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BIO

Chris is an Honorary Associate Warawara Department of Indigenous Studies, PhD candidate Centre for Environmental Law, Macquarie University. PhD thesis is on the protection of Indigenous medical knowledge with a particular emphasis on encouraging Indigenous directed models of health and economic benefit to Indigenous communities. He conceived and wrote a large University grant involving ten university departments in attempting to provide a national standard of ethical protocols with Indigenous communities that recognises them as equal industry partners in research and that maintains a focus on Indigenous control of the research process. Through this grant the university has committed to creating a Centre of Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity directed by Indigenous peoples and their needs. He is the father of three children.

ABSTRACT

Transforming Universities to Engage the Intrinsic Value of Both Indigenous Peoples and Their Knowledge Systems: Towards Research Relationships and Education Curricula of Cultural Equality

Approximately 25% of the world's pharmaceutical products find a significant degree of origin in Indigenous communities. While the World Bank estimates that herbal medicine will reach a 3 Trillion (US) dollar level by 2050. 77% of such plant related therapies are also 'appropriated' from Indigenous communities.

Awareness of some of the deeper issues of this context offers many unique opportunities for supporting self-determination trends in Indigenous economics, health and education. It also offers an opportunity to convince the wider community in the education and government sector of the practical evidence of the value of including a deeper engagement of Indigenous knowledge in mainstream education systems as well as encouraging models that allow for the emergence of community based indigenous education frameworks.

A case study will be offered of a large Vice Chancellor Development Grant at Macquarie University involving 10 departments whose goals seek to empower a research relationship of equality with Indigenous communities in the university and transform educational curricula in response. This case study will highlight the effective strategies and principles outlined in the first half of the paper. It will demonstrate a powerful process of 'model building' that enables people, communities and organizations, that possess little in the way of recognized power, to disproportionately transform mainstream educational contexts in positive ways that create positive long-term trends for Indigenous educational frameworks. A result of this grant is the creation of a Centre of Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity in Australia that is directed by Aboriginal people and engages the Indigenous communities as equal research (or 'industry' partners) with the university. Further methods of influencing other universities to adopt such processes will be offered in conclusion.