

Reciprocity with Sharlene Leroy-Dyer, Samantha Cooms and Gemma Irving

T: Tracey, K: Katelyn, SLD: Sharlene, S: Samantha, G: Gemma

- T: Hi everyone, I'm Tracey Bunda and welcome to our podcast series, Indigenising Curriculum in Practice. I'm a Ngugi/Wakka Wakka woman and the Professor of Indigenous Education at the University of Queensland. I'd like to start the podcast by acknowledging Country and the various countries from where our listeners are located, and pay my respects to Elders past, present, and emerging. I acknowledge the ongoing contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to society at local, national and international levels. I'm joined by my colleague and co-host, Dr Katelyn Barney.
- K: Hi everyone. I'd also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we're recording and also where you're listening from, and pay my respects to their ancestors and their descendants who continue to have strong connections to Country. I also want to acknowledge that where we are recording has always been a place of teaching and learning. I'm a non-Indigenous woman living and working in Meanjin. In this series, Tracey and I interview Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics about how they're Indigenising curriculum within the Faculties at the University of Queensland.
- T: Together we are going to ask questions to unravel the why, the how, and the when of Indigenising curriculum.
- K: Our theme for this podcast is based on the principle of reciprocity. And our guests today are Dr Sharlene Leroy-Dyer, Dr Sam Coombs and Dr Gemma Irving from the Business School at the University of Queensland. Welcome.
- T: Would you women like to introduce yourselves? Just do it in any way that makes you feel comfortable. Sharlene, can we start off with you?
- SLD: I'm Sharlene Leroy-Dyer. I'm a Garigal, Awabakal, Darug, Wiradyuri woman from New South Wales. I'm the Director of the Indigenous Business Hub at UQ Business School and a Senior Lecturer in employment relations.
- S: Hi Aunty Tracey. I'm Dr Samantha Coombs. I'm a Noonuccal Quandamooka woman and a lecturer in the Business School.
- G: Hi, I'm Gemma. I'm a non-Indigenous lecturer in the UQ Business School, and I'm trying to practice Binungana allyship which is about listening, thinking, and understanding.
- K: We're really interested in that term 'Binungana allyship' and we know you've written about this as well. Can you tell us a bit more about that?
- S: Firstly, Binungana is drawn from the Jandai language, which is my language from Quandamooka Country, Noonuccal language. Binun means to hear, listen and gana means to think and understand. So Binungana means to hear, listen, think, and understand. To apply that term to allyship was very important because there's not a lot of us, Indigenous academics within the business sector. Very few of us. I think the UQ Business School has the most Indigenous academics in a business school across Australia. But we're still a very small cohort, so we're very dependent on our non-Indigenous colleagues to be competent in this space. When we were talking about

binungana allyship, it was really about how do we guide the non-Indigenous people to feel competent and confident to work in this space and push this agenda.

- G: And as a non-Indigenous academic, I've just found this concept of Binungana allyship really helpful just in my own way of engaging with Indigenising the curriculum. I think sometimes as non-Indigenous people, we don't really know if what we're doing is helping or actually just perpetuating colonial processes and power dynamic. So having guidelines for how to act ethically in this space has been really, really helpful in my own journey.
- S: Just to add one more thing on that, I firmly believe through this process that Gemma and I have gone through that there is a hard limit that non-Indigenous academics reach when they are engaging Indigenising curriculum. I don't feel like it's entirely appropriate for non-Indigenous academics to teach Indigenous knowledges across the board. The process that Gemma and I focused on was more about that decolonial foundations of that knowledge, unpicking that and also focusing on challenging deficit narratives. But when it comes to actual Indigenous knowledges itself, I feel like it's risky for non-Indigenous academics to put themselves in the position to teach that, and it's also risky to the university to ask that of our academics.
- T: And certainly Sam, that's one of the things that the Green Paper on Indigenising Curriculum has stated that Indigenous knowledges belong to Indigenous people. That's not to say not to have Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum, but for non-Indigenous people to work with Indigenous people.
- S: Totally spot on. That's why we came to the Binungana allyship process because that was our way of preventing problematic people doing things in a problematic way. Even if they had the best intentions, they can inadvertently reinforce that colonial project and not even know. And that's harmful to the non-Indigenous academics just as much as harmful to Indigenous academics.
- T: I think it's a deadly framing, Sam.
- K: Sharlene, can you tell us a bit more about that process of Indigenising curriculum in the Business school?
- SLD: Indigenising the curriculum in the Business school is probably a little different to what has been happening across the university because as Sam said, we have mostly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and learning designers working on the process, so it's driven by Aboriginal academics. We designed five criteria that we use to guide what we do in addition to the Green Paper, which was put out through the university. The first one was place-based. So we primarily look at Indigenising curriculum from a Yuggera Turrbal Quandamooka, Southeast Queensland Indigenous people's perspectives. Knowledge based, so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship and expertise are prioritised throughout the process.

Partnership based, which Sam and Gemma have already touched on. So we work collaboratively with our non-Indigenous academics through an allyship process and we have equal share in the content development and the teaching. Progression based, so content is built into a form of coherent knowledge across the courses. And experiential

based, so students directly engage with Indigenous knowledge, which includes sometimes guided on Country experiences.

T: Do you think about assessment in the indigenised curriculum?

SLD: Depending on the course and how we're doing the Indigenising curriculum, some of it might be a small amount of content, but other is knowledges. One course that we've actually been doing, and we've been doing the guided on Country experiences, we take a group of students over to Minjerribah and we work closely with QYAC who we have a memorandum of understanding with. What the students get to do is they get to have a think about their discipline, whether that be management, marketing, accounting, and how that might assist or help QYAC to develop the work that they do through the native title body. And so the assessment is all around pitching ideas or something to QYAC board or coming up with solutions to problems that are posed by QYAC of what they might like assistance with.

T: So a real act of reciprocity in the teaching and learning process. Thanks Sharlene. Sam and Gemma, I just want to get down to some nitty gritty now around this concept of collaboration. How is that working? Gemma, if I can ask you in the first instance, because you're teaching that large class on management.

G: It's been a really fun experience. I think Sam and I have had a lot of yarns together. Sam often sends me poetry, she writes poetry or poetry that other people have written. Oodgeroo Noonuccal poems often come across my desk, which is a really interesting way of thinking about management that I've never explored before. One of the things that we talked about through the process is that it is such a huge task and it's not something that Aboriginal academics can do alone. It also means that what we need to bring to this process is our strengths and really think about what is it that I know, what's the piece of the puzzle that I can put together. And for me that's teaching at scale, that's teaching with experiences, that's transitioning first year students into university. So I bring that expertise to the table and then Sam brings the specifics of the Indigenous scholars that we should be reading or the stories that I should know about that might be relevant to the specific content.

I1: Thanks Gemma. Sam, did you want to add anything to that?

S: Gemma and I did do a lot of yarning through this process and there was a lot of poetry, there was a lot of pictures as well. I did send her any pictures that I thought were relevant to the conversations we were having. So it was like an arts-based approach to allyship training. I don't think that that particular approach would work with everybody, I think Gemma really enjoyed that, so it was easy to engage on that level. There was a lot of times when we had hard conversations about things that were happening in the media. So last year with the referendum, Gemma and I sat down and we unpacked a lot of the stuff around that and the different perspectives and the really nuanced positions of people.

There was a lot of conversation about identity, there was a lot of conversation about positionality and this difference between those two things. But for collaboration, I mean, one of the things that was a big barrier for me coming into the Business School and engaging and Indigenising the curriculum, was where's the literature? There's no

literature for us to draw on. So one of the things that was a really big priority for Gemma and I was to find where we could value add and really target effective publications to help with the process of Indigenising curriculum within business.

- T: I would have to agree that that's not only the context of business, but there would be other parts within the university, other disciplines within the university who are struggling to find the Indigenous voice, the authoritative voice in that particular field.
- S: Yeah, that's true. And that was part of the reason why we really wanted to use Indigenising curriculum process as a place to leverage off and find those pressure points where literature can make a real impact.
- K: It's really great to hear how you're collaborating together. We're interested in what are the benefits for each of you. What's reciprocal about your relationship? Because one of the UQ Indigenising curriculum principles is about reciprocity.
- S: I'm very new to academia. I've only been here, this is my second year. Through this process, Gemma has really taken me under her wing, I would say, and invited me to all the right conferences, invited me to meet all the right people, people who are already competent in this space. Because as you guys probably know, it's a field of minds, the landscape's difficult to navigate is what I'm trying to say. You can come across people that are going to exploit you or people that are going to take you for advantage, and Gemma has really helped guide me through that process. So for me it's like, well, we wrote a paper together and then she wrote this presentation for a conference that was fantastic and I was brought along with that. So we're giving and taking on the outputs of the process.
- G: It's really lovely to hear. I've also had a really positive experience working with you. You've been very generous in sharing what you know with me and being vulnerable. And I know when we started working together you weren't too sure about who this white fella was.
- S: Yes.
- G: You've also opened up your relationships and your knowledge to me. Sharlene mentioned at the beginning that she's leading the Indigenous Business Hub here in the school and it was so wonderful to go along to one of the early events of that hub, and I felt so awkward because I don't know who the elders are, I don't know who's who, I don't know how to conduct myself, what the protocols are, but to be invited into that space and to have the opportunity to learn and to make new connections. And there's so much that I took from that event in terms of things that will inform this process of Indigenising the course that I teach, and in terms of perhaps future research relationships and so many things. So it's been definitely a process that's been about win-wins and I think we've all really benefited from it.
- S: I'd like to expand on what Gemma's saying though because she does more than what she's saying. So Gemma has had a few of our Indigenous PhD students tutoring into her course and every single one of them comes out of it saying, "That's a safe space." We find that around the university there's only pockets of safe spaces, and Gemma definitely creates one of those.

- T: And in that regard, Gemma, I'd like to thank you for looking after our mob. This podcast is called Indigenising Curriculum in Practice. Sharlene, can I ask you what that means for you?
- SLD: For me, the really big thing around is working collaboratively with our non-Indigenous colleagues to ensure that when we're Indigenising the process, it's done authentically. The outcomes for our students are of a really good quality, but also at the same time ensuring that it is safe for us to do the work that we do. And having allies is really important in that process.
- T: Gemma and Sam, what does Indigenising Curriculum in Practice mean for you, particularly now that you're doing it?
- S: I had real reservations about this when I first joined the team because what does it even mean? How is that even possible? We're literally in colonial structures on stolen land, how do you Indigenise anything? Everything here is built to exploit that. But I feel like we can't get it perfect, so we need to just do as best we can to get it to the point where it's not creating as much harm, producing students that have the ability to think in different ways, to really unravel and question the foundations of what they're taught and what they assume, so they can peel back those layers and think, oh, hang on a sec, there's another way. I don't have to do it that way. Just because everyone else has done it that way forever doesn't mean I need to continue that. So producing really competent students who can question things and think differently to me is what's important.
- T: Gemma?
- G: I've really enjoyed it and I get a lot of enjoyment out of challenging the dominant version of management that I teach my students and actually opening them up to other perspectives. So for me, this is an ongoing process. It's never going to be done and it's never going to be perfect, but it's been really fun and I think our students are really benefiting from it and really enjoying learning about the multiple ways of doing management.
- SLD: I just wanted to put into perspective the kind of work that we're doing in the Business School. So we're the largest School in the university. We have 272 courses that are offered 585 times in one year. The Indigenising process is huge. And we're a team of six Aboriginal academics and I don't know about 200 allies. So it's a big job, it's worthwhile. And what we are trying to do is actually document that as much as we can so that other universities, other people in academia can learn from the way we did it. It might not be perfect, but as Sam said, there's a critical shortage of how we go about doing this and we're doing it in a different way, somebody else will do it in another way. But if we can all learn from the process, then it's going to be a better world, better place to work in academia.
- S: I just wanted to mention as well that in my position on the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion committee for the Business, Economics and Law faculty, that we are developing an arts-based public pedagogy for the campus around the area of the Business School, so that should be exciting, but that's to come soon.

K: Thanks so much for joining us, Gemma, Sam and Sharlene. It's great to hear about how you're collaborating together as Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics to Indigenise the curriculum within the Business School and also that importance of allyship of non-Indigenous academics as well, and also how you really are modelling reciprocity, which is a really important part of it as well. And thanks for joining us for another episode of Indigenising Curriculum in Practice.

[end of recording]