workforce-related contexts.

Reports such as the Gari Yala Report (Diversity Council Australia/Jumbunna Institute, Synopsis Report, 2020) show that well over a third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers carry the burden of high cultural load which impacts employers’ bottom line (Nair, 2021). It is clear here that cultural safety, cultural load, identity strain, and burnout are all factors to effective teaching, research, and professional application of IKs.

4.3.9 Truth-telling and righting wrongs.

Australia was built off the myth of *Terra Nullius* – the notion of a land void of ownership, or under the jurisprudence of no man – at least according to British colonial law (Banner, 2005). The perpetuation of this myth since the 1940s has served as justification for 230 years of colonial violence, oppression, subjugation, and exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Sadly, Indigenous peoples from all across the globe share a similar history due to European “invasion, occupation, imposed cultural change, and political marginalisation” (Niezen, 2003, p. 93). The systematic deconstruction of Indigenous peoples and societies throughout this has impacted the

state and integrity of their knowledge systems, and so therefore a restorative approach must be taken to unpack prevailing myths about Indigenous peoples, languages, histories, and cultures, and this is a foundational component to IKs teaching, learning, education and research.

While some attempts have been made to rectify the damages and harm done to Indigenous peoples in Australia in the past, such as Kevin Rudd's Apology to the Stolen Generations in 2007, there is still a long way to go to ensure some level of equity or justice is achieved. Too often, however, many non-Indigenous peoples and societies refuse to acknowledge the truth of our shared history, what Stanner (1968) referred to as 'The Great Australian Silence', while others just want to learn about Indigenous cultures without remembering the pain of the past. Morgan, in this context relayed the following sentiments sometimes expressed by non-Indigenous peoples:

"Grappling with historical truths, and there's a bit of a bypass that happens, [because] it's like, 'I just want the Indigenous knowledge; don't give me the stuff that's going to hurt my feelings and don't give me the stuff that's going to paint me to be a bad person, or a racist, or bias, or unconsciously bias in any kind of way. I just want the knowledge. Just give me the knowledge'".

In regard to group dynamics, while many individuals within dominant non-Indigenous groups would deny these types of sentiments as racist, they are perhaps *postracial* or *postcolonial*, and despite their intent, behaviours such as this are generally deployed as a means of 'silencing' non-dominant Indigenous group members and erasing their

continued experiences of racism and colonisation, which could be said to be acts of racism in themselves (Goldberg, 2015). This is primarily because these behaviours perpetuate social inequities, while seeking to shun individual and collective responsibilities to bring about positive social change and justice to those impacted by racism and colonial invasion (Castagno, 2008). Participants highlighted that indeed a more transparent and responsive approach is required for addressing racism and historical atrocities, as per Jamie's comments:

"I feel there does almost need to be a moment where ownership by the dominant western culture, needs to occur, and you need to be able to have open discourse..."

Efforts to promote reconciliation within the institution is ongoing, with some success through the UniSQ Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2020. However, a more robust approach to truth-telling would ensure that staff and students are not only aware of the important of relationships, respect, opportunities, and governance required for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, but also to take honest, reflexive steps toward healing and justice. Cody asks:

". . . how can we reconcile if we haven't 'conciled'? We like a lot of those prefixes. We like putting prefixes on it because it then makes the badness go away. If we put a de- or an anti- or a post- then the colonial we don't have to talk about anymore because we're beyond that now, or we're pulling it apart, or dismantling it, or we're doing something with the colonial . . . So, [they say] "let's not talk so much about the

colonial anymore” – [but] settler colonialism, the *colonial* is still there, and it’s settled, and it isn’t moving, it’s not shifting.”

In addition to these comments, further inquiry was made by Jamie into the relationship between reconciliation and truth-telling:

“. . . reconciliation, the recognition is great, but it needs to be a forward-focussed, how do we move on? How do we acknowledge? Being able to talk about it would be the best thing . . .”

For too long, Australia has organised itself and its own social and political systems around what Birch (2002, p. 42) calls “a veil of comforting half-truths and lies”.

Australian universities are no exception to this. Therefore, before true reconciliation can be achieved, perhaps broader truth-telling process would provide a stronger platform for progression and more room for growth, as Jamie continues to elaborate:

“. . . you need growth, you need development, you need moving forward, and it’s such a charged environment to have conversations, because [for] Indigenous people, I don’t believe they’ve ever really had the horrors of the displacement properly acknowledged, and I feel that once that occurs then you’re probably going to get growth. . .”

In a similar vein to reconciliation, however, truth-telling cannot be seen as the magical solution to Australia’s complex issues surrounding race and colonialism. Further, it cannot be seen as a linear representation of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

peoples' lived experiences, but rather, is a tool that can be used to “open spaces for new understandings” (Maddison, 2023, p. 8) although this requires a robust approach to critical analysis of historical, current, and future states and emancipatory objectives.

4.3.10 Recognising capacity for IK teaching support.

Teaching or embedding IKs into the curriculum is one thing, but knowing where to find the right people or materials is another. Indigenous peoples globally have been subject to forced removal and displacement from a lot of their stories, languages, histories, cultural and therefore, knowledges. While there is still much knowledge kept, particularly in relation to things such as land, language, spirituality, customary medicine, and more, the ambivalence of incorporating IKs into a system which had for so long marginalised and excluded Indigenous peoples brings a level of discomfort (Smith, 2021). However, many Indigenous scholars contest that steps must be taken to decolonise the academy and suggest “full and equal incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and knowledge systems into the traditional Western structure” along with “the participation of Indigenous scholars at all levels and in all disciplines therein” (Lampert & Burnett, 2012, np). Nakata (2004) in an Australian context, argues that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education is “a powerful and effective mechanism that gives us a visible presence in the university system” (p. 2), further highlighting the effectiveness and achievements of Indigenous peoples in higher education along with the incorporation of IKs. Although, in this regard Nakata also stresses that incorporation alone, which perhaps occurs predominantly on the peripheries of the university's educational agenda, is not sufficient. Instead, he suggests a more difficult longer-term goal of “making

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues core to university business” (Nakata, 2004, p. 3).

The rate of Indigenous peoples in Australia working and studying higher education is increasing (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2020), although it can only be *assumed* that the general levels of knowledge are increasing along with it. The suggestive nature of this claim resides in the overall increase in Aboriginal honorary degrees, along with broader investment and engagement in Aboriginal languages across parts of the country, land-based economic and employment opportunities, IKs as a feature of government frameworks, and wider inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in Australian curriculum frameworks. However, within the higher education context, there appears to still be separation between IK/s as a specialised skillset, and teaching, education and research opportunities that afford IK/s specialists to teach directly into their scope/s of knowledge. Within UniSQ this is not attributed solely to any particular *critical* component of the university such as gender or ability, although some minor imbalances were identified, but these would seem to pertain more specifically to university qualification levels. In terms of staff equity, it was identified that Indigenous academics within UniSQ, particularly those who have historically held Senior positions have been mostly female. A similar pattern exists in terms of examining Indigenous professional staff numbers, with significantly more Indigenous females employed across all departments and offices. However, this study does not seek to highlight imbalances in regard to employment, but instead, how this impacts the University’s capacity to teach relatively and respectively into IKs in this instance. Presenting in the data, was

that Indigenous male employees were employed predominantly in professional roles rather than academic roles, and despite being seen as IK/s holders within their own Indigenous communities, little consideration was given to how this IK or individual and collective teaching capacities could be utilised effectively in the life and structure of the University. This is captured by Cody's comments:

"I suppose I can't speak from a gender perspective of Indigenous knowledges, but where I can talk about it is, where that knowledge sits within the University. We've seen a lot of Aboriginal male staff still sit within professional roles, not academic roles in the University, whereas our females sit within academic roles".

Participants had highlighted how this information and context emerges from *less formal* interactions with male professional staff who are regarded in their communities as IK holders and specialists. The following comments are in reference to a particular staff member who meets these criteria:

"He's sitting in a professional space down there, but I talked to him for 15-20 minutes between something that I was doing, and out of that time to yarn I found out a lot more about him as an educator, as a knowledge holder, all of these kinds of aspects, but he doesn't have a platform in the University where that voice is heard".

Perhaps it can be assumed that professional roles are not seen by these individuals as the space to operate outside of the scope of their professional role. Although, in any

case where they might venture outside of their scope to provide cultural expertise or knowledge, they likely would not be appropriately remunerated for any contributions which sit outside of that scope either. This is partly because the level of cultural knowledge may be at odds with the professional pay classification rate. How this is determined is not something that has been identified in university systems to date. Some universities, in attempting to capitalise on this expertise may seek to contract professional staff into casual roles, such as course tutors or project managers. This can alleviate the tensions that come with having individual IK/s skillsets ignored, however, it can also compound the blurred lines between extractive or exploitative relationships with Indigenous staff, and cultural load – both of which can lead to Indigenous staff burnout or turnover if not addressed appropriately.

In addition, a potential barrier is effective resourcing of IKs for teaching and curriculum content, either through individuals and/or materials which can be utilised or incorporated into course programs. Regarding procurement of IK/s specialists outside of the University, this would involve sourcing particular peoples such as Elders or knowledge-holders, which in some cases may not be there due to the violence, displacement, forced removal and dislocation brought about by colonial invasion. While this is not an isolated issue, Alex highlights how this has impacted and continues to impact their community/s:

“Unfortunately, we don’t have a lot of strong Elders left in our community. . . our area was one of the places where so many people were gathered and forced together;

that doesn't just go away. So some of the feuds and the tensions and the politics over who has authority to speak, or not, very much continue here which make it very difficult, over who the right person is, and certain families have sort of nominated [that] it's this Elder, or that Elder, and this Elder is going to give approval”.

These types of issues can compound pre-existing sociopolitical tensions in Indigenous communities, if not handled correctly, or if cultural protocols are not adhered to.

Therefore, appropriate procurement and community relational frameworks should be allocated or emplaced to ensure positive relationships are upheld in sourcing processes. The same can be said about locating appropriate Indigenous content and resources for teaching, learning, research, and pedagogical approaches. This is emphasised in current course programs where academics promote the following messages to non-Indigenous educators:

“You don't have to use your own words, you don't have to make it up yourself. We have such a massive amount of First Nations literature, and videos, films, documentaries, there's just so much of it. Tap into that. Do a film study, do a novel study, let the student unpack it themselves. That's what I say, look for local authors, look for local resources, they've been designed with local educators like you in mind”.

In saying this, there are currently no internal opportunities to support the appropriate employment and deployment of IKs-related content into course programs, outside the

general employment and staffing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in particular departments and schools.

4.4 Conclusion

The themes emerging from this study present a wide array of opportunities to refine UniSQ's position on IK while also taking into consideration potential barriers which may inhibit its progression. Importantly, perspectives captured through participant interviews reference all levels of the University and provide further insights into potential gaps and areas for broader investigation into how IK/s can be viewed, taught, learnt, researched, and discussed in larger forums to continue to the development and presence of IKs at UniSQ. The themes also provide schema for how IKs within the University can evolve, progress, and adapt over time, through collective interpretation and analysis. With the right mechanisms in place, and ongoing facilitation into IKs teaching, learning, education, and research, many more possibilities can follow, bearing in mind cautionary elements of IK/s exploration to ensure protocols are adhered to along the way.

CHAPTER 5: NEXT STEPS

In consideration of the themes presented throughout the data analysis, there are many possibilities in fostering and growth and development of IKs within UniSQ. These will be explored in the following section, although this is not intended to be an exhaustive or definitive process. As highlighted within the previous section, efforts to design and realise the capacity of IKs within the University should be a *collaborative* process, feeding up into a larger body or scope of information, knowledge, ideas, and insights which carry planning and conversations forward. This study can be seen as one voice among many involved in that process.

5.1 Opportunities

In recent times, as uncertainties plague the global human populations' structures and resources, IKs are fast becoming a 'go-to' for finding solutions and answers to modern problems. Nationally and globally renowned authors and cultural practitioners are drawing on their 65,000-plus years of IK/s expertise to potentially "save Australia" (Steffensen, 2020), or more, "save the world" (Yunkaporta, 2019). These are not conceited sentiments or outlandish claims, by any means. Arguably, both texts from where these sentiments stem have the power to shape a collectivised, global response to many of the social, political, and ecological crises that humans and their non-human kin face now and will likely continue to experience in the future. UniSQ in a similar context can contribute to how this global discourse unfolds, and how specifically IKs look in their own immediate contexts. Subsequently, via 'complex' processes, as mentioned previously, this can feed up into the higher-level conversations, shifts and patterns at new or other levels.

From classifying the elusive concept of IKs by examining local and non-local characterisations of IK/s as it pertains to individuals and groups, to refining inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, fostering allyship and truth-telling, and more. UniSQ can support the overall progression of these conversations in real-time, while providing further opportunities to build internal capacity in staff, curriculum, and systems and structures through the inclusion of IK/s perspectives in governance and strategy, where appropriate and possible. This, again, would be determined by a collective Indigenous voice prioritised within IK-related processes and planning at all levels, and subsequently led by Indigenous staff who choose to participate. As such, in creating the space for discourse, it is perhaps not a matter of 'build it and they will come' and opportunities cannot be made simply to extract IKs from certain members of the community. Rather, there exists opportunities to foster IK/s teaching capacity with current staff, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to play specific, targeted roles in supporting a broader movement into IKs teaching and learning. In addition, the University can simultaneously attract Indigenous practitioners to support embedding perspectives in other course programs and procuring Indigenous specialists and representatives to support IK/s capacity at higher-levels. The latter is not something that is determined by level of qualification, but instead level of knowledge, skill, awareness and understanding of IK/s-related protocols and processes within Indigenous community contexts. Complications around this approach will be discussed in the following sections.

5.2 Challenges

Australia's colonial past has caused much disruption and angst within Indigenous Australian communities, with many individuals, families and communities being subject to severe displacement and dislocation from their homelands. In the context of IK/s this presents many distinct challenges. As per Jamie's comments:

"I guess the glaringly obvious one is the displacement due to colonisation. That's probably the most glaring history; that's the most impactful, in terms of Indigenous Knowledge, current day".

In reviewing the term 'Indigenous', Meriam-Webster gives a definition as generally defined as "produced, growing, living, or occurring natively or naturally in a particular region or environment" while 'knowledge' is seen as a fact or condition of knowing something gained through experience and association (Meriam-Webster, 2023). In this regard, one could perceive IKs as having a deep understanding of a particular place in a way that shapes your entire being including decision-making, ethics, protocols, and more. However, as colonisation has dispersed people from the places they were perceivably born from, so too did they disperse them from their conditions of knowing that they and their ancestors had developed over many thousands of generations. Therefore, IKS and other systems of knowledge within Indigenous communities have become widely fragmented, and there are now many different ideas of what IKs are, who holds them, who can teach and share them, and how they fit into a contemporary context. This presents many complicated social elements to incorporating and embedding IKs within mainstream systems.

For example, within Indigenous communities, there can be complications regarding who has appropriate levels of knowledge to teach and share, particularly in East Coast Indigenous communities where the full forces of colonial invasion have been felt. Many Elders who would have traditionally held and carried IK/s are not able to do so, as their knowledge systems have been too severely impacted. Therefore, in some cases such as this, younger generations find themselves retrieving languages, cultures, stories, designs, symbols, and more from colonial and historical records. While this can be positive, as it signifies continuity in cultural practices, this also means that practitioners may not always have the capacity, authority, or maturity to teach and share, and as a result the systems of knowledge become contaminated or (mis)appropriated for the incentive of social or financial gain (Dei, 2011). In other cases, information recorded in those resources has often been extracted by the interlocutors, who were often European linguists or anthropologists who leveraged off unequal power imbalances to advance their careers. This has led to highly sacred and culturally significant information to be shared and read publicly, when this information might have otherwise been kept deeply secretive or reserved for men and/or women of high degree. Finally, novelties and complexities around IKs in Australia due to the impact of colonial displacement, means that there is a social perception of just who or what constitutes as a “real” Aboriginal person. In some societal groups also there exists a populist-romantic coupling of Indigenous people with primitivity, further compounding Meadows & Molnar’s (2001) notion of ‘Indigenous’ as “irreconcilable with modernity” (p. 602). In this sense, there is a perception that the only true Indigenous people (and therefore the only true IKs) are those in remote Indigenous communities undisrupted by colonial invasion,

or perhaps those less impacted by it. The reality of this, is that while indeed Indigenous communities have had varied experiences within colonial imposition and the ongoing effects of displacement which shape levels of knowledge and accessibility to land, language, culture and philosophy, many Indigenous knowledge systems still hold fragments of information which can be accessed and retrieved forward by individuals and communities. It may well be true that the integrity of said knowledge systems has been compromised to varying degrees, but the process of drawing out insights, ideas, understandings and *knowings* from language, community and Country is a process that still remains valid and relative to Indigenous and individual community experiences.

Other potential challenges in this regard, may be translation of concepts across epistemological, ontological, and linguistic domains. What this essentially means is that there is potential difficulty in reconciling or finding correspondent ideas to IKs-related approaches to teaching, learning, education, and research in Western contexts. Varied levels of incongruence can present when bringing knowledge across or between knowledge systems. The notion of Third Space is a relative concept to addressing incongruence, as mentioned in section 4.3.6., along with the notion of code-mixing/code-making/code-breaking in section 3.2.2. However, this may not always be the case and alternatives may need to be sought. Furthermore, challenges may also be identified around appropriate recognition and remuneration for services or roles which involve IK/s contribution, and how IK/s-related intellectual properties are safe guarded not only through ICIP and Australian copyright laws, but also Indigenous Laws and governance, and the laws of Country.

5.3 Recommendations

The benefits and challenges of incorporating IKs in the education sector have been recognised over at least the past two decades (Desmarchelier, 2020). With new ideas and insights emerging continuously, universities must allow space for adaptive and responsive measures for inclusion at all levels. While some institutions may have progressed in certain areas more than others, it is important to acknowledge the place of IK/s in both historical, modern, and future contexts. UniSQ, based on participant interviews appears to be somewhat *disordered* in how it currently includes IKs, or seeks to include IKs, with varied elements being carried out in different ways across separate domains. This would indicate a high level of inconsistency in the approaches that the institution takes toward greater inclusion. Therefore, it can be argued that there are a number of strategic priorities which need to be developed (if they have not been developed already), refined, and improved if the University is to progress forward in serious global discourse of the benefits of IKs as a “multidimensional intellectual evocation” (Desmarchelier, 2020, p. 2) and support IKs as a “growing field of inquiry” (Battiste, 2005, p. 1). This is not a simple process, but one that follows a pattern of complexity that can only be achieved by collective interaction, voice, and decision-making. Simpler efforts such as employing an individual into a specialist IK/s role can be a starting point, but this should be seen as a *means to a means*, rather than a means to an end.

In supporting the University to further explore complex approaches to establishing an effective and impactful strategic direction to IKs teaching, learning, education and

research, the following recommendations have been provided for consideration. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and further dialogue and discussion will be required to determine the ways forward. However, it is hoped that this list will inspire continued investigation into the possible future opportunities of IKs at UniSQ:

- 5.3.1 Staff Forum on Indigenous Knowledges
- 5.3.2 Development of a University-wide Cultural Framework
- 5.3.3 Development of Specialised Curriculum Taskforce
- 5.3.4 UniSQ Indigenous Knowledge Reference Guide
- 5.3.5 Implementation of an ICIP Policy
- 5.3.6 Position on IKs at UniSQ

5.3.1 Staff Forum on Indigenous Knowledges

Throughout participant interviews, the notion of IKs being incorporated into the everyday life of the University, was often conjugated with the theme of *collectivity*. This would perhaps be of little surprise for many Indigenous peoples within the university community, as it is generally the collective who move and shape decision-making processes within Indigenous communities, and this is evident in traditional economic, political, and cultural systems (Kovach, 2015; Littlebear, 2009; Yunkaporta, 2019). This does not discount the importance of the individual. Rather, it positions the individual as an important constituent in the processes of governance, protocols, and collective sensemaking (Fletcher et al., 2023). In aligning with the principles for classifying IK/s outlined in section 4.3.1, the individual is, in fact, a critical point of reference for the collective body of IKs. This occurs through individual cultural contexts, personal identities and genetic memories being shared at relatively lower levels, which then feed up into a collective aggregate of information at higher levels. The emergent properties at

higher levels then pertain to and inform a broader shared experience of Indigeneity which are inclusive of all individual views and experiences.

Hosting a forum on Indigenous Knowledges would support the process of manufacturing interactions at those lower levels, between and among individuals, to then build up towards higher level understandings and awareness of IKs and shared experiences within the broader Indigenous Australian context. Once this process has been carried out, similar processes can be followed to establish multiple levels of individual and collective experiences shaped and influenced by connections to land, spirituality, cultural law/lore, protocols, and governance. Moreover, they can trigger appropriate responses and adaptations to colonial imposition, displacement, forced removal, social and economic disadvantage, exclusion, assimilation, integration, injustice, and more. By fostering an environment where all voices are heard, and perspectives can be shared and harnessed in ways that are conducive to capturing a shared experience and expectation of IK/s teaching, learning, education, and research within the University. This would be an essential step towards establishing a base for continued inquiry and development of a university-wide IKs agenda.

5.3.2 Development of a University-wide Cultural Framework

In following on from establishing a positive foundation for IKs teaching, learning, education and research within UniSQ, it would be ideal to formalise any emergent outcomes through the development of a university-wide cultural framework. There is flexibility in developing such a document which can span across areas deemed important from a UniSQ Indigenous staff perspective. Admittedly, there have been

previous attempts at capturing elements of this in the past, by seeking formal recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols, and the more recent *Blueprint for First Nations*. However, no further attempts have been made at formalising a position on Indigenous governance within the institution. During participant interviews, the need for this was evident, as Sam participant suggested:

“There’s a knowledge gap there, and it’s not about the level of position those people sit at. There’s knowledge gaps, there’s misunderstandings, and that’s why that cultural framework needs to be embedded and come to that understanding of the common threads . . . It [then] informs every element; it informs the Pro-Vice Chancellor (First Nations), the Head of College, the Elder Advisory Group, the Elder in Residence, First Nations staff, non-First Nations staff. It’s about a common agreement and understanding”.

Some Australian universities have explored the use of a Cultural Governance Mechanism, to hold, store and manage the complexities of Indigenous governance. These types of documents most often sit at a high-level and facilitate proper leadership and management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, policy, knowledge, and information. UniSQ could traverse the semi-beaten track that is Indigenous cultural governance, although this process would require further input from key leadership staff and members of the University’s Indigenous communities and network such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Network, the Elders and Valued

Persons Advisory Board, and local respected communities or Traditional Custodians within the UniSQ footprint, to name a few.

5.3.3 Development of Specialised Curriculum Taskforce

Notably, while there was an excellent range of insights procured from the data and participant interviews, there were also some ‘blind spots’ which presented, from which some inferences can be made. Here it does not give away anything that is not already known within the University, and this is that historically there is little to no consistent Indigenous academic representation in certain areas and course programs within the institution. For example, no perspectives were shared in regard to several of the science programs which UniSQ teaches into, including Agricultural Science, Astrophysics, and Engineering, along with Business and Law. While it is relatively well-known that the University excels in Arts, Humanities, Education, and Health especially, it is readily perceived that there is a distinct lack of representation and awareness of Indigenous perspectives within these courses and curriculum. It is worth stating that some affordances have been made to employ Indigenous academics into some of the schools in early 2023, with little success due to a *high demand:low frequency* problem relating to the procurement of Indigenous academics nationally. Sadly, there are no signs of proportional change in the immediate future. However, as a substitute and perhaps in preparation for Indigenous academics to take their rightful place in those course programs, the establishment of a specialised curriculum taskforce may be worthwhile exploring. A similar process was undertaken by the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in 2020 which saw an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group and Taskforce, along with Science and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

curriculum specialists, provide expert advice and guidance on reshaping the Australian Science curriculum's elaborations. The aim of this was to create "a more culturally responsive curriculum experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students resulting in increased engagement and better educational outcomes" (Australian Curriculum, New Science Elaborations Addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, accessed March 2023). Adding to this, would be the exposure of non-Indigenous students and teachers to Indigenous scientific concepts, processes, perspectives, and abilities, which they might not have otherwise encountered. Therefore, in regard to observations made within participant data, and reviewing the effectiveness of ACARA's approach to including Indigenous perspectives, knowledges and insights within the science curriculum, it is recommended that the University consider taking a similar approach to ensuring sufficient exposure and teaching and learning opportunities for non-Indigenous students. This can be explored in ways which provide opportunities for Indigenous students to see themselves better reflected in the curriculum, and in ways which produce better educational experiences and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in science programs at UniSQ. In time, an identical procedure can be followed for Business and Law.

5.3.4 UniSQ Indigenous Knowledge Reference Guide

There are complications and much nuance in teaching and communicating Indigenous perspectives, stories, knowledges, histories, languages, and cultures in mainstream settings. This has been an ongoing issue in all levels of education, with meagre support options and resources provided to assist in effective teaching and transmission of cultural information. This is changing slowly, with universities now facilitating workshops

on appropriate Indigenous education resourcing, along with the development of frameworks which can support the embedding of perspectives and employing Indigenous pedagogies such as the Eight Aboriginal Ways of Learning (Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011), and professional development opportunities becoming more widely available for teachers. Although, there is little information on how to appropriately source Indigenous Knowledge specifically, and how to include it in coursework and research topics in ways that do not contradict or misappropriate it. The development of an Indigenous Knowledge Reference Guide is recommended to support the ongoing implementation of IKs in the curriculum. A document such as this would be constructed at a high level with collective input from staff, with the primary aim of being deployed to support the appropriate sourcing of materials used in course programs, to aid in Indigenous staff teaching and research, and to maintain the cultural intelligence, integrity, and sensitivity regarding information sourced from Indigenous communities and colleagues. The UniSQ Indigenous Knowledge Reference Guide would be produced on the back end of previous recommendations.

5.3.5 Implementation of an ICIP Policy

Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property is a critical issue of our time, with IKs being sought after within many industries and sectors (Janke, 2021). The rights to control who can use IKs, in what ways, at what times, in relation to which Indigenous community members, and with what benefits, attributions and provisions in mind, is still not clear within most Australian universities. This is an ongoing problem which affects the ways that Indigenous academics share knowledge, expertise, information, story, history and culture within teaching, learning, education, and research spaces. UniSQ is no

exception, and therefore it is worth considering what steps can be taken to better protect Indigenous academic staff's IK/s through formalised systematic approaches to inclusion and implementation. This would be necessary to avoid misappropriation and exploitation of IKs, while also promoting cultural protocols, accountabilities and responsibilities in all staff seeking to include IKs in their teaching and research. In this regard, Janke's (2021) True Tracks principles have been utilised in some Australian universities, and this is an important body of work that would provide UniSQ with the clear guidance required to fulfil these obligations. The University of Newcastle in 2023 launched two key strategic documents which have been designed for these purposes, including the True Tracks principles with the intent of promoting and upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples regarding their heritage, knowledge, and cultural expressions. It is recommended that the development of an ICIP document or mechanism be explored for use in all settings and applied across all internal policies and process to safeguard IK/s as it pertains to individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and their inherent knowledges.

5.3.6 Strategic Planning

A majority of the University's strategic documents have been reviewed and implemented in recent years. In this, there may be limited opportunities to introduce measures regarding IKs within or across the institution. The recommendations provided therefore are a means to initiate incremental changes, building up to wider and more targeted inclusion in future years. As per other strategic operations, a full plan for IKs implementation and recognition may be required with regularly monitored and reviewed objectives and performance indicators. A strategically positioned advisory group,

inclusive of members of adjacent committees such as the Reconciliation Committee, the First Nations Workforce Strategy Committee, the First Nations Research Strategy Committee, College for First Nations staff members, and other relevant bodies. Responsibilities would be allocated based on expertise and working responsibilities, and may be shared across other individuals, areas, or disciplines. Alternatively, IKs can be specifically and explicitly written into those documents, along with ICIP Guidelines, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Protocols, and other training opportunities provided by the University such as microcredentials, short courses, and more.

5.3.7 Partnerships

As the inclusion and implementation is a collective movement, this will also require positive relationships across the University. Key strategic partnerships may include with the Vice Chancellors' Executive, the Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (First Nations Education and Research), the College for First Nations, Indigenous academics, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Network, and other Divisional and Faculty Leaders and representatives, such as Heads of Schools, Deans, and Senior academics. Additional partnerships with local and regional Indigenous communities will also be required, which may include Elders, Traditional Owners, respected knowledge holders, Aboriginal language speakers, and artists. These relationships will not be procured or monitored through any form of IKs-related documents, but instead should be pre-existing through strategic work and operations performed under a separate document such as the First Nations Workforce Strategic Framework, or the Reconciliation Action Plan. This is primarily due to the fact that exploitative or opportunistic attempts of building relationships with Indigenous stakeholders can have

the opposite effect and can be damaging for the University's reputation and future ventures in IKs.

5.4 Conclusion

Overall, UniSQ is in a positive position to explore the potential inclusion and exploration of IKs within the institution. With further investigation into some of the key strategic measures and leverage points, the University will be able to generate and foster an environment that is conducive to IKs-related teaching, learning, education, and research. However, in following an Indigenous methodology, it is important that these efforts be subject to a collective approach which includes the voices of key stakeholders and is considerate of the overall need for structural reform, curriculum review and responsiveness, protection, and governance of personal and/or cultural histories and knowledges, and future directions in IKs. The foundations have been laid, and with the right processes and procedures in place, UniSQ can continue to build and explore the state of IKs as it pertains to the institution, but also, the world all living things who reside upon it.

CHAPTER 6: PROFESSIONAL STUDIES (RESEARCH)

This study was conducted as part of the Professional Studies (Research) (MPSR) at UniSQ which supports work-based learning, individual career development and reflective practice. The term 'professional studies', refers to "academic programs that emphasise applied and non-traditional modes of knowledge and skills acquisition in higher education" and which embrace multiple pathways of learning (Fergusson et al, 2018, p. 4). In developing this study, the researcher set out to achieve several objectives which pertain both to the individual as a person and as a professional. Further to this, was the intention to create a work-based learning project, and subsequent artifact with the primary aim to develop an enhanced professional profile, increase career aspirations and refine self-development goals and disposition. The following section will provide an overview of how this was achieved through participation and immersion in the Professional Studies (Research) Program.

6.1 Professional Learning Objectives

Learning is a process that involves reflection (Daudelin, 1996). The ability to reflect critically on past behaviours, decisions, thoughts, experiences, and memories allows us to correct distortions in our pre-existing beliefs and errors made generally as a result of them (Mezirow, 1990). This often requires individuals to 'step back' from experiences and interactions to ponder, carefully and consistently, yet actively and persistently, to consider the effectiveness and overall impact of their approaches, actions, beliefs, and/or dispositions (Daudelin, 1996; Dewey, 2022). Further, this process is an opportunity to create meaning and make sense of past or current events so as to guide and inform future behaviours (Daudelin, 1996). Those who incorporate reflective

practices into their work and professional lives have been identified by Schon (1986) previously as 'reflective practitioners' who are able to exhibit a tacit knowing and intuitive capacity to cope with uncertain situations in their workplaces. This skill is arguably becoming increasingly important, with many industries, offices and workplaces undergoing intense changes due to the increase in technological capacities, complex social parameters, and the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. More generally, reflection is a key factor in developing and refining the skills and tools to meet unexpected change and address environmental shifts and emergent outcomes, all the while managing risks, being strategic, upholding ethical responsibilities, and negotiating/mediating conflict (Doncaster & Thorne, 2000). It can also be a harbinger for creativity and innovation, both of which are necessary and perhaps fundamental skills required to effectively navigate the 21st century. As modern-day workers committed to continuous growth and life-long learning, it is important to continually assess one's position, experiences, social responsibilities, and moral obligations to continue to refine the Self, and optimise their inherent and learned abilities.

In preparing this study, some key learning objectives were identified to support the ongoing growth and development of the researcher, along with their own reflective practice and activities within the workplace. The implementation of learning objectives can have a profound impact on workplace relationships, partnerships, strategic operations, and benefits over time when sufficiently achieved, often leading to creative and transformative outcomes (Mezirow, 1994). For the researcher, more specifically, this meant analysing and reviewing their own personal and professional capacities to understand the need for growth in certain areas through completing a CV assessment.

This required a targeted examination of previous professional experiences which have contributed to increasing knowledge and developing awareness of sensemaking abilities, collaborative efforts, communication tools, technological skills, and more. Completion of the CV assessment allowed the researcher to visually interpret the strengths and opportunities for growth within their professional scope, and provided further potential to explore specific, relevant, and achievable outcomes of the researcher undergoing research processes, and the study being completed. These included, but were limited to the following:

1. Development and refinement of professional skills and knowledge in the context of how Indigenous Knowledge can contribute to collective sensemaking and problem solving in contemporary society and modern, mainstream environments and workplaces.
2. Increased sensemaking abilities through the use of multifunctional and multivariate ontological tools utilised within Indigenous and Western research methods, methodologies, analytical approaches, ethical dilemmas, technological adaptations, inductive and abductive reasoning, planning and organisation complex information, and fostering the appropriate and necessary conditions for creativity and emergence.
3. Develop a broader personal and professional scope and capacity to lead within the industry of higher education, by managing high-level, strategic, multidisciplinary, transcontextual approaches to development and capacity-building across all levels.

4. Define and refine key focus areas for personal, social, cultural, and professional growth, and enhance and utilise skills and approaches for information finding (research), dissemination, translation, and communication to produce outcomes in Indigenous-led curriculum (re)design, planning, and implementation.

These objectives would support the overall professional growth and trajectories of the researcher, in becoming a leader in Indigenous education and career development goals and aspirations of facilitating further inquiry into how Indigenous perspectives, knowledges, philosophies and pedagogies can shape responses to global, complex challenges. As this is a relatively new idea, for many decades competing fiercely against Western theories that have persisted in learning and scholarship much longer. This is not necessarily because their approaches are more effective or efficient, but rather, because they had not been subject to formal epistemological or ontological scrutiny. However, there is support for Aboriginal academics, researchers, and thinkers to critique and reframe mainstream paradigms and subsequent development of Indigenous approaches to enhance or replace/re-place them (Martin, 2003).

The benefits for UniSQ relate to the University's aim to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples First Nations peoples to take their rightful place in teaching, research, and enterprise. This is possible only through sharing power with Indigenous Australian communities and allowing capacity for these cohorts to address, develop and manage their own knowledge systems in their own ways, on their own terms, and importantly, in relation to more dominant processes and paradigms. The procurement of

a collective voice and subsequent movement of recognising the capacities for IKs to be implemented, researched, protected, and maintained by the Indigenous community/s within UniSQ can serve as a point of impact for farther reaching conversations and opportunities to support local, regional, national, and international efforts to diversify mainstream knowledge systems, and identify possible solutions to current and future challenges. This in turn can assist the University in developing an outstanding reputation within the Indigenous community, as well as more broadly, with a rapidly increasing industrial need to locate more viable and sustainable opportunities for infrastructure and development. On a personal level, the recommendations provided can support the individual development of Indigenous academic and professional staff, who may benefit and learn from their peers, and can procure an increases sense of self and identity through greater participation in the University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. This may also foster some elements of inclusion for external members such as Indigenous alumni, or local Elders, consultants, and respected community members.

On a more personal note, for the researcher this study has served as an opportunity to build and generate more focussed relationships in the space of IKs, which have and continue to support their overall personal development. Further, the study has played a significant role in emboldening their cultural and social identity through skills procurement and transference of knowledge and insights to K/Gamilaroi community/s. Obtaining the skills required for effective project management, data procurement and analysis, ethical considerations, methodological approaches, research translation and

communication, have been developed and refined through all stages of the MPSR and this will undoubtedly support future opportunities in research, work-based learning, life-long learning, reflective practice, and general employment.

6.2 Work-based project

Work-based learning (WBL) is type of experiential learning which happens primarily in the workplace and is designed to develop and enhance personal and professional skills (Sweet, 2013). WBL typically recognises the experience, capacity, ability, and maturity that individuals possess to solve problems in their own workplace context through both formal and informal means (Hanney, 2005). This highly pragmatic approach seeks to support the active learning of employees on the job, along with the accumulation of critical skills to improve professional practice and workplace challenges. As employees dedicated to identifying potential gaps in knowledge or practice across workplace areas, work-based learners hold a complicated position. As well as being considered ‘insiders’ they must also grapple with being part of the problem/s or situations that they have identified within their research or within general procedures (Armsby, 2000). As mentioned in section 3.2.1 this is especially complicated for Indigenous insiders who hold additional memberships and relational obligations in their communities.

Learning in the context of this study was both formal, non-formal and informal. Moreover, there was a keen focus on transdisciplinary approaches to identifying, addressing, and managing knowledge gaps and opportunities for further knowledge production. As the study was research intensive, there was a strong component of “learning by doing” (Fergusson, 2022) as well as philosophising, theorising, and

realising, which was conducted with the cultural and academic support of workplace mentors from across several Aboriginal communities and realms of education.

The study in turn takes a pragmatic approach to WBL, through proposing a series of recommendations which seek to promote interactions between Indigenous staff at various levels, with results flowing out into the development of strategic documents and objectives. This at least should be enough to construct a theoretical base to undertake further thinking, promotion, and activity in the context of IKs. A subsequent body of work may take form through the implementation of the recommendations, and as highlighted previously, will be a complex process which is inclusive of interactions at varied levels, along with key relational underpinnings. In this regard, it is anticipated that this may prompt opportunities for reflection, and continued learning and developmental opportunities for staff, particularly Indigenous academics, and professionals.

6.3 Contributions to theory and practice

As well as making significant contributions to IKs-related information, agendas and advancements within the institution, this study contributes to several other areas in ways that productively build on existing literature. One example is in defining IKs. While the study was clear in ensuring no approach was taken to define IKs, as many definitions have been provided within very broad parameters (Battiste, 2002; Dei et al., 2000; Maurial, 1999; Nakata, 2007; Parent, 2014; Pidgeon, 2008) and other scholars have cautioned against such an approach due to controlling and inadvertently essentialising IKs (Nakata, 2004; Urion, 1995). In a similar vein, other scholars suggest that to define something is to describe it in terms of “its boundedness, its discontinuity

with all other realities, the borders between itself and all possible others” (Christie, 1993, p. 27). Instead, this study has progressed the theme of aligning values and actions with the commonly accepted characteristics of IKs (Kovach, 2015; Littlebear, 2000; Newhouse, 2013; Schneider & Kayseas, 2019), while also working to categorise the ways Indigenous Knowledge as general body of information can be classified and perceived, as per section 4.3.1. To initiate a more targeted notion of IKs as they pertain to UniSQ local and regional context, however, framing IKs as a complex system capable of many sophisticated levels of interaction and emergent bodies of information and accompanying laws and protocols, could be seen as useful and contributory to modelling IKs at the highest possible scale.

In addition to these insights, the development and advancement of IKs as a general principle could lead to further investigations on the roles of IK/s within the UniSQ context, and prompt increased capacities for research, structural reform, curriculum review, strategic planning, and potential partnerships across the institution. This would allow for a more specific research agenda to take shape and organise around the principles of IKs. Other areas to be considered for wider contribution and exploration are in K/Gamilaroi Research Methodologies, and the varied, progressive levels of code-switching that have been mentioned within this study.

6.4 Conclusion

This study has sought to investigate the state of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Southern Queensland. Further, the aim has been to understand and outline the past contributions and barriers to effective IK/s implementation at UniSQ, as

well as examining the current issues, investments and opportunities for IK/s-related teaching, learning, education, and research within the institution. In establishing an accurate base of information, a range of themes were explored throughout the research and applied to a series of recommendations on how the University can continue and progress the potential implementations of IKs across all areas, departments and offices, and how through strategic initiatives and operations IKs can be embedded within the life of the University. Protective mechanisms and governance within Indigenous contexts have been considered to ensure any future ventures into IK/s production, promotion, transmission, and application are carefully considered in relation to community protocols and processes. Finally, this body of research has been carried out in the context of the UniSQ Masters of Professional Studies (Research) (MPSR), which is designed to increase the professional capacity and personal development of researchers to carry out work-based learning projects which enhance scholarly contributions to knowledge in the context of what is known, and what can be known. As a pragmatic study conducted within dynamic, interrelated academic domains, perspective and anticipation is also given not only to the many thousands of years that have passed on this continent, but the many more that will come, and in this, the context of *what will be known* as a result of this research is also considered, along with how these ideas will continue to shape the Indigenous peoples, languages, and cultures that live in deep relationally-bound networks which connect people and place across countless generations.

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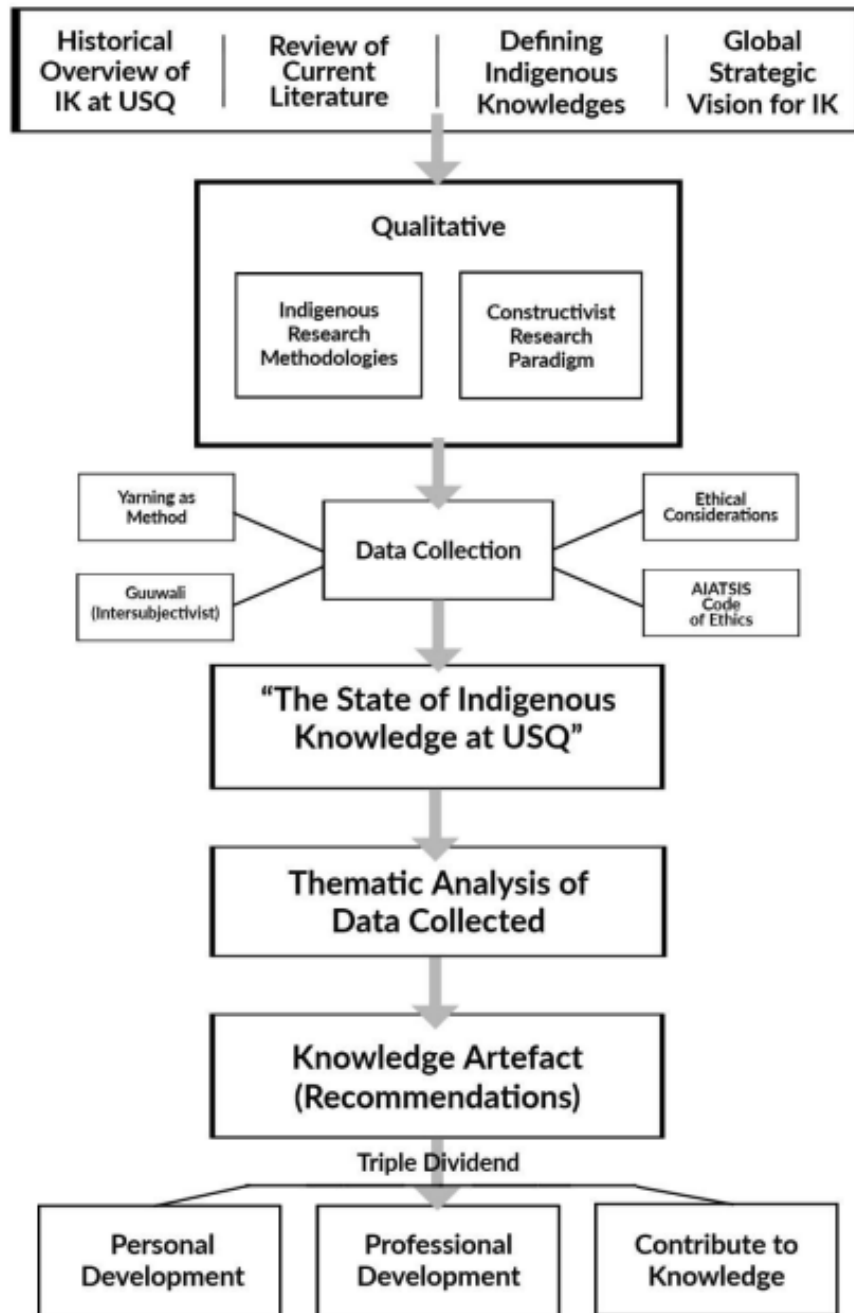
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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Timeline for completion of the study

Date	Task
Feb 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrol WRP9013 • Confirm Supervisors • Finalise research topic
Mar-Jun 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate research plan • Identify research questions • Construct Research Proposal (RP)
Jun-Aug 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise RP and submit for review • Implement recommended changes to RP
Sept 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Proposal completed • Confirmation of Candidature Panel identified • Research Resource Plan completed
Oct 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of Candidature completed • Correspond with PVCFNER • Finalise Ethics submission
Nov 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics completed • Invitations sent to participants
Dec 2021 – Jan 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and preparation for data collection • Literature Review
Feb 2021 – Mar 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection • Enrol WRP9020
Mar 2021 – Sept 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcription, data analysis, report writing, correspondence and feedback
Sept 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First draft submission for Thesis by Publication for review
Mar 2023 – May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalisation of draft Exegesis
July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final draft submitted for external examination
September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review comments received • Pass subject to minor revisions • Final resubmission

Appendix B – Flow chart for the Study



Appendix C – Human Research Ethics Approval

From: human.Ethics@usq.edu.au <human.Ethics@usq.edu.au>

Sent: Thursday, January 13, 2022 11:35:04 AM

To: Joshua Waters <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Renee Desmarchelier <[REDACTED]>

Subject: [RIMS] USQ HRE Application - H21REA250 - Expedited review outcome -Approved

Dear Joshua

I am pleased to confirm your Human Research Ethics (HRE) application has now been reviewed by the University's Expedited Review process. As your research proposal has been deemed to meet the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)

ethical approval is granted as follows:

USQ HREC ID: H21REA250

Project title: Investigating the State of Indigenous Knowledge at the University of Southern Queensland

Approval date: 13/01/2022

Expiry date: 13/01/2025

USQ HREC status: Approved

The standard conditions of this approval are:

- a) responsibly conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal;
- (b) advise the University ([email:ResearchIntegrity@usq.edu.au](mailto:ResearchIntegrity@usq.edu.au)) immediately of any complaint pertaining to the conduct of the research or any other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project;
- (c) promptly report any adverse events or unexpected outcomes to the University (email: ResearchIntegrity@usq.edu.au) and take prompt action to deal with any unexpected risks;
- (d) make submission for any amendments to the project and obtain approval prior to implementing such changes;
- (e) provide a progress 'milestone report' when requested and at least for every year of approval.

- (f) provide a final 'milestone report' when the project is complete;
- (g) promptly advise the University if the project has been discontinued, using a final 'milestone report'.

The additional conditionals of approval for this project are:

- (a) Nil.

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of this approval or requirements of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018, and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007 may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

Congratulations on your ethical approval! Wishing you all the best for success!

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to make contact with an Ethics Officer.

Kind regards

Human Research Ethics

University of Southern Queensland
 Toowoomba – Queensland – 4350 – Australia
 Email: human.ethics@usq.edu.au

Appendix D – Participant Information Sheet

Project Title	
Investigating the State of Indigenous Knowledge at the University of Southern Queensland	
Research team contact details	
Principal Investigator Details	[supervisor/ other investigator details]
Mr Joshua Waters	Dr. Renee Desmarchelier
██	██
██	██
████████████████████	████████████████████
Description	

This project is being undertaken as part of the Masters of Professional Studies (Research) Program through the University of Southern Queensland.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the current state of Indigenous Knowledges (IK) at USQ and to formulate a series of recommendations for exploring IK in greater depth as part of USQ's strategic direction and future initiatives. The study will seek to define and outline what IK is from a USQ context, and how its current state at USQ aligns with global, national, and regional definitions.

The data gathered from the research process will be used to develop a series of recommendations for USQ and key stakeholders such as the Executive Leadership Team and the Head of the College for The College for First Nations to advance the conversation on how and where IK can be promoted and implemented effectively across the University.

Participation

Your participation will involve contributing your thoughts and ideas in a 1:1 qualitative Yarning-style interview that will take approximately 60 minutes of your time.

The interviews will take place via Zoom, with the date and times to be confirmed through correspondence and availabilities determined by DVC(R&I) and College for First Nations.

Questions will include: What is the current state of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ)? In your current role, what have been your experiences or interactions with Indigenous Knowledges at USQ?

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Further, there is no cultural expectation or personal obligation to participate in the project. All participants will be given the opportunity to review their comments to ensure they reflect their true nature and intent. No comments will be published without the approval and consent of the participants, however, after the research has been published, you will be unable to withdraw data collected about yourself or statements you have made.

If you do wish to withdraw from this project, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form).

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland or any internal or external stakeholders or opportunities.

Expected benefits

The expected benefits of this project are that it will serve as an opportunity to further advance the discussion regarding the state of Indigenous Knowledges at USQ which through research

based practice in the field will allow Indigenous teaching and research staff an invaluable opportunity to provide insights and voice into where the University has been, is now, and is going in terms of Indigenous Knowledge research, teaching, study and excellence and contribute to timely discussions about the future of our global society.

Risks

In participating in the focus group,

There are no anticipated risks beyond normal day-to-day living, however, there may be some possibility of participants being identified by their comments which could present as a potential issue if negative commentary is provided. The researcher will not be identifying or naming participants in the research, although as there are only a small number of participants, there is some risk of being identified by comments made. The risk of any personal or professional implication for providing commentary will be minimized by removing any personal information that may identify the individuals such as name, sex, gender, cultural affiliations, areas of work or study, and lengths of time that individuals have been at UniSQ. Further, participants will also have the opportunity to review their contributions before publishing, to ensure their commentary reflects their true nature and intent, and to examine the possibility of any potential identification issues.

Due to the professional context of the research, as opposed to navigating more socially and culturally complex issues, there are no anticipated risks associated with causing significant amounts of distress to participants, however, in the case of any potential issues such as this arising, the researcher will consult with the research team as to determine an appropriate resolution. In the case of any psychological, emotional or cultural distress caused within the context of discussions, further information for referral services will be on hand and provided by the researcher and research team.

Privacy and confidentiality

All comments and responses are confidential unless required by law.

All interviews for this research project will be recorded via Zoom audio and video. These recordings will not be used for any purpose other than general data collection for the context of this study and to answer the research question 'Investigating the State of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Southern Queensland'. Due consideration is afforded for Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) throughout the project along with cultural sensitivities that may arise throughout this process, although it is not expected or anticipated that participants share personal or cultural information.

Only the research team will have access to the recordings and they will be stored safely and confidentially in an appropriate password protected data storage location or protected drive such as Microsoft Sharepoint. Non-identifiable data will be available for future research

purposes. Access to this data may be requested through the research team. At this stage it is planned that the principal investigator will assume the role of primary transcriber, however it may be necessary due to time constraints to employ the use of a third party transcription service. The Research Team has chosen Pacific Transcription as they have well defined data security on their website and are Cyber Essentials certified. Any questions regarding this matter will be directed to the Research Integrity Officer.

Please be advised that although the research team will take every precaution to maintain the confidentiality of the data.

Participants will be provided access of the results' project summary through a link to a MS Sharepoint document which will be sent to participants for review and accuracy.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely, as per University of Southern Queensland's [Research Data and Primary Materials Management Procedure](#).

Consent to participate

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate in this project. Please return your signed consent form to a member of the Research team prior to participating in a focus group. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Further, there is no cultural expectation or personal obligation to participate in the project as an individual representative of an Indigenous community, nor as a representative of the University of Southern Queensland.

Questions

Please refer to the Research team contact details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, you may contact the University of Southern Queensland, Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics on +61 7 4631 1839 or email researchintegrity@usq.edu.au. The Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics is not connected with the research project and can address your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this document for your information.

Appendix E – Consent Form

Project Details

Title of Project: Investigating the State of Indigenous Knowledge at the University of Southern Queensland.
Human Research Ethics Approval Number:

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details
Mr Joshua Waters

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Principal Supervisor Details
Dr Renee Desmarchelier

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Associate Supervisor Details
Prof. Karen Trimmer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Statement of Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- **Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.** **Yes /**
 No
- **Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.** **Yes /**
 No
- **Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.** **Yes /**
 No

- **Understand that the interview will be audio** Yes /
No
 - **Understand that you can participate in the interview without being audio recorded.** Yes /
No
 - **If you do not want to be audio recorded during the interview, please initial here: _____.**

- **Are over 18 years of age.** Yes /
No

- **Understand that any data collected may be used in future research activities related to this field.** Yes /
No

- **Agree to participate in the project.** Yes /
No

Participant Name	
Participant Signature	
Date	

Please return this sheet to a Research Team member prior to undertaking the interview.

