

2012 Duguid Memorial Lecture

Indigenous Knowledges, the Academy and the Community:

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I Acknowledge: traditional owners of country, elders, my family, and to you all for attending and participating in the Duguid Memorial Lecture distinguished guests.

Introduction:

The legacy of Dr Duguid is as important today as it was during its creation and the time of Dr Duiguid's campaign for the reform of Australia's relationship with the First Nations Peoples of this land. Duiguid's campaigns were long; one waged in 1947 was against the establishment of a British-Australian rocket and nuclear weapon testing program at Woomera in S.A. Though it was ultimately put down, subsequent history makes plain that he was right - Duiguid foresaw and urged against the immense and needless destruction and waste caused by the nuclear weapons program. That same level of urgency surrounds Aboriginal Australia today.

Dedication:

I dedicate this evening's presentation to my mother who began my journey and knowledge of Aboriginal Philosophy.

My presentation will critically review how far we have travelled and where we are currently positioned in relation to the lives of First Nations Peoples. The statistics on Aboriginal well-being are not so good. They reflect the first peoples of this country as the unlucky ones whose lives were historically and remain today negatively impacted by colonisation. Though the assimilation efforts of the Commonwealth and state governments have failed, attempts at recognition and reconciliation have also failed. Evidence of these latter failures is spread across the statistical data.

There have been a number of commissions of inquiry: we have had inquiries into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the Removal of Aboriginal Children, Aboriginal Heritage, and the Recognition of Aboriginal law and all of them have indicated the underlying issues that have impacted upon Aboriginal peoples. *The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* determined that the high levels of death in custody were the result of Indigenous peoples being incarcerated at levels higher than any other people in Australia. The *Bringing them Home Report* dared suggest that the removal of Aboriginal children from families was equivalent to being an act of genocide - a crime in international law as cited under the UN Genocide Convention. *The Hindmarsh Island Bridge Royal Commission* decided Aboriginal Women's business did not exist and should not be protected; meanwhile the state and commonwealth governments are unable to resolve the question of Aboriginal peoples' laws and cultures and where our Aboriginality fits within contemporary Australian society.

It is common knowledge that the *Mabo* decision put to rest terra nullius; but if it truly did this, than why are the ghosts of terra nullius so present and remain with us today? By the ghosts of terra nullius I mean that the effect of terra nullius is ongoing and present in our lives today.

Terra nullius means that at the time when Cook landed there were no people, and that where Aboriginal people were deemed to exist they were peoples without law and they were people who had no identity or subjectivity before the law as Aboriginal persons. The full recognition of the person was not as an Aboriginal person but with the identification of 'British subjects' which became, in 1967, 'Australian citizens'. But this 'right' Australian citizenship holds no recognition of or right to be an Aboriginal person.

Instead of negotiations and the recognition of Aboriginal peoples we experience governments committed to dealing with failed policies, taking interventionist measures as we have seen occur in the NT Emergency Response. This legislation is directed at Aboriginal peoples whose communities had been constructed as dysfunctional similar to the status of failed states, even though the failure is more to do with government policies. The truth is that Australian governments have consistently failed to find a way by which the First Peoples of Australia can create a shared space of peaceful co-existence. We have no treaty agreement to determine how we might share the common lands we now cohabit, and we have no constitutional or other contractual arrangements which provide for the security of future generations of Aboriginal peoples. We have instead native title for a few Aboriginal communities and individuals deemed worthy, and they have gained a form of recognition which has created its own intra-Aboriginal battle grounds and is of only limited security for future generations.

Terra Nullius

In reflecting on the impact of terra nullius upon Aboriginal peoples, we should know terra nullius means a land belonging to no persons and or persons who are without law and or systems of governance. Terra Nullius provided the legitimacy for imperial Britain to 'lawfully settle' Australia. That way they could avoid the complex business of treating with

Aboriginal peoples. In 1992 the High Court of Australia (in *Mabo*) rejected terra nullius, while also maintaining the legitimacy of Australia as a settled colony. It is a bit like having your cake and eating it, that is, the *Mabo* decision enjoys the lime-lighted victory against the injustice of terra nullius while at the same time retaining the spoils of an unjust foundation in the continued occupation of the lands and dispossession of the sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples. This is even though we have recognition of Native Title, one outcome of the *Mabo* decision. I have written about the limitations of native title recognition and will not have time to elaborate further.

In this presentation I am going to look beyond the effects of terra nullius as the source of Aboriginal dispossession from our lands, laws and governance and to focus on the impact colonisation has had on the philosophical centre or knowledge centre of Aboriginal peoples.

And to consider what the possibilities were and are for Aboriginal peoples to hold Aboriginal Philosophy and Knowledge at the centre post-terra nullius

I would say there are many opportunities - and that across Australia Aboriginal Peoples do hold Indigenous Philosophy close to the centre of our being. But it is a way of being which exists within an environment largely occupied with other ways of being, dominant ways of being. For many of us that environment is filled with images that reflect a commodified way of being, a way that relates to and uses our natural world as a commodity. An Aboriginal relationship to land is as a relative, loved and adored. Western European philosophy views nature as being there for man to use, and as Bacon described it: it 'has to be tortured to bare its secrets'. Torture, and in particular in relationship to the natural world is a concept alien to Aboriginal peoples. Such dominant positions regarding relationships to the natural world are possibly sourced in Genesis in its description of the land needing to be subdued so as to benefit man.

Historically terra nullius laid the foundation for the denial of Aboriginal Philosophy and Knowledge. Terra nullius deemed our peoples non-existent, so also was Aboriginal Philosophy deemed non-existent.

In this ongoing space of terra nullius - how might we think and talk about Aboriginal Philosophy?

In general philosophy consists of the contemplative investigation of the most fundamental aspects of existence, life, knowledge, and value. Philosophy concerns itself with how to live one's life (ethics), what one knows, can know, and how one knows it (epistemology), and what can be said to exist (metaphysics).

Aboriginal Peoples have lived and centred ways of knowing the world for thousands of years; the terra nullius times have disrupted a relationship in which we knew of human and non-human - the entire natural world, as one connected being. Now Aboriginal knowledge is no longer the central framework we live by. It has no status and is largely treated within the social sciences as culture or history. Until recently our lives and knowledges were being represented, translated and interpreted by anthropologists, historians, social sciences, and scientists in a space that objectified and spoke for and about our Aboriginality. Over the past decade there has been a radical shift, towards the positioning of Aboriginal voices which speak for ourselves; we are the speaking subject. In that space Aboriginal peoples have claimed a space in which to centre Aboriginal Philosophy.

What is Indigenous Philosophy, Knowledge and ways of being in this terra nullius space?

Perhaps we should start by looking at a definition of Indigenous People and as there is no definition within the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* I rely on the definition developed in the 1980s *UN Report on the Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations* by Martinez Cobo:

*Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a **historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies** that developed on their territories, consider themselves **distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories**, or parts of them. They form at present **non-dominant sectors of society** and are **determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories**, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.¹*

In coming to a definition of Indigenous Knowledges the definition of Indigenous Peoples plays a role, particularly in differentiating Indigenous Knowledges from the idea of Traditional Knowledge, and the call to also consider the impact that colonisation has had upon Indigenous Peoples. A particular aspect of being Indigenous is that we are Peoples whose lands have been colonised and continue to survive in places that have yet to be de-colonised, for example Australia, New Zealand, North America and Canada.

Definition of Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge is the local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. This includes the local knowledge of Aboriginal science, ethnoscience, traditional ecological knowledge, Aboriginal ecological knowledge, Aboriginal knowledge systems, folk ecology, ethnoecology, Aboriginal intellectual and cultural property, and cultural knowledge.² I would

add that Aboriginal Knowledge also incorporates the experiences of colonial times and could be incorporated into the definition of what constitutes IK.

Aboriginal Knowledge is not universal but localised in character.

Local Knowledge: Aboriginal protocols are similar across different Aboriginal territories. There is a common protocol in speaking for oneself and not speaking for other peoples' country. The knowledge of place is held by the Aboriginal people of that place, and learning Aboriginal knowledge is to learn from those Aboriginal to the country and knowledge centre of place.

While there are universal principles shared by Aboriginal Peoples our knowledges are themselves not universal but a diverse range of differentiated and highly localised knowledges. Australia is home to hundreds of diverse and different First Nations Peoples and indicates the diversity of knowledges across Australia.

The localised nature of IK makes it imperative that when considering capacity building needs it is at the local level that work needs to occur. The local level is where the Indigenous community needs to develop the capacity to continue to hold and carry Aboriginal knowledge. So while the Behrendt *Review into Higher Education* has called for building the capacity of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies so as to preserve Indigenous Knowledge, I would argue that it is at the local level that we need to ensure capacity is built. If we want to move beyond a museum approach to IK then the living life of our knowledge systems requires maintenance at the community level.

Sources of Indigenous Philosophy and Knowledge

I would argue the sources of IK are embedded in an Aboriginal Philosophical approach to the way we live in the world and that scopes the way we have lived pre and post Cook. That philosophical tradition has always been in connection with the land, as the land maps the philosophy of Aboriginal peoples, but philosophical concepts are also located in the languages.³ Aboriginal Knowledge is stored in, for example, the creation stories of the past.

Indigenous Philosophy – is taken up in defining *Traditional Indigenous Knowledge* general which:

- (a) is or has been created, acquired or inspired for traditional economic, spiritual, ritual, narrative, decorative or recreational purposes; and
- (b) is or has been transmitted from generation to generation; and
- (c) is regarded as pertaining to a particular traditional group, clan or community of people ;
and
- (d) is collectively originated and held

Holistic

Aboriginal Peoples' understandings are relational while a Eurocentric approach is to separate and compartmentalise. For example within the University knowledge accumulates within separated disciplines, or professional practice - Medicine, Engineering, Teaching, etc. An Indigenous approach to knowledge embraces all aspects of life as one entity. All skills are learned from childhood in a holistic way. Teaching and learning are in the life, not an aspect of it. Aboriginal peoples see themselves as being a part of the environment and in a relationship with the natural world. That relationship forms and informs all aspects of my

being and how I interact with the world. It is a relationship which continues; it is not just about the past, as the ‘Dreaming’ is often considered to be. It lives with us today.

The concept of Traditional often brings with it the manufacturing of cultural stereotypes

IP and IK are constantly being recreated, as our knowledges are alive and living and not frozen to a time pre–terra nullius. The following quote is taken from the native American philosopher and Chief Oren Lyons:

We have lost our old ways, but the principles that we go by are not old: peace is not old, justice is not old, equity is not old, it is what everybody aspires to. Those things are ours...Old is in the mind of the person, old is in their education. We are contemporary people. I don't apologize for standing in these clothes today, for that is what I wear. This is me, this is the Huodenosaunee, right now, right here...we don't expect to see [former US President Ronald] Reagan with a white wig.⁴

Similarly this speaks to the challenges to our Aboriginality within Australia and the constant measuring of Aboriginal authenticity. If we presented as naked peoples we would be locked up, as our ancestors were in colonial frontier times. Aboriginal knowledge is different from a **positivist** approach where **knowledge** is based on natural phenomena verified by the empirical sciences. Positivism sets out to describe phenomena we experience and the purpose of science is to describe what we can observe and measure. However we cannot directly observe emotions, thoughts, etc, and according to positivists that which can't be measured cannot translate as a reputable body of knowledge. Positivism largely rejects the validity of IK, even though Western science is largely built upon the world's IK. In contrast Stewart-Harawira claims that IP: ‘far from irrelevant in the modern world, traditional Indigenous social, political and cosmological ontologies are profoundly important to the development of transformative alternative frameworks for global order and new ways of being’.⁵ IK in fact

has always been present in the development of global knowledges even though that contribution lacks recognition in the academies and the halls of parliament houses.

The dominant approach recognises the rights of the individual, while in IK is the recognition of the mob or the collective who hold knowledge and the Aboriginal world together. A tension exists between individual and collective rights and this tension arises in relation to the problematic of ownership rights in Australian law being vested in the individual and not the mob. Aboriginal principles of recognition include reciprocity, balance and plurality. Western concepts of recognition hold individualised and ‘owned’ property as a central concern for the recognition of rights.

Centre - Periphery Terra Nullius

To make up for the historic and ongoing erasures of Aboriginal knowledge I see that there is a need to centre Aboriginal world views as the norm, and to liberate space from colonising and assimilationist processes. However for this to occur we need to take aim **at normativity** itself; and certainly to take aim at the proposition that **the state holds the centre** into which we are absorbed and assimilated.

In centring an Aboriginal knowledges framework we need to go beyond neo-liberal interpretations of human rights and start including, for example, the relationality of Indigenous knowledges to all things in the environment. Concepts of relationality are inclusive of Aboriginal relationships to land and kin. Butler argues:

one who is excluded from the universal, and yet belongs to it nevertheless, speaks from a split situation of being at once authorized and de-authorized. Speaking and exposing the alterity within the norm, (the alterity without which the norm would not

“know itself”) exposes the failure of the norm to effect the universal reach for which it stands, exposes what we might underscore as the promising ambivalence of the norm.⁶

In coming to Universal recognition what consideration is made for an Aboriginal framework?

Article 8J of the *Convention on Biological Diversity*, provides for limited protection of IK, and Bavikatte,⁷ in interpreting the effect of this article suggests that the protection of misappropriation is taken from conventional definitions, to include theft, or access to property of another without their permission. This conventional definition does not cover an Aboriginal ethical framework which would include respect for **relationality** and would go **beyond monetary considerations** of knowledge and **neo-liberal capitalism**. The point here is that even though international standards in respect of Indigenous Peoples are developing, those standards still have a way to go in providing recognition of Aboriginal frameworks.

The problem with claims to universal truths is the negation of any possibility of many truths and the opportunity for co-existence. One ‘truth’ once flattened our world. I do prefer the many truth approach or as Uncle Lewis O’Brien expressed: many truths and no difficulty with the co-existence of a creationist and evolutionist view of the world.

So what are these universals that we are destined to progress towards and assimilate into? In this journey called ‘progress’ will the inevitable become white, male, and Christian?

What are the obstacles to developing an Aboriginal framework?

The first is the failure of the state to realise that the Aboriginal person is a **subject**, and not an **object** of an ongoing terra nullius. To be an object means:

- You are without rights to, for example, land, self-governance and autonomy

- You have been made an object of an imposed legal political system without your consent
- you are talked about, and spoken for and you have no speaking voice
- You are the object of state authorised views

Nevertheless George Sioui makes some positive suggestions as to how change might occur. Where he is situated as a Huron, native of Ontario, the dominance of American values is so virulent and persistent. To begin Sioui suggests abandonment of the 'primitive cultures that are dead or dying' discourse. He argues that the continuing representation of such history is socially irresponsible, pointless and misleading and a shell without its animal content.⁸

There is a need for the presence and commitment of Aboriginal peoples whose traditions are being studied being able to direct the interpretation of their own history.

Therefore there is an ongoing need to revise and review old histories which have been written about us and in particular those histories that continue the primitive-extinguished discourse.

There is a need to realise how it is Aboriginal peoples are, as we have always been, transforming the world, agents in the bringing of the future and not mere victims.

Who is the subject of the master narrative?

Historically the West positions the white male as the subject, and excludes the native, slave, and woman. Spivak⁹ writes about the West as the subject, and the Indigenous as the object of a colonialist historiography, while the construction of gender still keeps the male dominant and the subaltern female 'even more deeply in shadow'. It is white systemic ignorance which enables racism to influence knowledge production. A whiteness of philosophy claims a universal space which masks sex, class, gender, and the race of its producers.¹⁰ There is a history of philosophy being derived from white patriarchal sources that acted as though philosophical thought applied universally without borders being managed by race, sex and class. Knowledge production has been in the hands of white, heterosexual, able-bodied, Western male academics.¹¹ But it is those marginal or subjugated knowledges which are now developing the tools to expose the social situatedness of knowledge production and the different realities which are produced and experienced.¹² Defining Aboriginality continues to be a predominantly white patriarchal knowledge production activity.

What are the moves here? Is Aboriginality to be assimilated into white male universals? As I have stated there is no universal or one IK but rather there are many localised versions of IK. But if the move were made bell hooks argues, the liberal white male subject's appeal to sameness is based on a belief that we all inhabit a universal subjectivity and this will somehow make racism disappear.¹³ But it cannot disappear by simply wishing for sameness.

Moreton-Robinson's dissection of the work of Moses, exposes his use of adjectives such as 'suspicious' and 'hostile' to describe the work of Aboriginal women scholars, and refers to the work of Karen Martin on relatedness as a 'fully blown re-enchantment of the world'.¹⁴ Moreton-Robinson argues that this is an example of Moses's acting out of epistemic violence

when he positions Martin's work within patriarchal knowledge production, while the concept of 'enchantment' has all the associations with witches. Moreton Robinson ends her critical appraisal of the work by Dirk Moses by putting out a challenge and asking Australian feminists within the academy how they position themselves in relation to these embodied epistemological battles?

Moreton Robinson argues Moses's:

*epistemic violence is enabled by the **power of patriarchal knowledge** and its ability to be the **definitive measure** of what it means to be **human**, what does and what does not constitute **knowledge** and who **can and cannot be a knower**. The anti-essentialist critique is premised on a contradiction embedded within the **Western patriarchal construction of truth**; it is applied as a **universal** and, through its epistemological claim to being antiessentialist, it reproduces a patriarchal metaphysical ontology.¹⁵*

So who are the knowers or the knowledge holders?

Sardar argues that the West maintains a hegemony over knowledge by denying non-Western science's existence and contribution to Western science, and that the history of non-Western science was generally written out of science history. Europe re-wrote the origins of European civilisation constructing it as self-generating. Conquest and civilisation appropriated the sciences of other peoples and then suppressed the knowledge of those origins so as to recycle them as Western science.

According to Blaut, prior to 1492 or the era of Columbus and the "discovery" of the Americas, there were few significant differences in the progress of science between the West and the rest. Blaut also provides evidence that the plundered wealth of the Americas enabled Europe to develop.

Scientific advancement, rarely acknowledged, occurred through interactions with Indigenous peoples. The wealth of silver and gold taken from their lands developed Western economies and the seeds of plants from Asia, Africa and the Americas previously unknown in Europe became major food sources; their origins remained unknown.

Their knowledge of plants was exploited; tropical medicine was first developed from Indigenous knowledge. This was ignored and that re-writing of history fitted with the colonial science project that was to benefit and maintain European power and hegemony and to make a profit. In reassigning the West as the centre and the rest as marginal the colonies went on to support the European sciences. The colonial projects of empires enabled European access to a large share of the world's energy and resources, but they destroyed local Indigenous scientific knowledges. The coming of European science was embedded in the colonial projects and it was responsible for the increased human bondage and mortality rates amongst colonised peoples.

Blaut argues that it was European colonial expansion which contributed to the increasing gap between European technology and the colonised cultures. The age of discovery did not unearth primitive timeless peoples with no histories and no scientific and technological knowledge. The Europeans encountered complex and sophisticated cultures with highly effective scientific and technological systems significant portions of which were borrowed into European traditions. Harding argues there is no one science and that science borrowed across the discovery era. The scientific community needs to be understood as a broader concept than that currently known as the European Centre. The difference between Western and non-Western science is that non-Western science comes from cultures and civilisations emphasising a unity of knowledge. These cultures embraced science and metaphysics which were not separate but unified.

Progress and the rise of Europe were contingent upon colonising America and then Africa, Asia, and lastly Australia and New Zealand. Europe needed the colonies in order to progress, not the other way round. The myth of colonialism was that the natives needed the Europeans to live and progress, but the reverse is true.

The ideals of progress, civilisation and Christianity justified the vast colonial projects employed by European nations, which competed with each other for access to the territories and resources of the 'New World'.

Franciscus de Victoria, a Dominican scholar, between 1526 and 1546 influenced early Spanish practise in the colonisation of the Americas. Victoria adopted the view that the Law of Nations was derived from 'natural' law.

His interpretation of law gave rise to rights and obligations universally binding and agreed to by the majority of states. Victoria argued that international law imposed on Indigenous societies basic duties which included:

- A duty to permit free passage by foreigners;
- A duty to allow free and open commerce and trade;
- A duty to share communal property;
- A duty to permit the propagation of Christianity.

But there were no reciprocal duties placed upon the colonisers. Victoria's interpretation of 'natural' law ignored the existence, the laws and philosophies of Indigenous Peoples. He denied Indigenous Peoples' sovereignty and authority over their territories and their resources. Other early European writers such as Grotius, Locke, Vattel, and Hobbes further entrenched Victoria's view that the land and resources of Indigenous Peoples could be taken with or without their consent. This colonial position enunciated in the sixteenth century remains extant in Australia today; is entrenched in its settler society.

The sovereign status and rights of Indigenous Peoples were denied by a process of legal rationalisation underpinned by the assertion that Indigenous people were uncivilised, inferior, and incapable of conducting international relations. It legitimised the wholesale exploitation or expropriation of Aboriginal resources. It legitimised the assumption of sovereignty and the imposition of foreign legal systems, and it legitimised the establishment of foreign colonial governments. Blaut and Harding both argue The European Miracle was no miracle at all. Europe constructed its own myth and it concealed the fact that it developed and ‘progressed’ from the resources and knowledge gained from its invaded colonies.

The savage

In 1859 Reverend Taplin described Aboriginal culture at Point McLeay Mission thus:

This horrid rite (ceremonial law) is much calculated to throw them back into barbarism, whatever good instruction they may have received in youth. Whatever sense of cleanliness, or love of European clothes may have been acquired is by this rite completely swept away. This custom must be done away with....I told all the blacks plainly this morning, that they obeyed the devil, and that Jehovah would send them to hell with the devil if they did not cease to obey him.

The history of Aboriginal Peoples prior to the British invasion was known as pre-history. As the ‘native’ was termed pre-historic we were deemed by Western science as beings living outside ‘civilised’ history. Aboriginal history was seen to pre date Western civilised beginnings, and likewise Australian history was known to begin in 1788. Australian history was never to include an Aboriginal perspective - of a time immemorial when our ancestors recorded the first songs of the land.

For Aboriginal futures to emerge, a shift is required from the ever-present racialised, colonised views held about Indigenous Knowledges to a new position, which restores an Aboriginal humanity. And to a position which recognises an Aboriginal philosophy and the

understanding that the native doesn't need to progress to an 'end point' in history. An understanding that the 'native' has already arrived. It needs to be acknowledged that we already live inside Aboriginal history and knowledge.

Why do we need to recognise Aboriginal Philosophy

Recognition of Aboriginal philosophical knowledges is necessary for the respect of 'native' reason, and all things about the 'native' being. Drucilla Cornell suggests we need to better learn each other's ways so as to understand the underlying competing values. This is a necessary first step in any successful process of recognition and then reconciliation

What remains is the possibility to re-build indigenous spaces which are then able to co-exist with an alien world view. But the possibility of co-existence is hampered by a colonialist indifference to Indigenous philosophy. From the beginning of invasion times there has been very scant reference to Aboriginal religion, values and traditions, and where it has been mentioned Aboriginal knowledge has been contained within the academy, listed under (for example) the 'discipline' of Anthropology which informs on the native for the benefit of the other expert knowledges. In the academy rationality has been seen as a white trait, not possessed by the 'native'

Universities and Indigenous Knowledges and Philosophy

Historically Aboriginal Philosophy, Knowledge and ways of being have been ignored and or destroyed by the colonial societies that have built over Aboriginal lives and lands. Colonial foundations have constructed educational institutions that have constructed knowledge in the space created by the unspoken principle of terra nullius. Historically we have seen throughout our education systems, - including the universities - of the negative and racist constructions

of Aboriginality, while the exclusion of Aboriginal knowledge from the educational institutions has been justified thus:

- Aboriginal knowledge is irrelevant,
- Irrational
- Unscientific
- Uncivilised
- Native story-telling
- Oral tradition and as such a failed record of history

As part of the 2012 Behrendt *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*, the review panel considered Rigney's three categories of IK:¹⁶ (1) IK that is invisible, (2) IK developed as a single unit of Indigenous Studies (3) embedded Aboriginal perspectives across all programs and courses. But the process has been uneven in the quality of its incorporation and Rigney has suggested there be an evaluation as to quality of and necessity for ongoing resources made available to the process of incorporating IK. Indigenous People's participation is critical to the process but Indigenous lecturers are often over-committed.

However at the early stages of incorporating IK content we are observing a backlash by non-Indigenous students expressing disinterest and querying why IK is relevant to their particular discipline/professional/career choice. This is a new frontier and it is often ATSI students who are positioned to explain and educate non-Indigenous students about why the content has been incorporated and worse, to deal with any racist backlash. So there remains in 2012 resistance to IK. So how might universities monitor this emerging frontier?

Aboriginality: what are the identity challenges ahead?

For some Aboriginal persons the question might be: how does one express and retain an Indigenous identity within the colonial state?

How might we progress a dialogue that centres Indigenous knowledge within the policy purview of the colonial state?

While there are a number of well-intentioned programs for inclusion of Aboriginality many remain assimilationist in effect, and are simply ineffectual in advancing Indigenous well-being in terms which would be understood as progressive or inclusive by Indigenous peoples. Notwithstanding the UN's completion of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the Australian Government's belated acceptance of the Declaration (2009), Aboriginal peoples continue to be amongst the world's most disadvantaged.¹⁷ While there is a substantial body of research on the belated and conditional recognitions of Aboriginal peoples in the 20th century, views constructed in the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries continue to prevail, to deny that Aboriginal peoples governments and relationships to land are legitimate forms of political organisation and ownership.¹⁸ Instead it has been models still aiming for the assimilation of Aboriginality which have been developed to accommodate claims for the equality of Aboriginal rights.¹⁹ The need for an analysis of the exclusion of Aboriginal-centred approaches is acute because Australian and international laws and social policy developments have been largely oblivious to the question and the validity of Aboriginal knowledge as an essential approach to questions of inclusion, justice and co-existence.

The difficulties of including Indigenous knowledge should not be underestimated. Ongoing racism, exclusions and the (at best) mixed progress to date suggest there is significant research and thinking remaining to be done surrounding the 'how to' part of the problem. Critical thinking requires us to take our experience of the problem of inclusion as a marker of

a political and intellectual landscape in need of rethinking in order to articulate political possibilities beyond those offered by the existing discursive framing of the problem.

Australia continues with little understanding of what Aboriginal philosophy is, and how it can continue to be. The ultimate goal is to reassess practises for inclusion and develop practical possibilities for the centring of Indigenous knowledges which will assist the academy and its disciplines in developing their knowledge of Aboriginal philosophy. Such a process would go beyond the translation of Aboriginal culture that has in most instances been affected by Western expertise and interpreters and would enable the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges from an Aboriginal standpoint.

There is a need for a pluralistic attitude in the contemporary Australian context, because diversity should not be reduced to or explained by a singular attitude.

Conclusion

Universities and other institutions can unravel the past injustices by unpacking the myth of terra nullius and enabling reinvigorated Aboriginal spaces to fill a perceived emptiness or a lack of Aboriginality and knowledge. Aboriginal peoples need space in which we can develop narratives counter to the one of the master - the Master Narrative which deems we do not exist. Sustaining Indigenous centres is to enable our re-gathering and our collaborative journey towards a way that we might share and care and ultimately co-exist.

¹ United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations, 11 March 1986, E/CN.4/RES/1986/35, (Martinez Cobo Report).

² Wohling, Marc, 'The Problem of Scale in Indigenous Knowledge: A Perspective from Northern Australia' (14) 1 *Ecology and Society* 2009.

³ Kwame Gyekye *Myth and Reality*.

⁴ Cited by Sioui, George, *For an Amerindian Autohistory*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992, p 32.

⁵ Stewart-Harawira, Makere, *The Indigenous New Responses to Imperial Globalization Order*, Zed Books, London, 2005, p xiv.

⁶ Butler, J, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, 1997, p 91.

⁷ Cornell, Drucilla, 2009.

⁸ Sioui, George, *For an Amerindian Autohistory*, McGill-Queen's University Press, p 22.

⁹ Spikak, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Nelson, Cary and Grossberg, Lawrence (Eds) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Macmillan London, 1988.

¹⁰ Applebaum 2010, p 13

¹¹ Harding 2004; Haraway Donna, 2004; Collins 2004; Smith 1999.

¹² Moreton-Robinson p 414

¹³ hooks, bell, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, 1992.

¹⁴ Martin, Karen.

¹⁵ Moreton-Robinson, Aileen, p 427.

¹⁶ Behrendt, Larrissa, *The Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*, 2012 p 75.

¹⁷ Venne, Sharon and Watson, Irene, 2010; Malezer Les, 2010; Anaya, James *Indigenous Peoples in International Law*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

¹⁸ Venne, Sharon, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 2001.

¹⁹ Watson, Irene, 2009.