

PHILLIPS, Jean (Murri)

Jean Phillips is a Murri woman from the Wakka Wakka language group in South East Queensland. Originally trained as a primary school teacher, she has been teaching in the area of critical culture studies at the Queensland University of Technology since 1996. Prior to that, Jean spent seven years working in curriculum development, community liaison and educator roles at university and TAFE colleges in Ballarat, Victoria. Her central research and personal interest is the interaction between Indigenous knowledge systems and the Western colonial tradition particularly with regard to colonial identity construction, intellectual authority, pedagogy and spirituality. Jean believes that the multi-dimensionality of Indigenous systems of relating to and within the world are integral to successful and transformative teaching and learning at all levels of education, for all students. Jean is presenting a paper with Sue Whatman.

WHATMAN, Sue

Sue is a non-Indigenous academic, born in Murwillumbah, NSW, which is bounded by Minjungbal, Bundjalung and Kombu-Merri nations. She has been working in the Oodgeroo Unit since 1993. Sue trained as a secondary health and physical education (HPE) teacher at QUT many years ago and returned as a postgraduate student and casual staff member, working with Indigenous students at QUT through the ATAS program. Sue's interest in Indigenous education arose from reflections upon her postgraduate study into school HPE curricula, specifically upon how community priorities find their way into classrooms, which then lead to a study into community participation in health education decision-making in a Torres Strait school. Sue's interest areas include the facilitation of Indigenous community control over educational decision-making at every level, and particularly the reform of HPE curricula at school and university level. Sue is presenting a paper with Jean Phillips.

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Decolonising University Curricula – Reforming the Colonised Spaces Within Which We Operate

This paper reflects a long journey of collaborative policy and curriculum reform; the reform of many of the colonised spaces within which we work in higher education. The inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in higher education for many years has been positioned as an equity/social justice issue, or as “study about” Indigenous peoples within unchallenged, colonial disciplinary spaces. To embrace, centralise and embed Indigenous knowledges as a core feature of the curriculum at QUT, and particularly in the education of pre-service teachers, a strategic, unique Indigenous pedagogy needed to be recognised and justified at a policy level, promoted and embraced at the teaching staff level, and implemented in the pre-service teacher education classroom through a compulsory unit called ‘Indigenous Education’. As such, this

reform may be described as a continuing series of dialogues at many cultural interfaces (Nakata, 2002).

What distinguishes this Indigenous pedagogy, but not polarises it, from non-Indigenous ways of knowing that are dominant in universities is that it recognises the multi-dimensional, multi-directional processes of learning, allowing for multiple entry and exit points. Students are encouraged to return to six key concepts throughout the semester to illuminate previously invisible understandings, un-learn what they know, as justified from an Indigenous standpoint, and then re-position themselves in relation to their knowledge of Indigenous (that is, shared Australian) history. The justified 'un-learning' of particular ways of reading and interpreting this knowledge is crucial to a successful teaching experience, which in turn, creates ongoing dialogue that continues outside of the initial interface.

Our commitment to decolonising university curricula is grounded in responsibility to the Indigenous communities in which we work and to which we belong (Smith, 1999). The community of Indigenous students within QUT has immediately benefited from the strategic approaches to embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges across university curricula, and particularly through their engagement in the core unit of Indigenous studies. The next generation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers who have engaged in 'uneasy' critique and self-critique, and emerged with new understandings out of their own resistance/experience at this cultural interface, have beginning skills to facilitate the ripples of curriculum reform in wider educational and Indigenous community contexts.