

***One Country: Different Voices:***

**Meeting the Challenge of Introducing Indigenous  
Approaches to Learning to non-Indigenous Students.**

**Creative Work and Exegesis**

**[www.onecountrydifferentvoices.com.au](http://www.onecountrydifferentvoices.com.au)**

**by**

**Kitty Grazyna Maria Vigo**

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"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders should be aware that some of the links on the *One Country: Different Voices* website that constitutes my artefact may feature images and voices of people who have passed away, and links to burial sites, art sites and artefacts. I apologise for distress that is caused."

## Abstract

One of the challenges facing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers working in 'mainstream' education is the question of how to embed Indigenous approaches to learning in the classroom in a way that is authentic and productive (Yunkaporta 2009b, p. 37). The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2012) has mandated that all students must learn about "histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, of their contribution to Australia, and of the consequences of colonial settlement for Indigenous communities, past and present" (p. 7). Australian universities, under the aegis of their peak body Universities Australia, have adopted policies committed to closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage in Australia, appointing more Indigenous academics and accepting more Indigenous students supported through university Indigenous centres. Yunkaporta contends that "tokenism and trivialization of Aboriginal culture in the curriculum" is less likely to occur if an Aboriginal pedagogy is used by 'mainstream' education (2012, p. 37).

This exegesis and the artefact, a website titled *One Country: Different Voices* ([www.onecountrydifferentvoices.com.au](http://www.onecountrydifferentvoices.com.au)), offer one approach for teachers that uses a website as a means for meeting the challenge of *how* to create curriculum that embeds Indigenous approaches to learning.

The artefact uses *8-Ways Learning*, an Aboriginal pedagogical framework, as the starting point for non-Indigenous teachers and students to explore a hypertextual and rhizomatic text that applies Indigenous approaches to learning. The *8-Ways Learning* framework was developed by the Elders and Owners of traditional knowledge of Western NSW Regional and its custodial owners, and RAET – Western New South Wales Regional Aboriginal Education Team, DEC. The website includes text that describes and discusses *8-Ways Learning*, many web-based links and resources such as videos about Indigenous knowledge and life, readings on learning theories, study activities, and a

moderated discussion forum that invites students to engage in debates about issues such as sport and racism.

The exegesis is based in practice led research. It uses the metaphor of weaving to discuss and analyse how the artefact brings together the learning approaches of constructivism, critical pedagogy, narrative pedagogy, Cultural Interface, and the *8-Ways Learning* framework, to create a web-based learning resources that enhances students' actively integrated holistic learning. It also discusses how the artefact acts as a reconciling interactive space that brings together both Indigenous and non-Indigenous theories of learning, and provides a model for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers for introducing Indigenous approaches to learning in the classroom.

## Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and pay respect to their Elders, past and present. I also acknowledge all the Wurundjeri people and their Elders, past and present. I will strive to respect their culture, stories and traditions. I also acknowledge and respect the Elders and Owners of traditional knowledge in Western New South Wales who own the 8-Ways learning pedagogies, and the work done by the Regional Aboriginal Education Team (RAET), DEC, based at the Bangamalanha Centre, Dubbo, in producing the *8-Ways Aboriginal Pedagogy from Western NSW* publication.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders should be aware that some of the links on the *One Country: Different Voices* website that constitutes my artefact may feature images and voices of people who have passed away, and links to burial sites, art sites and artefacts. I apologise for any distress this causes.

I would like to thank the Elders and Owners of traditional knowledge of Western New South Wales for permission to use the 8-Ways Learning framework in my work. I also thank members of the Wurundjeri community, especially Elders Aunty Dot Peters and Uncle Juby Wandin for their time and permission to use their stories.

To my supervisors, Professor Josie Arnold and Dr Janet Bryant, I wish to express my deep appreciation for their time and assistance and their faith that I would one day finish this work. I also wish to thank Dan Green for his extraordinary work in helping to design and program the *One Country: Different Voices* website.

I also wish to thank Professor Josie Arnold for being such a good friend.

Finally, I wish to thank my husband David Vigo who has been endlessly patient in his support.

To you all, my heartfelt thanks.

## **Declaration of Original Work**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no material previously published or written for an award of any other degree or diploma of a university of higher learning.

Signed

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kitty Grazyna Maria Vigo', written in a cursive style.

Kitty Grazyna Maria Vigo

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this work to my late husband David, my daughter Kate, my sister Barbara, and my mother Yanina Kompe who lived a truly remarkable life.

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## Preamble

In the forecourt of Swinburne University of Technology's former campus at Lilydale there is an installation called *Bukker Tillibul* by non-Indigenous New Zealand artist Chris Booth which stands in front of non-Indigenous architect Glen Murcutt's award-winning modern glass-fronted design for an education building. While both artists are non-Indigenous they consulted extensively with Wurundjeri Elders on whose land these edifices stand. In many ways they serve as a metaphor for my work in that they represent both Indigenous and Western ideas about knowledge and how, through *One Country: Different Voices*, I am introducing an Indigenous approach to learning to non-Indigenous students.

The installation *Bukker Tillibul* consists of three standing structures symbolising crows and a large rock symbolising Bunjil the Eagle. The concept for the installation came to Booth after he visited the campus and was inspired by the way Murcutt's building seemed to thrust out towards the landscape. He was also taken by the large numbers of crows that could be frequently seen flying around the campus. Booth always consults with the local Indigenous peoples in the place where he is to create an installation and was told by Wurundjeri elder and Swinburne Adjunct Professor Joy Murphy that two of the most important totems of the Wurundjeri people are Bunjil the Eagle – the Great Creator Spirit who made the mountains, the rivers, the rocks and the stones and created all living creatures and taught them how to behave – and Waang the Crow – a trickster who also brought the gift of fire to people. Booth sited *Bukker Tillibul* in front of Murcutt's building which features an atrium which has glass on three sides so that students and Indigenous community people can look over Wurundjeri land.

Murcutt designed the building after consulting with Wurundjeri Elders to give students the best opportunity to overlook Wurundjeri Country and to reflect the way that the Lilydale campus would operate differently from the rest of the university. It was to be a forward-looking “Multi Modal Learning” campus (Jeffrey, Smith & Weal 1998; Signor 2003) which would encourage students to engage in off-campus learning assisted by Learning Guides; via web-based access to teachers; on-line learning materials; and, Study Centres dotted around the Outer Eastern region for tele-conferenced lectures and tutorials.

Booth’s installation was officially named *Bukker Tillibul* by Murphy on October 16, 2002. Loosely translated, “bukker tillibul” means “bottomless pit” and refers to the land where a star fell on what is now the David Mitchell Limited quarry (behind the Lilydale campus). The large rock symbolising Bunjil the Eagle came from the quarry, hence the relationship between the sculpture and its name. The three standing structures, symbolising crows, are constructed from granite from a quarry near Bendigo (Dja Daja Wurrung land).



Figure 1: *Bukker Tillibul*.

The three standing structures representing the crows are at the foreground. The rock representing Bunjil the Eagle is located behind them. The installation is located in front of Murcott’s prize-winning building



Figure 2: Bunjil the Eagle.

This rock hewn from the Mitchell quarry located behind the Lilydale Campus site represents Bunjil the Eagle



Figure 3: The atrium of the Lilydale Campus

In 1997, during her “Welcome to Country” during the opening of the Lilydale Campus, Murphy had said that she felt her people would approve of the building because its glass walls meant they could still see what was common to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people “and that is our land”. She said that it was important that Dreaming Stories – such as how Bunjil created the world and Waang the Crow brought fire to people – should continue to be taught by Elders, the caretakers of traditional Indigenous wisdom and knowledge, in order to maintain the culture of the people.

Murphy concluded her speech with some comments that made a profound impression on me – in particular that the new campus offered an opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and their cultures and educations to come together to form a better partnership “to educate our people”. She was pleased with the work that Swinburne was doing to encourage local Indigenous students to enrol in higher education courses, concluding:

I’m not an academic in the contemporary sense but I believe that my traditional values and education and knowledge that has been passed down from my Elders will help build this university to what I believe will be a great partnership of people.

*One Country: Different Voices* reflects my commitment to Yunkaporta’s contention that there is “common ground between Aboriginal pedagogies and the optimal pedagogies for all learners” and that “a reconciling interface approach is needed to harmonise the relationship between the two pedagogical systems” (Yunkaporta n.d).

## **Introduction**

### **The Purpose and Content of *One Country: Different Voices***

The *One Country: Different Voices* website uses the visual representation of the *8-Ways Learning* framework developed by Indigenous academic Dr Tyson Yunkaporta (2009a, 2009b) and the Regional Aboriginal Education Team of Western New South Wales (RAET 2012) as an interactive navigational tool to allow non-Indigenous teachers and students to access web-based information about Indigenous approaches to learning. My use of the *8-Ways Learning* framework reflects Biggs' (1999, p. 13) contention that when we encounter new ways of thinking we see the world differently and that non-Indigenous students would benefit from being introduced to a different – Indigenous – way of conceptualising and visualising learning.

Use of the visual representation used by the *8-Ways Learning* framework also establishes an Indigenous approach to learning as a starting point, rather than as an addition to extant non-Indigenous learning strategies.

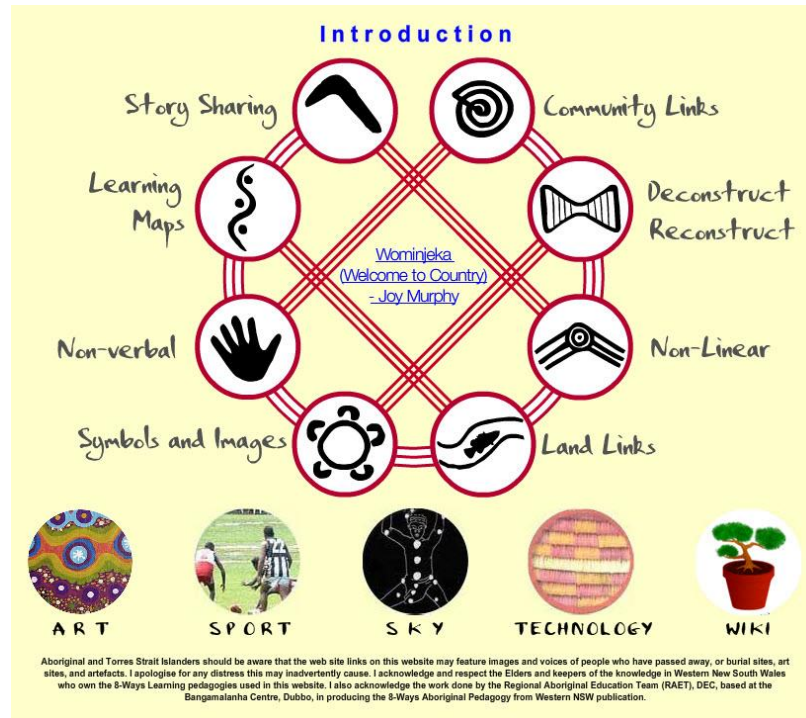


Figure 4: The opening page of the *One Country: Different Voices* website featuring the visual representation of the *8 Ways Learning* framework

At a time when Indigenous matters remain highly politicised in Australia, I believe students would also benefit from gaining insights and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures and issues. This is supported by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2012) mandating that the Australian Curriculum for secondary schools should embed lessons on “the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, of their contribution to Australia, and of the consequences of colonial settlement for Indigenous communities, past and present” (p. 7).

By clicking on the *8-Ways Learning* interactive symbols featured on the opening page of the *One Country: Different Voices* website, non-Indigenous teachers and students can access learning materials that describe each element of the *8-Ways Learning* framework and suggestions about how they might apply them to their learning, links to other learning materials such as videos, activities and readings from a range of other web-based sources, and a Wikispace where they can discuss and exchange ideas with students from all over Australia.

As will be discussed in further detail in the body of this exegesis, the *8-Ways Learning* framework developed by Yunkaporta and RAET is premised on an Aboriginal pedagogical approach that all learning is interconnected. That is, both the individual and the community connect and grow through lessons drawn from their country; knowledge is shared through narrative, visual and non-verbal means; thinking and learning is holistic and non-linear; and, all knowledge is brought home to benefit the community (Yunkaporta n.d., p. 1). The framework provides teachers with a means to access and implement Aboriginal pedagogy in their everyday classroom practice.

The *8-Ways Learning* framework was developed in response to research findings that suggest that in an Australian educational environment where Indigenous students are not generally performing well there is a clear need to develop and adapt pedagogies that “are culturally appropriate for all students in order to address Aboriginal disadvantage in education” (Yunkaporta n.d., p. 2). *8-Ways Learning* builds on gaps identified by Yunkaporta in strategies developed by Harris (1990, 1994) and the Aboriginal Ways of Learning Project (Hughes & More 1997, 2004) for improving Indigenous learning outcomes. These gaps centre on the lack of connection between land and pedagogy and the absence in their approaches of the narrative voice of Indigenous peoples. According to Yunkaporta, in these strategies “[S]tories were shared of real-life community learning activities from which Aboriginal pedagogy might be drawn” (Yunkaporta n.d., p. 2).

*8-Ways Learning* draws on international research by Indigenous educators including Wheaton (2000); Shajahan (2005); and Marker (2006) which refers to Indigenous pedagogy being drawn from sentient landscapes. It is also influenced by Battiste (2002, 2008) and Nakata (2002, 2007a, 2007b), who emphasise the “common ground” between Aboriginal pedagogies and optimal pedagogies for all learners. In doing so *8-Ways Learning* becomes what Yunkaporta terms “a reconciling interface approach” that will “harmonise the relationship between the two pedagogical systems” (Yunkaporta n.d., p. 6).

My artefact – *One Country: Different Voices* – is intended to work on at least three levels. Firstly it introduces non-Indigenous students to the *8-Ways Learning* framework and invites them to think about how they could apply and adapt Indigenous approaches to

learning to build on and enrich their already established learning strategies. For example, they are invited to reflect on how the concept of *Community Links*, which embeds strategies for “group-oriented” and “localised” learning that is “connected to real-life purposes and contexts” (RAET 2012, p. 52), could apply to their learning and benefit their lives.

Secondly, the website challenges what the non-Indigenous student knows about learning and how they construct knowledge. For example, students may believe that history is somehow an objective account of past events. A reading included on the website titled, “History – Whose Story? History Writing and the Story of Indigenous Australia”, which discusses the Western approach to writing Indigenous history, shows students that every historical account reflects the disciplinary and ideological position of the historian and the cultural experience of the history teller. The reading includes a series of what I have termed “Counterpoints” which link to other web-based readings such as Greer’s essay *Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood* (2003a) in which she argues that white Australians are unable to accept that they should assimilate into Aboriginal culture rather than accepting the dominant ideological position that Aboriginals should assimilate into white culture. Links are also provided to counter-arguments by Henderson (2004) and Langton (2003), and Greer’s (2003b) response to her critics. Through these means students are invited to read a range of opinions and begin to formulate their own opinions through assessing the merits of each of the positions.

Similarly, a reading included in the *Learning Maps* area of the website titled, “Myself as a Learner and Teacher: The Road to Developing *One Country: Different Voices*”, addresses in part the underlying pedagogy of the website and provides students with the opportunity to gain insights into what pedagogical theories have influenced me in developing the website. It also describes the experiences of my own life that have shaped my teaching approach and philosophy, and why and how I have used the *8-Ways Learning* framework. In this way it models what I am thinking about when conceiving of a teaching/learning exercise. Through these means the website encourages the student to also reflect upon the cultural constructions of their own lives.

Thirdly, the artefact provides non-Indigenous students and teachers with opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of aspects of Australian Indigenous life by providing a range of web-based resources that encourage them to reflect upon and challenge their extant knowledge and taken-for-granted assumptions about Indigenous Australia. For example, most Lilydale campus students were not aware of the existence of the Coranderrk Mission located near Healesville, close to their campus. Neither were they aware of the Coranderrk story, nor of the fact that many Coranderrk descendants still live in the area. The website includes interviews with Wurundjeri Elders, descended from the first Coranderrk inhabitants, talking about their lives and their continuing sense of relationship with Coranderrk. It includes links to other documents and videos in which Wurundjeri and other people of the Kulin nation offer Welcome to Country and talk about their connection to their Country. Significantly it also includes videos in which three Indigenous Swinburne students talk about their Aboriginal sense of identity.

Through these stories the website provides an opportunity for non-Indigenous students to question what they know about past and contemporary Indigenous life in their local neighbourhood. Further, through the inclusion of the Wikispace discussion forum, students are encouraged to exchange and discuss their insights and ideas with other students.

From this description of the purpose and content of *One Country: Different Voices*, I now move on to how the development of the website builds on my experience and knowledge of developing technology-based learning materials. I will also outline how this experience led to my decision to create a website as the vehicle for introducing non-Indigenous teachers and students to the Indigenous approaches to learning.

### **The Exegesis**

This exegesis addresses how the artefact has grown from my experience in developing over 30 web-sites and CD ROMs, the synergies between the World Wide Web (WWW) as hypertext and Indigenous knowledge, and pedagogical theories including constructivism, critical pedagogy, narrative pedagogy, Nakata's Cultural Interface, and the *8-Ways Learning* framework, that form the basis of the artefact.

### **The Journey to *One Country: Different Voices***

My interest in using the WWW as a learning space began in 1992 after winning the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Innovation in Teaching which I shared with my teaching colleagues in the Media Studies Department to explore ways of using hypertext for learning. This led to our involvement with a number of other funded projects that explored and developed web- and CD ROM- based learning materials. These projects included: three Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT) grants - *A Methodology for Utilising Technology for Self-Directed Learning in the Production of Narrative Discourse*, 1994; *Student Self-Learning and Self-Assessment Using an Interactive Computer-Based Program*, 1995; and, *Oz21: Australia's Cultural Dreaming*, 1996, later revised and extended in 2003 to become *G21: Global Cultural Dreaming*; an ARC Small Grant, *Citing Indigenous peoples in Cyberspace*, 2000, with Indigenous lecturer Andrew Peters; and, the development of the undergraduate and post-graduate subject websites.

As I became involved in developing these kinds of learning resources I became convinced of their importance for dealing with some of the challenges facing traditional mainstream teaching practices and curricula. Changes in Government policies regarding fees and student support mean that student study practices are changing, with increasing numbers taking part-time paid work to support their study and life-style costs. Informal surveys of my undergraduate students indicated that many of them were doing more than 20 hours of paid work, often during scheduled lecture and tutorial times. Using knowledge technologies such as the WWW creates flexible learning opportunities for students, allowing them to engage in independent learning by accessing lectures and other learning materials on-line at times of their own choosing. Further, they can be used as support and revision materials for students who do attend lectures and tutorials.

Use of the WWW as a learning platform also acknowledges where students are in terms of how they access information and communicate with each other. Through carefully planned learning activities, underpinned by sound pedagogical practice, it is possible to use internet resources to facilitate students becoming what Bandura describes as "agents of their own learning, not just recipients of information" (2006, p. 164).

My decision to create a website was based in the belief that the WWW is a “knowledge technology” (Laurillard 2012) because it changes our relationship to what is known and how it can be known. According to Laurillard, knowledge technologies such as the WWW “shape what is learned by changing how it is learned” (Laurillard 2012, Kindle Locations 271-275). By creating a website students are given opportunities to read text-based information prepared by me, as well as linking to a virtual library of relevant texts written by other academics and experts.

By reading formal academic texts, such as peer-reviewed journals and conference papers, the student is encouraged to develop an inquiring analytical approach to research done by others and what lessons might be learned. Examples found on the website include links to papers written by Yunkaporta on applying the *8-Ways Learning* framework; University of Sydney’s (2013) portal to learning theories such as constructivism; the Freire Project (2013) for papers about critical pedagogy; and a paper written by astrophysicists Hamacher and Norris (2011) about Australian Aboriginal traditional knowledge of eclipses.

Linked mass media resources such as videos, television news and documentaries, newspaper reports, and radio, provide students with further information that they can use to build on knowledge gained through reading formal texts. Examples here include a video of Nyungah Senior Elder Robert Bropho (2007) talking about how his people learn from the land; a video titled *Living Country* (2005) which shows how Aboriginal women from Central Australia apply learning strategies such as scaffolding to show their children how to live off the land; and, an image of an ancient Aboriginal rock carvings on the Basin Track Engraving Site, NSW (2007) which is believed to depict eclipses.

The website links to a Wikispace and a discussion forum which allows students to debate issues reported in the mass media (such as sport and racism, and cultural representation in film), and to exchange their stories with students beyond their classroom. Other advantages of Wikis are that they allow teachers to set up their own project area to which only their own students have access; teachers and students can contribute to a project area created by another teacher; and, other teachers and students can view closed project areas.

The WWW is not only a dynamic and interactive environment for introducing non-Indigenous teachers and students to the *8-Ways Learning* framework, its hypertextual nature also has synergies with Australian Indigenous practices of sharing knowledge.

### **The Web as Hypertext, Hypertext as Metaphor for Indigenous Narrative**

Hypertext is a word conceived and first used by Theodor H. Nelson in 1965 to describe electronic text as non-linear presentation of material that branches and allows the reader to choose how and in what sequence they will access it (Vassar Miscellany News 1965).

Barthes (1974) defines hypertext as blocks of text (words, images, sound video, etc.) that are linked electronically by open-ended multiple paths. According to Barthes,

...the networks [réseaux] are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend *as far as the eye can reach*, they are indeterminable (Barthes 1974, pp. 5-6, emphasis in original).

The “hypertextual” approach to learning and narrative by Indigenous Australians is revealed in a yarn-up, or discussion, between Yunkaporta and Kirby on the *8-Ways Learning* framework (Yunkaporta & Kirby 2012). Yunkaporta comments that none of the pedagogies depicted in *8-Ways Learning* exist in isolation. Rather, they are “dynamic and interrelated”, like all Indigenous knowledge and ways of thinking. This kind of relational thinking is represented in the *8-Ways Learning* framework as *Non-Linear*. Yunkaporta connects *Non-Linear* pedagogy with *Story-Sharing*, *Land Links* and *Learning Maps* because together they reflect the way in which Aboriginal Australians have used visualisation, memory and knowledge of land to conceive and pass on knowledge.

Damousi (2005) also refers to the hypertextual nature of Dreaming. She defines Dreaming as the term coined by Western anthropologists to describe the narratives that relate to “the Aboriginal belief that the land holds religious and philosophical knowledge and that everything that inhabits the land (whether animate or inanimate, human or

animal) has a fundamental connection to it” (p. 96). In Yunkaporta’s words, “[i]n the Aboriginal world, stories are in the land - stories *are* places” (Yunkaporta 2009a, p. 32). However, Dreaming also encompasses the notion of experience existing in a web-like fashion that links the parallel worlds of the past and present. Dreaming knowledge relies on memory and is transmitted, orally and through performance. It consists of stories that relate to specific places that shape their content and is a means of transmitting cultural knowledge from generation to generation (Damousi 2005, p. 96). This traditional knowledge allows the Indigenous person to know who their ancestors were and who they themselves are. Dreaming knowledge can be used to make cultural statements “appropriate to contemporary events and situations” (Watson 2003, p. 204).

The relationship between hypertext and Dreaming has also been noted by Glowczewski (2005) who, when living with Aborigines at Lajamanu in the Northern Territory, was struck by the similarities in what she terms “reticular thinking” practised by the Aborigines and developments in artificial intelligence. She observed that the Aboriginal’s “perception of memory as a virtual space-time, and the way they project knowledge on a geographical network, both physical and imaginary” had a hypertextual form that was still being explored by the computer program developers of the time (p. 25).

Watson (2003) also comments that all of the visual representations created by Kutjungka women of Central Australia, from marking their bodies, creating sand drawings, body painting to canvas painting, “are linked by webs of thought to the Tjukurrpa (Dreaming), the ground of cultural meaning” (p. 25).

This form of hypertextual story-telling is also encountered in the work of artists such as Aboriginal artist Emily Kam Ngwararray who uses the metaphor of the yam root, which spreads underground, to represent complex ideas about her country and culture. Indeed, her 1989 painting *Ntange Dreaming* has been described by National Gallery Australia curators (2013) as being akin to a self portrait because “...it is an image of her identity expressed in terms of her ceremonial status, her role in Anmatyerr society and her intimate relationship with the ancestrally created landscape of her birth”. She uses lines to connect the various important features and influences in her life and dots to represent the seeds of the ntange (yam) plant that the Anmatyerr women collect to grind into damper.

Kirby (Yunkaporta & Kirby 2012) comments that much of Aboriginal knowledge comes from land and that the *8-Ways* diagram acts as prompt for her and others to express this knowledge “within a cross-cultural dialogue”. She notes that the learning ways expressed in the *8-Ways Learning* framework are based on kinship systems and represent how Aboriginal Australians have imparted knowledge for millennia. This knowledge is “grounded in systems of land and systems of family that still shape our thinking and ways of learning today” (p. 1). It is for this reason that some of the lines connect around the *8-Ways* diagram but not at the top and bottom.

Instructions on how to use the *One Country: Different Voices* can be found from a link on the Introduction page of the site.

From this overview of the synergies between the hypertextual nature of the WWW and Indigenous forms of knowledge-sharing and narrative, I will now discuss why I have used the metaphor of weaving in the exegesis.

### **The use of the weaving metaphor in the exegesis: weft and warp.**

The Indigenous practice of weaving around topics when story-telling, the use of the term “yarn” with its Western connotations of thread that is woven or knitted, the Indigenous use of creating string figures while conveying cultural information, and the connotations of a World Wide *Web* are what led me to use the weaving metaphor in this exegesis.

In traditional Australian Aboriginal society yarning is an important means for exchanging or conveying information. Bessarab (2012) defines yarning as “an informal conversation that is culturally friendly and recognised by Aboriginal people as meaning to talk about something, someone or provide and receive information”. Yarning occurs best in informal, relaxed environments and is used to teach young people. It builds on oral traditions for handing down important cultural information. Bessarab notes that, when yarning, Australian Aboriginals will often weave around a topic:

Aboriginal people’s conversations often take the form of a story when replying to a question. They may start off answering a question but then may slip into a story which might seem totally unrelated; but the story is the reply to the question or topic being explored (2012, slide 4).

Edwards (2011 p. 6) notes the use of string to form figures similar to cat cradles is commonly used by Indigenous Australians as a means of direct transmission of cultural information from one generation to another”.

Tim Berners-Lee, developer of the WWW, also uses a weaving metaphor for his memoir, *Weaving the Web* (1999).

I use the weaving metaphor to connect the pedagogical approaches used to underpin the artefact: constructivism, critical pedagogy, Cultural Interface and narrative pedagogy are represented as weft threads because in weaving weft threads make up the body of the fabric. The warp thread is *8-Ways Learning* framework because in weaving the warp provides the core of support for the finished piece, giving the textile body and form.

These concepts of the Indigenous practice of yarning and the use of the weaving metaphor in my exegesis, and, as will be discussed below, my interest in narrative pedagogy, have each been influential in determining the structure of this exegesis.

### **The Use of a Narrative Approach for the Structure and Content of the Exegesis**

The use of narrative is a central teaching pedagogy for Indigenous teachers and Elders and underpins each of the pedagogies of the *8-Ways Learning* framework. In non-Indigenous teaching contexts, narrative is seen as a critical instrument for fostering self-reflection which allows teachers to inquire into and “connect their professional learning and their practice as teachers with their ongoing development as people” (Ritchie & Wilson 2000, p. 21). Indeed, Elbaz (1991, p. 3) has argued:

Story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense. This is not merely a claim about the aesthetic or emotional sense of fit of the notion of story with our intuitive understanding of teaching, but the epistemological claim that teachers’ knowledge can be best understood in this way.

Narrative inquiry has become a recognised pedagogical approach to encourage a reflexive process for teachers to interrogate their own teaching and learning (Lyons &

LaBoskey 2002). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) go so far as to suggest that “thinking narratively” (p. 2) is a fitting way for teachers to bring their curriculum course readings to bear on their lived experiences of teaching in their classrooms. Macintyre, Latta and Kim (2011) argue that the “narrative theorizing” that emerges from self-reflection helps to bring teachers near to their practices (p. 692).

I view the teaching experiences that led to the development of my artefact as a narrative which includes chapters in which I encounter, reflect on, and apply pedagogies such as constructivism, critical pedagogy, narrative pedagogy, Cultural Interface and, lately, the *8-Ways Learning* framework. My belief in the power of narrative as a pedagogical tool has led me to believe that it is appropriate to use a narrative approach in my exegesis. Further, the cyclical process of reflection that occurred led me to think about how these pedagogies could be applied to the artefact, and how the experience of creating the artefact led to further reflections and better understanding of the pedagogies.

The iterative cycle of reflecting on theory, applying it to the artefact, and taking the insights gained from creating the artefact back to a re-examination of theory, constitutes practice led research (PLR). Arnold (2007) describes PLR as a “dynamic way to knowledge” in which the practice of creating an artefact acts as pathway to research and assists in the bridging of theory and practice (p. 5). Marley (2012) suggests that PLR “is based on, and characterised by, the exploration of issues and interests through the production of the artefact” (p. 1) His interpretation of PLR is premised on the acceptance that the creation of an artefact can be regarded as research (Scrivener & Chapman 2004, pp. 2-3). Haseman (2006, p. 6) argues that the artefact is in effect the embodiment of the artefact creator’s research findings and requires no written statement of the theories that underpin it. A better way to describe the *One Country: Different Voices* website is as an artefact that is informed by a body of critical theory (Douglas, Scopa & Gray 2000, p. 3). It takes as its starting point an Indigenous approach to pedagogy and acts as model for non-Indigenous teachers wishing to introduce these pedagogies to non-Indigenous students. The pedagogical theories that inform my artefact, and the insights gained from the practice of developing it, are explicated in the exegesis, thereby making a contribution to the knowledge and practice of teaching and learning.

*One Country: Different Voices* contains many narratives from Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, but it also essentially tells my story as a teacher and the experiences and pedagogical theories that led to my decision to create a website that takes as its starting point the Indigenous pedagogies of the *8-Ways Learning* framework. By selecting particular links to Indigenous experience and culture, web-based readings which deal with pedagogy and Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives and accounts on a range of cultural issues, I implicitly present my view of what is important or worth questioning. I make my personal ideology and teaching practice transparent by including readings written by me such as “My Story”; “The Road to Developing *One Country: Different Voices*, My Teaching and Learning Journey”; and, “History – Whose Story? History Writing and the Story of Indigenous Australia”.

These stories of my journey constitute my contribution to the knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning.

## **Section 1**

### **Weaving the Fabric of *One Country: Different Voices***

In this section I discuss constructivism and how it forms the first weft of the exegesis. As noted in my introduction, I have used the metaphor of weaving because of the many references to fabric and weaving that occur both in Indigenous narrativity and in hypertext and the WWW. I also use a narrative style in my discussion because narrative is a central teaching pedagogy for Indigenous teachers and Elders and underpins each of the pedagogies of the *8-Ways Learning* framework.

#### ***Weft Thread 1: Constructivism***

Constructivism is a theory or paradigm for learning or knowledge acquisition that has its roots in both philosophy and psychology and has at its core the belief that learners actively construct their own knowledge and meaning from their experiences and exploration of ideas (Fosnot 1996; Steffe & Gale 1995). Since the 1970s constructivism has been recognised as both a “paradigm” and as a “theory” (Fosnot 1996), however, in recent years so many variants of constructivism have emerged that it has been argued that constructivism could be described as “a church of theoretical accounts” (Liu & Matthews 2005, p. 386).

Most discussions of constructivism define it as consisting of two major variants – cognitive/radical constructivism and social/ realist constructivism (Kalina & Powell 2009; Keller 2011; Liu & Matthews 2005). However, Doolittle (1999) identifies three main variants of constructivism – cognitive constructivism, social constructivism and radical constructivism, which are located along a continuum and with each form having significant but subtle differences and emphases. While all three of Doolittle’s variants of

constructivism contribute to the conception and construction of *One Country: Different Voices*, it is social constructivism that has the greatest relevance for my work.

For Doolittle, in cognitive constructivism knowledge results from the accurate internalisation and (re)construction of external reality by an individual. This occurs when students engage in individual reflective active learning to build knowledge of the world (Huitt 2009; Scardamalia & Bereiter 2006). This approach to learning has been identified as being typical for Indigenous Australians and is described in the *8-Ways Learning* framework as *Deconstruct Reconstruct*, whereby “Aboriginal students master activities and texts by beginning with the whole structure, rather than a series of sequenced steps” (RAET 2012, p. 51). This process of internalising outside knowledge and adapting it to individual experience (i.e., adapting knowledge of the whole to the part) has implicit in it the belief that external reality *is* knowable to the individual and it is this emphasis that differentiates cognitive constructivism from both social and radical constructivism.

Doolittle’s concern with cognitive constructivism is that while it is concerned with the way that what is learned is represented, symbolised or organised within the mind, it has little bearing on the nature of the subjective knowledge within the mind. However, I believe that Doolittle’s concern is an implicit acceptance of radical constructivism analytic approach which privileges learning from the part to the whole that has become the paradigmatic approach to research (Usher & Edwards 1994, p. 4). Further, it ignores the increasing acceptance by Western educators of holistic learning and Biggs’ contention that “sound knowledge is based on *interconnections*” (1999, p. 73, italics in original).

My interpretation of Doolittle’s reservations about cognitive constructivism is that he believes it *objectifies* what is essentially, in his view, a subjective experience. However, this objectification of what Doolittle terms a subjective experience ignores that reflective learning essentially involves a process of internalising knowledge (Biggs 1999, p. 66) and also fails to account for the importance identified by Yunkaporta of the *subjective* experience for Australian Aboriginals of connecting with land and seeing the land as a source of learning (2009a, p. 32). By using the *8-Ways Learning* framework which emphasises learning from the whole to the part, *One Country: Different Voices*

challenges the non-Indigenous student to adopt what for some is a culturally-opposite approach to learning.

Secondly, social constructivism, first proposed by Vygotsky in 1934, assumes that learning and knowledge are an outcome of social interaction and language usage. Learning is seen as a shared and collaborative experience in which great importance is placed on discussion and exchange of ideas. This occurs through scaffolding in which the learner is guided from what is presently known to what is to be known. The *8-Ways Learning* framework recognises scaffolding as being central for effective Aboriginal learning strategies (RAET 2012, p. 33). My artefact implicitly introduces students to the concept of scaffolding both through a description of Aboriginal use of scaffolding in the *Deconstruct Reconstruct* link text and through two web-based video links: one which shows use of scaffolding techniques in an Indigenous classroom, the other shows a non-Indigenous teacher using scaffolding techniques to maintain discipline in her classroom.

In simple terms scaffolding involves a person with knowledge helping the less experienced person to engage in that knowledge at a higher level than they would have been able to do unaided (Donovan & Smolkin 2002; Kaste 2004; van de Pol, Volman & Beishuizen 2010; Vygotsky 1978; Wood, Bruner & Ross 1976). With appropriate teacher support, students can function within the potential of their individual development to a point where the teacher is no longer necessary. They use and apply knowledge independently, and in time, pass it on to others. This process incorporates Vygotsky's idea of the *zone of proximal development* (ZOD) that recognises children's learning is limited primarily by the ideas they have mastered at a given point in time and that development beyond this zone requires careful coaching and scaffolding of learning. Clark and Graves (2005) and Pardo (2004) refer to this process as the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson & Gallagher 1983). They describe it as consisting of three phases: (i) teacher responsibility, (ii) joint responsibility, and (iii) student responsibility.

Hejl (2011) develops Doolittle's variant of social constructivism further to emphasise that learning is also an outcome of cultural evolution. Thus, learning by the individual is not confined to their particular lifetime experiences, but also builds on both the past and present learning and experience of the individual's culture as a whole. Concepts

formed by the individual such as “right”, “wrong”, “behaviour worth imitating”, “female” or “male” are heavily influenced by how the culture in which the individual lives conceived and evolved them in the past (p. 228). Hejl’s definition has strong resonances with Aboriginal Dreaming as a means of transmitting cultural knowledge from generation to generation.

I believe social constructivism provides a good “fit” for the teaching and learning model I have woven with *One Country: Different Voices* because it emphasises learning as deriving from social interaction and language usage. Indeed, as the *8-Ways Learning* framework shows, every Indigenous learning experience is community-based and collaborative and even the apparent absence of spoken words used in its *Non-verbal* learning approach makes extensive use of culturally-recognised forms of communication such as silence and body language (RAET 2012, p. 52).

Nevertheless, Doolittle’s social construction variation suffers from a limitation in that it fails to recognise that when Aboriginal Australians connect with land and see it as a source of learning, that this is both a subjective and *objective* experience. As web-based text and video based links included on the *One Country: Different Voices* website show, while knowledge was/is passed down orally, it cannot be described as being simply subjective, rather it is objective knowledge which is enriched by the learning of the individual passing it on. For example, contrary to many people’s beliefs Indigenous Australians have a wealth of knowledge of science and technology, much of it drawn from their careful observation and knowledge of the land. Links on the *One Country: Different Voices* website show how Australian Indigenous peoples use different kinds of woods to make spears, grasses to make baskets, grasses and canes to make shelters, treatment of plants to make them safe for eating, etc. Indigenous Australians also mined for ochres and stones to make implements and had an extraordinary understanding of astronomy.

Doolittle’s third variant, radical constructivism, is important for framing the artefact for three reasons: firstly, it argues that the individual’s knowledge of the world corresponds to, and is constrained by, reality as it is experienced by them (Holtorf 2008); secondly, it acknowledges recent recognition of the importance of social interaction and the role of culture in learning (Hejl 2011; Spivey 1997); and, thirdly it accepts genetical and

ontogenetical influences on learning, recognising that people learn from both from their social and physical environments. As *8-Ways Learning* emphasises in each of its Indigenous learning approaches, and as the web-based resources linked throughout the website show, learning occurs through social interaction, from the land and through cultural practices that have been handed down through millennia.

Radical constructivism draws on the work of Jean Piaget which was further advanced by American psychologist Ernst von Glaserfeld (1987, 1991). Von Glaserfeld argued that the defining principles of radical constructivism are that knowledge is internal and while an external reality may exist, it is unknowable to the individual (1990, 1996). In contrast to the position taken by cognitive constructivism, in radical constructivism the learner moves an understanding of the part and applies it to the whole. Von Glaserfeld argues that, because we experience the world through our senses, the “reality” we experience is never an accurate representation of external forms (e.g., objects, social interactions). This closely reflects Piaget’s conclusion that: “Intelligence organizes the world by organizing itself” (Piaget 1937, p. 311). Ausubel refined this idea to develop his assimilation theory of meaningful learning (Ausubel 1963, 1968, 1978) in which he contrasts rote learning – where the learner makes little or no effort to integrate new concepts and propositions with relevant concepts and propositions already known – with meaningful learning – where the learner seeks to integrate new knowledge with relevant existing knowledge.

In recent years there has been a move by some radical constructionists to also recognise the importance of social interaction and the role of culture in learning (see, inter alia, Hejl 2011; Spivey 1997). Hejl, who positions himself as a radical constructivist (2011, p. 228) has argued strongly that von Glaserfeld’s belief that the function of cognition is adaptive in “the biological sense” (von Glaserfeld 1995, p. 51) is limited because it ignores the place and importance of cultural evolution in shaping and influencing the individual’s experience. Hejl argues that social constructivism suffers from “near sightedness” because it excludes the evolutionary influence on knowledge (Hejl 2011, p. 228) and that it is important to accept the relevance of both “vertical” (genetical) and “horizontal” (ontogenetical) influences on the behaviour of individuals and hence on the construction of their perceived realities. He argues that this is reflected in the way that

there are many different cultures in the world which, in spite of their differences, share universal or near-universal patterns of behaviour (p. 229).

Applying Hejl's argument means that differences in behaviours and knowledge are the result of different biological evolutionary experiences. Thus, the Australian Aboriginal's ability to survive in the often harsh landscape of Australia has evolved through centuries of living in these conditions. Similarly, the Inuit's ability and knowledge about how to survive in frozen wastes is the legacy of centuries of experience of Arctic living. Neither culture can survive in the other's environment but what they share is the evolutionary (both "vertical" and "horizontal") experience of surviving in their own.

*One Country: Different Voices* is premised on the supposition that "vertical" (genetical) and "horizontal" (ontogenetical) influences on knowledge and behaviour lead adults to serve as conduits for the tools of their culture, including language, cultural history, social context, and more recently, electronic forms of information access (Doolittle 2006). As will emerge in my discussion below of *8-Ways Learning* and the development of the artefact, radical constructivism – taking into account Hejl's inclusion of both genetical and ontogenetical influences – also offers a good "fit" for the teaching and learning model I have woven. It does so because it recognises that people can learn both from their social and physical environments. As Yunkaporta notes, Australian Indigenous peoples traditionally learned through stories but stories didn't just "float around in a void" (2009a, 32). The stories were/are always connected to a place and the stories had a place in people's lives. In his words: "In the Aboriginal world stories are in the land – stories *are* places. Story places are sacred places. All places have story, but stories have place in them too – they are like maps of the land" (Yunkaporta 2009, p. 31).

The stories told by Coranderrk descendants included on *One Country: Different Voices* "map" their lives both in a physical and social sense through their affirmation of their connection with the land on which Coranderrk was located. They also affirm their sense of kinship with the Indigenous Stolen Generation people whose stories was denied them when they were removed from their land. By including the Coranderrk stories and links to Stolen Generation stories on the WWW, the artefact underlines how the lives of many Australian Indigenous peoples are influenced both by what Hejl (2011, p. 229) terms their "vertical" genetic experience (i.e., how their ancestors shaped and evolved their

lives on and through the land) and their “horizontal” ontogenetic experiences (i.e., the individual lived experiences of those telling their stories).

In this section I have shown how constructivism constitutes an important strand – or weft – for both my exegesis and artefact because it emphasises how students build on their learning from a variety of formal and informal sources, including the classroom, family, the community, the environment, and the new forms for social interaction provided by the internet. Practices such as scaffolding and the recent recognition of both genetical and ontological influences on people’s lives have particular application to understanding the Indigenous learning approaches embedded in the *8-Ways Learning* framework. Constructivism is also relevant to understanding Indigenous pedagogies in the way that it acknowledges the role of the teacher, or Elder, for conveying cultural information

In the next section I will unpack how critical pedagogy builds on constructivism by allowing students to develop an understanding of how they construct knowledge and of the political and cultural influences that shape that knowledge. Through these means critical pedagogy has the potential for learning to be truly transformational in a way that constructivism by itself cannot (Freire 1970, p. 82).

## Section 2

### ***Weft Thread 2: Critical Pedagogy***

As discussed above, constructivism provides students with insights into how they construct knowledge. In this section I discuss how this is facilitated through critical pedagogy.

A key goal of *One Country: Different Voices* is to use the critical pedagogical elements implicitly embedded in the *8-Ways Learning* framework as a starting point to encourage non-Indigenous students to “unpack” how they construct knowledge about Australian Indigenous life. Critical pedagogy is embedded in the *8-Ways Learning* framework through *Deconstruct Reconstruct*, which refers to students understanding the whole picture (RAET 2012, p. 51), *Non-verbal*, which encourages introspection, reflection and critical thinking (p. 52) and *Non-Linear*, which encompasses non-sequential thinking (p. 53). One way in which the artefact encourages critical thinking is through readings such as “History – Whose Story?” This reading includes links from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources which support and challenge the position taken in the reading.

The artefact is constructed to take into account that educational and everyday realities “are constructed in and through people’s linguistic, cultural, social and behavioural interactions which both shape and are shaped by social, political, economic and cultural forces” (Fischman & McLaren 2005, p. 1). Further, according to Freire, education and knowledge are “weapons to change the world” and it is the role of the teacher to help the student recognise – through classroom dialogue – how dominant values are embedded even in the system of formal education which works to maintain the status quo (Boff 1997, p. xi).

The term *critical pedagogy* was developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1993, 1995) who perceived all societies as consisting of powerful small groups who seek to dominate the mass of people through politics, the economy, religion and control of the content and flow of information. While Freire saw education as being used by those in power as a tool for communicating their values, ideas and ways of thinking in an uncritical and un-problematic manner (McCormack 2008, p. 11), he nevertheless believed that education could also be transformative and a revolutionary tool for liberation. Through critical pedagogy students could be provided with knowledge and understanding of how political systems work and how particular ideologies come to dominate society.

Given that Freire contended that education created a potential site for students to develop a critical consciousness, the classroom should be the site for a dialectic involving "...the conversion of transformative action into knowledge and the conversion of knowledge into transformative action", (Boff 1997, p. xi). The artefact provides discussion topics, links to a wide-range of information and points of view and the Wikispace discussion forum so that Indigenous and non-Indigenous students can engage in independent learning and share information about their lives and beliefs. These activities enact Freire's concept of classroom dialogue which is premised on the belief that just as the teacher has knowledge, so the student's knowledge about their own world has value which they share with their fellow students and their teachers.

In the context of Indigenous learning in Australia, this dialogue should extend to the teacher recognising the importance of forming positive relationships not only with the Indigenous student but also with their families and community and consulting with them about how they can contribute to the curriculum in terms of cultural knowledge and by designing curriculum that includes and values this knowledge (Burgess & Berwick 2010, p. 1) Through these means the teacher is both teacher and learner, and the student both learner and teacher (Freire 2001, pp. 81-83).

Through critical pedagogy's dialectical and dialogical process a reciprocal exchange is facilitated between teachers and students that leads to "reframing, refunctioning and reposing the question of understanding itself" and the connection between knowledge and power both in the classroom and in wider society (McLaren 2001, p. 121.) By acting

as a critical tool the artefact operates to challenge what students know and understand about issues such as life in Indigenous Australia, particularly given that most Australian university students have probably never met an Indigenous Australian, much less count them as friends, as was evident at Swinburne Lilydale. The artefact was designed to develop their awareness that many Coranderrk descendants still live near where Coranderrk was located. The stories narrated by the Coranderrk descendants show students that much of their knowledge of Indigenous Australia is superficial and that often their awareness of contemporary Indigenous life is informed by biased media accounts. As McLaren suggests, through critical pedagogy the teacher/learner and learner/teacher can assert the value and relevance of their knowledge about their particular world and therefore directly challenge dominant discourses (McLaren 2001, p. 121).

The artefact embeds critical pedagogy by enhancing students' critical thinking skills by the inclusion of background readings such as "History – Whose Story?", encouraging them to question the contention that history is somehow an objective account of past events. In this reading I myself transparent to students by providing an introductory statement that tells them that its content reflects my personal position on Indigenous issues and how I think about writing history. By establishing my ideological position in the text of this essay I provide the reader with an opportunity to identify with, or against, the ideas represented. I also create the conditions in which my ideology can be challenged or reproduced (Gilmore 1944, p. 23). Further, the use of "Counterpoints" in this reading facilitates them to actively engage in critically evaluating the information provided and helps them understand the ideological positions they take. For example, they are provided with links to work by Keith Windschuttle who claims that research conducted by Indigenous researchers on the colonial experience is contrary to contemporary non-Indigenous accounts as well as links to significant documents such as the *Bringing Them Home* report which traces the attitudes and policies towards the removal of Aboriginal children from early colonial days to the present.

This strategy is in line with bell hooks who encouraged teachers in North America's south to view education as a site where teachers and students could examine themes of Black culture and achievements as the foundations for a counterhegemony (hooks 1992, p. 2). hooks posited a model of engaged pedagogy whereby the teacher initiates classroom dialogue by revealing their personal experience, thereby placing themselves in a position of equality and vulnerability with the student and encouraging them by example to share their experiences. Berry argues that this approach has the potential to shift the power relationship in the classroom, creating an environment in which teachers and students learn from each other (Berry 2010, p. 19).

By opening up my ideological position to challenge – or acceptance – by students I am removing myself as the powerful keeper of knowledge. This allows the student to recognise that they should not be compelled to believe that their ideas, based on independent critical thinking, have no value. Similarly, the reading included on *One Country: Different Voices* about its underlying pedagogy, titled “The Road to Developing *One Country: Different Voices*”, shares my learning experiences and provides them with a model for beginning to reflect on their own learning style.

While the website provides students and teachers the opportunity to engage in dialogue through its Wiki discussion forum, Ellison (2009) warns that it is important to avoid falling into the trap of assuming that teachers and students exist in a space which is somehow divorced from all the too often competing values of the outside world, instead inhabiting some kind of utopia where they are able “to transcend their class, cultural, ethic and subjective identities (pp. 330-331). It is also important to remember that within any social context – including the classroom – there will be many and varying subjective experiences, none of which are necessarily wholly “right”.

This does not necessarily mean that critical dialogue cannot be a valuable tool provided that it is emphasised that it operates as a safe space where competing ideas are discussed and examined in a way that leads to greater insight and understanding. To ensure that the website operates and remains as a safe space it is necessary to ensure that an independent, detached and impartial moderator oversees discussion and reminds students that while their ideas may be different they must all be respected. It is also important to heed Schor's warning that while democratisation of the classroom

is desirable, teachers should take care to avoid using the classroom as a political meeting: “Students cannot be commanded to take action and cannot be graded on their consciousness” (Schor 1992, p. 197).

It is the need to have independent, detached and impartial moderation that led to my perhaps contradictory decision to use a Wiki discussion forum for student dialogue rather than the initially intended Facebook page. Studies of Facebook use by students have shown it to be the most ubiquitous social networking site, with more than 90% of university students in America reporting daily use. However, most of this use is for social rather than study purposes (Dahlstrom, de Boor, Grunwald & Vockley 2011; Junco 2012a, 2012b). Further, Facebook has been associated with misuse (Kincheloe, Weed & Lack 2010) and is essentially a commercial operation. While Facebook has been used successfully for classroom activity and discussion (Irwin, Ball, Desbrow & Leveritt 2012; Perry 2013; Shiu, Fong & Lam 2010), I felt that a Wiki offered better opportunities for moderating student discussion because it requires students to apply for and be approved for participation. Wikis also allows teachers to create their own Wikis and link them to the *One Country: Different Voices* Wiki. This creates opportunities for students from diverse locations to work collaboratively on particular projects as determined either themselves or their teachers and approved by the moderator.

The decision to create a moderated Wiki may seem contradictory given that I am philosophically and practically inclined to openness in teaching and allowing students to voice their opinions, but I nevertheless feel it is equally important to ensure that while discussion and debate may be heated at times, it must never be offensive. Further, while the website’s Wiki includes guidelines on behaviour which emphasise the importance of fairness towards all participants, the site is still essentially an online classroom and it is the teacher’s role to moderate behaviour and comments in an online classroom context just as it is in the physical classroom (Greener 2009; Way 2011).

The website acts as counter-pedagogy because it provides students with the opportunity to broaden their understanding of mass media coverage of issues through exchanging ideas and insights with students from different cultural backgrounds. It does so by keeping in mind that transformative dialogue can only occur in a context where conditions of mutual respect and trust exist between teachers and students, and

between students. It must also be understood that being critical does not mean being destructive, instead it has the potential for creativity (Stevenson 2010, pp. 72-73).

Ellison (2009) contends that critical pedagogy also depends for its effectiveness upon teachers clearly clarifying and defining concepts through classroom activities, research and debate, and also by strategically introducing ideas and questions which challenge what students take for granted. He cites the example of questions about race, class and gender about which students generally have ideas based upon their particular social experience. However, they may have little experience of, say, race if they come from white middle class backgrounds. In this case they may either think racism is a problem of the past that has since been rectified or a problem experienced by others who wish to “unfairly” take advantage of policies such as affirmative action (Ellison 2009, pp. 348-349).

The need for a critical pedagogy to address the abnegation of race and its associated socio-economic issues by students from white middle class backgrounds is also noted as being an issue for Australian educators by McGloin (2008), who expresses concern that neo-liberal political agendas have come to dominate education in Australia. She argues that Indigenous students reading recently written Australian histories will have little or no knowledge of Indigenous experience because the histories “are imbued with the attitudes of neo-conservative political agendas that foreground individualism through pervasive neo-liberal ideologies”. For McGloin critical pedagogy is an important strategy to counter these trends and warns that teachers of Indigenous Studies must constantly reevaluate and rethink what they are trying to do and how they can do it better (McGloin 2008, p. 82).

Nakata (2007) argues that the problem of neo-liberal thinking which denies Indigenous history and experience becomes even more contentious when it comes to teaching Indigenous knowledge because it is often not scientifically validated or is perceived as being “unmediated” (p. 7). While Nakata’s discussion deals with Indigenous knowledge that can be applied to purposes which in the Western tradition have scientific validity, such as ecological, environmental and natural resource management or agricultural practices, the underlying premise of his concerns is also relevant to teaching Indigenous

history or present Indigenous life. This occurs because there is often a significant gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous perceptions of what is true or has credibility.

Nakata cites Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001, p. 72) who suggest that because Indigenous knowledge can be perceived as being problematic, it is difficult to “plonk it in the curriculum unproblematically as if it is another data set for Western knowledge to discipline and test”. Nakata argues that the issue is complicated because Indigenous and Western knowledge systems work off different theories of knowledge that

frame who can be a knower, and what can be known, what constitutes knowledge, sources for evidence for constructing knowledge, what constitutes truth, how truth is to be verified, how evidence becomes truth, how valid inferences are to be drawn, the role of belief in evidence, and related issues (Nakata 2007, p. 8).

The power of critical pedagogy lies exactly in the way that it encourages the student to question the dominant values and power structures in their society and it is because many non-Indigenous students may believe that racism does not exist in Australia that they are asked to debate and discuss it in the Wiki discussion forum. In this way the Wiki operates as a form of counterpedagogy against unquestioned assumptions such as Australia as a place that gives people a “fair go”. In the sports and racism Wiki discussion, students will not only be provided with links on specific examples of racism in sport, but also with links to further readings such as “Racist outbreaks threat to Australia's ‘brand’” (The Age, August 24, 2012) in which Australia’s race discrimination commissioner claims that the nation’s “brand” has at times been maligned by outbreaks of racism and that there is a poor understanding of the problems experienced by nationalities such as Somalis or Iraqis in the wider community. Two other stories that are linked are, “Study reveals racial abuse of Aboriginal Victorians” (The Age, November 15, 2012, p. 9) which reports that a survey of 755 Victorian Aboriginal adults said they were victims of racism, including verbal and physical abuse and discrimination; and, “Carving a route to Indigenous wealth” by Professor Marcia Langton (The Age, November 17, 2012) in which she comments on the positive and inclusive actions by mining companies to raise the living standards of Indigenous peoples living in Australia’s north.

This practice of embedding a range of points of view in the links included in an artefact reflects Giroux's (1994) recognition that while schooling is a significant socialising experience and the school is an important site for both academic and social learning, it is nevertheless only one of many influential experiences involved in "social reproduction, cultural production, and moral and political regulation", (Robbins 2009, p. 437). By encouraging students to understand and exchange ideas about their subjective experiences and the historical contexts of their lives they are led to evaluate different lived experiences. In what he describes as a process of "border politics" (1994), Giroux's pedagogy allows the student to retrieve hidden or submerged life histories in order to help them understand political, ideological and cultural differences.

Giroux's concept of "border politics", which he defines as that area of social action where individuals with different social histories and experience "cross over and struggle together for democracy and social justice" by exchanging life stories (Kellner 2001, p. 235), is analogous to what Australian Indigenous academic Martin Nakata describes in his discussion of new directions for critical pedagogy in Australian schools as the Cultural Interface. According to Nakata the concept of the Cultural Interface provides a means for developing a better understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students because it shows how "things are not clearly black or white, Indigenous or Western", (Nakata 2007, p. 9).

In this section I have shown how critical pedagogy offers a way for all teachers and students (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to experience learning as a transformative in the way it allows them to "unpack" their taken-for-granted assumptions about how society operates. I will now briefly examine the contribution of Irigaray to critical pedagogy in helping teachers shift their stance from "passive" observers of their students to "active" listeners, thereby enhancing the democratisation of the classroom.

## Section 3

### ***Weft Thread 3: Critical Pedagogy and Feminism***

In this section I will discuss feminist developments of critical pedagogy, in particular Irigaray's (2004, 2006) variant in which the teacher shifts from "looking-at" (or perceiving) information and ideas and the "truth" in any dialogue, to "listening to" what is being said. By listening to the student the teacher empowers them and creates a more equal relationship (Irigaray 2006, Kindle Locations 3633-3634). This concept of "listening-to" has strong resonances with the *8-Ways Non-verbal* and *Story-Sharing* pedagogies (RAET 2012, p. 52, p. 53) which use the informal language of "yarning" to place the student in a more equal position. I will show how the concept of "listening to" is applied in constructing questions that ask students to carefully notice, or "listen to", the language used by each other, and in the newspaper articles and papers linked in the Wiki discussion forum of the *One Country: Different Voices* website.

While Freire, Giroux and McLaren promote a critical pedagogy that is premised on a democratic process and space for learning in which the teacher and student engage in a critical dialogue between equals, a number of feminists have argued that nevertheless their language and underlying ideology is masculinist, ignoring the interests and experiences of women – and by extension the needs of other marginalised groups such as people of colour. Arising out of feminism's 1970s push to introduce women's studies, feminist pedagogy sought to "problematise" the concept of knowledge and how it is evolved. Morley states that "feminist pedagogy problematises the nature of knowledge itself, implying that it is partial, exclusionary and incomplete". She rejects the idea that "knowledge is fixed, certain and the property of teachers", but argues instead that

knowledge is produced through classroom engagement and interaction (Morley 1999, p. 101).

Feminists such as Lather, hooks and Weiler accept many of the central tenets of critical pedagogy but feel that it nevertheless has a limited view of how power and politics operate in the classroom. Lather (1992) argues that in spite of the fact that critical pedagogy “is positioned as that which attends to practices of teaching/learning intended to disrupt particular historical, situated systems of oppression”, it nevertheless all too often fails to “probe the degree to which ‘empowerment’ becomes something done ‘by’ liberated pedagogies ‘to’ or ‘for’ the as-yet-unliberated, the ‘Other’, the object upon which it is directed” (pp. 121-122). hooks, while accepting many of Freire’s elements of critical pedagogy, believes that Freire’s early writing “constructs a phalocentric paradigm of liberation” (hooks 1994, p. 49). She is also concerned by his general lack of concern for gender and the power relationship between men and women. While hooks criticises Freire’s unquestioned patriarchal stance, she nevertheless sees his positioning of himself as a man of the third world as being more meaningful and inclusive for her than the way in which many white feminists such as Friedan (*The Feminine Mystique*) position women (Weiler 2001, p. 75) because Freire saw himself as side-lined by “mainstream” power. Indeed, hooks was so influenced by Freire’s statement “[W]e cannot enter the struggle as objects in order later to become subjects” that it became a revolutionary mantra for her, leading her to engage in a process of critical thought that was transformative (hooks 1994, p. 46).

Weiler contends that while critical and feminist pedagogies share many aims and ideals such as the need “to challenge dominant assumptions of knowing and knowledge and to value all students” (2001, p. 68), she nevertheless believes that Freire has failed to take into account the experiences of women and failed to “analyse or even acknowledge the patriarchal grounding of Western thought” (p. 74). While postcolonial feminists such as Anzualda and Trinh Minh Ha believe that it is not sufficient to lump all women into a single identity – “woman” (Weiler 2001, p. 72), Irigaray proposed a women’s language, *parler femme*, in order to empower and move past the legacy of patriarchy (Tilghman 2009, p. 39).

Gee and Hayes (2011) make a distinction between “informal and socially bonding language” such as phone texting which uses contractions and linguistic references shared by a peer group such as teenagers, and the “formal and distancing language” which is used by, say, academics when presenting papers or the lecturer standing at the lecture hall podium. Gee and Hayes contend that all utterances (whether written or spoken) are constructed to both “...say ‘something’ and to shape a social relationship with our interlocutor” (p. 23). They offer the example of a series of statements that communicate similar content but imply different social relationships and attitudes toward the person being addressed:

- 1: I will be at your party tonight.
- 2: Can’t wait till the party tonight.
- 3: Let’s party hard tonight, bro.
- 4: I guess I’ve got to go to your party tonight.
- 5: It is my privilege to attend your party tonight.
- 6: If you really want me, I will come to your party tonight.
- 7: You’re lucky I am coming to your party tonight (pp. 23-24.)

Further, they argue that both informal and formal linguistic styles may present barriers to understanding to those who are not familiar with them. Even formal language, which may appear “neutral” because it appears to be rational and unemotional, is intended to distance people not familiar with it. Formal language style has an implicit sense that the writer/speaker and reader share characteristics such as privileged “insider”, status, gender, and so on, and that certain types of behaviour are accepted and others are not. For example, the opportunity for questioning or challenging what a teacher says will be subtly indicated by signals such as the style and tone of delivery (formal or informal), the arrangement of the classroom, the teacher’s body language, etc. Indeed, Gee and Hayes contend that there is no “neutral” way to communicate, and that apparently being neutral or non-committal “is just another type of relationship and attitude . . . designed to be effective for argumentation and not to project emotion within socially bonding relationships” (p. 23).

Irigaray (2006) contends that from the early days of Greek culture when Socrates first conceived of a new form of critical pedagogy that asked the student to question, teaching has evolved into a practice that encompasses a relationship between teacher and student that involves the teacher – who is always represented as being masculine (Cole 2010; Peers 2005; Warton 2008) – ensuring that the student “sees” knowledge in the same way as him. The model is essentially teacher-centred because it relies on the teacher “transmitting” the same knowledge and world view that he acquired in turn from his teacher.

The problem with this approach, Irigaray argues, is that the traditional Socratean way of teaching is no longer appropriate to our times because it “presupposes that only one world can amount to the universal truth, and it does not take into account that different worlds exist which do not envision the truth in the same way” (2006, Kindle Locations 3350-3352). The Socratean approach would not, for example, accept the much more fluid Indigenous pedagogies embedded in the *8-Ways Learning* framework which reflect the Indigenous position that while all the eight learning approaches are interconnected, they “can change in different settings” (RAET 2012, p. 5).

In a way that mirrors *8-Ways Learning* emphasis on the importance of listening (*Non-verbal*) for testing knowledge (RAET 2012, p. 52) and Watson’s insight that many Central Australian Indigenous peoples believe that hearing “is the medium of intelligence” (2003, p. 54), Irigaray proposes that teachers must shift from just “looking at” (or perceiving) information and ideas – the “truth” in any dialogue – to “listening to” what is being said. For Irigaray, “looking at” implicitly involves accepting the “pyramid of values” contained in the information; “listening to”, on the other hand involves assessing information according to its *particular* pyramid of values. The challenge is to “listen to the way in which the other envisions and constructs their truth” (Irigaray 2006, Kindle Locations 3633-3634).

This process of “listening-to” should include both the student and the teacher. For Irigaray, the act of listening to the student and encouraging them to develop their own listening skills creates a different more equal relationship in which the right of each – teacher and student – to a particular point of view is respected. Through this process the teacher is able to present her knowledge in a way that keeps “open the dimension

of the present and the presence in teaching” and allows the student to not only open their mind to the teacher while maintaining their own values, beliefs and identity (cf. Freire 2005, p.14). The good teacher “has to teach the students how to dwell and how to find and keep a way of thinking that allows each one, but also present and future humanity, to dwell” (Irigaray 2006, Kindle Locations 3692-3694).

The artefact’s Wiki discussion forum encourages students to engage in “listening to” by reflecting on how students from different situations, cultures and experiences use language to discuss issues such as racism or humour. Thus, in the discussion about sport and racism students are asked to think about how other participants in the discussion (non-Indigenous, Indigenous, male, female, different cultures, etc.) use language in constructing their responses. They are asked to think about whether the language is assertive or passive, formal or informal, in its style and tone. Similarly, when discussing humour, they are asked to think about how comedians use language. Why is it alright for Greeks to call themselves “wogs” but it is offensive when someone else does? What point are comedians making when they mangle or misuse English? How does the comedian position themselves in relation to the audience? Is it a position of power? How do they know?

These questions posed on the Wiki discussion forum encourage students to also think about differences in gender language use and reflects Irigaray’s insight that there are linguistic gender differences between males and females that are not only sexual in a limited sense, but sexuate in that they are not confined to simple gender and bodily differences but also to their whole subjectivity (Irigaray 2006, Kindle Locations 3202-3203). These differences also apply to multicultural use of language and the teacher who “listens to” can adjust their teaching approach. This supports Irigaray’s contention that

[t]he way in which a child speaks or lives in is not an unimportant matter. It bears witness to the child's manner of dwelling – of relating with himself/herself, with the other(s), with the world in general. It reveals the child's own world, a world in which he/she lives, a world which takes part in some way in the identity of the child (Kindle Locations 3350-3352).

The discussion forum also encourages students to emulate Indigenous cultural practices referenced by the website of introducing oneself (kinship, moiety, skin, language) when meeting new people. Students are asked to always introduce themselves when they post their first comment, providing a short narrative about where they go to school, their hobbies and family, etc.

hooks also incorporates the use of narrative in her model for engaged critical pedagogy in which the teacher initiates classroom dialogue by revealing their personal experience and inviting the student to do likewise (hooks 1992, p. 2). This process places the participants in a position of equality and vulnerability (hooks 1994). Through these means of sharing narratives and listening to each other (Irigaray 2006) they learn from each other (Berry 2010, p. 19).

In the preceding discussion I underlined how feminist interpretations of critical pedagogy recognise the importance of listening to and sharing narratives in helping students to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about other cultures and experiences. In the next section I will discuss how sharing narratives is central to Indigenous cultural practices.

## Section 4

### ***Weft Thread 4: Narrative and Sense of Place***

*Then we must first of all, it seems, supervise the storytellers. We'll select their stories whenever they are fine and beautiful and reject them when they aren't. And we'll persuade nurses and mothers to tell their children the ones we have selected, since they will shape their children's souls with stories much more than they will shape their bodies by handling them.*

*Plato, Republic, Book 2. 377c*

A central activity of *One Country: Different Voices* is sharing narratives told by Coranderrk descendents and, via links on the WWW, by members of the Stolen Generation, and through the explicit and implicit stories shared by students through the Wiki discussion forum. There are many slightly differing definitions of narrative. For example, Hinchman and Hinchman define narratives as “discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way”, that are targeted at specific audiences in order to help them gain insights about the world or other peoples’ experience of it (1997, p. xvi). Gergen is more focused on the structure of a story, the organisation of its plot and how its construction reflects the values and experiences of the story teller (Gergen 1998). In spite of the different interpretations of the purpose of narratives, both share a common assumption that there is an important connection between “life as lived and life as told in personal narratives” (Goodson & Gill 2011, p. 5). Attwood (2005) and Johnston (2013) highlight the importance of traditional knowledge

for Indigenous Australians for the formation of cultural narratives that form identity for both outback and urban Aboriginals.

The background reading on *One Country: Different Voices* titled, "History, Whose Story", offers one interpretation of the relationship between narrative and identity for Indigenous Australians. However, in order to gain a further understanding of Indigenous narrativity and identity it is useful to consider how Somers' (1994) concept of overlapping but shifting narrative networks that change over space and time relates to Indigenous narrative practices. According to Somers, ontological, or personal, narratives allow the individual to make sense of themselves and their relation to the world. These narratives are also influenced by public or cultural narratives which may be local, national or global, and shape, and are in turn shaped by, particular understandings of the world, thereby over time prioritising one meaning over another. She also identifies meta-narratives which include master narratives such as democracy, freedom or the doctrine of progress (pp. 618-619).

Somers links ontological narrativity with developments in identity politics which, since the early 1990s, saw "shifts in explanations for action from 'interests' and 'norms' to *identities* and *solidarities*, from the notion of the universal social agent to particularistic categories of concrete persons" (p. 608, italics in original). This conception of identity is premised on the assumption that people who share social categories such as gender, colour, generation, cultural background, etc., and have similar life experiences, will behave in similar ways because they choose to do so. In Somers' terms, "I act because of who I *am*" (p. 607, italics in original). As will be noted in my discussion of Dreaming below, Somers' contention contrasts markedly with the Australian Indigenous practice of "I act because of my culture". Somers also argues that there is no reason "to assume a priori that people with similar attributes will share common experiences, let alone be moved to common forms and meanings of social action, unless they share similar narratives and relational identities". However, she notes, these narratives and relational identities shift over time and space leading to changes in behaviour (p. 635).

Somers' concept that ontological narratives and relational identities shift over time and space provides some insight into how Indigenous Australians can experience multiple narrative identities that are influenced concurrently by historical/cultural narratives

with personal/cultural experiences. The role of Dreaming in the shaping of Australian Indigenous identity provides an example of how historical/cultural narratives operate in this context. Damousi (2005) describes Dreaming as the term coined by Western anthropologists to describe narratives that relate to “the Aboriginal belief that the land holds religious and philosophical knowledge, and that everything that inhabits the land (whether animate or inanimate, human or animal) has a fundamental connection to it” (p. 96).

However, Dreaming also encompasses the notion of experience existing in parallel in normal time as well as in the past. Dreaming knowledge relies on memory and is transmitted, orally and through performance. It consists of stories that relate to specific places that shape their content and it is a means of transmitting cultural knowledge from generation to generation (Damousi 2005, p. 96). In Yunkaporta’s words, “[i]n the Aboriginal world, stories are in the land – stories *are* places” (Yunkaporta 2009a, p. 32). Thus, traditional knowledge allows Indigenous peoples to know who their ancestors were and who they themselves are. Given that traditional knowledge – Dreaming – exists both in the past and in the present and can be used to make cultural statements “appropriate to contemporary events and situations” (Watson 2003, p. 204), it becomes an integral part of Indigenous identity.

Acknowledgement of this sense of connection between past and present through land is achieved by the artefact by including a number of narratives from descendents of the original inhabitants of Coranderrk. Aunty Dot Peters reveals in her interview that Coranderrk embodies both her internal self or consciousness and her external embodiment. It connects her spiritual past with her physical present. Indeed, for many Indigenous peoples land and body (the internal self) are indistinguishable. For example, Stewart and Strathern (2001) refer to the way in which Indigenous Australians “saturate the perceived landscape with values and meanings that provides a rich material network of associations for identity constructions, from the personal and emotional to the social and political-legal” (2001, p. 80). Strehlow (1947) refers to the way in which for the Aranda people of northern Australia “various physical objects in the landscape” are not mere “signposts that ‘mark the spot’ where the important events in the lives of his totemic ancestors took place at the beginning of time”, rather, they regard them as the

“actual bodies of [their] ancestors”, (1947, p. 28). Swain (1993) argues that “Aborigines do not, or once did not, understand their being in terms of time, but of place and space”. The Aboriginal sense of being located in place and space, contrasts with the primacy placed by Western thought on temporality (1993, p. 2).

The content of the artefact also raises non-Indigenous students’ awareness of how personal/cultural experiences relate to Indigenous peoples integrated into contemporary Australian society (for example, the urban Aboriginal) who live in both an Aboriginal world and a non-Aboriginal world (McLean 1998, p. 134). This experience is illustrated by the interview with the late Wurundjeri Nurungaeta James (Juby) Wandin included on the artefact in which he speaks of his identification as both an Indigenous person and as an “invisible” Indigenous person living a “white” lifestyle.

Wandin’s Indigenous identity was strongly associated with his Indigenous relatives and Coranderrk, a place that in many ways represented his Indigenous life. He refers to the way that, during much of his life, while his Indigenous identity was important, he in effect set it aside, and developed an identity as a successful person operating within “white” society, doing well at school and playing football for St Kilda. While he was widely recognised as being Indigenous this was seen as irrelevant in terms of his success to both himself and white society. When living his “white” lifestyle, he said, he had relatively little knowledge of Wurundjeri customs and practices and it is only later in life, when he was appointed as the Nurungaeta of the Wurundjeri people, that he came to learn more about his people’s traditions. At that point traditional knowledge came to the foreground in shaping his Aboriginal identity.

In Somers’ terms, Wandin shifted in time and space in what she terms his relational setting. She defines relational setting as “a pattern of relationships among institutions, public narratives and social practices” (Somers 1994, p. 625) in which identity-formation occurs. Thus for Wandin, for much of his life, his identity was formed within the relational setting of “white” society. Later, when he was appointed as the Nurungaeta of the Wurundjeri people, his relational setting shifted to the narratives and practices of his traditional Aboriginal heritage.

Traditional knowledge has also become important for many Indigenous Australians living in urban contexts in contemporary Australia (Attwood 2005). Attwood notes that the act of identifying with traditional knowledge allows many contemporary Indigenous Australian academics to include references to their traditional land and knowledge in order to establish Indigenous identity:

For some Aboriginal people, the past has been seen as the source of real Aboriginality, often considered to be that of traditional or classical Aboriginal culture; for others, it has been treated as a resource for learning more immediately who you are because of where you come from and who your people are (Attwood 2005, p. 45).

One way of understanding this process is through applying Somers' concept of cultural narratives which provides a context for understanding that while most people living in Australia are ostensibly "Australian" (that is, they are Australian citizens or residents) they nevertheless have different individual and cultural histories and experiences. The interviews with Indigenous peoples included on the *Story Sharing* area of the artefact show that they perceive themselves as being inextricably linked with the land for their identification and their spiritual and physical existence. They introduce themselves as Wurundjeri or, or, as in the case of the interview with the three Indigenous students, as Wathaurong, Gunai or Kamilaroi. In a reversal of perception, Indigenous Australians see non-Indigenous peoples living on this land as being "the other" and as descended from "outsiders". These outsiders have, through invasion, imposed their particular ("other") cultural values and identities on this land called Australia. However, for non-Indigenous Australians descended from British stock, it is the Indigenous Australians – and indeed all people with different national heritages – who are the "other".

McLean (1998) develops the concept of cultural narratives by arguing that they are the essential avenue through which both cultural and personal identities are formed. He argues that a sense of aesthetic, sense of place and spiritual consciousness reflect the individual's cultural narratives and that these narratives form a nexus for negotiation between the past, present and future. He cites Yuri Lotman's contention that "every culture" – and by implication each individual – divides "the world into 'its own' internal

space and ‘their’ external space” – and that this division constitutes “one of the human cultural universals” (McLean 1998, pp. 1-2).

Non-Indigenous teachers and students can explore this sense of “otherness” – from both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspective – through web-based links included on the website. These links include both David Malouf’s (1998) and Marcia Langton’s (2012) Boyer Lectures in which they each explore the concept of identity from their particular cultural and political position; stories from the ABC Indigenous radio program *Awaye*; poems by Dorothea Mackellar and Noonuccal Oodgeroo; and, the television series *Redfern Now* which deals with urban Aboriginal identity.

This sense of “otherness” felt by non-Indigenous Australians is cogently explored by Malouf in his 1998 Boyer lectures in a way that resonates with Nakata’s contention that Indigenous Australians must negotiate two worlds– Indigenous and white (2007a, 2007b). Malouf discusses the “complex fate” of Australians of European origin as being “the paradoxical condition of having our lives simultaneously in two places, two hemispheres” and the tension that exists “between environment and culture”. He argues that this tension “is not simply between the old world and the new, or even ... between new and newer”, rather the tension relates to the need to reconcile a new physical environment (with “...different seasons, unfamiliar vegetation and birds and flowers ...different and disorienting stars overhead...”) and an inherited culture based in a different hemisphere and which was transplanted to the new land. According to Malouf,

We have our sensory life in one world, whose light and weather and topography shapes all that belongs to our physical being, while the larger part of what comes to us through language for example, and knowledge, and training, derives from another (Boyer Lectures, 1998, lecture 2: A complex fate, transcript).

The artefact invites the student to confront the concept of “otherness” and the problem that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians experience of living in two cultures through the Wiki discussion forum. Here they are given links to sites such as *Australia Day or Invasion Day*, created by Indigenous Australians, which questions the real

meaning of “Australia Day;” a video featuring an Aboriginal Elder titled, *Learning to Live in Two Worlds*; and, a link to an episode of the comedy *Acropolis Now* in which a Greek character tries to identify where in the world the cafe’s Koorie waitress comes from. Each of these resources highlights how cultural narratives address the experience of “otherness”.

The power of language in shaping cultural and environmental consciousness is illustrated by Malouf when he points to Judith Wright’s 1960s insight that “except for the wattle . . . there is very little mention of trees, flowers and birds by name or by recognisable description in Australian verse during the nineteenth and early twentieth century”. Malouf argues that this was not because early white settler poets did not appreciate the environment, but because the environment had not yet entered the language of allusion and meaning used in poetry written in the “old” country. In his words, “Currawong and banksia carried no charge of emotion like ‘nightingale’ or ‘rose’.” By the mid-1960s this had changed and Australian poets were at last including Australian environmental references in their lexicon of cultural references. Malouf describes this as

that great process of culture, and also of acculturation, that creates a continuity at last between the life without and the life within. It is one of the ways - a necessary one - by which we come at last into full possession of a place.

This discussion on narrative and sense of place has highlighted the importance of narrative for shaping identity. It has emphasised that for Indigenous Australians in particular narrative is a central and living process that connects both the past and present, and shown how connection with land forms their sense of identity. In the next section I will address how and why *One Country: Different Voices* embeds narrative pedagogy and its connection with the *8-Ways Learning* framework.

## Section 5

### ***Weft Thread 5: Narrative Pedagogy: Learning Through Narratives***

A key goal of *One Country: Different Voices* is to demonstrate to students how narratives can change their understanding of not only themselves, but also of others. In this section I discuss how *One Country: Different Voices* achieves this through narrative pedagogy.

The reason that narrative pedagogy forms such an important weft thread in the weaving of artefact is that it opens up the possibility for non-Indigenous students and teachers to begin unpacking their taken-for-granted assumptions about their culture and, as I address further in the next section, their unquestioned “invisible whiteness”. Narrative pedagogy’s strength lies in its identification that narrative is a central means by which individuals construct their lives, that this is an ongoing process, and, by implication, can help them to deconstruct their lives (Goodson & Gill 2011, p. 15). In narrative pedagogy the teacher’s role as a partner in learning demands that they reveal and share their own narratives. I share my personal narrative through the “My Story” and “The Road to Developing *One Country: Different Voices*. My Teaching and Learning Journey” readings and students are invited to share their narratives through the Wiki discussion forum.

While Priestly (2011) argues that sharing narratives may lead to a “failure to differentiate between theoretical and everyday knowledge”, thereby depriving students of the ability to develop and critique disciplinary knowledge (Priestly 2011, p. 223), I believe that narrative pedagogy offers a means by which the “listening” teacher can begin to introduce theories and critical skills to help students better understand their lives. Thus, an understanding of theory emerges from the personal construction of student lives (bottom up), as well as from a curriculum which has the *primary* goal of teaching theory (top down). Priestly’s concern of the danger the “learnification” of

education which leads to an “unproblematised acceptance that learning is good in, and of, itself but which fails to address educational questions such ‘what are we learning?’ and ‘why are we learning it?’” (2011, p. 225) is addressed by narrative pedagogy because these questions are central to successful narrative learning.

My position on narrative learning concurs with that of Goodson and Gill (2011) who posit that successful learning occurs when the individual engages in a narrative spiral which has integral to it theorising both at the personal and – as introduced by the teacher – at the level of social theories which gives the students a theoretical context for understanding their lives (Goodson & Gill 2011, p. 89). I also believe that central to narrative pedagogy are Priestly’s two important tenets of critical realism: firstly, depth ontology which recognises three domains of reality: (i) the empirical, i.e., that which is experienced; (ii) the actual, i.e., words, events and entities that actually occur; and, (iii) the real, which is comprised of underlying mechanisms with causal properties. The second tenet is that mechanisms and their properties, such as social structures, customs and tradition, exist independently of our knowledge in time and space (2011, p. 228). Thus students are also asked in the living in two worlds Wiki discussion forum to **share a narrative about some dramatic event in their lives which changed the way they think or behave. They are asked to relate what happened; the significant words that may have been used and/or the actions that occurred; and, why they think the event happened. They are also asked to reflect on how they made sense of what happened in relation to their normal expectations.**

This kind of exercise emerges from the belief that narratives act as both a form of meaning-making for both the individual and larger social groups and as significant sites for learning. It is through narratives that individuals and larger social cultural groups learn their sense of self and acquire values and attitudes that go beyond knowledge and skills. Indeed, Goodson and Gill (2011) contend that one of the most important outcomes of learning narrative encounters is the potential to transform the individual’s understanding of themselves. They define the transformational process that occurs as an

enhanced understanding of oneself and the other, one’s lived experience as a person over time, one’s position in the world, and how histories, cultures,

socio-political forces have helped shape who we are, as human beings were, who we are now, and the journey we have travelled so far and the journey we are to travel together (2011, p. 119).

Goodson and Gill's definition of narrative learning is close to definitions of Indigenous Dreaming in that Dreaming knowledge relies on memory, is a means of transmitting cultural knowledge from generation to generation, and allows Indigenous peoples to know who their ancestors were and who they themselves are.

Academic discussion of the transformational capacity of narratives ranges from the extremes of Mezirow's (2000) contention that transformative learning occurs through an often disorienting process of reframing values and beliefs learned in childhood through a critical dialectic that results in an "altered state of being" (Mezirow 2000, p. xii) to Goodson and Gill's (2011) position that transformational is a lifelong process with an open agenda that draws on the individual's life and experience. While the position I take is much closer to that taken by Goodson and Gill, I do not exclude the importance of Mezirow's notion that transformation can occur in a dramatic and disruptive way, especially when one's taken-for-granted assumptions are over-turned by specific events. In the "My Story" reading I describe such a dramatic transformation that occurred for me after my mother explained why a young Aboriginal boy from regional NSW who stayed in our home could not find employment in Melbourne. Students are invited to share their stories about events that may have disrupted their taken-for-granted personal narrative through the Wiki discussion forum.

Mezirow's concept of transformational learning begins when the individual experiences a disorienting dilemma which leads to self-examination often associated with feelings of guilt and shame (deconstruction). These feelings are resolved through a critical assessment of assumptions, along with the recognition that one is not alone in experiencing these feelings. This knowledge leads to exploring actions for change – including acquisition of new knowledge – that results in new modes of thinking and behaving – reconstruction (Mezirow 1978, 1995).

Goodson and Gill (2011) believe that while disorienting dilemmas are an inevitable experience and that self criticism can lead to positive outcomes, transformation through

narrative learning does not necessarily need to be as dramatic as Mezirow's formulation because most people do not experience disorienting dilemmas every day. Their approach is concerned with seeing narrative learning as a lifelong process that has an open agenda that draws on the individual's life and lived experience. It is not intended to be problem-based but it allows for the beneficial outcomes of drawing the student's attention "to the discords and dissonances in his/her accounts as pedagogical leverages" (p. 118).

Important for the development of my artefact was Goodson and Gill's emphasis of the importance of "voice" in narrative learning. They share with Mezirow the belief that narrative learning involves a process of reframing, but for them this occurs through an "internal conversation" and renegotiation of beliefs and values that is conducted by the "different voices" that one has in oneself. In a way that integrates Somers' concept of inter-related dimensions of narrativity, Goodson and Gill describe these voices as existing over different times, identities and locations:

Some of these voices are ancestors, some belong to a particular profession or vocation, some speak in the voice of dominant social forces, some speak from the concern of, for instance, being a parent, child or sibling; some come from a person's own ego, and some may be represented by a higher vision or from a spiritual process (p. 119).

These voices conduct a debate between the self and the imagined interlocutors that represent other points of view, with each point of view shifting in dominance depending upon the information being received and considered. Through this process of internal conversation a reframing of ideas may, or may not, occur.

Taking a cue from Goodson and Gill about the careful use of discords and dissonances as pedagogical leverages, the artefact presents students with ideas, information and exercises that will facilitate internal – and external classroom-based – debates. Thus, the background readings provide links to information that may agree with, or disagree with the information being presented. This offers students with an opportunity to debate their ideas in an environment which both supports already held opinions and values, and also challenges them. The choices about the kind of learning through narrative

experiences that are included on the website occur within the context of the background reading, including in the “Learning Maps” area of the artefact, titled “The Road to Developing *One Country: Different Voices*”, which describes how and why I have constructed the artefact and its underlying pedagogical approach. It provides students with a background context about issues including why and how this “story” is being presented as a website rather than in print, why I chose particular pedagogies, and why Nakata’s concept of the Cultural Interface offers an important framework for my thinking about creating a teaching and learning resource that, while it is targeted at non-Indigenous students, nevertheless uses an Indigenous learning framework. It also describes how and why I have used the *8-Ways Learning* framework to introduce them to new ways of thinking about learning, and as a navigational tool. The reading’s voice is informal and conversational in tone in order to engage the student directly, and to reduce the authoritative distance that often occurs between teacher and student.

Goodson and Gill state an important preparation for successful narrative learning is to have the student ask questions such as: “Who am I?”, “How have I become?”, “What are the major events in my life?” They also argue that it is vitally important that the teacher share their own narrative at this stage (2011, p. 126). It is for this reason that I have also included a short biography, titled “My Story” because, as Goodson and Gill note, doing so places me as an equal participant in the process of learning rather than as an expert or voyeur (p. 151).

When participating in debates and discussions on the website Wiki discussion forum, students will be asked to briefly introduce themselves, stating their name, where they come from (location and cultural background) and what they are interested in (music, hobbies, etc.). This will help students to begin to engage with what Goodson and Gill refer to as their “narrative maze” which includes disparate identities such as student, friend, music lover, sports lover, “white”, Indigenous, city dweller, country dweller, etc. (p. 127). This reflects the Australian Indigenous custom of people introducing themselves not only by name but also by their skin and as coming from particular Country. This approach requires the teacher – and, in time, the student – to carefully listen to the overt and covert messages being communicated. As noted above, Irigaray also addresses the importance of “listening to” information according to its *particular*

pyramid of values. She also emphasises that “listening to” is done by both student and teacher and the challenge is to listen to how others construct their truth. Through these means a more equal relationship is created in which the right of the individual – teacher and student, student and student – is respected (Irigaray 2006, Kindle Locations 3633-3634).

Goodson and Gill’s “spiral of narrative learning” offers an insightful model into how individuals move through a narrative cycle. As noted in further detail below, there are a number of synergies and similarities between the Goodson and Gill model and the *8-Ways Learning* diagram which emphasises the circular and interconnected nature of Indigenous learning.

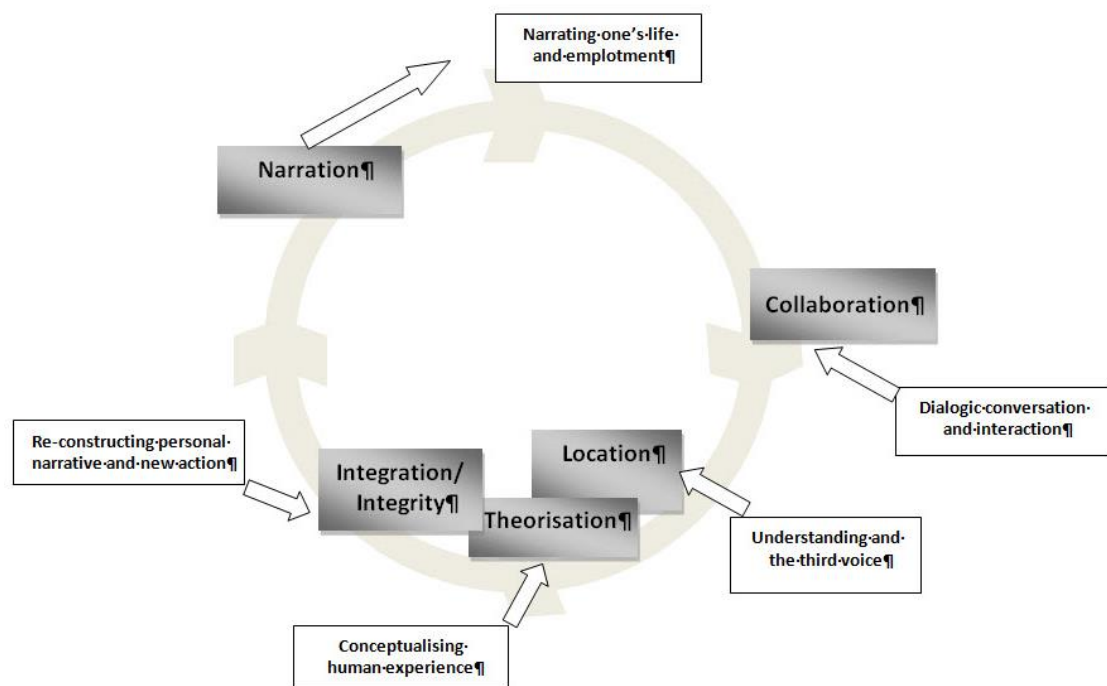


Figure 5: After Goodson and Gill’s Spiral Process of Narrative Learning

(2011, p. 126)

Goodson and Gill’s model begins with Narration. They suggest that narration is best started with the learner engaging in self-reflection on their life experiences before they share their stories. The *8-Ways Learning* framework includes the concept of *Non-verbal*

(RAET 2012, p. 52) whereby individuals engage in introspection to test knowledge, and *Story-Sharing* wherein particular Elders transmit important cultural knowledge (p. 53).

In Goodson and Gill's model, Narration is followed by a process of Collaboration during which the teacher and learners work together to exchange interpretations of the narratives to deconstruct and reconstruct them (p. 127). They note that the act of "intense listening", or "listening-in-conversation" – as is also proposed by Irigaray and *8-Ways Learning's Non-verbal* – is important here because Collaboration involves both the listener and narrator being receptive to verbal and physical cues that will ensure understanding. Central to *Non-verbal* learning is the use of body language, silence, listening and reflection as key learning strategies (RAET 2012, p. 42). Further, Indigenous listening is constructive, in that the participants, their communication contents, and even their vocabularies, "are all constructed and reconstructed in conversational give and take" (Waks 2010, p. 5). Goodson and Gill warn that the Collaboration phase involves hearing both what is said and "unsaid" and that this demands the teacher in particular to teach with "identity and integrity" because sharing stories requires a sense of trust and belief that the exchange of often personally revealing narratives will be respected (p. 127).

Goodson and Gill refer to Location as the process by which the learner "locate(s) their own narrative in historical, cultural and social spaces", coming to understand how these elements work together to lead them to construct their narrative (p. 128). The *8-Ways Learning* framework's *Land Links* locates narratives in the land (RAET 2012, p. 52). Goodson and Gill warn that it is not the teacher's responsibility to guide or tell the student how to proceed in their lives in terms of future action gained from insights about themselves. For some, individual narratives may lead them to a stage that Goodson and Gill refer to as "theorisation" which involves a more abstract understanding of their story in terms of location, i.e., the historical, cultural and social events or actions that have affected their lives. Theorisation may lead to them taking new directions in their lives, whether it be changing attitudes or taking concrete steps such as deciding on a career. It is at this point that their narrative begins to shift or change and they re-enter, or re-engage with the narrative spiral (2011, pp. 126-129). Theorisation as conceptualised by Goodson and Gill has synergies with the *8-Ways Learning* concept of

*Deconstruct Reconstruct* whereby Indigenous students learn from the whole before moving to an understanding of the part (RAET 2012, p. 52).

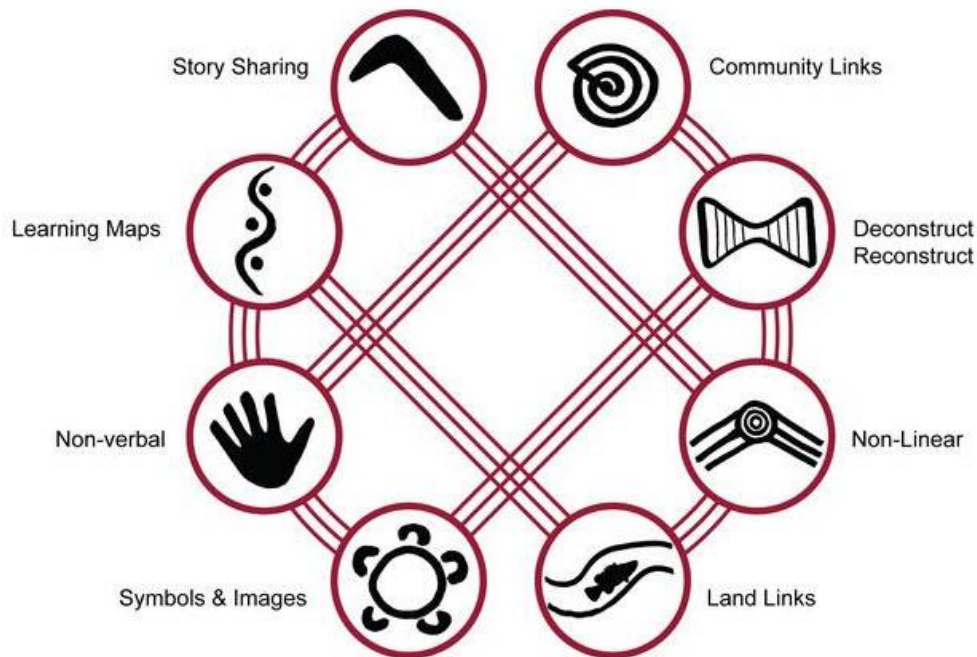


Figure 6: The *8-Ways Learning* framework

(Yunkaporta, 2009a, p. 46; RAET, 2012, p. 6)

Both Goodson and Gill's narrative spiral and the *8-Ways Learning* framework integrate and build on constructivism's concept of the individual constructing knowledge and meaning from their experiences and exploration of ideas, and critical pedagogy's concept that teaching and learning is never innocent and that the teacher has a role in guiding the student in a way that positions the teacher and student as partners in learning.

Narrative pedagogy provides one of the most brightly coloured and most textured weft threads in the fabric that constitutes the artefact, complementing in many ways the warp provided by the *8-Ways Learning* framework. It is also within narrative pedagogy's conceptual model that students sharing narratives on the Wiki discussion forum, and the background readings that reveal my own teaching narrative, have purpose and make sense in terms of introducing Indigenous approaches to learning to non-Indigenous students. In the next section I will begin my discussion of the implications of an environment that privileges non-Indigenous, "Western" values and practices for

developing and embedding Indigenous approaches to learning in “mainstream” curricula and schools.

## Section 6

### **Moving from Weft to Warp: Constructivism, Critical Pedagogy, Narrative Pedagogy and Indigenous Education**

#### ***Weft Thread 6: Indigenous Participation in Education***

In this section I provide an overview of some of the key social issues in Indigenous education and pedagogy and the problem that Nakata (2004, p. 12) identifies: that most academic knowledge of Indigenous life is filtered and mediated through “the ontological world of Western knowledge systems” (p. 12). This overview, and the following and final weft sections of this exegesis (why I became involved in the production of a study titled, *Indigenous Inclusion in Curriculum* and Nakata’s concept of the Cultural Interface as a route for thinking about creating a space where Indigenous and non-Indigenous pedagogies can be negotiated) provide a framework for the discussion of the warp of the exegesis, *8-Ways Learning* and how it provides the best starting point for the development of the *One Country: Different Voices* website. The discussion in this section also references earlier discussion about critical and narrative pedagogies.

The tendency by most educators – including even those such as Freire who have a heightened insight into inequities in education – to lump all marginalised groups into a single entity and to gloss over the fact that there are many marginalised groups with different life experiences and with different educational needs, remains a central issue in debates on Indigenous education in Australia. This is in part the result of a continuing “colonising” attitude maintained by many non-Indigenous educators who do not fully understand the particular needs of Indigenous students.

One way in which Australian Indigenous students form a particular marginalised group is in their low education completion rates. Gray and Beresford (2008), Devlin (2009), Dockery (2009), and Herrington and Jones (2010) all note that Indigenous participation at tertiary level is “unacceptably low”. Devlin notes that while Indigenous Australians make up around 2.4 per cent of the population, they constitute only 1.3 per cent of the higher education population. This is in spite of the fact that the total Indigenous population has increased (from 2.1 per cent to 2.4 per cent between 2001 and 2006), and that there has been an increase in Indigenous school participation, as well as an increase in the proportion of Indigenous peoples of University age (p. 2).

Low education completion rates do not mean that Australian Indigenous peoples do not recognise the importance and value of education. Eady et al. cite Battiste (2008) who writes that most Indigenous peoples do recognise the importance of education in alleviating poverty. Dockery states that while Indigenous Australians have lower levels of educational attainment, they nevertheless have high rates of participation in VET because they perceive the link between VET training and employment (2009, pp. 22-23). In spite of the fact that many Indigenous Australians believe in the importance of education, the tendency of many young Indigenous Australians to have poor education outcomes has been linked to issues of cultural difference. Dockery cites Dawes (1988, pp. 9-19) who suggests that there is:

...a mismatch between the cultures of Indigenous families that shape the socialisation of Indigenous children, and the culture those children [are] confronted with at school. The main difference is that Indigenous children are likely to place more value on cooperation and communal roles, while the school culture emphasises competition and individual achievement as the determination of educational success (Dockery 2009, p. 15).

Dockery also notes that research has shown that Indigenous students feel alienated in educational institutions and often do not have the skills of seeking help from teachers if they feel they are not coping (p. 16). He cites Mellor and Corrigan who argue for the need for teachers to affirm the importance of the students’ culture in order to gain more positive learning outcomes. This is achieved by treating Indigenous cultures as “an asset of real value” (Mellor & Corrigan, as cited in Dockery 2009, p. 16).

Herrington and Jones (2010) also refer to research done on the frequent cultural mismatch of teaching style which pairs highly sophisticated technologies and non-Indigenous learning traditions with Indigenous education (p. 264). Their survey of literacy practitioners in Australia found that the most effective approach involved the teacher developing an understanding of the cultural complexities of the community – such as language, family relationships, etc. (p. 270); the use of culturally relevant materials (p. 274); encouraging communities – and in particular Elders – to participate in the construction of curriculum (p. 275); and, encouraging older members of the community to act as mentors to younger learners (p. 276).

Their insights were confirmed by research by Burgess and Berwick (2009) on work done by the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, which undertook a research project to elucidate Aboriginal parents and community members' perceptions and beliefs about quality teaching. The findings indicate that "Aboriginal parents and community members believe that above all teachers need to understand, know and build trust relationships with their students" (p. 1). The study found that teachers must develop knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture, particularly in relation to the local community culture where they are working and that only through authentic engagement with student's families and the community can trust be built. The preliminary findings also indicate that Aboriginal parents felt a sense of belonging and the confidence to continue with their education from their relationship with particular teachers who had strong personalities rather than particular knowledge of curriculum (Ibid.).

Devlin (2009) also points to the problem of cultural mismatch experienced by many Indigenous students even in situations where teachers may have the best of intentions towards their students. She contends that there are three aspects of education curriculum: "the intended curriculum, that is, the official texts, and so on; the enacted curriculum (i.e., how the intended curriculum is delivered); and the hidden curriculum" (p. 5). This "hidden curriculum" is not always recognised but is problematic because it includes "*the values and beliefs* that are signified by what is, and what is not, represented in the intended and enacted curriculum and discourse, and what is represented outside of these" (2009, p. 5, italics in original). One way that the problem

of the “hidden curriculum” is played out is by many non-Indigenous and Indigenous students having had no family members who attended university and from whom they could learn to decode university practices, ways of learning, social mores and behaviours."

In a study on the reluctance of student teachers to explore their own racism, Aveling (2002) found that for many of them their status as “white” was not considered as being an issue when considering possible futures teaching Indigenous students. Further, Aveling found that a number of them had decidedly racist attitudes towards both Indigenous and non-Anglo-Saxon people (p. 122). Aveling used Giroux’s model of critical pedagogy, and in particular border pedagogy, to encourage students to “explore the invisibility of whiteness and the ways in which whiteness confers privileges on many of us who are white” (p. 120). Implicit in her understanding of “whiteness” is her belief that it involves an historical and geographical understanding of what it means to be white and that that this involves a sense of dominance and superiority to non-white people.

Aveling found that many students did not recognise that while they may express non-racist attitudes, supported concepts such as multiculturalism, and did not engage in overt racist acts, many of them nevertheless found it difficult to accept that not challenging their own taken-for-granted understanding of what being white means in terms of unstated privilege could be problematic, particularly when they felt challenged by other – non-white – cultural values, attitudes and practices (p. 125).

It is also in the context of critical pedagogy that Indigenous scholars Martin Nakata (2004) and Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2006) argue that Indigenous students need to understand the implications of “whiteness” on their lives. Nakata has suggested that Indigenous students and researchers are faced with the complex problem of most academic knowledge of Indigenous life being filtered and mediated through “the ontological world of Western knowledge systems” (2004, p. 12). Western knowledge systems mean that cultural traditions are dealt with as anthropological, Indigenous life stories are dealt with as an addition to Western literary and history traditions, Native has nothing to do with traditional Indigenous ways of dealing with land ownership but instead reflects Western legal practices, and Indigenous languages only exist as objects of study rather than being connected to living communities (Ibid.). According to Nakata,

“All knowledge that is produced about us, and all knowledge that we produce ourselves is added to the Western corpus, gets reorganised and studied via the disciplines of Western knowledge” (Nakata 2004, p. 1).

Nakata argues that in the classroom, the fact that most information about Indigenous life and knowledge is filtered through the dominant non-Indigenous discourse is generally unrecognised and unchallenged by the non-Indigenous teacher and student. However, just as the dominant non-Indigenous discourse must be negotiated by the Indigenous student who may learn first-hand about Indigenous life, so the non-Indigenous student must question the dominant discourse. This is facilitated by being introduced to Indigenous practices through using the *8-Ways Learning* framework embedded in the artefact. These Indigenous pedagogies include “ways of story-telling, of memory-making, narrative, art and performance and social practices, of relating to kin, of socialising children; in ways of thinking” (Nakata, 2007, p. 10). Through these means Indigenous students are exposed to a different version of their culture second-hand through formal schooling, the law, the workplace, and so on (Ibid.) and in the same way non-Indigenous students are exposed second-hand to Indigenous cultures.

This situation is complicated further in that while many Indigenous students may learn first-hand about their culture through their families, etc., there are also many Indigenous students (particularly urbanised Indigenous students) who may, for a number of reasons, know little about their Indigenous histories and acquire their knowledge of them only through second-hand sources which are filtered through, and informed by, the dominant non-Indigenous discourse. This issue has been recognised by many academics and teachers working within mainstream learning environments (Arnold et al. 1999; Bin Sallik 1989, 1993; Nakata 2002, 2004, 2007; Reid et al. 2009; Williamson & Dalal 2007). Moreton-Robinson’s (2006) solution is to recommend that “whiteness studies” be included in university curricula for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Such a subject would challenge the way that academic disciplines such as history, political science, Aboriginal studies, Australian studies and anthropology act as “normalizing modes of rationality that facilitate procedures of Indigenous subjugation and mask non-Indigenous investments in relations of patriarchal White sovereignty” (Moreton-Robinson 2006, p. 389).

Having raised some of the cultural issues challenging both Indigenous and non-Indigenous education, I now move on to a brief discussion of how I and several of my Swinburne colleagues attempted to address some of these problems.

***Weft Thread 7: Swinburne University of Technology's Response: Indigenous Inclusion in Curriculum***

It is within the context of my belief in the principle of Indigenous inclusion in curriculum and commitment to critical pedagogy that the learning resources included on the *One Country: Different Voices* website have been developed. In this section I briefly describe how I arrived at my understanding of Indigenous inclusion and how this led in 1999 to the production of the Swinburne report, *Indigenous Inclusion in Curriculum* (Arnold, Atkinson, Vigo & Lilley 1999).

It was the concern that Indigenous cultures was largely ignored by curricula taught by Swinburne University of Technology that led to the publication of *Indigenous Inclusion in Curriculum*. This report examined the ways in which Swinburne University of Technology could

...enrich its awareness of Indigenous matters and apply them to teaching and learning construction and delivery so that Aboriginal people [could] participate fully in mainstream education and so that all students become aware of the position of Indigenous peoples in Australia (Arnold et al. 1999, p. 1).

The report looked at Swinburne's policies regarding Indigenous students and teaching of Indigenous matters; two Swinburne courses – the Indigenous-specific Childcare course offered at Swinburne's Prahran campus and the Indigenous-inclusive Media and Multimedia majors offered at Swinburne's Lilydale campus.

The broad aims of the report were centred on improving teaching and learning outcomes at Swinburne specifically by "identifying ways in which the general curriculum might involve sensitivity to Indigenous inclusiveness" (p. 121). The impetus for producing the report came in part from our interests and concerns about how the university was addressing the learning needs and experience of the Indigenous students

it was encouraging to enrol. Our concern came out of the recognition that many Aboriginal students were reluctant to enter formal tertiary education because it was,

...too often non-inclusive in such curriculum areas as cultural exemplars, references, materials, assessment procedures and readings; that many academics [did] not always take Indigenous inclusiveness into account when preparing or delivering curriculum; and that non-Indigenous students [were] not fully aware of the range of cultural realities of Australia's black history and present existence (Arnold et al. 1999, p. 1).

The report offered a set of recommendations to the university as well as checklists for Indigenous inclusion that could be used by university policy makers and academics developing curricula. While two of the report's co-authors are Indigenous (Sue Atkinson and Lorraine Lilley), the report did not specifically seek to create content about Indigenous knowledge and experience aimed at Indigenous students, arguing that this should be done by Indigenous academics. However, it did set out to encourage both university management and staff to be consciously aware of the pedagogical and curriculum advantages of Indigenous inclusion and to seek to be inclusive as a matter of principle and practice.

The experience of being involved in the *Indigenous Inclusion in Curriculum* report opened my mind to the importance and potential of Indigenous approaches such as Nakata's Cultural Interface for dealing with gaps in Indigenous education. In the next section I will overview the key aspects of Cultural Interface that are relevant to my development of the artefact.

### ***Weft Thread 8: Martin Nakata and the Cultural Interface***

Nakata's Cultural Interface (2002, 2003, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2011) is one of the key theoretical frameworks that informs the *8-Ways Learning* (Yunkaporta 2009a, p. 161). In this section I will discuss how Cultural Interface also provides the non-Indigenous teacher with a class of predominantly non-Indigenous students (with, perhaps, a few Indigenous students) with a way of understanding how *One Country: Different Voices* can be used as an important entry point for introducing Indigenous content and perspectives into the curriculum in a way that shifts the preoccupation with differences

to instead focus on a more equal relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to knowledge and learning (2003, p. 4).

Nakata developed his Cultural Interface model as a means of addressing the problems of Indigenous pedagogy and research. Broadly, the model offers an explanation for “the daily negotiations made by Indigenous peoples in colonised contexts” (McGloin 2009, p. 38). It provides a means of understanding the Indigenous experience and how it is shaped and constituted within colonial relations of power. It provides a mechanism for understanding how post-colonialism has influenced other sites of struggle, such as, for example, Land Rights (Nakata 2007, pp. 195-212). It deals with the cultural spaces where “things are not clearly black or white, Indigenous or Western” (p. 9). According to Nakata, it is the space that includes,

...histories, politics, economics, multiple and interconnected discourses, social practices and knowledge technologies which condition how we all come to look at the world, how we come to know and understand our changing realities in the everyday world, and how and what knowledge we operationalise in our daily lives. Much of what we bring to this is tacit and unspoken knowledge. Those assumptions by which we make sense and meaning in our everyday world (p. 9).

It is a site where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can contest and confront and reconceptualise their understanding as being the colonised other and the coloniser.

Taking its cue from Cultural Interface, *One Country: Different Voices* introduces non-Indigenous students to insights about the Australian Indigenous experience and pedagogies and creates opportunities for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous students to engage in dialogue through the website’s discussion forum. This allows them to share and contest experiences and insights so that they come to “unlearn”, or undo, the constraints of previously unrecognised dominant ideologies and their effect on attitudes and behaviour. While the struggle for Indigenous students is immeasurably harder because they confront the problems of existing in a colonised society, it can also be difficult for the non-Indigenous who has a closed mind that

refuses to acknowledge their position as colonizer and that they are so deeply bound by their dominant ideology.

Nakata does not criticise the move to include inclusion of Indigenous learning approaches in curricula but warns that this can result in a simplified understanding of how both Indigenous and Western knowledge and culture operate. For example, Nakata distinguishes Indigenous “knowledge about”, that is, knowledge about medicine, ecology, botany, astronomy, etc., from “Indigenous Knowledge”, that is, knowledge that includes “knowledge about”, but which exists as part of a complex relationship that also includes culture and spirituality. He argues that the Western practice of focusing only on Indigenous “knowledge about” has led to Indigenous cultures being treated as merely another “way of knowing” and positioning the Indigenous person as “the other”.

One of the challenges confronting the development of *One Country: Different Voices* is that a great deal of Aboriginal knowledge about cultural and spiritual matters is secretly held by different members of the community (Watson 2003, p. 6) and therefore it is impossible, and inappropriate for the non-Indigenous teacher to refer to these matters. However, taking the cue of Nakata’s Cultural Interface, it does include links that highlight the richness, depth and complexity of Indigenous knowledge. In doing so, it recognises and accepts Nakata’s argument for the recognition of the complexity of Indigenous thinking (2007, p. 5). The failure to do so by can result in what David Mowaljarlai, senior lawman of the Ngarynin people describes as a cause for regret:

We are really sorry for you people. We cry for you because you haven’t got meaning of culture in this country. We have a gift we want to give to you. We keep getting blocked from giving you that gift. We get blocked by politics and politicians. We get blocked by media, by process of law. All we want to do is to come out from under all of this and give you this gift. And it’s the gift of pattern thinking. It’s the culture which is the blood of this country, of Aboriginal groups, of the ecology, of the land itself (cited in Grieves 1995, p. 200).

Nakata also argues that separating domains of knowledge – Indigenous and Western or “traditional and formal” – results in “simplifications that obscure the very complexities

of cultural practices in both domains” (2007, p. 5). It is vital, he suggests, that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students be exposed and introduced to the context in which knowledge exists. In too many cases, he suggests Indigenous inclusion does “little to orient students to the context of Western knowledges which via the disciplines are also de-contextualised and removed from life” (Ibid.). Nakata’s concept of “knowledge about” in many ways reflects Irigaray’s concept of “looking at” which involves “looking-at” (or perceiving) information and ideas and the “truth” in any dialogue, rather than “listening to” what is being said (Irigaray 2006, Kindle Locations 3633-3634).

Non-Indigenous educator Colleen McGloin (2009) also points to the same problems when she says that Indigenous inclusion in the classroom is not simply about teaching anti-racism. Rather, “an anti-racist pedagogy requires an understanding of the on-going construction of nation as a project that seeks to eliminate cultural and physical difference while at the same time relying on difference to identify itself in relation to that which is excluded” (McGloin 2009, p. 38). *One Country: Different Voices* addresses some of these issues by embedding critical pedagogy which asks the student to question and challenge what they know and their taken-for-granted assumptions about their culture.

While Nakata’s Cultural Interface gains much support from many Indigenous – and non-Indigenous – academics (Griffiths 2011; Ma Rhea & Russell 2012; McGloin 2009; Pearce 2008) there are some who voice doubts. For example, Grieves (2009) argues against the danger of homogenising Australian Indigenous cultures implied by Nakata in his book *Disciplining the Savages: Savaging the Disciplines* (2007), arguing that not only are there many Torres Strait Indigenous cultures, but there are many more on the Australian mainland. Further, she argues that Nakata implicitly characterises the Cultural Interface “as existing in a postcolonial space” which opens up possibilities for postcolonial approaches “that have been overwhelmingly rejected by Aboriginal scholars who recognise colonialism as ongoing, not in the past” (p. 201). She saves some of her most trenchant criticisms for his use of the Cultural Interface model for education, stating that it seems to be “based on a wide-eyed approach to Western education and process” that accepts uncritically the benefits of Western education while glossing over its denial of Indigenous approaches to learning and Indigenous knowledge (p. 202). *One Country:*

*Different Voices* addresses this concern in the way that it challenges the supremacy of Western education by deliberately using the *8-Ways Learning* framework as a starting point for non-Indigenous students, thereby also privileging Indigenous approaches to learning.

Grieves' concern that there is a danger implied in Nakata's Cultural Interface of lumping Indigenous cultures into a vast neutral multicultural space where all cultures are equal is also noted by Canadian academic Verna St Denis (2001). St Denis warns that there are four implicit dangers in multiculturalism: its practice of encouraging social divisions by separating different cultures into groups which compete for recognition and resources; its failure to combat social inequality; its relegation of many cultural groups into the merely decorative "cultural others" and limiting their representation to things such as music, food and dance; and, its inadequacy for dealing with competing demands of competing cultural groups or individuals living in a centralised state. All of these factors, she asserts, prevent an anti-colonial analysis (p. 308) and deny Aboriginal sovereignty (p. 312): "Multiculturalism is dangerous because it diminishes the importance and need for Aboriginal content and perspectives" (p. 313).

Implicit in the range of resources included or linked from the *One Country: Different Voices* website is Nakata's (2011) rebuttal of these criticisms in which he acknowledges the danger of colonial attitudes and the dominant white ideology, situating his concept of the Cultural Interface as a "rationale and much less prescription". He argues that Cultural Interface is not "preoccupied over differences of meaning in intersections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds of knowledge and experience", rather there should be recognition "of all the disruptions, discontinuities, continuities and convergences of knowledge that exist in this space and appreciation of the complexities that exist there" (2011, p. 3). The inclusion on the *One Country: Different Voices* website of links to sites such as television program *Redfern Now* recognises and supports Nakata's contention that the concept of the Cultural Interface offers a means of recognising that not all Indigenous students are same: some are urban, some are rural, some have strong English language skills, others do not, and so on.

*Redfern Now* is the first television series written and directed by Indigenous Australians. Ginsberg (2017, p 124) describes it as important because it 'speaks forcefully to the

unfinished business of decolonization’ in two ways: firstly because of the subject matter it depicts and, secondly because it was the first Australian television series conceived, written and directed by Indigenous Australians. The program challenges popular media representations of Indigenous Australians of living ‘traditional’ lives in isolated communities. Rather, it depicts Aboriginal Australians living urban lives and leading to what Nelson (2013, p 48) describes as the ‘realisation ... that, for perhaps the first time in a television drama, White Australia is “other”, and the token characters are the non-Indigenous ones; the tables are finally turned. There is interaction between the outside world and that community, and there is mobility and fluidity, but the focus is firmly on the Indigenous inhabitants of this universe, and the richness of the characters on full display.’

By targeting and situating itself in the non-Indigenous classroom *One Country: Different Voices* addresses Nakata’s contention that many Indigenous students have particular education needs which may be best met by Western educational practices, particularly if they are to operate successfully within mainstream “white” culture. Inclusion of Indigenous content in curriculum, he argues, benefits both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (Ibid.).

*One Country: Different Voices* is premised on individuals engaging with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge and rejects the contention that there should be separation between them. By introducing Indigenous perspectives and knowledge as a normal and routine part of the general curriculum (rather than as an oddity, token or add-on), *One Country: Different Voices* allows all students to engage with Indigenous knowledge, which is then protected from being relegated as a remnant of the past (Nakata 2009, pp. 5-6).

For the non-Indigenous academic wishing to introduce or embed Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum the challenge can be difficult because much – or all – of this knowledge exists outside their personal frames of reference. *One Country: Different Voices* addresses this by embedding both narrative and critical pedagogies which offer a means by which non-Indigenous teachers can unpack the discourses that influence their attitude to Indigenous students and the way they go about learning, allowing them

to open their minds to concepts of Cultural Interface and the role it might play in their curriculum development. By focusing on the experiences of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, *One Country: Different Voices* creates a learning resource that leads students to recognise that knowledge is not fixed, rather it reflects the cultural values, insights and experiences of particular social groups and that one culture's values, insights and experiences should not be privileged over another.

In the next section I will briefly describe and discuss how the weft threads that constitute the discussion in this exegesis so far are woven with Yunkaporta's *8-Ways Learning Framework* that forms the warp of the fabric that constitutes *One Country: Different Voices*.

## Section 7

### **Weaving the Warp: *Eight-Ways Learning***

In this section I will discuss some of the debates surrounding Indigenous education that have led to, and inform, the *8-Ways Learning* framework. I will then describe the framework and how it relates to, embeds and develops mainstream learning theories such as constructivism, critical pedagogy and narrative pedagogy. In doing so I will discuss how these learning theories underpin the design of the artefact to the extent of enabling it to be applied in ways that encourage non-Indigenous students and teachers to actively engage in critique of the processes of knowledge construction that frame mainstream education in relation to Indigenous matters.

This discussion pre-shadows how the *8-Ways Learning* framework can be applied and how teachers using the *One Country: Different Voices* website can enhance their learning outcomes by using its dialogic model to avoid any sense of “us” and “them”, the binary oppositions that can occur when both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators fail to recognise value in each other’s cultures and knowledge, or the richness in the different approaches to learning taken by Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The dialogic approach used by the artefact, which is enabled most explicitly by the website’s discussion forum and implicitly through its many linked resources, allows students to participate in both construction and deconstruction of their cultural ideologies, at the same time empowering Indigenous users to “re” construct knowledge from new epistemological standpoints.

### ***Warp Thread 1: Pathways to Indigenous Education***

As discussed above in the section, *Indigenous participation in education*, teaching Indigenous students requires a different approach to ensure positive learning outcomes within the context of mainstream, or Western, education. Dawe (1998) notes that there is “a mismatch” between the cultures of Indigenous families that shape the socialisation of Indigenous children and the culture those children are confronted with at school, and that Indigenous children are likely to place more value on cooperation and communal roles while the school culture emphasises competition and individual achievement (p. 1). This notion of “mismatch” is also noted by Dockery (2009) who comments that Indigenous students feel alienated in educational institutions and are often unable to seek help from teachers (p. 16); Mellor and Corrigan (2004), who observe there is a need for teachers to treat Indigenous cultures as “an asset of real value” (p. 35); and, Herrington and Jones (2010) who refer to the frequent cultural mismatch of teaching styles in Indigenous education, which pairs highly sophisticated technologies with learning traditions associated with non-Indigenous approaches to learning (p. 264).

Devlin (2009) extends the problem of cultural mismatch experienced by many Indigenous students to include situations where teachers may have the best of intentions towards their Indigenous students but are effectively undermined by the fundamentally ideological nature of the mainstream education curriculum. Devlin identifies three aspects of the curriculum: “the intended curriculum, that is, the official texts, and so on; the enacted curriculum (i.e., how the intended curriculum is delivered); and, the hidden curriculum” which is not always recognised but includes “*the values and beliefs* that are signified by what is, and what is not, represented in the intended and enacted curriculum and discourse” (p. 5).

It is not within the scope of this work to offer a comprehensive review of all Government, school and teaching strategies to overcome these needs and cultural mismatches in Indigenous education. However, one key strategy was the introduction by the Northern Territory education system of bilingual education programs in 1973, which ended in 1988 after a review panel appointed by the then Northern Territory Government reported that the program resulted in a decline in English usage by Indigenous students

(Nicholls 2005, p. 161). The programs were reinstated not long after only to be abandoned again in 2008 in spite of positive findings of better educational performance and outcomes from students in bilingual programs reported by the Northern Territory's Department of Employment, Education and Training report, *Indigenous Languages and Culture in Northern Territory Schools Report 2004-2005*.

In 1990, Stephen Harris introduced the concept of "both ways" or "two-way" schooling which he defined as "a theory of schooling for simultaneous Aboriginal cultural maintenance and academic success" which arose out of Indigenous peoples believing that there was a fundamental incompatibility between the Aboriginal and Western world views. Two-way schooling would address that by organising two separate systems or domains: the Western and the Aboriginal (Harris 1990, p. xiii). This involved students switching, as appropriate to the content being taught, between the Western domain with Western approaches to learning coming to the fore, and the Indigenous domain which privileged Indigenous content, values and approaches to learning. It was mooted that two-way schooling would succeed best in local schools owned and controlled by the local Indigenous community who also determined the curriculum in a way that respected both domains. Learning in both domains would also be strongly contextualised with schools as far as possible "doing Aboriginal things in Aboriginal ways in Aboriginal contexts for Aboriginal reasons" (p. 144). Further, Western teachers teaching in the Western domain, should make "hidden" underlying (colonial) ideology explicit. Indeed, Schwab (1996) argued that the priority in the Aboriginal domain was to strengthen Indigenous identity and maintain Aboriginal culture, not to imitate the structures and approaches of the Western domain (p. 13).

While recognising the value of many aspects of the "two-way" learning approach, Schwab identified a number of problematic issues raised in surveys conducted in 1994, by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and, in 1995, by the National Board of Employment, Education and Training, which found that many Indigenous parents believed that sending their children to "mainstream schools was a positive step in self-determination". The concept of community-controlled schools was not completely understood by all communities and not all two-way schools were located within easy access resulting in Aboriginal parents preferring to send their children to "mainstream"

schools closer to where they live. In addition, a fear by many Aboriginal parents that “community-controlled” could mean “faction-controlled”, with control resting in the hands of a few powerful figures rather than the community as a whole meant that some Aboriginal parents associated special Indigenous schools with the authoritarian mission schools. Thus, not all Aboriginal parents were convinced that two-way schools would offer a better educational outcome (Schwab 1996, pp. 12-13).

Schwab argued that these findings, as well as research conducted by himself (1988) and other anthropologists showed that in Aboriginal communities “[I]nterest and concern is focused most intently on the individual, immediate kin and, to a much lesser degree, on the wider community” (p. 17). Government attempts to involve the community in “mainstream” education are likely to fail. He suggested that a better strategy may be to draw the school into the community with administrators and teachers looking for better ways to meet community needs. As will be discussed in further detail below, the *8-Ways Learning* approach is to extend this strategy and bring Indigenous approaches to learning to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous schools in a way that emphasises the need to ground “learning content and values in community knowledge, working on community projects and using or displaying knowledge products publicly for local benefit” (Yunkaporta 2009a, p. 38.)

Another strategy, the so-called “culturally-responsive” model of education, targeted to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, in which Indigenous knowledge is included in the curriculum, has also been addressed in the construction of my artefact. For example, recommendations made by both the *What works: Explorations in improving outcomes for Indigenous students* (2000) and the *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: Key indicators 2009* include strategies curriculum based on Indigenous knowledge, nurturing cross-cultural relationships, inclusion of cultural references, etc., which would lead to better learning outcomes. This approach requires the teacher to have cultural competence which Lee et al. (2007) define as “The ability to work effectively across cultures; it is a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system” p. 3). In this way *One Country: Different Voices* provides a link to an Identity Map which invites non-Indigenous teachers and students to use it to understand their own identity and values and how these influence their perceptions.

The artefact is predicated on Lee et al.'s premise that the culturally competent teacher has knowledge, skills, experience and the ability to transform their understanding of their own and other cultures into teaching practices in order to improve the learning outcomes of all students (p. 3).

It is also noteworthy that the culturally responsive model has synergies with Goodson and Gill's (2011) placement of "Narration" at the beginning of the spiral of narrative learning, given that effective narrative pedagogy is best started with the learner and teacher engaging in self-reflection on their own life experiences before they share their stories. This is followed by a process of "Collaboration" during which the teacher and learners work together to exchange interpretations of the narratives and to deconstruct and reconstruct them. Implicit in this process is the act of constructive "intense listening" which involves listening for both what is said and what is left unsaid. This transaction, in which both listener and narrator are receptive to verbal and physical cues, ensures understanding (Goodson & Gill 2011, pp. 126-127). The artefact models this process with the inclusion of "My Story".

The construction of *One Country: Different Voices* is also guided by Universities Australia's position that the "culturally responsive" model is central to the concept of Indigenous Cultural Competence which provides "the basis upon which Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians may engage positively in a spirit of mutual respect and reconciliation" (2011). Building on these definitions Sims (2011) argues that cultural competence involves more than just a set of teaching skills and an awareness of Indigenous cultures. She points out that it requires "a willingness to engage with heart as well as mind; an engagement many service providers find difficult given the mismatch between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures on fundamental beliefs around children, child-rearing and the roles of parents and community" (p. 11). The website addresses this mismatch by including links to sites in which Indigenous Australians talk about their strong ties and commitments to family, community and land that implicitly invite non-Indigenous students and teachers to re-evaluate their attitudes and beliefs.

Perso (2012) contends further that while cultural sensitivity is an implicit aspect of cultural competence in that it focuses on the importance of knowing and being sensitive to the culture of one's clients, cultural competence is "a skill-focused paradigm and is

therefore a journey rather than merely a stage in the transition from cultural sensitivity to *cultural responsiveness*" (p. 18, italics in original). Perso also argues that at the heart of any culturally responsive teaching program is a genuine knowledge of the students and their needs (2012, p. 30). This knowledge can come if we address what Delpit (1985) describes as "cultural blindness". In his words:

We all carry worlds in our heads, and those worlds are decidedly different. We educators set out to teach, but how can we reach the worlds of others when we don't even know they exist? Indeed, many of us don't even realize that our own worlds exist only in our heads and in the cultural institutions we have built to support them. It is as if we are in the middle of a great computer-generated reality game, but the 'realities' displayed in various participants' minds are entirely different terrains (1985, p. xiv).

While Perso implies here that computer-generated reality games can "obliterate the world around us" (Murray 1997, p. 98) in a form of cultural blindness, Murray points to how the mediating nature of computers can create environments which allow individuals to open themselves to new information and ideas in a way that seems more difficult in their "real" lives. She cites examples of the way in which people detach themselves from their public physical self and take on a "virtual" self that is happy to put private information on their Facebook page or form relationships on internet dating sites (p. 99). *One Country: Different Voices* taps into this capacity of allowing the user to both detach and immerse themselves in an environment that takes them on a journey on which they explore and apply a range of interconnected Indigenous ways of thinking about the world in a serendipitous and non-linear fashion.

Yunkaporta (2009b) alludes to this kind of cultural displacement when he says that the challenge for the teacher is to learn through culture rather than about culture (p. 4). As will be discussed in the following section, the *8-Ways Learning* framework achieves this in part through embedding Nakata's Cultural Interface which includes aspects of the culturally-responsive model.

## ***Warp Thread 2: Nakata's Cultural Interface and 8-Ways Learning***

One of the challenges in creating *One Country: Different Voices* was to ensure that while its design and content adheres to the principles of cultural responsiveness, it did not fall into the trap of creating an environment of binary opposites and recognises the complexities and tensions at the cross-cultural interface and the need for negotiation between Indigenous knowledge, standpoints or perspectives and western disciplinary knowledge systems so that meanings are reframed or reinterpreted (Nakata 2004, p. 14). Like the *8-Ways Learning* framework, but unlike the Two-Way schooling model proposed by Harris, or even aspects of the culturally-responsive model as proposed by Delpit (1985), Sims (2011), and Perso (2012), *One Country: Different Voices* seeks to avoid any sense of “us” and “them”. Instead, taking my cue from *8-Ways Learning*, I seek to develop a dialogical approach which brings together “the highest knowledge in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learning systems to find a productive common ground” (Yunkaporta 2009a, p. 161).

Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009) argue that the way to achieve this dialogical exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learning systems is through Nakata's Cultural Interface which provides both a conceptual framework and a means for “...situating the lifeworlds of contemporary Indigenous peoples in the dynamic space between ancestral and western realities” (p. 58). They note that while Nakata contends that the Cultural Interface is highly political and contested, it also offers the opportunity for reconciliation, innovation and creative exchange and to harness two systems in order to create new knowledge. Yunkaporta also invokes Indigenous concepts of balance, synergy and reciprocity (Yunkaporta 2009b, 3.)

The *8-Ways Learning* framework takes as its guiding principle what Yunkaporta describes as the basic law of Nakata's Cultural Interface: “The shallower the knowledge, the more difference is found between cultures. The deeper the knowledge, the more common ground is found between cultures” (2009a, p. 161). Yunkaporta argues that “...the most productive form of deep common ground knowledge found at the Cultural Interface is meta-knowledge, particularly knowledge about ways of learning” (2009b, p. 3).

By using the *8-Ways Learning* diagram as the starting point, and by drawing on what Yunkaporta and RAET consider to be the most beneficial aspects of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to learning, I have attempted to construct a resource that can be equally used in the non-Indigenous and Indigenous classroom. Yunkaporta (2009b) contends that an intercultural approach allows the teacher to embed Aboriginal perspectives into *how* they teach rather than what they teach, thereby “making all existing curriculum content culturally responsive while also increasing quality teaching practice” (p. 162). In doing this he reflects the position taken by Canadian Indigenous educator Marie Battiste that much can be gained from “focusing on the similarities between the two systems of knowledge rather than on their differences (Battiste 2002, p. 11). Indeed, in the spirit of Indigenous reciprocity, I will give the *One Country: Different Voices* to the RAET team for their educational use as they see fit as well as making it available for any non-Indigenous teacher.

The *8-Ways Learning* framework embeds Nakata’s contention that, for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, the Cultural Interface model starts with their particular location before extending to the non-familiar worlds of either Indigenous or non-Indigenous cultures. In developing his concept of Cultural Interface Nakata (2007b) draws from standpoint theory that lived experience forms the platform from which the individual (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) can begin to question from their position of personal experience how social organisations and social practices of knowledge are expressed and articulated. However, he emphasises that the individual’s “lived experience is the point of entry for investigation, not the case under investigation” (p. 215.) While acknowledging that standpoint theory has “weaknesses”, he nevertheless feels that it offers Indigenous students, academics and researchers “a method of inquiry” through which they can begin to understand the way in which the non-Indigenous world shapes and influences their lives:

I see this as theorising knowledge from a particular and interested position – not to produce the ‘truth’ of the Indigenous position but to better reveal the workings of knowledge and how understanding of Indigenous peoples is caught up and implicated in its work (2007b, p. 215).

Nakata, who is a Torres Strait Islander, incorporates in his definition of the Cultural Interface the position that it is both a theoretical and lived space where Australians – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – struggle to make sense of their past and present experiences of each other. He underlines that the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is that they have been “co-opted into another history, another narrative that is not really about them but about their relation to it” (2007b, p. 215). This narrative reflects the colonialist experience and positions the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience as secondary and means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences and knowledge are largely unheard and not understood (2007b, p. 202). Implicit in Nakata’s position is that in the colonialist narrative – which he perceives as the dominant narrative – Indigenous approaches to learning and knowledge are marginalised or ignored. Nakata challenges this by asserting that the Cultural Interface model recognises that traditional modes of transmitting knowledge may have changed but that this does not mean that the knowledge has disappeared or become less important. Rather it should be understood as an important aspect of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are redefining themselves in relation to their traditional past and present, their colonialist past and present, and their individual and collective perceptions about how their lives can be shaped in the future (Nakata 2007b, p. 206).

An insight into Nakata’s contention of the implicit marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge is offered by the way in which non-Indigenous educators continue to distinguish between Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to learning. Perso offers the table below which summarises research done by Hughes and More (1997) comparing Indigenous and “mainstream” learning styles (Perso 2012, p. 52):

<b><u>Traditional Aboriginal Learning Styles</u></b> (If students are from traditional Indigenous backgrounds it is likely they have a preference for...)	<b>Mainstream Learning styles</b>
Observation and imitation	Verbal and oral instruction
Personal trial/ and error, and feedback	Verbal instruction accompanied by demonstration
Real life performance/learning from life experiences	Practice in contrived/artificial settings
Mastering context specific skills	Abstract context-free principles that can be applied in new, previously inexperienced situations
Person oriented (focus on people and relationships)	Information oriented
Spontaneous learning	Structured learning
Holistic learning	Sequential and linear learning

Table 1: A comparison of Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to learning

While it is undeniable that there are differences between traditional Aboriginal and “mainstream” learning styles, it is incorrect to imply that they are mutually exclusive. For example, as has already been discussed and will be discussed in further detail below, both scaffolding and narrative pedagogy are important learning approaches in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous learning practice.

The *8-Ways Learning* framework works from Indigenous approaches to learning and, “...applying a reconciling theory of Cultural Interface to staff development”, asks how non-Indigenous teachers can engage with Indigenous knowledge and how they can integrate it into mainstream learning (Yunkaporta 2009a, p. xv). Rather than taking an oppositional position – Indigenous versus non-Indigenous learning approaches – *8-Ways Learning* seeks to create a model which acknowledges that there is “a dynamic overlap” between the two approaches and adopts the best of both (Ibid.).

The key elements of the *8-Ways Learning* framework include a range of approaches that are used in both “traditional Aboriginal” and “mainstream” learning. These include: use of narratives; learning maps to elucidate learning processes; non-verbal, intrapersonal and kinaesthetic skills; images and symbols to maximise understanding of concepts and content; eco-pedagogy and place-based learning; lateral thinking; scaffolding learning, modelling and learning from wholes to parts; and, focusing on local viewpoints and applying what is learned to benefit the community. In developing *One Country: Different*

*Voices* I have sought to develop a learning resource that is informed by both “tradition Aboriginal” ways of learning as described by *8-Ways Learning* framework, and by “mainstream” learning theories such as constructivism, critical pedagogy and narrative pedagogy.

### **Weaving the Weft and Warp Threads: Using the 8-Ways Learning Framework to Weave *One Country: Different Voices***

In this section I will briefly describe the *8-Ways Learning* framework and how I have incorporated and adapted it to the *One Country: Different Voices* website. I will also map synergies and overlaps between Indigenous and “Western” pedagogies in a way that guides the reader in their navigation of the website.

## **8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning**

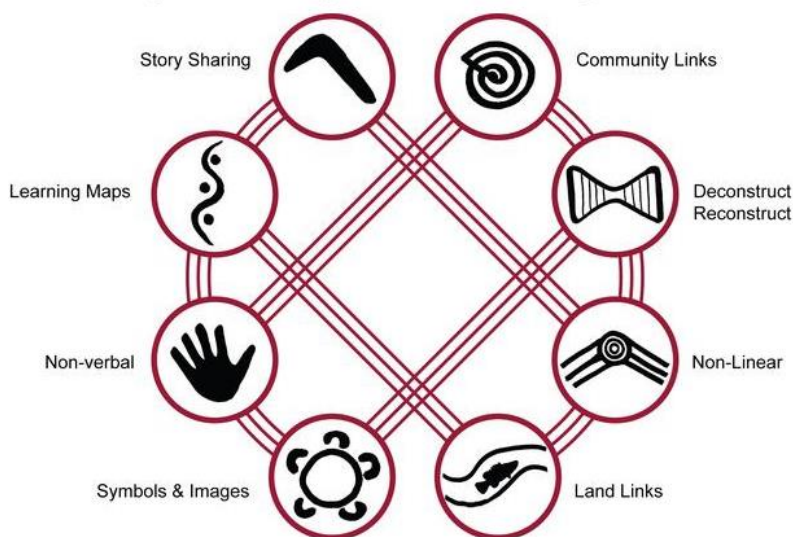


Figure 7: The 8-Ways Learning Framework

### ***First Way: Story Sharing: Learning Through Narrative.***



*Story Sharing* is based in what Yunkaporta terms “Aboriginal yarning modalities” whereby Elders teach using stories to encourage the listener to engage in introspection and analysis. It can also be understood as “narrative as pedagogy, narrative as process, stories experience, cultural meaning-making, place-based significance, and as dynamic frameworks for memory and cognition” (*8-Ways Wikispace* 2012). In grounding learning in the exchange of personal and wider narratives, *Story Sharing* has synergies with, and overlaps, Goodson and Gill’s (2011) concept of narrative as being transformational. They contend that narrative learning leads to an enhanced understanding of one’s own and others’ lived experience, including their location, cultural history and the socio-political forces have helped shape who they are (p. 119). Further, in a way that strongly echoes Nakata’s discussion of the Cultural Interface, they argue that narrative construction of our lives is

not only an individual process of re-visiting and re-organising our stories of the self, including our sense of moral being, but also provides a basis for groups and communities to reflect on and consolidate their sense of integrity and wellbeing (p. 138).

Film director Peter Brooks offers another useful insight into narrative when he writes, “We live immersed in narrative, recounting and reassessing the means of our past actions, anticipating the outcome of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed” (as cited in Goodson & Gill 2011, p. 137).

Thus, narrative is the way in which we negotiate and make sense of ourselves in terms of our individual and cultural past, present and future. As discussed previously, this definition of narrative learning is close to Indigenous Dreaming.

As noted above, the artefact puts *Story-Sharing* into practice through the inclusion of a brief biographical reading titled “My Story”, asking students to complete the “Personal Identity Map” found on the *8-Ways Wikispace*, and through students exchanging their personal stories on the Wiki discussion forum.

The short biographical reading, “My Story”, is intended to serve two key purposes: firstly it adopts and adapts the Indigenous practice of providing people they meet with

information about their Country, their clan, community, or specific totems; and, secondly it acts as a model for students participating in the Wiki discussion forum, encouraging them to think about who they are and about some of the events in their lives that have shaped their lives and attitudes. The intention of the reading about my experience as a learner and teacher is to make transparent to the student the ideas and learning theories that underpin the website. This also enacts Freire's (1992, 1995) concept of critical pedagogy that includes classroom dialogue, which is premised on the belief that just as the teacher has knowledge, so the student's knowledge about their own world has value which they can share with their fellow students and their teachers. The outcome of such a dialogue positions the student and teacher as equals in the learning process.

Freire's concept of critical pedagogy is also put into practice by encouraging students to complete the *Personal Identity Map* found on the *8-Ways Wikispace* because it asks questions which reflect on their ways of being, knowing, doing and valuing. The questions cover issues such as where they belong and who they belong to, thinking of things they know are real, what sorts of things they know implicitly without having to be taught, how they go about learning, and how they know what is true: this provides a means by which students can be provided with knowledge and understanding of how political systems work and how particular ideologies come to dominate society.

By sharing their personal stories (who they are and where they come from, and so on) when engaging in discussions on the Wiki discussion forum students are given further opportunities to gain insights into not only how their personal experience and cultural location shape their ideas and opinions, but also into how they shape the world views and lives of other students. By beginning with their individual experience and opening their eyes and minds to the experiences of others they also enter the transformative potential of Nakata's Cultural Interface.

A link from *Story-Sharing* titled *The Story of Coranderrk* encourages students to post a response about their insights and feelings about the Coranderrk story. The second activity on the page encourages them to find out whether there are any Indigenous communities in their neighbourhood and to make contact with them in order to learn

their stories. Through these means students are encouraged to critically reflect on their knowledge of local Indigenous life and experience.

***Second Way: Learning Maps: Making Learning Pathways and Process Explicit Visually***



*Learning Maps* represents the way in which Indigenous learners have a preference for thinking about knowledge in a visual way and make use of metaphors grounded in culture and country (RAET 2012, p. 32). Indigenous students have more successful learning outcomes when teachers make learning activities explicit in a visual way by using diagrams or visualisations which map the whole learning task. This is a more holistic approach to learning (Yunkaporta 2007a, p. 48).

*One Country: Different Voices* puts the use of *Learning Maps* into practice in three ways: firstly, through the use of the *8-Ways Learning* diagram as a navigational tool; secondly through the inclusion of a learning map and concept map of the website in the *Learning Maps* text; and, thirdly through the use of videos throughout the site that represent ideas about Indigenous approaches to learning in visual ways.

By using the *8-Ways Learning* model as a navigational tool and framework for students to navigate the website, they not only see the *8-Ways* representation of the relationship between the eight ways of Indigenous learning, but also apply it to access further information about the ways in an interactive way. Similarly, students are given the opportunity to access visual representations of how the featured topics of *Art*, *Sport*, *Sky* and *Technology* relate to Indigenous ways of learning:



Figure 8: Aboriginal Astronomy page on the *One Country: Different Voices* website.

By presenting students with this kind of visual representation of learning they are provided with a model designed to encourage them to think metacognitively about their learning approaches when dealing with specific topics or areas of study. This provides them with new skills to apply in other learning contexts.

The text that deals with *Learning Maps* included on the site includes a learning map and concept map that I developed when planning the *One Country: Different Voices* website. These maps also provide models for students when planning assessment tasks by providing them with two different visual ways of thinking about and clarifying their ideas. By including my own learning maps and links to WWW sites on creating learning maps I am providing another transferable skill that enhances students' independent learning skills.

The use of videos throughout the site that represent ideas about Indigenous approaches to learning in visual ways illustrates graphically how important visual ways of learning are for Indigenous Australians. An excellent example of these videos is "Our Land The Teaching Ground" in which an Aboriginal Elder talks about how the land represents a learning map for the culture and life of each clan. These kinds of videos offer non-Indigenous students different ways for thinking about the various influences that shape their lives and for looking at their environment with new eyes.

Holistic learning is defined by Nichol (2009), as “complete, cooperative, integrated and all-encompassing” and involving the concept that “everything is interrelated and all relationships are important” (p. 8). He also argues that rather than compartmentalising learning according to academic disciplines or subsets of apparently unrelated skills, holistic learning is integrated and concurrent. This results in learning flowing smoothly between content areas, making the interrelationship between knowledge and skills apparent. He notes that Indigenous students “prefer to observe and discuss a task or topic before working through components and activities” and that their learning outcomes are more effective “...if the overall concept and direction of a lesson is outlined, discussed and modelled before specific learning activities are introduced”. He argues that this approach is more “real life” and “is more reflective of their Indigenous worldview” (p. 9).

I believe that non-Indigenous strategic learners (Entwhistle 1998, p. 73) would benefit from *Learning Maps* because it will help them plan their study approach and goals more effectively. Similarly, Entwhistle notes that deep learners often employ a holistic approach as one of their learning strategies (p. 75).

A good example of integrated and holistic learning versus more compartmentalised learning comes from Michie and Linkson (1999), who mapped the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge of rock formations in a way that clearly differentiates the Indigenous holistic, integrated approach from the sequential and specialised approach of non-Indigenous science:

<b>Concept: Landforms</b>	<b>Australian Indigenous knowledge</b>	<b>Western scientific knowledge</b>
<b>Explanation</b>	Results from the effects of religious events in the Dreamtime. For example, the actions of the Rainbow Serpent travelling across the land.	Results from the effects of erosion. For example, the effects of wind, the movement of water in rain and rivers and heating from the sun.

<b>Evidence</b>	Comes from stories, songs and dance.	Comes from observations, theories, predictions and experimental confirmation.
<b>Available to</b>	Particular people who are related to that land and own the knowledge. Others can be aware but will not claim the knowledge publically.	Anyone who is able to access it and has some background science knowledge.
<b>Can be accessed by</b>	Participation in ceremonies; oral transmission; art; singing; dancing. Manipulation of media containing Indigenous knowledge: print, video, audio, CD-ROM, internet.	Participation in science education. Manipulation of media containing Western scientific knowledge: print, video, audio, CD-ROM, internet.

Table 2: Comparison of the origin and acquisition of Australian Indigenous knowledge with

Western scientific knowledge about landforms

(Michie & Linkson, 1999).

In Michie and Linkson's comparison the Indigenous approach to knowledge about rock formations relies on Dreamtime Stories told through voice, dance, music and metaphorical visual representations such as rock art and painting. Further, information about rock formations is conveyed as part of a clan's larger cultural and spiritual knowledge that can be accessed through traditional modes of knowledge transmission (song, dance, art, etc.), as well as modern technologies including CD ROM and the internet. The Western approach, on the other hand, relies on scientific observation and theorising which sees rock formations as being caused by natural phenomena such as wind and rain. This knowledge is then tested, validated and disseminated through formal modes of knowledge transmission such as peer-reviewed publications, the classroom and modern technologies such as the internet. Rather than being part of an

individual's larger cultural and spiritual knowledge, in non-Indigenous society knowledge about rock formations is generally limited to scientists or members of the general public who have a particular practical reason for this knowledge such as miners, farmers or tourists.

Nichol also describes Indigenous students as being "imaginal", that is, their learning is "...relatively unstructured and consists of thoughts, images and experiences of learning" which is facilitated through observation and imitation rather than verbalisation. He quotes a Yipirinya teacher who found that

Aboriginal students form pictures of tasks in their minds and then perform them through imitation. They prefer to see the 'whole' rather than 'little bit by little bit'. In this way they have the task and the expected outcome and are then prepared to give it a go... They often need concrete materials to conceptualise what they need to learn. For example, when teaching a social studies lesson we might take students on a 'bush tucker' excursion (Nichol 2009, p. 9).

***Third way: Non-verbal: Relating and Connecting to Knowledge Reflectively, Critically, Ancestrally and Physically***



The *8-Ways Learning* framework defines *Non-verbal* as the Aboriginal way of relating and connecting to knowledge reflectively, critically, ancestrally and physically (RAET 2012, p. 32). It stresses that in Aboriginal culture communication also occurs through body language and that silence and listening respectfully is considered to be just as important as speaking. It underlines the importance of kinesthetic or hands-on learning and that through testing knowledge non-verbally through experience, introspection and practice, the Aboriginal student develops independent critical thinking skills (p. 52).

*The use of introspection embedded in Non-verbal to encourage independent critical thinking skills is in many ways akin to Svensson's (1997) contention that holistic learners engage in deep reflection in order to integrate different parts of an area of knowledge (p. 64, p. 68). However, non-Indigenous teachers can take a lead from 8-Ways Learning and then model independent critical thinking skills through articulated analysis of the texts they use, examining them for unspoken values and assumptions and making these clear to the student. Through this process of problematising or questioning texts, the teacher also encourages students – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – to engage in critical reflection and independent thinking. This practice is analogous to McLaren's (2001, 2007) concept of critical literacy in which the teacher assists the student to "read" and understand how knowledge/power relationships operate within all aspects of social life – school, media, family, community – and how they become dominant narratives in their lives.*

Students are encouraged to engage in critical dialogue through the Wiki discussion forum. The impartial moderator intervenes if discussion becomes unfair or inappropriate and ensures that the forum remains a safe space where all points of view are respected (Ellison 2009, pp. 348-349).

The *One Country: Different Voices* website offers a different interpretation of *Non-verbal* learning through the inclusion of non-Indigenous artist Cath Clover's Healesville Aboriginal Cemetery Soundscape. In her commentary on what she terms her "sounding", she describes her nearly seven-minute long piece as a non-verbal recording of an identity of a particular place at a particular time. She invites the listener to think about the sounding – which includes noises of wind, grass, insects and birds, and, later the sound of an airplane flying overhead – as a metaphor for Indigenous life before and after white invasion. This sounding also offers a graphic example of how non-Indigenous peoples can tell stories without words.

*8-Ways Learning* also remind the non-Indigenous teacher that for many Australian Aboriginals silence is an important and valued feature of non-verbal communication, indicating a desire to think about a matter or to become comfortable with a social situation. This response is markedly different from non-Indigenous Australian society where a pause in conversation can be cause for embarrassment (Fryer-Smith 2002, p.

54). Fryer-Smith also notes that sign language and gestures are significant aspects of communication in traditional Aboriginal culture. Sign language may be especially important in hunting and mourning practices. Many gestures are common to Aboriginal people throughout Australia, particularly those which are intended to identify relatives or other people.

He also points to other subtler gestures which are frequently missed by non-Indigenous peoples such as eye, head or lip movements “to indicate direction of motion, or the location of a person or of an event being discussed”. Gesture is also used in touch between Aboriginal people, either to initiate conversation or in place of conversation. However, he also warns that uninvited touch by a non-Aboriginal person may be interpreted as a sign of aggression (Ibid.).

While non-Indigenous teachers and students use gestures and body language in an implicit way, it is a much more formalised mode of communication for Indigenous society. *Non-verbal* is also used as a way for teachers to manage classes through looks and gestures. This involves the teacher and the class agreeing on a range of small gestures, eye direction and facial expressions to act as coded messages which convey meaning about behaviour. *8-Ways Learning* also warns non-Indigenous teachers that they need to be deeply committed to teaching Indigenous students in a positive and inclusive way because if they are not they may betray their true feelings through unintended non-verbal cues such as rolling of their eyes, hand gestures and smirks (RAET 2012, p. 73).

#### ***Fourth Way: Symbols & Images: Exploring Content Through Visual Imagery***



The use of symbols as metaphors can work at both the oral and visual levels when an idea that is expressed through an analogy or figure of speech is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. *8 Ways Learning* defines *Symbols & Images*

as a visual metalanguage which forms the building blocks for memory and the making of meaning. This metalanguage is cross-cultural and dynamic. Symbolic learning is seen as a strategy which teachers use to present students with both concrete and abstract imagery which focus on the micro level of content rather than the macro level of processes (RAET 2012, p. 32, p. 52).

Watson (2003) offers an excellent example of how this process works in traditional Aboriginal communities such as the Balgo people from the Great Sandy Desert when the women use sand drawings – or walkala – to teach children important skills:

Public sand drawing – walkala or walkula – is a multisensual social activity comprising the marking of the ground with the finger or a stick, to the accompaniment of a verbal or chanted narrative. It is a storytelling system to show children how to hunt, gather, or cook bush food, to teach them how to behave in important social situations, or about things that happened to family members in the past. It includes illustrations, small models demonstrating processes, as well as facial and hand gestures. Walkala stories shared between adults tell of the events in their everyday lives, their plans, or memories (p. 64).

The Balgo women using walkala for teaching purposes instinctively understand importance of visual learning as highlighted by Williams (1983) who notes that symbols and images serve as visual metaphors because they provide connections between new concepts and previous experience by constantly focussing on “the process of recognising and understanding patterns and general principles which give meanings to specific facts” (p. 59).

Indeed, in non-Indigenous society the use of common symbols in public places has become so ubiquitous that we don’t think twice about their meaning. Students using the *One Country: Different Voices* website are asked to analyse and discuss ubiquitous symbols used in advertising by companies such as Coca Cola which sell their products globally, to think about the implications of these kinds of advertised products for the development of international and cross-cultural shared meanings. For example, they are

asked to look at the following Coca Cola advertising images and to think about what they represent and why Coca Cola would use them:



Figure 9: Advertising logos used by the Coca Cola company

Students are also invited to think about the way that many cultures use symbols to convey often similar complex cultural ideas. One way they are encouraged to do so is through the way that the website uses alternate symbols used by other cultures to represent similar ideas to those used by the *8 Ways Learning* diagram. For example,

the *8-Ways Learning* symbol for *Community Links*



alternates with this



Celtic spiral symbol

that symbolises the way we are more than our bodies and more than the confines of this earth and reminds people to pass their positive energy to the world, ultimately making the universe a better place to live and grow. In the Celtic tradition the spiral lies on the rippled sand of a seashore but it could equally lie on the wind-rippled sands of the desert.

### ***Fifth Way: Land Links: Relating Learning to Land and Place***



*Land Links* refers to the way in which concepts of place and country can offer paths to developing curricula that is relevant to a particular community's country. This is illustrated by the work done by Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009) developing curricula for the "Garriya community college", a remote Indigenous community in western New South Wales, which used the junction of three local rivers as a metaphor for "...working synergistically in the overlap between multiple social realities and ways of knowing". The theoretical model they developed for the project was constructed visually and mapped onto local geographical and political notions of place (pp. 56-57). Yunkaporta and McGinty found that their theoretical model, which also used the metaphor of the junction of three rivers to diagrammatically represent their ideas, was particularly useful in combining local and non-Indigenous knowledge to create new curriculum designs. They also used Dreaming stories about the formation of local land features to metaphorically represent Aboriginal ways of thinking. For example:

From [the local Wamba Star] story came the notion that local Aboriginal ways of thinking and innovating took a winding path rather than a straight line, a concept that had considerable overlap with De Bono's (1996) lateral thinking techniques. Both ways of thinking were explored and used not only in product design, but also classroom design, as the students practised the technique initially by customising the classroom environment, procedures, activities and content to suit their needs. In this way they became active participants in the study rather than passive objects of the research (2009, p. 68).

This approach of grounding learning in country has also been adopted by the Indigenous Land and Sea Management program described by Fogarty and Schwab (2012) which is based on an experiential learning approach incorporating the concept of "learning through country". Some of the program's key insights included: the importance of

allowing students to bring their extant environmental knowledge to the classroom; accepting that senior members of the community are an asset and their knowledge and participation in various approaches to learning from country can support and extend learning both inside and outside the classroom; student engagement increase when classroom activities include local references; and, because learning through country has widespread relevance to Indigenous communities, many learning modules and instructional materials can be readily adapted from place to place (p. 17).

Embedded in the learning approach taken by both the *8-Ways Learning* model and the Indigenous Land and Sea Management program is the idea that the land both forms and informs the community, and that by utilising the concept of “learning from country” the community both learns from the land and feeds this learning back to the land. Further, by using a land and place-based model for learning which taps into ancestral and personal relationships with place, the student’s sense of community identity is reinforced and traditional knowledge valued. This process merely articulates what happens at an unspoken and unconscious level in non-Indigenous classrooms when lessons are premised on an implicit Eurocentric view that European culture is superior to all others (Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist 2003).

*One Country: Different Voices* encourages non-Indigenous students to think about what they can learn from the land by thinking about issues such as climate change and sustainable living. They are also provided with many web links that provide information about how Australian Aboriginal people learn from the land and use the land in a sustainable way. These links include publications written by Indigenous teachers and researchers about learning from the land such as Issue 2, 2010 of *Learning Communities: International Journal of Learning in Social Contexts Australia Learning Communities*, devoted to the theme of Teaching From Country; and, and O'Brien, & Watson (2014) paper titled ‘In conversation with uncle Lewis: Bushfires, weather-makers, collective management.’

***Sixth Way: Non-Linear: Finding Common Ground and Creative Potential Between Diverse Viewpoints and Knowledge Domains***



*8-Ways Learning* describes *Non-Linear* as encompassing the ideas of cultural innovation through the interaction of cultural systems and approaching higher order thinking by incorporating seemingly unrelated domains to create complex, real-life problems to be solved by using holistic thinking and innovative processes. Yunkaporta rejects claims that irreconcilable differences exist because Australian Indigenous peoples are “not constrained by the serial and the sequential nature of verbal thinking” usually associated with the West. Rather, he argues, both worlds are capable of both non-linear and sequential modes of thinking even if they have preference for one mode over the other (2007a, p. 50).

Yunkaporta, in a way that references Nakata’s Cultural Interface, states that more can be learned from “avoiding dichotomies” and “finding common ground and creative potential between diverse viewpoints and knowledge domains” than by pointing to the singular advantage of using one way of thinking to another. The effect of privileging serial thinking over non-linear thinking has been the marginalisation of Aboriginal students in the classroom and preventing them from forming an identity associated with creative thinking. Similarly, there are many non-Indigenous thinkers, such as de Bono, who point to the creative advantage of non-linear thinking (Ibid.).

Two lateral ways of thinking about Non-Linear approaches to learning and thinking are offered by non-Indigenous academics Rose (1969) and Glowaczewski (2005). Rose points to the Non-Linear relationship that Australian Indigenous peoples have with the land when she writes:

Country is multi-dimensional - it consists of people, animals, plants, Dreamings; underground, earth, soils, minerals and waters, surface water,

and air. There is sea country and land country; in some areas people talk about sky country. Country has origins and a future; it exists both in and through time. As I use the term here I refer to areas of land and/or sea including the subsurface and sky above, in so far as Aboriginal people identify all these components as being part of their particular country (1969, p. 7).

This description of the people's relationship with land encompasses the concept of circularity in which time, spiritual life and the world overlap to shape a particular way of thinking in which past, present and future co-exist.

Glowieczewski's work with Australian Aboriginals living in northern Australia has led her to believe that there is "...a strange confluence between their traditional way of thinking and the development of artificial intelligence". This insight was inspired by her observation that, "Aboriginal people's perception of memory as a virtual space-time, and the way they project knowledge on a geographical network, both physical and imaginary, was beginning to echo with the network and hyperlink programs of the first computers" (2005, p. 25). Glowieczewski refers to Australian Aboriginal thinking as being reticular, that is, it involves creating networks of understanding from many pieces of knowledge. She argues that any individual's accounts of an event are never holistic – accessing the whole from any part – because the accounts always relate to singular places. She uses the metaphor of using hundreds of different eyeglasses that you change according to where you stand. However, in order to understand the whole you need multiple points of view (pp. 28-29). According to Glowieczewski, the pieces of knowledge provided by the multiple viewpoints can be diverse, human and non-human – an animal, a plant, a Dreaming story, a song, a geographical space or physical object, an alignment of stars, a group of people – which criss-cross to produce particular meanings to those who have experience of them all.

This concept of reticular thinking is related to the work done by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) on the rhizome as a metaphor for thinking and the construction of knowledge. Rather than using the metaphor of the tree – which is fundamentally hierarchical in its structure in that it is posited on a central trunk from which other branches of knowledge are created, Deleuze and Guattari use the metaphor of the rhizome which is the network of spreading root tendrils that form underground much like that which occurs with a

mushroom or aspen tree. The advantage of the rhizome as a metaphor for knowledge is that it is not premised on a single source of authoritative knowledge and can be entered from many different points, all of which connect to each other. The rhizome does not have a beginning, an end, or an exact centre. "The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple... it is comprised not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion" (1987, p. 21). The *8-Ways Learning* framework demonstrates rhizomatic learning in the way that you can begin your learning journey at any point in the model – such as *Land Links* - and inevitably you will begin to incorporate, and reference knowledge and ideas connected to other ways of learning such as *Story Sharing*, *Deconstruct Reconstruct*, etc. because they are all connected.

According to Glowaczewski the multiple viewpoints can consist of thousands of stories and songlines (a Dreaming, an ancestor, a group, a person, an animal, a plant) which criss-cross one another to create "singularities" at the meeting points.

They can be sacred places, encounters with conflict, or alliance and the emergence of new meanings. They can be new manifestations like a spirit child being born into a child, or a new song or painting being dreamt for that place (1987, p. 21).

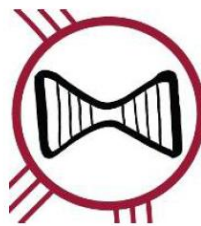
This approach to thinking is non-linear or reticular and stresses the fact that there is "no centrality to the whole, but a multipolar view from each recomposed network within each singularity – for example, a person, a place, a Dreaming – allowing the emergence of meanings and performances, encounters, creations as new original autonomous flows" (p. 28).

An Indigenous example of rhizomatic representation is the art work of Aboriginal artist Emily Kam Ngwarrray (or Ngwarreye). It has been described as rhizomatic because she uses the metaphor of the yam root which spreads underground to represent complex ideas about her, country and culture. Indeed, her 1989 painting *Ntange Dreaming* has been described by National Gallery Australia curators Cubillo and Caruana (2010) as being akin to a self portrait because "...it is an image of her identity expressed in terms of her ceremonial status, her role in Anmatyerr society and her intimate relationship with the ancestrally created landscape of her birth". She uses lines to connect the

various important features and influences in her life and dots to represent the seeds of the ntange (yam) plant that the Anmatyerr women collect to grind into damper.

*One Country: Different Voices* models Non-Linear thinking in the way that it cross-references ideas and information. As noted above, the *8-Ways Learning* model as a navigation system allows students to start their learning journey from any point – *Land Links, Story-Sharing, Non-Verbal*, etc, allowing them to make conceptual links between all the other ways of knowing contained in the *8-Ways Learning* framework in any order they wish. By presenting students with examples of knowledge from Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources they are able to see that there are more synergies and overlaps than differences.

***Seventh Way: Deconstruct Reconstruct: Learning Wholes Rather than the Parts***



According to the *8 Ways Learning* model, *Deconstruct Reconstruct* relates to the Indigenous way of learning through understanding the whole concept before breaking it down to its parts. This approach is generally opposite to the usual Western approach to learning which often involves a sequenced process whereby the student builds on small pieces of knowledge and moves to developing an understanding of the whole.

One insight into the differences between Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to learning is offered by Marika-Mununggiritj and Christie (1995) who note that a common metaphor for learning in English is to uncover something that is hidden. Thus students “find out” or “discover” information or knowledge. Implicit in this, they suggest, is the sense that “...knowledge is not something that is constructed through negotiation but is something that we find if we look hard enough and if we are lucky enough” (p. 59). While I believe that this is perhaps a limited view of learning it does serve to highlight some of the different approaches to learning taken by non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples.

Research done by Marika-Mununggiritj and Christie in the Yirrkala Community School in northeast Arnhemland has found that the Elders, who were consulted about developing a Yolgnu curriculum, use five different words for learning: *galtha*, *dhin'thun*, *lundu-nha:ma*, *dhudakthun*, and *gatjpu'yun*.

*Galtha* is a connecting spot which could be a meeting place or a sacred site. People meet at these places at particular times of the year to participate in ceremonies or activities such as hunting. People from different places, families or groups sit on the ground and negotiate the ceremonies or activities. Every meeting place is a *galtha* and it is important that those involved make contact with the earth – they never sit on blankets or seats. Every ceremony must be different which takes a lot of planning and discussion on the part of Elders. There are discussions about “which songlines to choose, which people should be involved, what roles they will play, and how to make this particular ceremony special and unique – to reflect this particular moment and place” (p. 60).

*Galtha* is the name that the Yirrkala Elders gave the Indigenous curriculum taught in the school. The lessons on how to develop this curriculum were given by Yirrkala Elder Daymbalipu Mununggurr who used hunting metaphors to guide the teachers. First he used the metaphor of *dhin'thun* which involves identifying and following animal tracks. By learning about the environment, the student learns about surviving on and through the land in both a physical and spiritual sense. According to Marika-Mununggiritj and Christie, “*Dhin'thun*, in this sense, speaks of research. We use it to find out about our history, and about the way we follow up decisions that have been agreed upon” (1995, p. 60).

*Lundu-nha:ma* refers to “the pattern and style of the past” and the things that can be learned from the ancestor beings and the Elders of the present. Students undergo a journey on which they must “see” the knowledge and learning of the past and the present acquired by the ancestor beings and their community’s Elders. This involves identifying the land, the people that the ancestor beings and Elders have interacted with, “their loyalties, their ideas, and everything else which has made them great” (p. 60).

Successful *dhin'thun* and *lundu-nha:ma* results in *dhudakthun* which has the effect of putting the Yolgnu student “in tune” with their spiritual past, shaping them like their ancestors while still allowing them to adapt the lessons from their ancestors to modern times (p. 61).

According to Marika-Mununggiritj and Christie (1995) *gatjpu'yun* refers to the sense of happiness that the Yolgnu person feels when they know their past and their land, and have the skills needed for spiritual and physical survival. This knowledge means they can face the future with confidence.

A number of Indigenous academics, including Moreton Robinson (2004) and Nakata (2007) have argued that important Indigenous knowledge such as that described above is lost or ignored because the focus on Eurocentric knowledge in Australia's schools has constructed Indigenous peoples as objects to be studied and ignores that they have their own wealth of knowledge that non-Indigenous peoples could benefit from knowing. Hart, Whatman, McLaughlin and Sharma-Brymer (2012) have summarised this succinctly as “learning about” Indigenous peoples and their knowledges, rather than “learning from” (p. 717).

This is not to say that the application of non-Indigenous theories about teaching and learning such as scaffolding do not also exist in Indigenous classrooms. Clearly, the Yirrkala example of Indigenous curriculum is informed by scaffolding. Indeed, an important aspect of the *8-Ways Learning* model is the use of Aboriginal scaffolding methodologies that engage whole processes and texts, which involves building on the student's basic skills and identities and then transferring them to unfamiliar contexts. As discussed above, scaffolding as a teaching strategy originates from Lev Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development. This zone of proximal development refers to the distance between what the student already knows and can do by themselves and the next learning that they can be helped to achieve with competent assistance. In scaffolding a more knowledgeable other, for example an Elder, parent or teacher, provides scaffolds or supports to facilitate the learner's development.

Scaffolding involves the teacher using a teaching and learning approach in which the teacher identifies the level at which the student is working and then provides learning

experiences that will improve their learning. These learning experiences include the teacher providing some information about the content of a particular lesson and then modelling how to go about the learning task rather than just letting the student make their own perhaps misguided journey of discovery. Over time, with proper teacher direction, the student learns how to work independently.

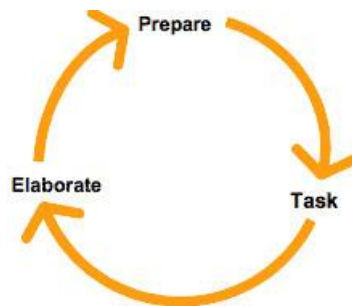


Figure 10: The Scaffolding Cycle

In the scaffolding cycle the teacher first prepares the student for the learning task by providing them with information that sets the context for the learning task. Then the teacher clearly tells them what the learning task is, what will be involved and what the learning outcomes will be. Lastly, the teacher elaborates by discussing issues that might need to be addressed and how to go about them.

While the way that scaffolding is used in Indigenous contexts is fundamentally the same as the way that it is generally used in non-Indigenous contexts, there is one important difference: in the Yolgnu Yirrkala example students start with the big picture: learning lessons from their past and their present, from their environment and their Dreaming stories, about how to deal with day-to-day life. In the non-Indigenous classroom students start with the small picture: a particular problem which they use to work towards big picture explanations and theories which will provide them with answers. The non-Indigenous approach to the scaffolding cycle is exemplified by the 5-E Learning Cycle (Bybee 1997) which involves a process in which the student engages with a particular problem, followed by exploring ideas related to the problem, explaining what they have learned, elaborating what they have learned to see if it can be applied it to similar problems, and then evaluating the validity of what they have learned by applying it to other similar problems to see if the results are the same.

By providing students with access to a wide range of inter-connected ideas and information *One Country: Different Voices* allows the student to see big picture – or whole – explanations as well as being able to access detailed information about a range of topics.

***Eighth Way: Community Links: Learning that Relates to, and Benefits the Community***



The *8-Ways Learning* model talks about *Community Links* in two key ways: (i) in terms of Aboriginal relationships with both community insiders and outsiders and the centrality of these relationships to the development and acquisition of all knowledge; and, (ii) in terms of the belief that all knowledge and learning should relate to, and benefit, the community.

Aboriginal relationships to insiders and outsiders also operate essentially in two ways. Firstly, there are the relationships between different Aboriginal communities: when Aboriginals travel through the land of different communities they must acknowledge that they are “outsiders” and seek permission to enter. It applies, for example, in the recognition by Aboriginal artists that they do not have permission to paint another clan’s country. It also applies to Aboriginal researchers seeking to work in Aboriginal communities not their own, as described by Aboriginal researcher Peters-Little (2000). Secondly, Aboriginals also have relationships with non-Aboriginals – those that visit their traditional country and, in the case of Aboriginals living in urban areas, their non-Aboriginal neighbours.

The term community can refer to people who live in the same space (i.e., the same town) or to people who identify with each other in some important and tangible way. Most Aboriginals identify as belonging to the larger Australian Aboriginal community because they share a history, culture, values, sense of identity, and experience as “the other”, that is, as non-white Australians. But even notions of shared culture and experience can

be problematic as Peters-Little found (2000, p. 3). Further, Aboriginals also identify themselves in terms of their language group, kinship, and land.

Even within a community that lives in the same physical space there will be people who are not Aboriginal but who feel a member of that community because they work with a shared purpose or goal such as education and maintenance of the community. What differentiates the non-Aboriginal from the Aboriginal members of that community is that while they may share common interests they are, in the end, the outsider. Nevertheless, a non-Aboriginal teacher, for example, can still be committed to ensuring that her work benefits the Aboriginal community.

The *8 Ways Learning* model emphasises that education must not ignore the importance of “insider” community knowledge and that the concept of *Community Links* is best understood in terms of Aboriginal relationships with both “insider” and “outsider knowledge” coming together to benefit the community as a whole. This relationship – and the success of incorporating “insider” Indigenous knowledge and approaches to learning to externally determined curricula – is highlighted by Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009) when they noted that challenges for learning rest with both Indigenous students and non-Indigenous teachers. Indigenous students face the challenge of dealing with Western curricula with its logical and linear approach to learning. Non-Indigenous teachers face the challenge of learning new cultural approaches to developing curricula that do not merely incorporate “local lore, language and the sentient landscape” as content, but use it as a means to “provide innovative ways of thinking and problem solving” (pp. 63-64).

*One Country: Different Voices* asks both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous student to explore their understanding of community and how their sense of community might influence how and what they learn and the ways in which what they learn can be used to benefit their community. They are asked to think about how their cultural or national identity influences their sense of community and to reflect upon the different communities they belong to and how they relate to each other. By presenting non-Indigenous students with a wide range of information about Indigenous knowledge and

community practices and relationships, they are able to reflect on what they can learn from Indigenous life.

## **Section 10**

### **Conclusion: The Completed Fabric**

*One Country: Different Voices* constitutes my contribution to the challenge raised by Yunkaporta (2009b, p 37): “How can teachers use Aboriginal knowledge in their classrooms authentically and productively?” He contends that by using an Aboriginal pedagogy the danger of ‘tokenism and trivialisation of Aboriginal culture in the curriculum’ is less likely to occur.

The decision to create a website reflects my extensive experience in creating web-based learning materials over 15 years and my belief that the WWW can be an effective knowledge technology which enhances students’ independent and flexible learning skills. It provides them with a vast library of resources, both formal and informal, which they can utilise. In creating *One Country: Different Voices* I have used *8-Ways Learning* as a graphic and interactive means for non-Indigenous teachers and students to *start* their learning journey using Indigenous approaches to learning. The website not only includes my interpretation of the *8-Ways Learning* framework but also provides many links to Indigenous resources that will give the teacher and student the opportunity to learn more about Aboriginal culture. It also provides them with links on Indigenous and non-Indigenous learning theories.

My experience in creating the artefact has shown that as a well-intentioned non-Indigenous teacher, committed since the mid-1990s to introducing Indigenous matters to the non-Indigenous classroom, I had to engage in extensive learning and research to understand not only why Indigenous pedagogy is being called for, but also to understand the elements and approaches to learning that underpin Indigenous ways of knowing. This research included reading books written by Indigenous Australians about their life, as well as academic books and papers on approaches to Indigenous ways of

learning. This research led me to the 8-Ways Learning framework. As I came to understand it better I recognised that there are many synergies between Indigenous approaches to learning and so-called 'Western' pedagogies.

In writing the exegesis I realised that the journey to developing *One Country: Different Voices* has been a life-long process although this was intensified in the early 1990s when I was introduced to learning theories such as constructivism, reflective learning, experiential learning, and life-long learning. When I started to experiment in the mid-1990s with knowledge technologies such as the WWW, I encountered the theories of Barthes, Deleuze & Guattari, and feminists such as Irigaray, hooks and Lather. Who provided me with a new way of thinking about textuality and discourse. This led me to understand that the hypertextual and rhizomatic nature of the WWW created opportunities for students to engage in self-direct holistic learning. Their work also led me to open my mind to the marginalised position of Indigenous Australians and their narrative approaches, culminating at the end of the 1990s with my involvement in the production of *Indigenous Inclusion in Curriculum*. In 2000 I was introduced to the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and the narrative pedagogies of Goodson and Bourdieu which helped me understand how the classroom could be a place where students could be challenged to think about ideas such as colonisation and how it affects our world view.

My journey toward the development of *One Country: Different Voices* started in 2006 but only found its focus in 2012 when I encountered the *8-Ways Learning* framework developed by the Elders and Owners of traditional knowledge in Western NSW, RAET (2012) – its custodial owners, and Yunkaporta (2009). Their work has provided me with the opportunity to create an artefact that is based on an Indigenous Australian approach to learning. I believe the approach will be of immense benefit in giving non-Indigenous students a new and different way to enhance their learning skills and to learn about the richness of Indigenous Australian cultures.

The work of the Elders and Owners of traditional knowledge in Western NSW, RAET and Yunkaporta has shown the way. My artefact and exegesis offer *one* interpretation of how a non-Indigenous teacher can follow their path for introducing an Indigenous Australian approach to learning to the non-Indigenous classroom.

The reflective process involved in creating website and writing exegesis has only highlighted the extent to which my teaching journey has been an iterative one: involving learning about pedagogy, putting what I have learned into practice, reflecting on my practice to improve my teaching skills, learning about new pedagogical theories and skills in creating learning resources which led to new teaching practices and reflection. It truly has been a journey of practice-led research.

In the spirit Indigenous Australian reciprocity, I have committed to sharing my exegesis with the developers of the *8-Ways Learning* framework in the *8-Ways Wiki*. I offer the *One Country: Different Voices* website to any teacher – Indigenous or non-Indigenous – to use on their journey introducing an Indigenous Australian approach to learning in their classroom.

I hope that this will be of some assistance to them and enrich their lives as it has done mine.

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