Indigenous success: Creating a Senior Leadership Capability Model (SLCM) through capacity building

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success acknowledges Indigenous peoples across Australia as the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the nation's campuses are situated. With a history spanning more than 60,000 years as the original educators, Indigenous peoples hold a unique place in our nation. We recognise the importance of their knowledge and culture, and reflect the principles of participation, equity, and cultural respect in our work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and future, and consider it an honour to learn from our Indigenous colleagues, partners, and friends.

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Abbreviations

APS   Australian public sector

BIPOC   Black, Indigenous, and people of colour

CBD   Central business district

DVC   Deputy vice-chancellor

HE   Higher education

HEW   Higher education worker

IEW   Indigenous education worker

JEDI   Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion

KPI   Key performance indicator

NATSIHEC   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium

PVC   Pro vice-chancellor

RAP   Reconciliation Action Plans

SLCM   Senior Leadership Capability Model

SMART   Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound

STEM   Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

UeX   University executives

UNDRIP   United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

VC   Vice-chancellor

1. Executive summary

1.1 Training moving forward

This research project aims to address the need for a Senior Leadership Capability Model (SLCM) to foster Indigenous success in higher education through capacity building for non-Indigenous leaders. It is tailored for university executives (UeX) and focuses on portfolio-specific training to equip senior leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions that benefit the Indigenous community within their portfolios.

1.2 Unrealistic expectations of Indigenous leaders

Indigenous leaders are expected to not only to possess the necessary qualifications and experience but also to maintain strong relationships with their communities. Consequently, the demands placed on Indigenous leaders are significantly greater than those on non-Indigenous leaders, who are typically assessed solely on the basis of their qualifications and experience. This disparity presents a considerable challenge.

1.3 Inclusion is more than just numbers

While the number of Indigenous students and staff has grown over the years, this growth is insufficient. Australian universities are falling short in their efforts to provide equal employment opportunities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff. Moreover, aside from the numbers, the integration of Indigenous knowledges and practices has not been adequately achieved since universities remain environments where knowledge is hierarchically constructed, relegating Indigenous knowledges to a secondary status compared with Western knowledge systems.

1.4 Discrepancies between leaders' confidence and experience in Indigenous contexts

A notable observation was made about the relationship between experience and confidence in Indigenous engagement. Although a smaller portion of participants felt very experienced in Indigenous higher education, a much larger group felt confident in engaging with Indigenous peoples and communities. This disparity raises important questions about how university leaders perceive and evaluate cultural competency.

2. Recommendations

Drawing on the key findings of this research project, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance Indigenous engagement and support within the institution:

1. **Develop clear accountability measures for senior leadership in Indigenous engagement**: Develop and implement transparent accountability frameworks that delineate clear responsibilities for senior leadership in promoting Indigenous engagement. These measures should include specific goals, defined objectives, timelines, and comprehensive reporting protocols to monitor progress and assess impact.

2. **Allocate dedicated resources for Indigenous programs and initiatives**: Secure dedicated and long-term funding to support Indigenous programs, initiatives, and partnerships. This includes financial investment in staffing, program development, and infrastructure, ensuring a meaningful and lasting impact.

3. **Foster genuine partnerships with Indigenous communities**: Prioritise the development of authentic, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities, grounded in mutual respect, trust, and collaboration. Active engagement should be based on trust and reciprocity, and fostered through open communication, ensuring that community voices are heard and respected.

4. **Create portfolio-specific training programs**: Move beyond introductory cultural awareness by instituting tailored training programs that address the specific contexts and responsibilities of various portfolios. This approach will empower staff and leadership with the knowledge and skills needed to integrate Indigenous perspectives into their work effectively.

5. **Distribute responsibilities more equitably between Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff**: Ensure that Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff share the workload associated with advancing Indigenous initiatives. This equitable distribution prevents overburdens on Indigenous staff and fosters a collaborative approach to reconciliation.

6. **Integrate Indigenous voices in strategic governance and decision-making**: Actively involve Indigenous representatives in the institution's strategic governance and decision-making structures. This may involve establishing Indigenous advisory councils, appointing Indigenous leaders to key governance bodies, and embedding Indigenous perspectives into institutional policies and strategies.

7. **Establish support structures for all levels of university leadership**: Implement comprehensive support systems for leaders at all levels to enhance their capacity to engage meaningfully with Indigenous communities. This may include mentorship programs, resource toolkits, and continuous professional development opportunities.

By adopting these recommendations, the institution can make substantive strides towards fostering an inclusive, supportive, and collaborative academic landscape, where Indigenous engagement is not only prioritised but embedded within the institutional structures.

3. Introduction

Indigenous leadership is vital to the advancement of higher education, driving cultural safety, equity, and innovation. In developing this study, we recognised that many mid-career Indigenous leaders are often navigating complex institutional landscapes, frequently shouldering significant cultural load and systemic burdens that can impede their advancement and wellbeing. However, despite their invaluable contributions and leadership potential, their experiences and insights are often overlooked in traditional capacity-building frameworks, placing more undue pressure on these individuals rather than addressing systemic issues. This document introduces the **Senior Leadership Capability Model (SLCM)**, a novel initiative designed to strategically ease the institutional burden on mid-career Indigenous leaders. Unlike conventional approaches, the SLCM purposively focuses on building the capacity of managers and senior leaders. Grounded in a rights-based approach informed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), this model aims to equip those in senior positions with the understanding and tools necessary to foster genuinely supportive environments. By enhancing the capabilities of institutional leadership, the SLCM seeks to create systemic change, enabling Indigenous leaders to thrive and contribute without disproportionate burden, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and equitable university landscape.

Unrealistic expectations are often imposed on a small number of Indigenous leaders within Australian universities, holding them solely accountable for all Indigenous outcomes across their institutions. Despite growing recognition of Indigenous leadership's importance, and while foundational theoretical work on Indigenous leadership paradigms exists (for example, Coates et al., 2023, who introduce Indigenous Institutional Theory as a new theoretical framework; Kiatkoski Kim et al., 2020; Williams, 2020), a specific gap persists in the academic literature regarding established, comprehensive theoretical paradigms and practical models designed to build the capacity of non-Indigenous leaders to effectively operationalise Indigenous success and share the responsibilities often disproportionately borne by Indigenous staff. This project highlights the necessity for non-Indigenous leaders to share these responsibilities. The primary objective of this research is to create an SLCM that fosters Indigenous success in higher education by enhancing the capacity of non-Indigenous leaders. This involves acknowledging existing theoretical frameworks on Indigenous leadership (specifically Coates et al., 2023), clarifying the possible compatibility of formal and community-centred approaches, and clearly articulating the unique, complementary contribution of the SLCM in building the capacity and confidence of non-Indigenous leaders to effectively operationalise Indigenous success. Designed for university executives (UeX), the project emphasises portfolio-specific training to prepare senior leaders with the knowledge and skills required to make informed decisions that benefit the Indigenous community within their portfolios. The study includes evidence-based capacity building, national-level research, and innovative learning strategies. The program's immersive nature accommodates diverse time constraints while promoting engagement. There are six proposed themes for advancing Indigenous higher education:

- covering challenges
- cultural understanding
- community partnerships

- student support
- diversity promotion
- continuous learning.

Overall, the SLCM project aims to empower leaders and promote institutional change for Indigenous success in higher education. It also goes beyond the typical cultural awareness and cultural safety training currently offered. Australian universities provide training for their staff to better understand and support Indigenous students (see Griffith University, n.d.; Queensland University of Technology, 2025; The University of Queensland, n.d.). However, this training appears to be quite generic, making it insufficient for those working within Indigenous groups.

This report is based on research conducted by Professor Peter Anderson between 2018 and 2020, as well as the commissioned Accelerating Indigenous Higher Education report, Buckskin et al. (2018) from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium and the Australian Government Department of Education and Training. While the Buckskin et al. (2018) report made 28 recommendations to the sector, there has yet to be any tangible progress towards their implementation. In a recent meta-synthesis, Anderson et al. (2023) discovered that despite four years of sustained efforts following the establishment of the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017–2020 (Universities Australia, 2017), there had been little progress towards sustained and successful Indigenous participation. The progress involved assigning efforts to a small number of senior Indigenous leaders at the policy and program levels. To create lasting organisational change and success, it is unrealistic to place the totality of institutional Indigenous outcomes and expectations on the small number of Indigenous leaders, who are often under-resourced (Anderson et al., 2023; Trudgett et al., 2021), putting institutions in an industrially precarious position. Non-Indigenous leaders must share some responsibilities for Indigenous outcomes within their institutional portfolios, thereby contributing to overall Indigenous success.

During 2020 to 2021, Professor Anderson undertook a comprehensive examination through a case study approach regarding the Indigenous key performance indicators (KPIs) within his affiliated institution. The UeX of the institution were all interviewed as part of this study. The results revealed a notable level of dedication towards the Indigenous agenda. However, a lack of assurance existed among the staff members, leading to hesitancy in their interactions with the Indigenous communities. This was due to the fear of unintentionally displaying cultural ignorance and reinforcing systemic racism. Through this preliminary work, a series of capacity-building modules designed specifically for UeX and their portfolios was designed. This research has sought to further develop these modules for interested universities drawing on already established methods of developing education leadership by the lead investigator and the team (i.e. Anderson et al., 2023).

Key contributions from this study include:

- building professional capacity for UeX through portfolio development, specific training, and organisational change principles to provide long-lasting support for Indigenous communities
- advancement of Indigenous participation and success in higher education, through partnerships with Indigenous higher education experts and innovative program design.

The originality of this research stems from the development of a unique SLCM using a dataset from a larger national survey along with in-depth interviews. This approach is set to make a substantial contribution to the field of leadership in higher education.

Findings for this research project include:

- An SLCM program tailored for UeX, which contemplates shared responsibilities for Indigenous outcomes, encourages a more inclusive and supportive environment for Indigenous individuals in higher education.
- There is a need for a clearer Indigenous strategy. While most universities had an identifiable Indigenous strategy, participants were often unsure of how it was implemented in their workplace. Decisions were frequently limited to individual initiatives, responsibility, and involvement, and were often tokenistic.
- Developing relationships and partnerships is of greater importance. It is essential to cultivate and strengthen ties with Indigenous communities through the deputy vice-chancellor (DVC). These partnerships should be collaboratively developed, guided by responsible practice statements and strategies that support Indigenous success.
- Most participants had some experience working with Indigenous communities and felt confident engaging with Indigenous peoples. However, while they demonstrated confidence in their interactions, the majority had moderate or limited experience leading projects within Indigenous contexts. This indicates that, despite their limited experience in various aspects of working with Indigenous students and communities, participants still felt assured in their ability to work effectively with them.

4. Background

While Indigenous education and experiences may have evolved over time, the legacy of colonialism persists within settler colonial societies (see for example, Coates et al., 2019; Jaggi et al., 2024; Povey et al., 2021a). This legacy stems from the assimilationist policies established in various settler nations through diverse social structures, including universities (Stewart-Ambo, 2021). The ongoing inequalities have created a gap between the educational opportunities available to Indigenous and those available to non-Indigenous individuals. These disparities are evident in multiple aspects. For instance, Indigenous peoples are often underrepresented (see Coates et al., 2019; Morrison & Tunnage, 2014; Povey et al., 2021b) across several sectors (for example, health care and education).

Australia's first university was established over 150 years ago. However, the first senior Indigenous leadership position was created only in 2009 (Horne & Sherington, 2010). Senior leadership positions typically include vice-chancellors (VCs), DVCs, provosts, pro vice-chancellors (PVCs), and deans (Coates et al., 2022). Trudgett et al. (2021) stated that, at the time of writing their paper, 39 public universities in Australia employed a total of 28 senior Indigenous scholars, which is less than one per university. The creation and promotion of grants and courses specifically designed for Indigenous research students (see Bessarab et al., 2009) suggests that the importance of Indigenous leadership has been somewhat recognised. Despite these new advancements, the results remain disappointing.

It has been reported that feeling underrepresented amplifies feelings of marginalisation and exclusion for Indigenous peoples (Business Queensland, 2024). To create a more inclusive tertiary education system, a greater number of Indigenous leaders should be integral to the design process. While it has been argued that this underrepresentation conveys a negative message to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and employees (Universities Australia, 2011), incorporating senior Indigenous leadership positions within institutions appears to significantly influence aspiring Indigenous academics and foster Indigenous academic success (Coates et al., 2022). *You cannot be what you cannot see.*

4.1 General ideas

This literature review addresses leadership, effective support for staff, and Indigenous communities. To explore these themes, we considered three main topics in the research literature: leadership, Indigenous communities, and success. We began searching for literature on leadership within Indigenous communities following the methods recommended by proponents of systematic literature reviews. We conducted three database searches—ERIC (n = 6), Scopus (n = 3), and Informit (n = 5)—using the search terms: (staff) AND (Indigenous context) AND (success), focusing on academic articles published between 2014 and 2024. We expanded the search using the same terms on Google Scholar, resulting in fewer than 30 papers. Because of the limited results, we searched again in Scopus for the terms (education) AND (Indigenous AND leaders) AND (support). This search yielded 85 results and provided the bulk of the 100 papers screened for this literature search. After a review of the titles and the abstracts of these papers, 37 articles were found to meet our inclusion criteria and appeared useful for examining leaders who support staff in Indigenous

communities. Following a second review of the 37 papers, only 15 were found to be relevant to the current study (see Figure 1). Most of the excluded articles were disqualified because participant populations did not include university leaders. Other excluded articles were either health related or doctoral theses. Since only 15 relevant articles met the inclusion criteria, we contend that there is insufficient academic literature to justify any claims of generalisation.

Figure 1: PRISMA
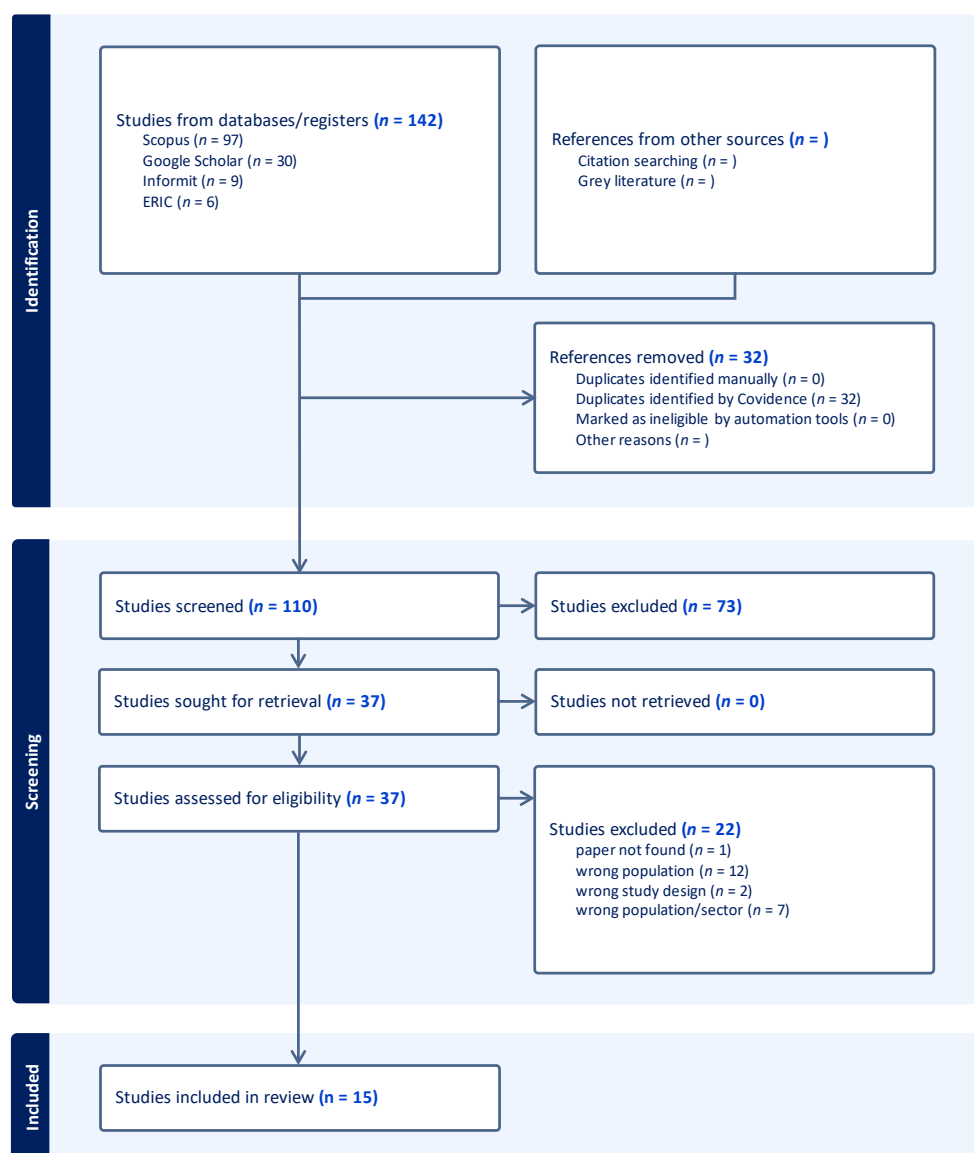
Given the limited results returned, we abandoned the systematic literature review framework and deemed it appropriate to shift towards a narrative literature review. This approach allows for the incorporation of data from partially relevant sources for a comprehensive analysis of central concepts. However, performing the initial steps of a systematic review helped us establish general principles that guided our literature review search strategies. First, most of the research teams consisted of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors ($n = 6$). Only four papers were authored by Indigenous writers (see Figure 1). By highlighting this point, we aim to showcase the limited participation of Indigenous people, even when the research concerns their cultural knowledge and background. Despite possessing the knowledge

sought by the research teams, Indigenous people were often overlooked during the communication of that knowledge.

Most of the papers included in the selection were published in the Global North (for example, Canada, Australia, the United States, and New Zealand). They discussed leadership within Indigenous communities in those countries. Only one paper explored experiences in a Global South country, Ecuador (see Wise et al., 2018). The lack of data from other sources made us wonder whether (a) there are no successful (or unsuccessful) stories of leadership within Indigenous communities in the Global South or (b) no research has been conducted in these communities. This situation continues to place the Global South as politically and culturally marginalised in the academic knowledge economy (Dados & Connell, 2012). The limited research from the Southern Hemisphere may reflect the marginalisation the Global South faces within the mainstream Western research economy. To address this issue, we intentionally sought information from the Spanish-speaking world, focusing on their experiences with Indigenous groups. The Spanish-language focus was motivated by the language expertise within the research team.

Most papers meeting the inclusion criteria referred to qualitative studies and empirical data. The different participant groups included Indigenous Elders, university staff, higher education students, educational communities (for example, institutes and universities), mentors working in Indigenous teacher education programs, Indigenous individuals holding leadership roles, and Indigenous students. These papers predominantly used traditional data-generation methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Some papers showcased case study methodologies, while others were framed as ethnographies. Most studies were conducted *with* the communities rather than *on* them. The research teams collaborated with their participants, viewing them as important and valuable holders of knowledge. Russell et al. (2022) employed more unusual methods, producing data through self-recorded videos that discussed student experiences from a more diverse perspective. Their paper emphasised the importance of including authentic student voices when engaging in strategic decision-making processes.

There appears to be no clear theoretical trajectory that supports the various studies. Although most included some race-related frameworks, these were not applied consistently. The theories employed included social identity theory, the theory of Métissage (supplemented by Indigenous and critical theory), tribal race theory (TribalCrit), political race theory, and culturally responsive theory.

4.2   Why this research matters

The landscape of contemporary leadership is evolving, especially regarding social and racial justice work within mainstream organisations. Given these changing dynamics, it is crucial to thoroughly equip all leaders, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, with the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to effectively disrupt inequality and inequity while initiating transformative change (Mitchell & Bishop, 2020).

In 2022, the Minderoo Foundation and others conducted the Indigenous Employment Index, offering the first detailed overview of Indigenous representation in the workplace (Minderoo Foundation et al., 2022). This study was the first to document reporting practices within large organisations and highlighted the extent to which Indigenous Australians are significantly

excluded from the workforce. While less than half of working-age Indigenous Australians are employed, over three-quarters (75.9%) of non-Indigenous Australians hold jobs. Indigenous Australians make up approximately 3.3% of the Australian population but represent only 1.3% of the working population. Employers struggle to retain Indigenous employees at the same rate as non-Indigenous employees, often focusing more on recruitment than on retention and professional development. This report showed that Indigenous employees were largely absent from senior management and executive leadership roles across various workplaces (Minderoo Foundation et al., 2022).

Some institutions have shown a genuine commitment to Indigenous employment. Despite their efforts, much work still remains. The limited research and data available to inform effective strategies poses significant barriers to progress (Minderoo Foundation et al., 2022). The Gari Yala report (Diversity Council Australia, 2020), based on surveys conducted with over 1,000 Indigenous individuals, revealed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers continue to experience high levels of racism in Australian workplaces; they are treated unfairly, are often subjected to racial slurs, and receive comments about their appearance. Importantly, the racism they face affects their wellbeing and job satisfaction. However, according to existing studies (for example, Bargallie et al., 2023), there is very little empirical evidence on the experiences of Indigenous peoples, and even less when it comes to disaggregated data. Such data can enable organisations to better understand the diverse dynamics of power and privilege and move beyond assumptions or stereotypes (Nasr, 2020).

Some Indigenous Australian scholars have explored the workplace experiences of Indigenous peoples. For example, Debbie Bargallie, a Kamilaroi and Wonnarua woman, focused her doctoral research on 21 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the Australian public sector (APS). Her thesis, later published as a book, described how society's political, moral, and epistemological frameworks are structured to create a racially unjust system that clearly distinguishes between the status of whites and that of non-whites, whether by law or custom. The primary aim of this contract is to preserve racial order, securing privileges for white citizens while subordinating non-whites. Bargallie (2020) revealed the persistence of racism within the public sector, asserting that employees are subjected to a racial contract reinforced by structural, systemic, and everyday racism. She argued that this system is upheld by leaders' ongoing failure to address racism and reform the cultural norms of the APS.

The author of this report, First Nations fellow Peter Anderson, and colleagues (2022) undertook research for the Diversity Council and published their findings in a report addressing racism in Australian workplaces. The authors asserted that to understand racism, the Diversity Council of Australia has proposed five principles: recognise the unique position of First Nations peoples, centre lived experiences, focus on racial and cultural diversity, acknowledge that our default worldview is white, and understand that we racially label each other. These principles are instrumental in understanding how racism manifests. It can appear as subtle, everyday racism, whereby workers go unnoticed or are racially stereotyped, or as systemic racism connected to organisational policies and practices that exclude or disadvantage marginalised people. Key elements of racism include its relationship to power, starting with prejudice. Racism can be overt or subtle, and occurs at various levels of society. A crucial conclusion of this report is that we must take action, not just acknowledge racism. To be anti-racist, we need to consciously act against it every day

while also recognising its systemic nature. Lastly, it is important to note that anti-racism differs from non-racism. Non-racism is a passive rejection of racism, whereas anti-racism involves accountability and active engagement in our behaviours.

Indigenous author Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015) recounted the story of an Aboriginal nurse named "'Leesa" and her experiences of working in a public hospital (pp. 93–108). Leesa reported experiencing differential treatment at work compared with her non-Indigenous colleagues and Indigenous patients. She felt alienated, subjected to racist remarks, treated as inferior, and excluded from training opportunities. When Leesa lodged a complaint with management about this treatment, they failed to take her concerns seriously. In her review of the affidavits from Leesa and 25 non-Indigenous nurses, Moreton-Robinson noted a sense of racial unity, evidenced by the participants' collaboration in their testimonies, resulting in consistency in their recollection of events. Moreton-Robinson highlighted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals who report racism in the workplace are often labelled as "troublemakers" and "too sensitive" (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 99). Positioning Leesa as a troublemaker shifted the focus to her as the problem, rather than acknowledging or addressing institutionalised racism. A crucial issue appears to be that racism in Australia is often perceived as confined to isolated parts of society rather than acknowledged as widespread and systemic.

4.3   Indigenous leadership in Australia

Historically, Australia has placed limited emphasis on fostering Indigenous leadership. Such leadership is crucial for addressing the unique needs and perspectives of Indigenous communities. The lack of sufficient Indigenous leaders has likely resulted in a very challenging experience (Minderoo Foundation et al., 2022).

In Australia, we recently experienced a clear and outright rejection of Indigenous people's rights and participation in leadership (see Australian Human Rights Commission, 2024; Tan, 2023; Wellauer et al., 2023). In the 2023 Voice to Parliament referendum, Australians were asked whether they supported an Indigenous committee to advise the country's federal parliament. Over 50% of voters opposed the change, which represents a significant setback for effective reconciliation in this British colonised country. Back in 2013, there was already a belief that:

> Australia needs to rebuild and rearticulate the structures of democratic governance, recognising that it requires greater collaboration between the public sector (on the one hand) and the private and community sectors (on the other). New forms of partnership are required to provide public benefit in unexpected ways and, in the process, to revitalise the participatory engagement of citizens in the life of the nation. To achieve these goals the operation of public services (collectively) and the role of public servants (individually) will have to be transformed. (Shergold, 2013, p. 9)

In the years preceding the 2023 referendum, Australia had not been able to foster a democratic or collaborative environment that involves new forms of partnership (Ma Rhea, 2015).

Leach (2023) has stated that encouraging voters to reject the Voice to Parliament referendum was that the idea reportedly lacked a comparable constitutional body elsewhere. However, some countries already have systems that include reserved parliamentary seats

(for example, Taiwan, New Zealand, Bolivia, the United States), traditional authority councils (for example, Fiji and Vanuatu), and devolved self-governance (for example, Canada and Norway). South America appears to showcase unique cases of Indigenous community leadership. Brazil's recently elected president has worked to strengthen Indigenous rights. For example, during his government, a Ministry of Indigenous Peoples was created. Additionally, Sonia Guajara became the first Indigenous woman to hold a ministerial position (Taylor, 2023).

Indigenous leadership remains relatively underexplored within the broader field of leadership research in the Western world. Kiatkoski Kim et al. (2020) advised that there were no published studies on Indigenous leadership in academic research that could guide policy and practice. Moreover, leadership within the Indigenous context does not seem clearly defined or conceptualised within the available literature (Blakesley, 2011; Williams, 2020). More research is needed because "Indigenous research leadership can enhance research benefits to Indigenous communities" (Kiatkoski Kim et al., 2020, p. 353). The limited available research has been attributed to the paucity of accessible cultural knowledge as well as the Western-centric nature of leadership literature (Anderson et al., 2023). Coates et al. (2022) claimed that while leadership has been widely conceptualised, the attributes needed to be an Indigenous leader seem to be subject to debate. Coates et al.'s (2022) research has produced mixed results: while Indigenous leaders need to possess appropriate qualifications and experience, they are also expected to maintain strong community connections. Importantly, the connection with the community reflects what Foley (2007) suggested: Indigenous people have lived in "a pluralist society that did not experience dominance and leadership in the Western sense" (p. 179). While traditional conceptualisations of leadership often prioritise formal qualifications and experience, effective Indigenous leadership frequently integrates these with deeply collaborative and community-centred approaches. This duality, however, can create unique pressures for Indigenous leaders, who are often expected to bridge these two worlds within Western institutional frameworks. The aim of the SLCM is to build the confidence and capacity of non-Indigenous leaders to understand, value, and actively support Indigenous leaders who embody this integrated approach, ensuring that both formal expertise and community embeddedness are recognised as complementary strengths essential for Indigenous success.

Systems that reward academic achievements over community engagement may support certain types of leadership while marginalising others. For example, as argued by research (Anderson & Diamond, 2020), there are three often interrelated career paths in higher education: senior leadership, professional, and academic roles. Individuals in these positions are typically expected to hold a PhD—the highest level of education available—and demonstrate management experience, strategic planning skills, and knowledge of financial resources and budgeting, among other competencies. These stringent requirements tend to favour groups with greater access to Western education, thereby benefiting some over others. A recent study by Kiatkoski Kim et al. (2020) investigated the expression of Indigenous leadership within academic research and how Indigenous leadership is either limited or enabled in this space. The researchers conducted an exploratory study that included semi-structured interviews with 20 Indigenous Australian scholars. This group proposed a model connecting Indigenous leadership to the impact of social research. The authors noted that the performance metrics emphasised in academic research capture only a narrow aspect of leadership. As a result, Indigenous researchers are less likely to develop

equivalent track records in academic achievement and performance. These track records are typically characterised by grants, publications, and citations. Focusing on "numerical" outcomes impedes the hierarchical advancement of those who adopt a comprehensive leadership approach. Therefore, incentive structures and performance measures should be revised to better support Indigenous leadership (Kiatkoski Kim et al., 2020).

Kiatkoski Kim et al. (2020) suggested that supportive leaders within Indigenous communities require a specific set of characteristics. They defined effective leadership as "highlighted by the ability of an individual to utilise a diversity of constituent viewpoints, perspectives, and 'voices' to guide their respective decision-making processes". Povey et al. (2021a) described a powerful leadership style in which participants are strongly committed to achieving meaningful change through bold, assertive, and proactive leadership. Coates et al. (2022) stated that Indigenous academic staff pursue senior leadership roles as a means of driving positive institutional outcomes alongside personal career development. Mitchell and Bishop (2020) argued that fostering leadership informed by Indigenous ways of being is crucial for disrupting power dynamics and systemic racism within institutions. Therefore, leaders require Indigenous-specific leadership development. The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Committee (IHEAC) proposed a series of ideas to enhance the recruitment and retention of Indigenous people in the higher education sector. Their report included the following recommendations: Indigenous peoples should be actively involved in university governance at all levels of management, Indigenous staffing should increase across all levels and areas, and universities should collaborate with Indigenous communities.

In addition, Ma Rhea (2015) listed four essential elements for effective change within education that leadership should be aware of. First, there must be a disruption to the status quo. Second, self-reflection is crucial because it enables individuals to confront their fears of failure and criticism. Third, opportunities should be created for engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in education, including administrators, principals, school councils, teachers, and families, to collaboratively uncover the best solutions. Finally, there is a need for a dynamic, collective movement towards a new configuration.

Educational leadership is seen as a collective effort involving diverse voices from various perspectives, including local communities and national networks. Educational institutions should recognise the importance of creating partnerships between Indigenous leaders and their potential involvement in academic and policy management at different institutions. Within universities, leaders and senior faculty need to consistently challenge the misleading beliefs that suggest racial diversity compromises institutional excellence. Challenging these beliefs requires critically analysing racialised language, often framed as neutral, objective, or benign, through terms such as equal, fairness, meritocracy, professional, qualified, quality, rigour, and standards (Endo, 2020). The following article describe Indigenous leadership as "multi-layered, storied, and extending far beyond just Indigenous school administrators" (Anthony-Stevens et al., 2022, p. 97). This leadership often emphasises a sense of collaboration, which is part of the Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Buckskin et al., 2018). A further definition of leadership extracted from the *NATSIHEC Accelerating Indigenous Higher Education consultation paper* (Buckskin et al., 2018) is that leadership is "an activity driven by a genuine commitment from the individual to the development of others and [it is] attached to respectful relationships" (p. 155). Thus, fostering such leadership within educational institutions is crucial for creating an academic environment that values the unique contributions of various groups.

Ma Rhea (2015) provided a critical and multilayered perspective analysis of the education Indigenous students received. Multiple chapters addressed the key problems influencing educational failure. Through using an Indigenous rights approach, the author suggested that:

> only a significant repositioning of the provision of education services through partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people; with recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples in education afforded by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008) will change the underlying circumstances which shape these services. (Ma Rhea, 2015, p. X)

Anderson, Howe, et al. (2024) added that a rights-based approach contributes to interrogating and dismantling colonial legacies "embedded in institutional structures, pedagogical practices, research methodologies and psychological interventions" (p. 377).

Importantly, multiple bodies address the significance of Indigenous rights and issues globally, which are integral to international conventions and agreements. Regardless of the agreement, they emphasise the importance of education as a foundational aspect of the work surrounding rights. Ma Rhea (2015) provided insights about a complex, globalised education system. According to the author, "the challenge facing leaders and managers in this field is that debates are conducted in narrow ideological terms, laden with appalling statistics and grim historical reminders" (p. 174). Ma Rhea reminded us that embracing an Indigenist, rights-based approach draws on the conceptual frameworks developed in complexity research, which are intended to address challenges that seem insurmountable through linear thinking.

While some foundational work exists, a comprehensive theoretical framework for Indigenous leadership, particularly within settler colonial contexts, remains largely undeveloped. This study, through the development of the SLCM, aims to make a foundational contribution to this emerging field. The SLCM is not merely an applied model; it is designed to articulate and embody key principles and values of Indigenous leadership, rooted in rights-based approaches (Anderson, Howe, et al., 2024; Anderson et al., 2025), thereby actively contributing to the theoretical landscape.

4.4   Indigenous leadership in the Global South

Following the work of Raewyn Connell (2007), in which she argued that the knowledge produced by Global South scholars is often marginalised by those from the Global North, we used the knowledge of our researchers to explore literature from the Global South. As explored by this author, the dynamics of knowledge are shaped by social, economic, and political factors, which create, construct, and establish hierarchies of knowledge. As suggested by Singh et al. (2024):

> colonialisms and colonial legacies have been built on unequal power/knowledge hierarchies which have constructed binaries between Western (Northern) and Other (Southern) knowledges. The former is constructed as hierarchically superior, the latter inferior. Such knowledge hierarchies persist in most university curriculum [and production]. (p. 285)

Historically, then, contributions from the Global South have been overlooked, which reproduces a colonial idea in which Indigenous knowledges are seen as less valuable than

those from Western origin. As Connell (2007) did, we have tried to challenge the dominance of Western knowledge and advocate for a more inclusive approach that acknowledges contributions from the Global South. The Spanish-language literature offers some valuable definitions (see Choquehuanca Callisaya, 2023; Palacio, 2023; Velasco, 2014). In Velasco's work, leadership was defined as a process wherein an individual gains followers via various real or perceived reasons. Essentially, leadership cannot exist without the followers' recognition because their acknowledgement is what establishes someone as a leader. According to Bartolomé (1997), Indigenous authority requires a formal role within an institutional system with hierarchies and roles defined by custom or law, aligning with what Hernández and Selee (2013) described as Indigenous local government. Consequently, the legitimacy of Indigenous authority arises from tradition and community governance, whereas Indigenous leadership draws legitimacy from organisational abilities and the capacity to mediate within external political systems.

4.4.1   Educational leadership in South America

Gutierrez (2020) explored the relationship between educational leadership and community within Nicaragua's autonomous and regional educational system. The author conceptualised educational leadership as involving two dimensions. The first dimension is leadership *for* the community, which entails that a leader's social position emerges from the community they represent. Their role arises in times of crisis, and these leaders are usually responsible for mobilising and organising the functioning of community members while supporting and representing other community leaders. The second dimension, leadership *of* the community, highlights organised action and the process of promoting collective change. In other words, the qualities of individual leaders contribute to the enhancement of collective wellbeing.

Gutierrez (2020) suggested that educational leadership cannot be defined without community leadership. These types of leadership are tightly connected and interdependent. Drawing on the work of Hooker-Blandford (2013), Gutierrez argued that educational and community leaders working together can enhance the political, communitarian, economic, spiritual, territorial, and cultural revindication of Indigenous groups. Education can be used to speak up against institutional racism, marginalisation, and inclusion in the pursuit of a good living. The author explained the importance of "recovering" power through education because much of South American education has been entirely controlled by settlers, illustrating a mission-focused educational history. Missions were designed to "civilise" Indigenous peoples by teaching them the colonisers' language—Spanish—and assimilating them into the coloniser's culture (Molina Bedoya & Tabares Fernández, 2014). Ideally, through community leadership, individuals can access improved living conditions and better education, and enhance their social capital. These circumstances can then promote positive change for Indigenous communities, so they can regain control of their natural resources, lands, economic resources, and education systems. Educational systems are of particular interest because the communities seem to pursue a system that responds to the communities' demands for equity, belonging, and higher education. The desired educational system emerges from collaboration, whereby educational and community leadership work together towards mutual goals.

Gutierrez (2020) outlined a model of leadership to promote "good living" and Indigenous autonomy via community pedagogical initiatives that enhance effective educational processes. This model is the product of resistance and collective organisation and includes

leaders, Elders, politicians, and Indigenous, mestizos,[1] and Afro-Caribbean descendants claiming their rights through intercultural collaboration. The groups built a high-quality model of education that was pertinent and compassionate, and belonged to them. Gutierrez (2020) suggests that democracy should be implemented in schools and that more advanced educational models will lead to more visible change.

Palacio's (2023) work outlined another example of Indigenous leadership within the educational space. She focused on the type of strategic leadership needed to improve academic outcomes within an Indigenous school in La Guajira, Maicao, Colombia. Over 50% of La Guajira's population live in poverty (Colombian Statistics National System, 2020) and most (n = 46.2%) are of Indigenous descent (La Guajira Chamber of Commerce, 2023). Palacio's study surveyed 54 teachers and school leaders, highlighting the positive impact of leadership aimed at transformation, social and environmental sustainability, efficiency, and fostering a supportive work environment. However, certain practices remain entrenched, limiting staff participation and centralising academic and administrative processes.

Palacio (2023) also provided a definition of "leader": someone who possesses attitudinal qualities such as generosity and courage, inspirational behaviours such as motivation and integrity, and interpersonal skills such as communication, negotiation, empathy, and discipline. A leader was described as someone with the authority and ability to influence, guide, and motivate others. Institutional leadership was further defined as the legitimate capacity of an institution's director to motivate staff members, plan, make decisions, manage conflict, delegate tasks, and uphold the institution's vision. Within an educational institution, leaders are supposed to encourage teachers and students to be the best versions of themselves. Palacio's project illustrated the positive outcomes when leaders position themselves as mentors, transmitting and teaching skills and knowledge so staff can reach their full potential. Leaders were deemed effective when they attained their goals via relational work with their staff. Good educational and institutional leadership is key to achieving goals shared with teachers, parents, and students (Palacio, 2023). This idea is also provided in Australian literature. Buckskin et al. (2018) suggested that Australian universities should promote the inclusion of mentorship programs, through which those already working within the system can guide the newly included.

Where Indigenous leaders serve as ethnic agents with multiple connections to their communities (for example, class, locality, ethnicity, citizenship, and gender), they often function as both intermediaries and community spokespersons. Instances when leaders advocate for an identitarian cause to combat exclusion and discrimination also portray them as activists. This form of leadership may have enduring potential beyond traditional Western leadership models. It has been suggested that activists persist long after organisations dissolve. For these individuals, activism involves continuously accumulating experiences and transferring knowledge gained to their other causes.

4.4.2　Leadership and activism

Within the recent influx of activism scholarship, some authors are connecting leadership to activism, noting that leaders must advocate for systemic change and actively embody their role and goals (see Dache et al., 2019; Gavin, 2023; Mitchell & Bishop, 2020). For example,

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[1] Mestizos in South America are the group composed of those of European and Indigenous heritage (Montecino, 1996).

Gavin (2023) gathered the experiences of 14 college student activists protesting against the rise of right-wing authoritarianism in the United States. Gavin (2023) explored the issues of engagement, leadership development, belonging, and community partnerships in the context of challenging unjust practices. Gavin argued that to effectively support students, education workers can no longer "claim notions of political neutrality" (p. 23). Paulo Freire's (2005) work has been widely cited in studies examining activism and educational neutrality (for example, Cabrera et al., 2017; Luguetti & Oliver, 2020; Tapia et al., 2023; Tapia Parada & Whatman, 2024). Freire highlighted the value of self-reflection about our surroundings as an important means of gathering new knowledge for collective liberation. Quaye et al. (2019) supported this position, suggesting that self-reflection helps educators to realise that they are becoming the leaders they seek.

Indigenous societies have experienced multiple mobilisations, fights, and protests, given their constant exposure to mistreatment, authoritarian control, and exclusion (Bizberg & Zapata, 2010). Bizberg and Zapata (2010) wrote about Indigenous political activism in Mexico. They argued that Indigenous activism frequently emerges as a reaction to challenges faced by their communities. While these mobilisations are often dissociated from political parties or formal organisations, they usually seek a public societal space. Leaders within Indigenous communities often maintain strong ties to their community of origin, which legitimises their role, validates their leadership, and provides them with essential support.

Bolivia has a fascinating history of political Indigenous leadership and activism. As reported by Wood and McIntosh (2019), Bolivia has been a global leader in at the forefront of Indigenous rights for years. Bolivia was the first country to incorporate the 2007 UNDRIP into local law and the constitution, going further than any other nation globally, in the securing rights and freedoms for the nation's indigenous peoples (Rice, 2014). Other countries have acknowledged trailing behind, such as Canada, by not issuing a statement supporting UNDRIP until 2010 or including it into any of their local legislation until six years later (Wood & McIntosh, 2019).

Moreover, in 2006, Bolivia elected the first Indigenous president. Evo Morales is an Aymara person born to a poor family of llama herders. He was the leader of the Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement to Socialism) and a well-known activist who experienced racism, politically motivated arrests, and abuse. Despite these challenges, he was elected to congress and then to the presidency (Blair & Collyins, 2019). Choquehuanca Callisaya (2023) argued that Morales's election emerged as a response to the crisis within the neoliberal model, reflecting widespread dissatisfaction and a desire for systemic change. Crabtree (2017) state, "The Morales administration sought to give Indigenous peoples more rights and greater influence in government, effectively breaking down traditional patterns of exclusion…" (p. 60). His election empowered both rural and urban Indigenous populations, shifting Bolivia's historically exclusionary social structure. Morales's presidency saw more women in power and addressed grassroots concerns, making significant improvements to living standards, reducing poverty, and enhancing economic growth. His pro-Indigenous policies established Bolivia as a plurinational state.

President Morales encouraged the establishment of Bolivia's intercultural and bilingual educational system to promote emotional and political reconciliation. This initiative aimed to decolonise education by prioritising Indigenous knowledges and languages (Corbetta et al., 2018; Internacional de la Educación América Latina, 2010). It allowed Indigenous children to learn in their native languages alongside Spanish, which represented a significant political—

and cultural—achievement. The large Indigenous population means this initiative makes more sense than a Western-centred curriculum (Tamburini, 2020). The newly established program also sought to address low literacy rates by aligning education with local community goals, and challenging historical inequalities in schools, which often cater to the oppressors rather than the oppressed.

Rigoberta Menchú played a major role in fighting for Indigenous rights and social justice in Guatemala. She won the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize for her work exposing Indigenous peoples' struggles facing violence and inequality. Menchú is the first Indigenous woman to receive this award (Barrios-Klee, 2018) and played a crucial role in highlighting social issues frequently ignored under the umbrella of the capitalist hegemony. Across Latin America, policies labelled as "democratisation" often align with neoliberal agendas that worsen inequality, especially for Indigenous communities. Indigenous people have actively resisted these policies to protect their rights, lands, and cultures, creating a strong movement resisting these changes (Zimmerman, 1999).

4.5 Lessons to learn

4.5.1 Challenges faced by Indigenous peoples within the educational space

Indigenous Australians face challenges in obtaining academic education, skills, knowledge, financial resources, and biases in leadership recruitment processes. It seems difficult for them to reclaim leadership and decision-making positions. Indigenous applicants are often positioned at a disadvantage compared with outsiders holding advanced degrees, extensive work experience, and experience in negotiating leverage with employers (Jaggi et al., 2024). A central reason for this challenge may be the underrepresentation of Indigenous Australians in managerial positions (Weerasinghe et al., 2023). Similarly, the issue has been considered in New Zealand, where a study investigated the circumstances of Māori leadership in higher education by Povey et al. (2021a) Their findings illustrated how Māori senior leaders navigate their successes to shape transformative change against a backdrop of organisational constraints. The authors argued that a strong link exists between having authority and creating opportunities to implement institutional change. The inclusion of more Indigenous leaders is needed to disrupt the status quo and enable equitable access for other Indigenous individuals seeking leadership positions.

The general underestimation of Indigenous leaders and Elders is another challenge discussed in the literature. Within the Ecuadorian context, Wise et al. (2018) emphasised that Indigenous leaders are often well informed, politically experienced, ethical, and deeply engaged in addressing higher education challenges. They also demonstrate strong professional relationships with educational institutions. However, Elders should be recognised for their essential role in integrating Indigenous knowledges because their presence has traditionally been a cornerstone of successful initiatives within Indigenous communities (R. Robinson, 2023). Anthony-Stevens et al. (2022) argued that understanding the link between tribal knowledge, history, and contemporary realities is crucial for community wellbeing. This knowledge, deeply rooted in historical experience and the impacts of colonial disruption can only be accurately shared by Elders and the wider Indigenous community. Therefore, it is important for communities to gain local control over

their higher education, self-determination, and community development in harmony with their cultural aspirations (Jaggi et al., 2024).

Individuals from minority groups are often marginalised in certain spheres because homogeneous groups tend to protect their membership to preserve self-esteem and a shared sense of identity. Because of social categorisation behaviours (Weerasinghe et al., 2023), minorities are more likely to be excluded from leadership positions and influential social networks. According to Anderson and Diamond (2020), traditional organisational methods employed by universities assume an effective "pipeline" into senior leadership roles, whether professional or academic. These are insufficient to meet the Australian government's targets for Indigenous employment growth. More importantly, these methods fail to address the aspirations of Indigenous peoples because the institutional reforms envisioned by frameworks such as UNDRIP cannot be achieved through conventional pipeline approaches. Consequently, leaders from minority backgrounds face significant barriers to advancement (see Capezio & Mavisakalyan, 2016; McDonald & Westphal, 2013).

Samantha Faulkner and Julie Lahn (2019) conducted interviews with 50 current or former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who attained executive or senior executive service levels in the APS. Their research focused on identifying factors that either support or hinder career progression in the APS. The findings emphasised the value of informal mentoring and highlighted obstacles such as institutional biases, poor management practices, and the undervaluing of Indigenous skills and leadership styles. Faulkner and Lahn (2019) concluded that the APS needs to develop a strengths-based business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.

4.5.2   Foster collaborative research

The importance of collaborative research has been highlighted in the literature (Povey et al., 2021a; Russell et al., 2022; Wise et al., 2018). Wise et al. (2018) suggested that Indigenous leaders' capacity for constructive collaboration helps to overcome both community and inter-nationality differences and present a unified Indigenous worldview. Povey et al. (2021a) also highlighted the importance of strong cultural identity and meaningful relationships.

However, to foster collaborative research, three key challenges must be addressed:

> (1) University researchers need to recognise that Indigenous people can play active roles in research projects.

> (2) Indigenous people must demonstrate confidence in having a meaningful voice within academic institutions.

> (3) Indigenous peoples should see themselves as active collaborators with agency. (Wise et al., 2018)

Indigenous peoples' confidence in being heard will likely precede their willingness to be an active participant. Hence, both parties need to feel they have a stake in the research project(s). Weerasinghe et al. (2023) built on these ideas to explain how people think that they need to belong to a homogeneous group, presenting particular skills and characteristics before achieving a leadership position, stating "It appears that re-categorisation is possible; the candidate ceases to be the out-group as defined by their characteristics and is re-categorised according to their level of achievement or skill attainment" (p. 239).

Fostering these collaborations may involve planning meetings focused on a clear set of practical developmental activities. Defining specific activities could avoid the perception of aimless discussion without immediate action. Collaborative relationships also require a "long lead-time for development [which is] essential for building trust and respect between Indigenous leaders and the university" (Wise et al., 2018, p. 343).

4.6 Previous experiences with Indigenous leadership in research

While it is widely acknowledged that strengthening leadership skills is crucial for effectively supporting workers, the existing literature provides limited guidance on developing these skills, particularly in Indigenous contexts. In a Canadian study, Russell et al. (2022) claimed that students' voices were crucial to fostering a climate of inclusive excellence. They framed their project from a justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) model (Mahar et al., 2021). This model highlights the critical role of student voices and the importance of intentionally incorporating student perspectives to strengthen JEDI-focused decision-making and foster a climate of inclusive excellence. The acronym includes key strategies designed to build these desired skills: "J" stands for justice and involves recognising and dismantling systemic barriers affecting individuals' and groups' access to opportunities and resources. "E" stands for equity—recognising, supporting, and allocating resources to address the unique needs and challenges of individuals with the aim of ensuring opportunities for success and advancement. "D" stands for diversity, and accepting and valuing each individual's characteristics, including age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical attributes, gender, socio-economic status, beliefs, and origin. Finally, "I" stands for inclusion—actively embracing, supporting, and valuing individuals to empower them and maximise their belonging (Russell et al., 2022).

Russell et al. (2022) suggested that nothing could change without comprehensive training for faculty, staff, and administration members that:

> includes the skills to create an environment in which students feel safe and comfortable to not only share their story/voice but also express their needs and identify possible barriers and obstacles. It is imperative that programming is aligned with and produces the expected outcomes of established strategic goals and objectives. (p. 301)

Recent Australian research highlighted the development of professional learning programs. Johnson and Flückiger (2022) gathered participants from various areas, including community Elders, school leaders, teachers, and Indigenous education workers (IEWs). These groups participated in a professional learning program aimed to foster long-term family–school–community engagement and leadership in children's reading. The program began with in-person workshops held in Far North Queensland, focusing on theories and practices related to shared leadership for improving literacy through involvement from families, schools, and the community. Initial contact with these communities was followed by on-site visits to build rapport with school leaders, community members, families, and IEWs. During the consultation and rapport-building phase, coalitions were established within each school, consisting of Indigenous Elders, school leaders, staff, IEWs, and families. The project's findings revealed a strong desire for Indigenous knowledges to be actively integrated into the

various programs. Indigenous workers are crucial in driving intended changes, especially in the short term, by collaborating within coalitions to support Indigenous children's reading. The role of IEWs should shift from a supplementary position to a more elevated leadership role. While this professional development program took place within school-level communities, it could be recontextualised for universities.

Creating and developing mentorship programs and partnerships among stakeholders could also foster growth in this area (see Ma Rhea, 2015). In the United States, Endo (2020) noted that public declarations typically promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within their organisations. However, faculty demographics have remained unchanged, indicating that little progress has been made in fully achieving these objectives. Endo attempted to develop a new mentoring model that could address the sociocultural challenges faced by Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) at predominantly white institutions. A key concern is performance assessment and how trends in these evaluations influence promotion decisions. According to Endo (2020) and Hinsdale (2016), the failure of some mentorship programs lies in deficit assumptions, whereby the mentee is presumed to lack knowledge and skills (Hinsdale, 2016, p. 171). Mentor-partners need equity-focused professional development, particularly in education and allied disciplines. These disciplines often have an insufficient number of BIPOC faculty to serve as culturally relevant mentors for new faculty from similar sociocultural backgrounds (Cavazos, 2016).

Institutional leaders rarely offer structured support to mentoring pairs beyond making initial introductions. As a result, the success of the one-on-one mentoring model largely hinges on the compatibility between the mentee and mentor, particularly in terms of their communication styles and personalities. Ideally, mentorship programs should be framed under an equity focus, through which training emphasises a reciprocal relationship among and between individuals rather than adopting a deficit perspective. While mentor-partners provide valuable advice, paternalistic perspectives that assume faculty members are incapable of succeeding should be avoided. Institutional leaders rarely offer structured support to mentoring pairs beyond making initial introductions. Importantly, Indigenous teacher mentors highlight "a parallel approach to teaching, one that centres learning around a set of relationships rooted in place, community wellbeing, and cultural survival" (Anthony-Stevens et al., 2022, p. 100).

Endo (2020) offered a multi-level mentoring-partnership model that explicitly prioritises racial equity. Their approach is designed for predominantly white institutions to address racialised challenges while harnessing collective and individual strengths. This multi-level approach aims to foster collaboration and mutually beneficial professional relationships. Endo (2020) developed equity-centred mentoring partnerships to fundamentally change the approach by shifting from assimilating and integrating BIPOC faculty into predominantly white organisations to a model in which perceived or actual differences are embraced as strengths. This alternative should be grounded in equity mentoring partnerships (Endo, 2020). This author argues that this "model decanters several assumptions and practices inherent in dominant mentoring frameworks" (p. 172). An equity-focused model recognises the various individuals and social networks that contribute to supporting a faculty member, shifting away from the common idea that a single person is mainly responsible for assisting a new colleague. An equity-based mentorship program highlights the importance of establishing reciprocal relationships among individuals (Bonus, 2020; Endo, 2020).

In the United States, Anthony-Stevens et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study that explored the power of Indigenous mentorship to address change in perspective. The authors were inspired by the connection between educational leadership and the strength of nations, which drives the exploration of the role of master–novice mentorship among Indigenous teachers. Indigenous mentorship is crucial in revitalising and reclaiming Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and valuing through relational and intergenerational learning. These practices challenge and disrupt colonial influences within teacher education and school leadership. Mentorship programs might be particularly useful in areas with a general shortage of teachers of colour. It is likely that educators of colour leave or are pushed out of their positions at higher rates than their white counterparts. Targeted mentorship among teachers of colour might help them stay longer in the classroom. These mentorship programs try to target understanding settler colonial logics and how they have shaped schools. Mentors share their stories to make others aware of the everyday challenges they have faced in their lives. According to Anthony-Stevens et al. (2022), "all mentors saw Indigenous leadership as a critical aspect of practicing sovereignty in Native-serving schools" (2022, p. 97). Mentors emphasised building relationships with the community and the environment as central to Indigenous learning philosophies.

In Canada, I. M. Robinson et al. (2019) identified the kinds of support that enabled Indigenous (Mi'kmaw) women educators to obtain and retain positions as school principals. A crucial element in this project was the existing collaboration between researchers and educators. They develop partnerships often inspired by decolonising methodologies. Mi'kmaw women have secured and maintained positions as school principals thanks to the unique support available within the Mi'kmaw context. The personal and professional support they receive has allowed them to thrive in leadership roles. I. M. Robinson et al. (2020) stated that "their families, colleagues, and communities have served as role models and mentors in culture and leadership. Their ongoing educational and career support not only created opportunities but allowed the women to take advantage of them" (p. 706). Members of the Mi'kmaw school communities, including students, teachers, parents, and other community members, embrace their leadership styles, appreciate their contributions, and actively support them. These collaborations and organisational backing provided the women with opportunities to learn about Mi'kmaw culture and leadership, build and sustain networks, and receive support in their hiring and retention as principals. While the specific contexts within Mi'kmaw cannot be replicated, certain elements of the support structures can be adopted by universities to aid in the hiring and retention of traditionally marginalised individuals in leadership roles.

4.6.1   Australian university context

As a colonised country, Australia initially created its universities to establish and develop British knowledge (Ma Rhea & Russell, 2012). Hence, post-secondary institutions continue to perpetuate colonial beliefs and practices that negatively affect Indigenous communities. To challenge this issue, institutions must think beyond admission and retention, and support Indigenous Australians to become active decision-makers within the different institutions (Coates et al., 2019).

Indigenous Australian scholars have tried to understand the discrepancies in how the skills of Indigenous leaders are interpreted by the academy and eventually challenge the status quo, ensuring that Indigenous people become crucial in designing the future of the

Australian higher education sector. Often, Indigenous workers have sustained the status quo within education in Australia, which means that "Indigenous people perform low-paid contract work with opaque job descriptions centred on assisting mostly non-Indigenous school leaders and teachers to deliver standard Western curricula and manage children's behaviour" (Johnson & Flückiger, 2022, p. 1). To understand the issue, Trudgett et al. (2021) gathered 80 participants—a considerable number of participants for qualitative research. The participants worked in different groups and levels of university leadership. These participants reported the various roles they played inside universities and that often interfered with their desire to interrupt the status quo and provide others with tools to advance in their professional careers. For example, senior Indigenous leaders needed to take part in university initiatives and teaching duties such as Indigenising the curriculum and providing pedagogical advice across all disciplines. Senior Indigenous leaders must also participate in research activities (for example, ethics, external funding, and research strategies) and support Indigenous students via pastoral, cultural, and academic support.

Indigenous academics seem to face numerous activities and limited time, many related to supporting Indigenous students, ensuring university principles are aligned with national Indigenous higher education priorities and international principles, and so on (Diversity Council Australia, 2022). This type of work is often referred to as a cultural load. Cultural load is positioned as an additional, and frequently invisible, workload assumed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace (Australian Public Service Commission, 2023), which:

> includes extra Indigenous-related work demands that non-Indigenous colleagues do not have, expectations to educate non-Indigenous colleagues about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and racism, and expectations to talk on behalf of all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. (para. 1)

In a report, the Victorian Public Sector Commission (2024) added that "Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to have caring responsibilities and cultural and/or community obligations outside of the workplace that non-Aboriginal co-workers do not have" (para. 15). These responsibilities include caring for family members, serving on local advisory councils and boards, living and working off country, and more. Ultimately, Indigenous workers are burdened with obligations and tasks involving caring responsibilities and cultural-community roles. Furthermore, Povey et al. (2021b) suggested that Indigenous leaders be given the role of driving systemic change and bearing its weight. However, as Indigenous peoples remain underrepresented in the workforce, the workload is not equitably distributed.

The concept of cultural load has started to be reframed to two terms: cultural responsibility and colonial load (Weenthunga Health Network, 2023). Reframing the cultural load shifts the responsibility to where it should be: the colonial project. This is because culture is a strength. Cultural practices keep members of communities sane and well, so the culture should not be a "load", which implies a negative meaning. Indigenous peoples should not be responsible for the colonial project; settlers should bear that responsibility. The burden placed on Indigenous peoples by settlers and institutions consists of settlers' biases, assumptions, expectations, and entitlements. This load can lead to harm, burnout, or the inability to maintain their cultural responsibilities. The colonial load encompasses working in isolation (tokenism), being expected to educate colleagues, having identities questioned, facing deficit narratives about Indigenous cultures and communities, and working unpaid out of necessity.

It is critical to consider the power of colonial education policies in reproducing these types of practices (see Anderson, Howe, et al., 2024). Schooling legitimises the Australian colonial past, particularly the deficit framing of Indigenous knowledges against Western knowledge (see Anderson, Howe, et al., 2024)

Trudgett et al. (2021) noted that while senior executives and Indigenous academics might have different perspectives on the roles senior Indigenous leaders play, most of them agreed that it was an excellent opportunity to interrupt the status quo and dismantle power structures: "The Senior Executives' desire for strategic advancement in the Indigenous sphere seems to be echoed by the Indigenous staff, creating high expectations for the senior Indigenous leader to achieve visible outcomes" (Trudgett et al., 2021, p. 100). Indigenous leaders diligently work to transform higher education despite facing numerous systemic challenges. They seek to replace outdated institutional practices and are committed to establishing a fair, sustainable, and robust future for Indigenous education in universities while supporting Indigenous staff and offering them leadership opportunities (Povey et al., 2024; Trudgett et al., 2021).

Finally, the Accelerating Indigenous Higher Education Project used previous reports and recommendations, such as the Behrendt Review and NATSIHEC (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium) recommendations, to help expedite changes in Indigenous education (Buckskin et al., 2018). The report aimed to update the evidence surrounding the subject to inform future actions, strategise from the evidence into specific and measurable outcomes, focus on the most effective strategies that are practical and budget-conscious, and clearly outline which organisations or institutions will be responsible for them. To gather the data, the research team conducted roundtable forums and interviews with leaders and the workforce. They also analysed student participation and workforce data, examined interventions that had been shown to be replicable and effective, and assessed the alignment of future actions and strategies for implementation within national policy and potential funding by 2018.

While seven key aspects were used to develop the data analysis, we are focusing on their reports about the first one—governance, strategy, and leadership—because of the scope of this research. Fifteen universities across Australia appointed Indigenous senior leaders; however, only 52% of these leaders were members of the executive group. Some conclusions drawn by this research team include the potential to offer professional development to aspiring staff—developed by senior staff—so that the aspiring group can cultivate skills, knowledge sets, networks, and experience for accessing positions at the next level of leadership. These professional development programs should be designed by the Australian state governments and universities.

The Accelerating Indigenous Higher Education report established that strong leadership and effective management are crucial factors for attracting, developing, and retaining the Indigenous academic workforce. Specifically concerning leadership, this report recommends adopting effective leadership models, clarifying responsibilities and accountabilities, and recognising the unique knowledge and experiences that Indigenous peoples can contribute culturally, intellectually, and socially.

4.6.2   University efforts within the Australian context

Various reports have been developed to evaluate the performance of universities regarding Indigenous issues (see Behrendt et al., 2012; Moreton-Robinson et al., 2011). The *On Stoney Ground* report (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2011) focused on reviewing universities' governance performance. The reports conceptualised governance in two ways: participation and influence, which involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and direct influence on university executive functions, and regulation, which refers to the strategies, programs, and objectives aimed at enhancing Indigenous outcomes, including the integration of Indigenous knowledges within university operations. The group of researchers concluded that activities and initiatives related to Indigenous education are often primarily driven by the funding available, rather than a coherent strategy or underlying philosophy. Reconciliation Action Plans play a crucial role in institutional objectives, addressing aspects that other corporate planning documents typically overlook. Indigenous higher education is often grouped with equity and diversity initiatives aimed at supporting low socio-economic status groups. However, this approach fails to recognise the unique status and rights of Indigenous Australians as First Peoples, as highlighted in the UNDRIP and acknowledged in many universities' reconciliation statements.

The *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People* (Behrendt et al., 2012) aimed to provide recommendations concerning parity for Indigenous students and staff at universities; best practices and opportunities for change at universities, including units, university culture, policies, activities, and programs; the effectiveness of current Commonwealth Government programs designed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in higher education; and the acknowledgement and equal recognition of Indigenous knowledges within the higher education sector. Ultimately, this report suggested that VCs should lead and collaborate with faculties to transform university culture and governance. Ideally, this would ensure that the responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education outcomes is shared across all levels of university leadership. Moreover, there should be greater representation of Indigenous peoples in senior governance positions.

Strategies based on the results of the reports have been put in place. Universities Australia (2017) launched an Indigenous strategy initiative to stimulate action across the university sector and increase Indigenous leadership. This initiative was "designed to improve outcomes in higher education, across key areas such as curriculum, research, student support and importantly, workforce" (Coates et al., 2019, p. 216). The strategy aimed to boost the participation of Indigenous Australians in higher education, not only as students and graduates but also as academic and research staff, with a particular emphasis on fostering Indigenous leadership (Anderson et al., 2022; Universities Australia, 2017).

Analysing the Universities Accord 2024, Anderson, Baeza Pena, et al. (2024) argued that "we need more than just good intentions" (para. 8) and that:

> while this proposed new review sounds like a significant and comprehensive work, it isn't a new idea. What's needed is a commitment to implement recommendations from the years of work by Indigenous experts in the higher education sector rather than starting a new process. (para. 21)

Authors such as Anderson, Baeza Pena, et al. (2024) and Stahl et al. (2020) have claimed more inclusion, voices, and belonging are required. Diversity Council Australia (2022) suggested that three main issues prevent Indigenous people from being included in the higher education sector: the experiences of Indigenous students, the shortage of Indigenous academics, and the integration of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives into the curriculum.

Universities Australia (2020) reported an increasing number of Indigenous students enrolled at universities. However, retention, success, and completion rates for these students remain low (Diversity Council Australia, 2022). Some issues affecting Indigenous students are social isolation, lack of confidence in academic abilities, and insufficient support at university. The lack of Indigenous staff in leadership positions contributes to Indigenous students ineffectively navigating university constraints. Similarly, supporting and helping Indigenous students and workers would be easier if academics and leaders were more familiar with Indigenous knowledges and cultures. Academics who can effectively and adaptively engage with Indigenous students while understanding their social, emotional, and learning needs are crucial in supporting their persistence and success (Diversity Council Australia, 2022). Indigenous students rely heavily on university support. If there is no place where they can find support, they are unlikely to succeed as students or workers. Another barrier to success is a shortage of Indigenous academics. The percentage of Indigenous staff working as academics and professionals is below the population parity (Universities Australia, 2019). First, filling the leadership positions with Indigenous people is difficult. Second, those Indigenous workers taking up senior roles are often unfamiliar with the university culture (Anderson & Diamond, 2020). Hence, although there has been progress in Indigenous leadership throughout the university sector, the long-term implementation remains mostly inconsistent and unstructured (Page et al., 2017). Anderson et al. (2023) ultimately reported the lack of a culturally competent workforce as a crucial issue. They argued that a culturally competent workforce is needed to teach Indigenous-related content, knowledge, and perspectives (Page et al., 2019; Young et al., 2017).

4.6.3 Government efforts

In Australia, some government organisations have created guidelines to support the inclusion and experience of the Indigenous workforce. For example, the Victorian Public Sector Commission (2024) outlined ideas that people can implement to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the workplace. These include discussing possible flexibility in work arrangement so employees feel supported and valued. It also suggested that Indigenous workers should not be used as representatives of the whole Indigenous group. As previously mentioned, Indigenous employees are often asked to speak on behalf of all Aboriginal people, which adds to their cultural load, risking their wellbeing. Leadership staff should supervise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in a manner that aligns with their comfort while being mindful of the influence of language and setting. They should also support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to connect with cultural resources and mentorship from a relevant Aboriginal organisation or professional.

Authors such as Bargallie et al. (2023) have recommended taking affirmative action, which means that the different institutions should specifically target the recruitment of Indigenous employers with an emphasis on leadership opportunities. These authors have also suggested creating an annual networking event or retreat focusing on leadership and

opportunities for professional development targeting Aboriginal women interested in leadership. While they have researched with Aboriginal women, these ideas can always be recontextualised for all Indigenous peoples.

5. Research design and methods

5.1 Rationale for the research methods

The primary aim of this research project is to address the need for an SLCM to foster Indigenous success in higher education through capacity building of non-Indigenous leaders. This project is tailored for UeX, focusing on portfolio-specific training to equip senior leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions that benefit the Indigenous community within their portfolios, contributing to Indigenous success institutionally. In this project, the SLCM model is applied to develop a specific program, aimed at UeX and portfolio-specific to provide sponsorship for Indigenous activities within their portfolio. The program follows principles of organisational change and includes a customised six-module training for senior executives based on their portfolios. See Figure 2 for a visual representation of the research questions and proposed modules.

The research questions for this project included:

1. What do you think the senior executive group needs in terms of training/development to support you to deliver your KPIs?
2. How confident are you in your ability to meet your KPIs?
3. What might you find patronising (cultural competency, white privilege)?
4. What support do you need to rate the consciousness of the next level of leadership/ management so that decisions about Indigenous engagement become routine rather than bolted on?

Figure 2: Visual project representation
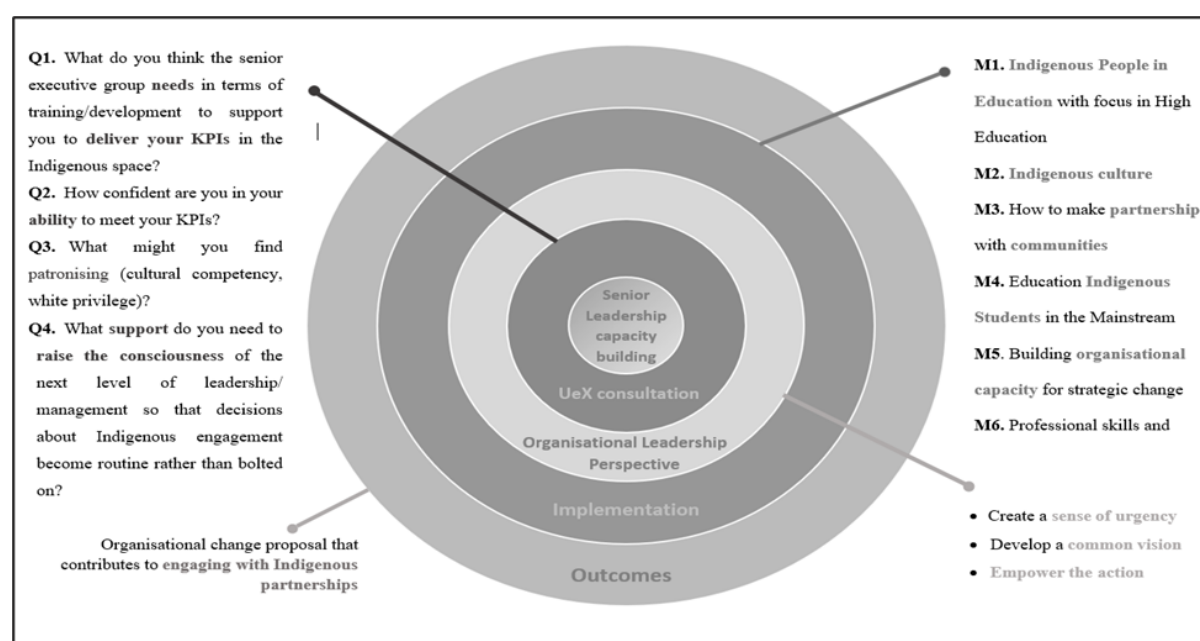
5.2 Methodology

This project followed a qualitative approach, including a case study, thematic analysis, and a quantitative descriptive statistic. The qualitative approach involved open-ended questions in an online survey and posterior in-depth interviews with UeX. These activities explored participants' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences related to Indigenous higher education, cultural competence, capacity-building, and training needs for university leaders. This approach allowed us to obtain a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by Indigenous people in higher education, the potential barriers to engagement with Indigenous communities, and the specific professional development needs of university leaders.

In contrast, the quantitative descriptive statistics approach was used to summarise and describe quantitative data gathered in the survey. By employing quantitative descriptive statistics, the research offers a more comprehensive understanding of the dataset's characteristics, facilitating the identification of patterns, trends, and potential outliers. Miksza et al. (2023) stated that descriptive statistics enables researchers to effectively communicate the main findings to stakeholders and inform subsequent analyses or interventions based on the insights gained from the descriptive analysis. This analysis offered patterns and trends that were later analysed via qualitative approaches.

Full ethics approval for the research project was granted by Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee GU Ref No: 2024/459.

5.3 The research participants and data collection

The research participants were executive or senior leaders currently working in Australian universities nationwide. The participants' positions included VC, DVC, PVC, dean, executive dean, director, and senior manager. We used a screening question at the beginning of the survey to ensure that the study recruited appropriate research participants. In total, 41 university leaders participated in this study.

The online survey using the Qualtrics platform was launched for data collection between July 2024 and February 2025. The survey was distributed online through various channels, including invitations on websites such as LinkedIn, as well as via the lead researcher's network, academic forums, symposiums, and workshops. The survey included 34 questions divided into three main sections. The first section focused on demographics information, including Indigenous identification, gender identification, employment status, and length of time participants had held their current role. The second section explored the participants' roles, their workplace settings, and whether their university had an Indigenous strategy. It also examined their duties and responsibilities, experiences working within Indigenous contexts, the support they received from their leaders, the support they provided to their staff, and their engagement with cultural training and cultural awareness programs. The final section addressed potential improvement to participants' roles, featuring open-ended questions that invited them to share their perspective on the support they needed as senior leaders to support and improve their work environment regarding Indigenous issues. The survey was administered and analysed using Qualtrics, a software platform for data collection and analysis. Qualtrics enabled efficient data management, facilitated the organisation of responses, and provided robust features for statistical analysis, data

visualisation through charts and graphs, and the generation of comprehensive reports. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, and questions were optional. Participants could withdraw their involvement in the study at any time, in which case their incompletion responses were excluded. However, we kept the responses for analysis even if participants skipped a few questions. At the end of the survey, participants were asked if they would be interested in further discussion with the lead researcher at a face-to-face interview or online via Teams to provide more comprehensive feedback about what knowledge and skills they need. Participants were also invited to attend workshops, seminars, or forums (face-to-face and online) to discuss the results from this online survey if they expressed their interest in doing so during the online survey. The in-depth interview included questions about the participants' involvement with Indigenous staff. This involvement encompassed recruitment and hiring processes, mentorship programs, professional development opportunities, and collaboration on projects. Other questions explored the importance of safe spaces and the significance of practising Indigenous cultural safety. By the end of January 2025, six in-depth interviews had been held with the lead researcher, Professor Peter Anderson.

5.4 Data analysis

The data analysis was initially conducted using Qualtrics, which helped identify the categories of data. Qualtrics provided a platform to collect and store data and perform advanced analytics. This facilitated the organisation and categorisation of the data we produced with the senior leaders. For example, because the survey included open-ended questions, Qualtrics grouped similar responses together, which helped us to identify common themes. After grouping the responses, we used the Qualtrics analytical tools to deeply understand the responses.

Overall, Qualtrics was used to:

- create and distribute surveys
- collect and organise responses
- categorise data into themes
- analyse patterns and trends.

Descriptive statistics are crucial for data analysis because they provide tools to summarise and describe essential characteristics of the dataset (Hassan, 2024). This type of analysis helps researchers organise, visualise, and interpret large sets of data. Miksza et al. (2023) stated that descriptive statistics enable researchers to effectively communicate the main findings to stakeholders and inform subsequent analyses or interventions based on the insights gained from the descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis has been reported as being simple and clear because it provides straightforward ways to summarise data. It also provides data visualisation tools, identifies patterns and trends, and more importantly, provides foundation for further analysis (Hassan, 2024). Therefore, descriptive analysis helps to easily draw conclusions about a considerable population.

We used Qualtrics to obtain a frequency distribution of our data. This distribution organised data into categories and provided a representation of occurrences in each category (Hassan, 2024). For example, the demographic variables included age, gender, and Indigenous identification. Qualtrics provided a table with the different responses. Each response had different categories. Qualtrics showed the number of answers, the percentage, and the value

for each question. We later used this information to develop graphical methods to visualise data, including pie and bar charts.

For those participants who expressed their interest in further discussion with the lead researcher, an in-depth one-on-one interview was implemented via Teams. The interviews were then transcribed by a professional transcription service and imported into NVivo for analysis. We then used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach to analyse the open-ended responses and the interviews. This method enabled us to identify, analyse, and report on patterns or themes within the data. This method of analysis offers positive outcomes, such as its flexibility. Themes can be organised in various ways, for instance, focusing on a single theme or a group of themes. Regardless of the approach, it provides a detailed and nuanced account of the theme. By capturing the perspectives of key stakeholders, the qualitative research method can inform the development of targeted capacity-building modules tailored to the identified areas of weakness and support the overarching goal of enhancing Indigenous participation and success in higher education.

We have organised and report the emerging themes in the following way: First, the question regarding demographics provides a comprehensive picture of the participants. The second section explores how the participants perceived their universities' Indigenous portfolios. The third theme highlights the various experiences participants had when working with Indigenous students, peoples, and communities. The fourth section addresses the training and preparation participants received and how they applied it to their everyday responsibilities. The fifth theme focuses on support: the types of support participants received, the support they provided, and the support they desired but could not find. The data were read multiple times to achieve the best possible outcome. Additionally, the team reflected on the data as a group, discussing possible implications from different angles. The last theme explored the different possibilities suggested by the participants to achieve the desired improved outcomes.

6. Results and findings

6.1 Descriptive demographic results

The study explored the demographic information, including participants' Indigeneity, gender, employment status, employment classification, campus location, and division. Table 1 summarises the demographic data collected from research participants.

Table 1: Descriptive demographic results

Category	Subcategories	Count	Percentage
Gender	Male	11	29.7%
	Female	22	59.5%
	Non-binary	1	2.7%
	Others	1	2.7%
	Prefer not to say	2	5.4%
Indigeneity	Aboriginal	4	10.8%
	Torres Strait Islander	1	2.7%
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	1	2.7%
	Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander	31	83.8%
Employment status	Full-time	35	94.6%
	Part-time	1	2.7%
	Casual	1	2.7%
Employment classification	HEW 8–10	3	8.1%
	Executive contract	19	51.4%
	Other	12	32.4%
	Prefer not to say	3	8.1%
Location	City, CBD, or main campus	5	13.5%
	Work across campuses	1	2.7%
	Australia (Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, New South Wales)	28	75.6%
	Prefer not to say	3	7.1%
Division	Education	8	21.6%

Category	Subcategories	Count	Percentage
	Vocational Education	3	8.1%
	Operations	4	10.8%
	Business	2	5.4%
	Central	1	2.7%
	Centre for Social Justice and inclusion	1	2.7%
	DVC Office	6	16.2%
	Health	2	5.4%
	Industry and External Engagement	2	5.4%
	Mathematics	1	2.7%
	Policy Strategy and Impact	2	5.4%
	STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)	1	2.7%
	Student Services	1	2.7%
	I prefer not to say	3	8.1%
Duration in the current position	Less than 1 year	4	11%
	1–5 years	20	54%
	5–10 years	9	9%
	Over 10 years	3	3%
	Prefer not to say	1	1%

The demographic data on Indigeneity revealed a majority of non-Indigenous participants, alongside representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals. Only one person (2.7%) included in this research was both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Four (10.8%) were Aboriginal, one (2.7%) was Torres Strait Islander, and the other 31 (81.3%) were neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander. The non-Indigenous participants represented 83.8% of the participants.

Of the 37 participants responding to what gender they identified with, the majority of participants (n = 22; 59.5%) were females, 11 (29.7%) were males, one (3.1%) was non-binary, one (3.1%) identified as other, and two (5.4%) preferred not to say.

The study attracted 41 participants who were in the senior executive leadership and took part in the survey. Their positions included four VCs (10%), six DVCs (15%), five PVCs (12%), five deans (15%), 11 directors (27%), and two senior managers (5%). Eight participants declared "other" (20%), which included associate dean, associate director of

resourcing and capability, policy, strategy and impact portfolio, vice-president, and interim chief financial officer. Figure 3 demonstrates participants' senior executive positions

Figure 3: Participants' positions at universities
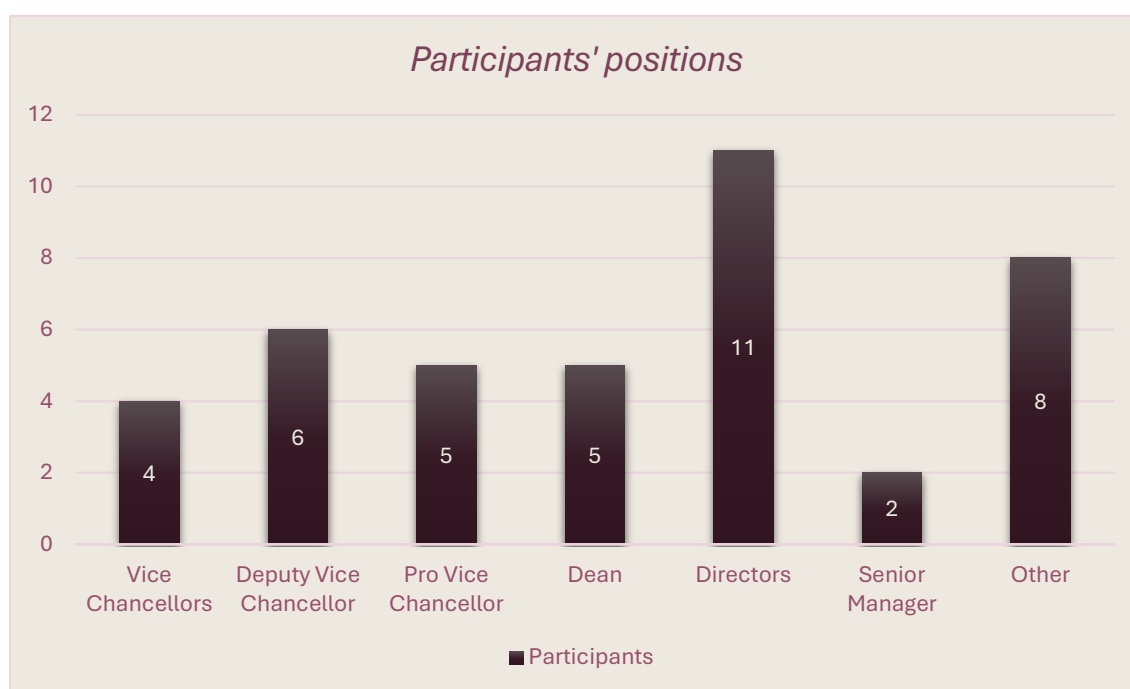
Of the 37 participants who answered the question regarding their **current employment status**, the majority (*n* = 35) were hired full-time at the university (95%). Only one was hired on a part-time basis (3%), and one worked casually at the university (3%).

Participants' campus locations were various across Australia. Eleven participants (34%) were located in Melbourne. Six participants (27%) were in Brisbane. Five participants (13.5%) were located within the city, central business district (CBD), or city campus without revealing where that city, CBD, or city campus was located. Two participants (5.4%) were in Perth, two (5.4%) in Sydney, one (2.7%) in New South Wales, and three (7.1%) preferred not to say. One participant (2.7%) mentioned Australia as their location, but did not specify a city. Finally, among 37 participants who revealed their campus locations, only one person (2.7%) worked across different campuses.

Regarding their employment classifications, more than half of the respondents (*n* = 19; 51.4%) held a higher education worker (HEW) executive contract. Only three participants (8.1%) were HEW level 8–10, and three (8.1%) preferred not to say. The other 12 participants (32.4%) held "other" positions, which included different academic roles and an academic management role, and three others (9.4%) preferred not to say.

Out of the 37 participants who reported the area they worked at, eight (21.6%) worked in education schools or faculties, 16% worked in the DVC office, three (8.1%) worked in colleges of vocational education, and four (10.8%) worked in operations. Other areas had two participants each (21.6%) (for example, business, health, industry and external engagement, and policy strategy and impact). The central office, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), the Centre of Social Justice and Inclusion, and

student services had one participant each (13.5%). Three people (8.1%) preferred not to say.

Over half of the participants (*n* = 20; 54%) had been in their positions for between one and five years. Twelve leaders (32.4%) had held their positions for more than five years. One participant (2.7%) preferred not to say and four (10.8%) had been there less than a year.

6.2   Indigenous strategy or portfolio

This section presents the findings related to Indigenous strategies or portfolios within participants' universities. It explores whether institutions have established formal Indigenous strategies, the extent to which these strategies inform participants' roles, and the ways in which universities support Indigenous initiatives. The results also highlight participants' perspectives on their responsibilities within Indigenous contexts and the support they receive and provide in relation to these strategies.

Our findings show that 88% of the universities where participants worked had an identifiable Indigenous strategy. However, when asked about how leaders built their portfolios in different areas to establish Indigenous partnerships, participants suggested different ideas. One of those who was not convinced of how the portfolio worked at their workplace, mentioned that "the issue was limited to individual decisions/involvement" (Participant #27), suggesting that contributing to the area's portfolio often depended on the personal initiative of leaders and employees. Another participant claimed that they did not think this was currently happening in their university, and if it did, "this tends to be very tokenistic" (Participant #17). For example, universities invite an expert to speak at a seminar or event, but they do it on a single occasion rather than as an ongoing activity. Participant #18 claimed that at their university "it hasn't been great… There's an invisibility or siloing in governance, which is a problem." Another participant (Participant #1) stated that work towards building portfolios was "sadly, mostly in isolation. We have strategic plans and frameworks but very little collective action." Participant #9 provided an insightful description of how building an Indigenous strategy worked at their university:

> I'm not aware of all approaches used, but my personal approach is to do so in consultation with relevant Indigenous communities. Often, the "need" or "objective" that the community would value is not that of the university team and through consultation, we can achieve projects that will bring mutual benefits. (Participant #9)

Despite many universities having an Indigenous strategy, the approach to implementing it does not seem well explained or collectively built. Instead, leaders appear to act based on their own interpretations, without specific guidance or institutional agreement. Additionally, the universities do not seem to agree or incorporate insights from communities, which could ultimately detract from the validity of the project as a whole.

When discussing the importance of focusing on strategies to improve Indigenous outcomes and embed Indigenous knowledges, perspectives, practices, or activities throughout their portfolio, 31 participants (75.6%) viewed the issues as very important. Eight participants (20%) claimed that it was important, and only one person (2.9%) said that it was unimportant (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Importance of focusing on strategies to improve Indigenous outcomes and embed Indigenous knowledge

Importance of focusing on strategies to improve Indigenous outcomes and embed Indigenous knowledges

2% 2%
20%
76%

■ Very Important ■ Important ■ Unimportant ■ Neutral

The research findings reveal that many participants emphasised the importance of building relationships and partnerships with Indigenous communities as a key strategy, often facilitated through the Indigenous Centre and the DVC Indigenous portfolio. Participants highlighted the need for these partnerships to be grounded in responsible practice statements and Indigenous student success strategies, guided by community impact and informed by the perspectives of Indigenous staff.

Several participants underscored the significance of fostering personal relationships and trust with Indigenous people and communities as a foundation for developing an Indigenous portfolio. For instance, Participant #21 stated that "we [the participants] work hard to set up and maintain initiatives that support Indigenous partnerships, internally and externally". Similarly, Participant #2 emphasised that "[Indigenous portfolios should be built] through the development of personal relationships and trust with Indigenous people and communities". Participant #3 reinforced this idea, suggesting that "more engagement with the communities" was necessary.

The importance of involving Indigenous people from the initial stages of strategy development was also noted. Participant #5 suggested that the portfolio be built "by involving Indigenous members at the initial discussions stage through to creating a detailed plan and bringing it about". This view was echoed by Participant #10 and Participant #19, who advocated for building Indigenous strategies "through personal relationships fostered by working with Indigenous colleagues, communities, employers and leaders". Participant #28 highlighted the need for Indigenous leadership in these partnerships, stating they aim to "let the partnerships be driven by Indigenous staff and community need", positioning their role as a leader to support and implement these initiatives.

Participants also acknowledged the key contributors to developing Indigenous strategies and portfolios. According to Participant #35, this work was carried out primarily by Indigenous engagement staff (identified positions), Indigenous academics (identified and non-identified positions), and senior or executive staff in identified and non-identified positions.

However, a concern emerged regarding the reliance on Indigenous colleagues in developing these strategies. Participant #20 pointed out that "currently, I would say this [the development of the Indigenous strategy] is done with an overdependence on Indigenous colleagues and employees". This over-reliance can contribute to what is commonly known as "cultural load or colonial load", placing additional mental and physical strain on Indigenous staff.

Participant #22 further explained that "in building partnerships, we [participants] explore statements of responsible practice and relevant guides to action such as the Indigenous Student Success Strategy". This collaborative approach involves various stakeholders, ensuring that everyone's voices and interests are considered while addressing responsible practice when working with students. Such a comprehensive approach fosters partnerships grounded in a foundation of mutual respect and ethical considerations, which contributes to enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of the initiatives.

We identified specific areas of outcome and potential community partners, guided by opportunities for impact and by the perspective and priorities of Indigenous members of RMIT staff.

While Participant #18 acknowledged that their current university's approach to Indigenous strategies was lacking, they reflected on successful practices they had observed in the past. The strong integration of Indigenous partner organisations and community members into strategic governance bodies and frameworks proved to be effective. Participant #18 noted that:

> a strong integration of Indigenous partners into the strategic governance bodies [was] very effective. This worked because there was a partnership centred on achieving the overall strategy, for instance, course accreditation and curriculum integrity, with the First Nations voices at the table. There was give and take, but there was an alignment of purpose.

These responses highlight the importance of embedding Indigenous perspectives into institutional governance to create strategies that are both impactful and sustainable when building on the Indigenous strategy.

Another strategy proposed during our research project was to encourage university staff to attend events and participate in professional development opportunities. Participant #8, a leader, highlighted how they built on the Indigenous portfolio by encouraging "attendance at events and professional development opportunities" for the staff members in their division. Participant #10 also mentioned this issue, saying that they encouraged relevant training and provided funding for Indigenous initiatives. The universities seem to often look for specialists in specific areas to try to find insight into best practices. For instance, an Indigenous community Elder and Indigenous learning and teaching specialist were often invited to discuss the improvement of the Indigenous portfolio. This idea was reflected in Participant #14's explanation, in which they stated that "specialists in their areas reach out to specific external or internal experts to seek insights into best practices".

The participants also discussed the importance of co-designing teaching and research programs with different stakeholders. Participant #16 shared an example: "[When] working with our current relationships and key stakeholders we engage in six months plus dialogue before events and research and teaching programs to ensure the fit and right timing and co-design of programs." Similarly, Participant #34 described their collaborative outreach efforts, highlighting their work with the university's Institute for Indigenous Research "to co-design and implement culturally appropriate outreach programs, such as the Indigenous outreach team". They also emphasised that their community-driven programs were developed in partnership with local Indigenous groups, who informed and guided initiatives such as pathways programs. This was informed to align with the community's needs.

A frequently used and effective strategy was fostering positive and trust-based relationships among university staff and communities. This often involved regular meetings with Indigenous staff, community representatives, and Elders to discuss planning and collaboration. Another highly effective strategy was integrating Indigenous partners into strategic governance bodies, ensuring that First Nations voices actively contributed to decision-making processes. This partnership-driven model focused on shared goals such as course accreditation and curriculum integrity through mutual exchange and collaboration, aligning the purpose and priorities of all parties.

Building on these strategies, participants also emphasised the importance of working directly with Indigenous students and communities. The findings presented in the next section explore how these collaborative efforts extended beyond internal governance, highlighting community engagement and student support initiatives.

6.3   Working with Indigenous peoples and communities

The study also investigated the experience of university leaders in engaging with Indigenous communities, Indigenous people, and students. To better understand the context of participants' insights, we gathered information about their experience within the Indigenous higher education landscape. Figure 5 first demonstrates the experiences of university leaders in working within Indigenous higher education. Table 2 then summarises the levels of confidence of participants who took part in the online survey.

Figure 5: Experience in Indigenous higher education

Experience working within Indigenous higher education
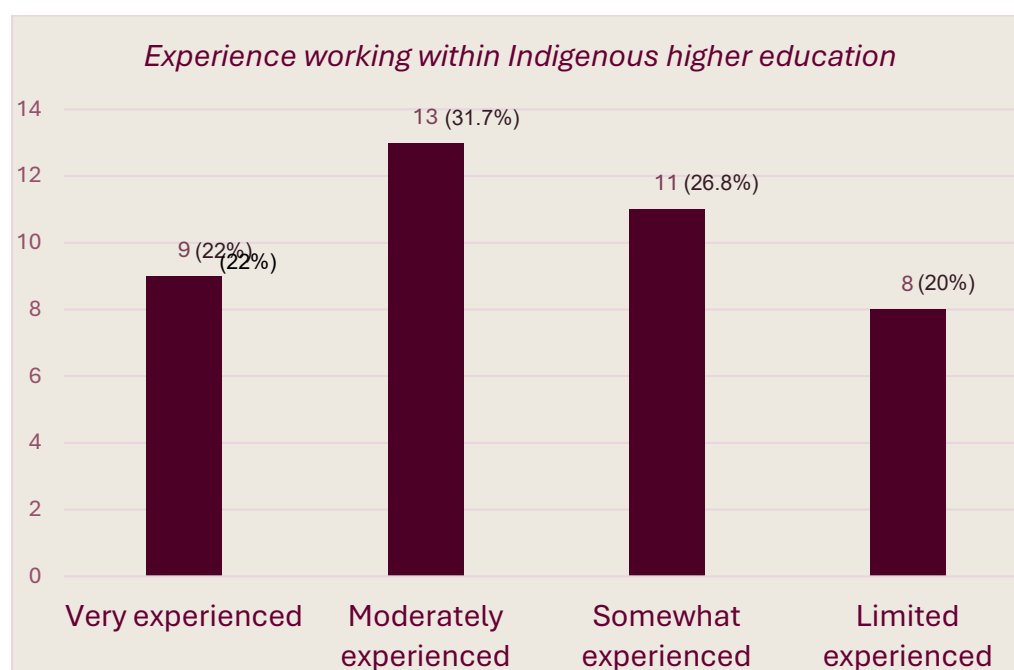
Of the 41 participants, nine (22%) were very experienced, 13 (31.7%) were moderately, and 11 (26.8%) were somewhat experienced. Eight participants (20%) reported having limited experience, reflecting a diverse range of expertise.

Table 2: Levels of confidence

Category	Subcategories	Count	Percentage
Working with Indigenous peoples	Very confident	10	24%
	Fairly confident	22	54%
	Somewhat confident	7	17%
	Slightly confident	1	2%
	Not at all confident	1	2%
Engaging with Indigenous communities	Very confident	9	25%
	Fairly confident	17	47%
	Somewhat confident	7	19%
	Slightly confident	2	6%
	Not at all confident	1	3%
Engaging with Indigenous communities/peoples or activities	Very confident	8	20%
	Fairly confident	15	37%
	Somewhat confident	15	37%
	Slightly confident	2	5%
	Not at all confident	1	2%

One might assume that individuals with more experience in a particular area would feel more confident than those with less experience. However, our data revealed that confidence levels were not tied solely to experience. Among the seven participants with limited experience working with Indigenous students, only one reported being slightly confident, and one was not at all confident. Overall, this indicates that participants appeared confident in engaging with Indigenous peoples, communities, and activities regardless of their prior experience.

When we asked How confident are you in working with Indigenous peoples? Out of 41 responses, over half the participants (*n* = 22; 54%) declared themselves fairly confident. Ten participants (24%) felt very confident. Only seven participants (17%) were somewhat confident. One participant (2%) was slightly confident. Just one participant (2%) did not feel comfortable at all. Consequently, experience working with Indigenous students in higher education does not seem to associate with how confident leaders feel when engaging with Indigenous peoples.

When exploring how confident the participants were in engaging with Indigenous , communities within their current role, most of the participants (n = 17; 47%) were fairly confident. Approximately 20% (n = 7) were somewhat confident, 25% (n = 9) were very confident, two participants (6%) were slightly confident, and only one participant (3%) was not at all confident.

When asked how confident they were when engaging with Indigenous communities/peoples or activities, 19.5% (*n* = 8) were very confident, 36.6% (*n* = 15) were fairly confident, 36.6% (*n* = 15) were somewhat confident, 4.9% (*n* = 2) were slightly confident, and one (2.4%) was not confident at all.

There was no apparent relationship between how experienced the leaders were and how confident they felt performing their different tasks. Figure 6 illustrates the experiences of senior leaders in leading projects within the Indigenous context. Among the 41 leaders, only 10% considered themselves experts in leading projects in Indigenous contexts. A few (20%) saw themselves as experienced, while a larger portion (37%) identified as moderately knowledgeable. A small number (10%) had no experience in this area, and 25% had limited experience in leading projects within Indigenous contexts. When discussing **communities of practice** as a university initiative to strengthen relationships, the findings showed that the majority of participants (*n* = 35, 85%) expressed interest in participating in a community of practice at their institution. These collaborative spaces were seen as valuable for fostering connections and sharing knowledge. Four people (10%) preferred not to comment, while two (4.9%) indicated they were not interested in participating.

Figure 6: Experience leading projects within Indigenous contexts
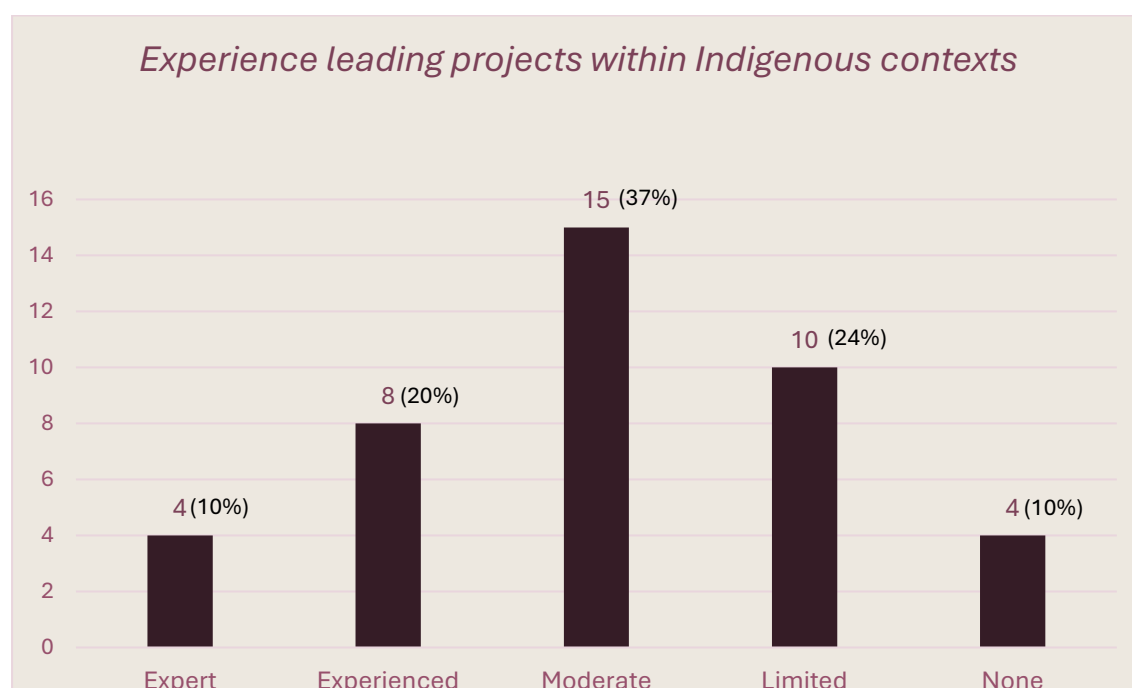
These findings suggest a gap in expertise among senior leaders when it comes to leading projects in Indigenous contexts. This highlights the need for targeted professional development and culturally responsive training to strengthen leadership capacity in this area.

6.4 Training and training perceptions

Over the previous two years, the majority of participants had engaged in training focused on cultural awareness, cultural safety, or cultural competency, highlighting varying levels of exposure and familiarity with these programs. Particularly, 30 participants (82.9%) had attended **training focusing on cultural awareness, cultural safety, or cultural competency** in the previous two years. Six participants (14.6%) had not attended any of the listed training programs. One participant (2.4%) had never heard of these types of training. Table 3 presents information on the training leaders had participated in over the previous three years, and Figure 7 illustrates the training types they attended.

Category	Subcategories	Count	Percentage
Leaders' participation in training	Yes	34	82.9%
	No	6	14.6%
	Never heard of it	1	2.4%
Training time	2022	11	32.3%
	2023	17	50%
	2024	6	17.6%

Figure 7: Types of training undertaken by leaders
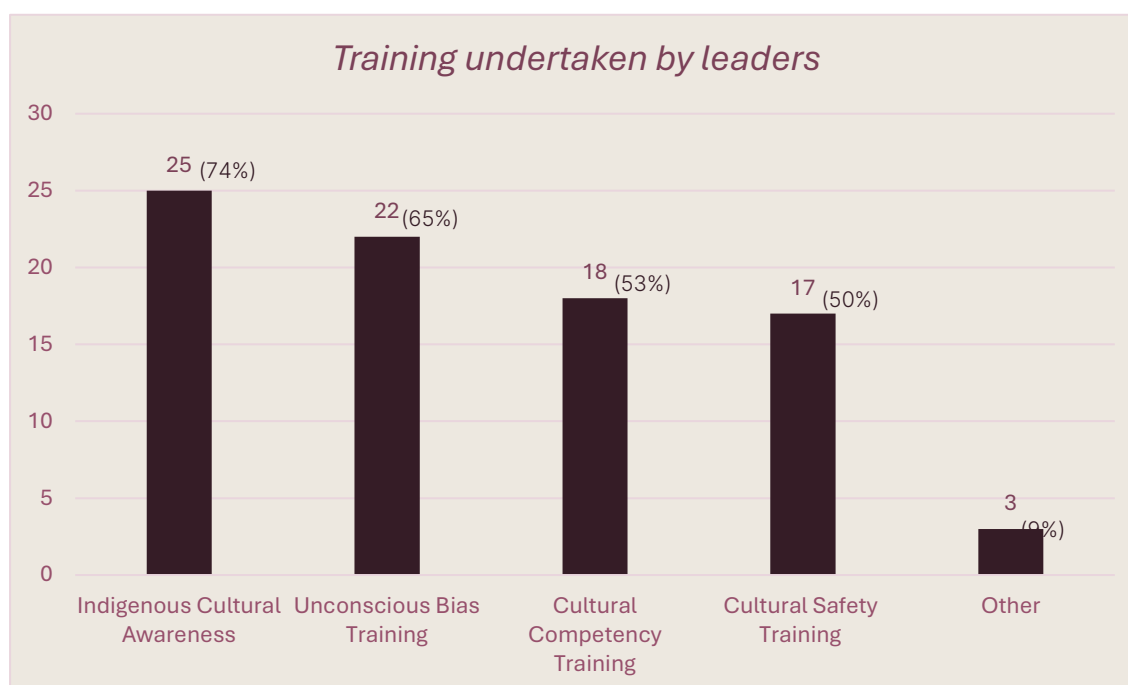
Figure 7 presents the training undertaken by leaders. Among the participants who engaged in training, 25 (73.5%) attended Indigenous cultural awareness training. Twenty-two people (64.7%) attended unconscious bias training. Eighteen (52.9%) attended cultural competency training. Seventeen participants (50%) attended cultural safety training. Three participants (9%) attended "other" trainings, which included the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' Core Cultural Modules and curriculum workshops. Out of the participants attending training, 17 (32%) attended their training in 2022, 17 (50%) attended in 2023, and six (18%) attended their training in 2024.

Looking further into participants' responses to the open-ended question about cultural competency training, we found that many participants viewed learning, achieving, or acquiring cultural competency not as patronising but as essential. They suggested that developing cultural competence was a necessary challenge for personal, professional, and

institutional growth. A male participant even mentioned that it was his obligation to learn about cultural issues: "I might find them uncomfortable or challenging at certain moments, but as an incomer who is also a white Anglo male, I think it's my obligation to attain a certain degree of humility in relation to these questions" (Participant #6).

Another participant, who identified as having white heritage and described their background as "a quite racist upbringing" (Participant #13), expressed that they still had so much to learn about Indigenous knowledges that "I acknowledge the impacts of colonialism and how that has benefited my individual pathway. I would like to be able to make and support change to benefit Indigenous and First Nations communities." In contrast, an Indigenous participant expressed a very interesting perspective that they did find some issues patronising, such as many white people thinking that:

> cultural competence and inclusion is a generosity on their part and seem to expect some sort of congratulations for "making the effort". It is still too rare that a genuine partnership is built, and that non-Indigenous Australians recognise that they actually have a load to learn and would be better as professionals, individuals, and just people generally if they set aside the arrogant assumption that coloniser thinking is somehow superior. (Participant #20)

Along the same lines, one participant noted that patronising behaviours often were shown through "apathy, ignorance, indifference, belittling, and rudeness" (Participant #7). Most participants appeared to view cultural training as a positive opportunity within their workplaces—probably to push back against mistreatment. However, it was acknowledged that staff might not always engage with these pieces of training out of a genuine desire to learn, but rather from a sense of "doing a favour".

Participants highlighted the need for different types of training to address specific issues. For example, misunderstandings and differing perspectives exist regarding issues such as white privilege, and some participants expressed concern about the concept. One participant viewed the term "white privilege" as overgeneralised or even offensive, failing to acknowledge individual experiences or challenges. Conversely, another participant expressed feeling that there is some denial of white privilege. For him, people did not see the privilege they had "by virtue of their whiteness" (Participant #20). Participant #5 added to this topic by stating that "white privilege is woven all the way through higher education, and it is extremely patronising". However, Participant #26 emphasised that there is nothing patronising about confronting white privilege; instead, it needs to be addressed "firmly and with honesty". Ultimately, two participants reinforced the idea that neither cultural competency nor white privilege should be seen as patronising.

From a different perspective, one participant raised concerns about the potential issue of requiring staff to undergo training specifically on how to work with Indigenous colleagues. Participant #24 said:

> I remember vividly an example of an Indigenous colleague who was upset to learn that we—his immediate colleagues—were asked to do training to learn how to work with Indigenous colleagues, and he emphasised that he was a staff member and colleague like anyone of us—and wanted to be treated in that way. I remember this and that we can also create a situation where through well-intended efforts, we make our Indigenous colleagues feel different in ways that may not be appreciated.

Participants voiced a desire for cultural competence training to be improved to be more meaningful and effective. Some felt that the current efforts were more of a "bandaid approach instead of a holistic approach" (Participant #27). One leader explained that "there are assumptions about who is taking the training" (Participant #18). Often there is a presumption that any immigrant identifies as Anglo-Saxon, when in reality, many migrants to Australia come from a marginalised or colonised background. They suggested that training should consider "the diversity of contemporary higher education workforce, especially among academics" (Participant #18).

Concerns were also raised about the quality of training and the design of the training. Participant #5 expressed scepticism about programs that might simply be "a typical HR-developed module" and questioned their value. However, they stated that if the training was designed, developed, and facilitated by Indigenous people, they would feel confident in its authenticity and impact.

6.5 Support

6.5.1 How leaders support their employers

The findings revealed varying levels of support provided by managers and group leaders to their staff in fostering partnerships between the university and Indigenous communities, highlighting a spectrum of engagement and commitment. Figure 8 illustrates the frequency of staff support we found in this study. Particularly, of the 40 participants who provided support to their staff in their partnerships with the university and Indigenous communities, 14 participants (35%) supported their staff frequently, 16 (40%) offered support to their staff occasionally, nine (22.5%) indicated that they supported their staff very frequently, and only one (2.5%) supported their team rarely.

Figure 8: Frequency of staff support
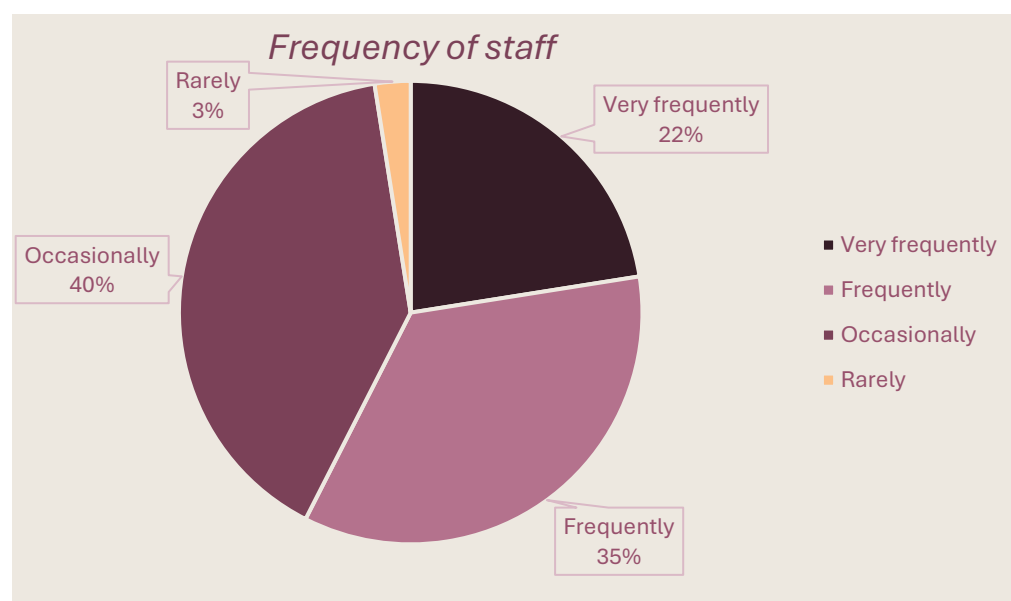
Figure 9 presents the opportunities provided for staff. When the 41 participants were asked whether they frequently created or provided opportunities for staff to actively participate in Indigenous activities, 33 (80.5%) replied yes and six (14.6%) said no. Only two (4.9%) preferred not to say.

Figure 9: Opportunities for staff
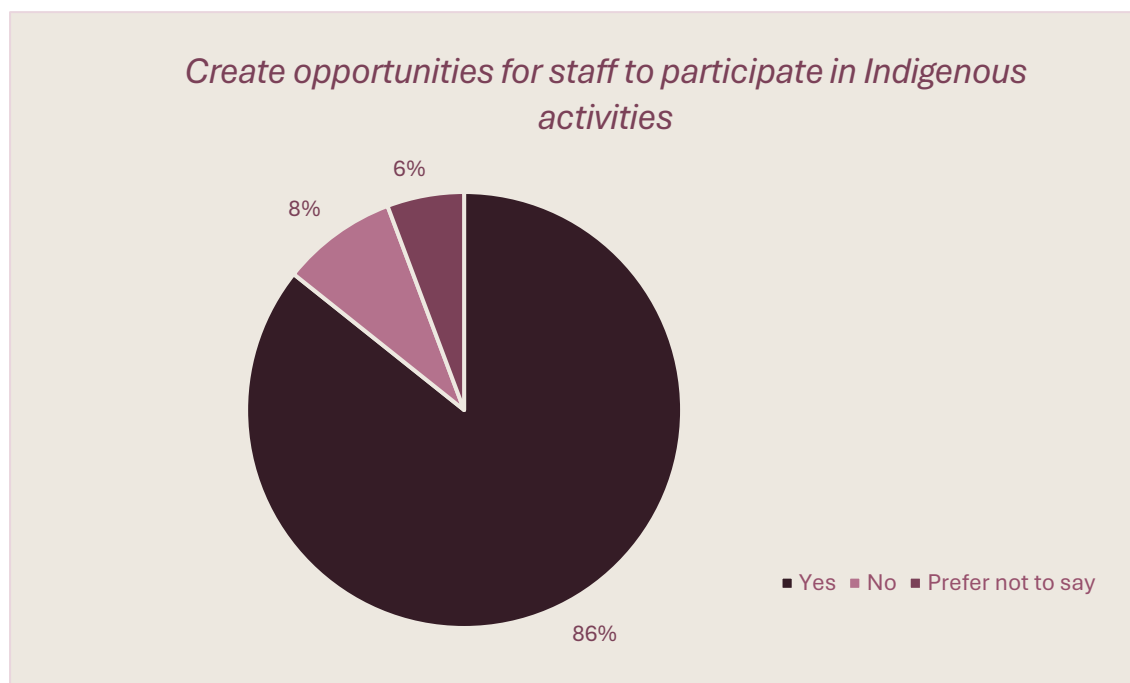
Some of the Indigenous research engagement opportunities that participants offered to staff were:

- **Professional development and training on Indigenous matters:** These were the most frequently cited engagement opportunities. Training usually involved embedding Indigenous perspectives in their units. Leaders often helped with funding for these training opportunities.
- **Participating in Indigenous research:** These opportunities often involved collaborating with communities to design and develop programs or training. Leaders also provided their teams with opportunities to do research by allocating workload for staff to participate in Indigenous research.
- **Participating in cultural activities and events:** Few participants provided this as an answer.
- **Contributing to Indigenous strategies:** Asking teams to contribute to the university's Indigenous strategy.
- **Offering co-led communities of practice:** Providing staff with the opportunity to participate in a co-led community of practice about First Nations perspectives in learning and teaching.
- **Developing programs for Indigenous people:** Examples include the eye clinics designed for Aboriginal patients.

Some participants did not provide any examples because disclosure entailed a significant risk of participant identification.

6.5.2 Current support experienced by university leaders

While participants reported supporting their staff, they also discussed the support they received when embedding Indigenous consideration into their day-to-day management and decision-making. A notable proportion of participants (63%, *n* = 25) acknowledged having received support. However, 11 participants (27%) stated they had not received any support and four (10%) preferred not to say.

Forty participants shared insights on the support needed to effectively integrate Indigenous perspectives into decision-making processes:

- People should take responsibility for their own learning and actively engage in self-education on Indigenous perspectives and practices without burdening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues.
- Embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledge into all aspects of work, building team capability, and contributing to decision-making.
- Include Indigenous representation at all leadership levels.
- Ensure Indigenous voices in all leadership levels are included in decision-making. Participants acknowledged this was difficult considering that large organisations often have few Indigenous staff.
- Increase funded positions to reduce the workload on Indigenous staff, to ensure their perspectives are included authentically, and to help reduce the cultural load on Indigenous staff.
- Include strategic advice and support from Indigenous education and engagement leaders.
- Provide practical advice on how to embed Indigenous perspectives in a genuine way rather than engaging in tokenistic activities.
- Leaders and managers need to be culturally literate by understanding and respecting that Indigenous people bring distinct knowledge, authority, and leadership to the community.
- Increase mandatory training about Indigenous knowledges from top to lower levels within the institutions.
- Improve decision-making, which requires carefully weighing potential benefits and risks, with a clear demonstration of due diligence to influence academic boards, councils, and government.
- Provide support from university leaders such as the PVC Indigenous.
- Invest greater time because working with Indigenous communities in decision-making processes requires more time and involvement.
- Provide ongoing education and confidence-building, which are important for integrating Indigenous perspectives into leadership and decision-making frameworks.
- Establish communities of practice among leadership.

Some participants did not comment on the issue. In the next section, we highlight the findings about the support university leaders wished for but had not yet received.

6.5.3 What's missing: Support leaders are still seeking

Despite some positive initiatives, participants also reflected on the challenges and negative experiences they encountered in their efforts to support Indigenous partnerships and inclusion within their institutions. One participant shared that their experience at their institution had not been particularly great, highlighting the issue of invisibility in governance, which poses a significant problem. Another participant specified that they have only witnessed non-Indigenous-led Indigenous partnerships at their university, from which they were excluded. Additionally, one leader expressed frustration about working in isolation, stating, "Sadly, mostly in isolation. We have strategic plans and frameworks but very little collective action" (Participant #1).

The particular forms of support the participants sought but could not find included the following:

- **Strategic guidance**: Specifically to embed Indigenous practices and support systems across the whole university, or, as Participant #27 presented it, "a university-wide approach and focus".
- **Sharing examples from other sectors:** Access to more examples or case studies demonstrating how other industries or sectors have successfully implemented policies to support Indigenous staff and students, especially in navigating systems rooted in colonial perspectives. Participant #18 elaborated on this, stating "Examples where sector leaders or other industries outside HE [higher education] have successfully applied or created policy and procedural provisions that would help Indigenous staff and students navigate systems predicated on colonial understandings of evidence/documentation."
- **Strengthened decolonising efforts:** Guidance is required to help staff engage in decolonising the curriculum, creating culturally safe environments, and embedding a respectful workplace culture. Participant #6 suggested, "We need to build a culture of acceptance, inclusiveness and appreciate all diversity. Hire managers with the capability to deliver on D&I [diversity and inclusion] strategy and build strong D&I culture."
- **Leadership development:** There's a gap in leadership-level initiatives for Indigenous practices, though frontline efforts exist. Participant #1 expressed it like this: "Leadership-level development to help guide strategic practice. There are front line initiatives in place, but not much focused on staff in leadership roles."
- **Genuine embedding of practice:** More practical support is needed to ensure Indigenous practices are implemented meaningfully, not just as a checkbox. Participant #10 explained the need for "more practical help in how to embed practice in a genuine rather than tokenistic way."
- **Staff and resources:** More dedicated staff, funding, and time are needed for Indigenous programs, alongside tools and mentorship for senior leaders. Participant #6 expressed it in a succinct way: "More staff focused on Indigenous programs. Money from the organisation. More time. Not being a tick box exercise."
- **More (collective) action:** According to Participant #3, "People are fearful about doing something wrong, so they do nothing." If doing something, "let's make sure that we're listening to the right people" said Participant #6. Therefore, incorporating Indigenous views into various aspects of work, such as project management, can improve outcomes. Participant #4 echoed the importance of including more voices,

emphasising that training should be designed to consider "how we progress the opportunities for Indigenous researchers but also how we undertake research into Indigenous issues topics". There must be engagement with local Indigenous communities, but also listening to others who engage in the same educational mission:

> what their journeys are about, how they've overcome—overcome assumes that they've got—they're starting from a deficit position, but how their life journey has progressed and what's led them to where they are and as a consequence what their ambition and aspiration is. (Participant #6)

- **Understanding of Australia's context:** Training is missing a better understanding of Australia's demography (Participant #3). Who is receiving the training should be considered when designing professional development—"one training does not fit all" (Participants #1 and #3). Additionally, there is a growing far-right discourse that considers everything as "too woke" or "leftist" (Participant #3), which jeopardises the advancements in Indigenous matters. As Participant #3 suggested, such perspectives need to be carefully considered when designing training that addresses and responds to these challenges.
- **Organisation, clear design, and inclusion of different voices:** According to Participant #1, training should include different stages. First, the learner should have some asynchronous learning as they can start with self-paced activities to help them prepare for their next stage of learning. As a second stage, in-person learning should be included. People enjoy in-person sessions, which can be very immersive and beneficial, especially for small, focused groups. In the in-person stage, learners should be exposed to learning from real-life experiences, especially from Indigenous students and staff, information that is "not coming out of a textbook, it's not coming out of a doctrine" (Participant #3).
- **Baseline capability:** Staff need some level of their needs covered to do a proper job. Participant #3 stated, "Baseline capability is missing and that actually will fix—not fix, but will support a whole range of things." According to this participant, baseline capability would build a foundation for those activities that build on personal experiences and truth-telling so learners/staff/students can understand stories from the perspective of Aboriginal people. Participant #3 added, "When you understand and acknowledge and experience the history and the stories, I think that helps you come through a more generous place."
- **Impact:** Current training misses "a sense of impact or history, even if it is a really good module" (Participant #3). A sense of impact is needed to build a deep narrative that can connect with people on a personal level. Participant #3 shared an experience of this issue: "I've—personally I've learnt so quickly, I've got to work closely with people who share—generously share their stories, and that helps." Importantly, the participant criticised that while we are supposed to understand everyone's experiences and recognise privilege, in the end, "everyone gets the same size box". Therefore, equity and equality should play a pivotal role in training design to ensure it has a meaningful impact on learners.

6.5.4 Areas for growth and development

In investigating the support university leaders expected to be developed at their universities, we asked: "What support do you need to raise the consciousness of the next level of leadership/management so that decisions about Indigenous engagement become routine rather than bolted on?" Participants discussed various ideas about the support needed to raise awareness and embed practices that routinely include Indigenous peoples in decision-making processes. These ideas included the following:

- Provide "dedicated resources from the university, not just strategies and reports, actual actions to move forward" (Participant #5).
- Provide guidance and practical tools to incorporate Indigenous knowledges and engage Indigenous peoples. These tools would support the implementation of responsible practice and help change the perspective towards eliminating the tokenistic perspective. Participant #19 further explained this point as:

    It's difficult to know where to begin, but guidance with how to facilitate staff to engage in decolonising work within curriculums and their education, how to create culturally safe environments, how to better support Indigenous staff, and how to embed a culture of respect in the workplace.

- State clear KPIs for senior leaders. Senior leaders, including DVCs, should report on their efforts to embed responsible Indigenous practices, with accountability built into strategic priorities. Reporting might also enhance the visibility of university efforts to improve the Indigenous space. Participant #9 added "I have noticed since RAPs [Reconciliation Action Plans] have disappeared, there is no accountability to meet targets. External and transparent reporting will help ensure that unis are meeting their requirements."
- Recruit managers with the skills and expertise to effectively implement diversity and inclusion strategies, fostering a robust and inclusive organisational culture.
- Incorporate Indigenous engagement into occupational health and safety training and recruitment processes, ensuring staff have a clear understanding of their learning responsibilities and obligations. This would help foster meaningful discussion. As Participant #33 noted, "I would be interested in further understanding considerations in recruitment, or rather different ways to do recruitment."
- Support staff participation in different cultural events, immersions, and opportunities to connect with Indigenous people and culture. As Participant #30 said, "staff need the opportunity to embed themselves with Indigenous culture through events, immersions, and connection with Indigenous people and culture. This will support their understanding and competency related to Indigenous cultural inclusion and consideration." Participant #3 echoed this idea and stated that for them, what had actually worked over the last years was "a full day immersion led by the Aboriginal Land Council that challenge[d] exactly that step through about privilege, history, truth-telling, and the stories of where we come from." While immersion can be a positive experience that accelerates connection, it is also a challenge because of its considerable personal impact, which influences a deep analysis on who you talk to and how you as a person connect with the world.

Some participants also mentioned that the process of raising consciousness was already under way. One participant revealed that "we are well on the way at [institution name] to

embed decisions about Indigenous engagement" (Participant #24). Another participant had a similar idea: "I think we have raised levels of consciousness but with everyone at different parts of their own reconciliation journey" (Participant #21). However, Participant #21 pointed out that having team members progress at different stages in their reconciliation journeys and not progressing together might hold them back as a group, emphasising the importance of working towards a shared goal. Participant #10 further challenged the notion of Indigenous engagement being treated as an add-on, stating "It's a complex space that is about more than simply awareness and intent to do 'right'. These sorts of generalisations and simplifications are unhelpful." Participant #3 stated that "grouping the cultural learning in with compliance modules is inherently flawed in my opinion, because it just becomes a tick box".

These reflections highlight that Indigenous agency is a nuanced and evolving process space that goes beyond simple awareness, and oversimplification is unnecessary. In the next section, we present the findings from the in-depth interviews with the lead researcher, focusing on the training needs of university leaders. These findings highlight both the training leaders seek for themselves and the support they believe is necessary for their staff.

6.6 Developing a training framework: Addressing learning needs for university leaders

6.6.1 Identifying learning priorities for university leaders

In discussion with the lead researcher on further training university leaders needed, we found that participants explored their own experiences when starting in academia. Some would participate in "lots of different trainings" or engage in everything they could because they wanted to be "upskilled and have better understanding" (Participant #1). One of the priorities to improve training is highlighting the importance of robust, well-referenced sources in educational content. Participant #1 noted that attendees should not have to ask "Where does that come from? Or where is the reference for that?" They observed that facilitators would use quotations or statistics without providing context or references. Designing training should include strong scholarly development. Participant #3 continued explaining that, while not everyone delivering training should be an academic, "they should have at least signposting [sic] who are the scholarly Indigenous leaders that we should be reading and thinking about their work and drawing attention to". Participants agreed that those designing and delivering training should have a deep understanding of pedagogy and contextualisation, recognising that a uniform approach is ineffective.

Interestingly, while there is a common agreement that training needs improvement and, probably, redesigning, Participant #3 highlighted the importance of avoiding "spoon feeding". They emphasised that staff should have an "active approach that requires cultural immersion and building understanding of the place and the location and the experience that you [people] are currently in, the stakeholders, etc.". According to this participant, principles should flip and prioritise "listening, understanding, and co-creating solutions". This perspective seems to offer a response to the burden of the colonial load. If all staff were actively engaged in learning about Indigenous matters, the responsibility would shift from resting solely on Indigenous workers to being shared collectively.

Another learning priority for university leaders is the inclusion of Indigenous material. Educators or content designers should thoughtfully consider where and how to engage with Indigenous students or staff, drawing on Indigenous-led materials, resources, and scholarship, and thinking about how these fit into wider strategies and plans. As Participant #1 pointed out, this approach should align with broader institutional and national strategies from the outset rather than adding "an Indigenous bit" as an afterthought to programs and training.

Overall, participants emphasised the need for training that fosters active engagement, cultural immersion, Indigenous-led training, and the meaningful integration of Indigenous perspectives. Building on these insights, the next section unpacks the targeted training that supports team development as endorsed by university leaders.

6.6.2   Supporting team and collective development through targeting training

This section presents findings from an in-depth analysis based on participants' open-ended responses and follow-up discussions with the lead researcher during interviews. To support team development, participants suggested that it is crucial to create an environment where issues can be openly and respectfully critiqued. As Participant #1 noted:

> People won't critique is an "important part" of the narrative and certainly, discussions I've had over the years with participants in some of the professional development are that people feel they are not in a position to provide critical feedback because to do so may make them feel that they are racist or not interested in cultural competency development.

This reluctance to critique and the resulting silence negatively affect collaborative efforts to improve training.

Participant #2 proposed moving beyond a simple "collaboration framework", to focus on "how to pursue fruitful collaboration in order to enact some responsibilities". They emphasised that leadership responsibility should be later translated into collaboration by mobilising achievable and manageable groups such as student–academic collaboration or cross-sector collaboration as part of an Indigenous community framework. Ultimately, they advocate for a fruitful, collaborative initiative covering all levels of the university.

Integrating Indigenous perspectives and knowledge into all aspect of leadership is crucial. For example, experiential learning is considered vital because it provides a deeper understanding of Indigenous history and perspectives. Participant #1 said, "what is needed, and specifically what I think is productive, is frameworks that people can use to think about the way in which their practice should be relating to Indigenous perspectives and/or knowledges". "Add-ons do not really drive any strategic institutional change", as this participant added. Therefore, participants believe that well-designed frameworks can help drive strategic institutional change by embedding Indigenous engagement into everyday practices.

In summary, this section has presented a comprehensive overview of our study, including descriptive demographics of the participants, insights into the Indigenous strategy or portfolio, experiences of working with Indigenous students and communities, the support

universities require, and the support they offer to their staff. Additionally, we have highlighted key themes emerging from the in-depth interview analysis. Building on these findings, the next section delves into the discussion, where we interpret these results, explore their implications, and connect them to broader scholarly and practical contexts.

7. Discussion

This research has revealed complex dynamics in implementing Indigenous strategies within Australian universities, highlighting progress and persistent challenges in creating meaningful institutional change. Our findings underscore the pioneering nature of this research in articulating a practical framework for non-Indigenous leadership capability in advancing Indigenous success. While theoretical work on Indigenous leadership paradigms exists (for example, Coates et al., 2023, who introduce Indigenous Institutional Theory as a new theoretical framework and methodological tool), the development of the SLCM serves as a critical, complementary contribution. It demonstrates how Indigenous perspectives and Indigenous rights-based methodologies can inform and shape novel applied leadership models specifically designed to equip non-Indigenous UeX. This approach moves beyond merely applying existing theories by actively constructing a framework grounded fundamentally in the rights of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous approaches to ways of knowing and being, tailored for the capacity building for non-Indigenous leaders to enact systemic change. The findings demonstrate several key areas that require careful consideration for developing and implementing the SLCM.

7.1 Strategic implementation: From policy to practice

A significant finding of this research is the disconnect between institutional Indigenous strategies and their practical implementation. While almost 90% of participants reported having an identifiable Indigenous strategy at their institution, execution of these strategies often lacks cohesion and coordination. This aligns with Anderson et al.'s (2022) observation that despite years of policy development, there remains limited progress in achieving sustained Indigenous participation in higher education.

The reliance on individual interpretation and implementation of Indigenous strategies, rather than coordinated institutional approaches, creates what participants described as "isolated" or "tokenistic" efforts. This fragmentation echoes Ma Rhea's (2015) assertion that educational leaders often face challenges in translating broad ideological frameworks into practical action. The findings suggest that universities need to move beyond having strategies on paper to developing clear, institution-wide implementation frameworks that guide consistent action across all levels of leadership.

Universities might need to better integrate Indigenous voices across their different governance areas via consultation with the communities because their needs or what they value might differ from what the universities "think" they need. By developing this, it is likely both the community and the university would benefit.

7.2 The confidence–competence paradox

A striking finding emerged regarding the relationship between experience and confidence in Indigenous engagement. While only 22% of participants reported being very experienced in

Indigenous higher education, a notably higher percentage, 72%, expressed confidence in engaging with Indigenous peoples and communities. This disconnect raises essential questions about the nature of cultural competency and how it is understood and assessed by university leaders.

This confidence–competence gap may reflect what Bargallie (2020) described as the persistent impact of the racial contract in Australian institutions, where white privilege can manifest as overconfidence in cross-cultural engagement without corresponding depth of understanding. The finding suggests a need for more nuanced approaches to cultural competency development that help leaders better calibrate their self-assessment of cross-cultural capabilities.

7.3   Colonial load and active engagement

This research reinforces ongoing concerns about cultural load in Australian universities, supporting findings from the Australian Public Service Commission (2023) about the additional responsibilities often placed on Indigenous staff. Participants acknowledged a tendency toward overreliance on Indigenous colleagues, highlighting how institutional attempts to address Indigenous issues frequently inadvertently increase pressure on already stretched Indigenous staff members. This situation reflects broader patterns identified by Trudgett et al. (2021), whereby Indigenous academics face multiple demands, including teaching, research, student support, and institutional leadership. The findings emphasise the need for universities to develop more equitable approaches to implementing Indigenous strategies that broadly distribute responsibilities across Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership. Importantly, cultural considerations are required when taking action towards distributing responsibility; as the Victorian Public Sector Commission (2024) suggested, Indigenous peoples are more likely to take on caring responsibilities with their families and communities. Non-Indigenous workers are not given extra responsibilities because of their cultural heritage, and Indigenous staff should not carry the weight of systemic change (Povey et al., 2021b). This situation seems even worse when considering that Indigenous groups are underrepresented in the workforce.

7.4   Training and professional development: Beyond basic awareness

While almost 90% of participants had undertaken cultural training in the previous two years, the findings indicate that current training approaches may be insufficient for developing the sophisticated understanding required for senior leadership roles. The preference for what Participant #15 called a "holistic approach" rather than a "band-aid approach" aligns with recent literature calling for more comprehensive and contextualised professional development (Anderson et al., 2023).

The research suggests that future training initiatives should:

- be portfolio-specific rather than generic
- focus on practical implementation rather than just awareness
- address the complexity of institutional change management

- include guidance on meaningful community engagement
- incorporate Indigenous perspectives in development and delivery
- develop training programs that are impactful and accessible.

7.5   Building authentic community relationships

The findings emphasise the importance of developing genuine, sustained relationships with Indigenous communities. Importantly, the current academic and research systems continue to replicate colonial patterns of knowledge production and validation, creating a cycle that is difficult to break. This affects where research institutions look for "successful examples" to copy. Settler colonial states, such as Australia, look primarily to other Global North countries for methodological frameworks and epistemological foundations, leaving Global South knowledge production marginalised (Connell, 2007; Dados & Connell, 2012). This occurs on multiple levels; for example, Indigenous knowledges remain subordinated to Western paradigms, research questions reflect the dominant culture's concerns rather than the colonised communities' needs, and "good research" is defined by institutions embedded in colonial power structures and Western criteria. We want to highlight this issue because, while many successful experiences might happen worldwide, if they do not occur in the Global North, it is unlikely that Australian academia and research will consider them.

Successful initiatives highlighting the development of genuine relationships with Indigenous communities were characterised by long-term engagement and mutual benefit, supporting Wise et al.'s (2018) assertion that extended time is essential for building trust between Indigenous leaders and universities. Participant #33 highlighted the need to move beyond transactional or tokenistic engagement towards what one described as "consultation with relevant Indigenous communities" whereby "the 'need' or 'objective' that the community would value is not that of the university team". This aligns with calls in the literature for more collaborative and community-centred approaches to Indigenous engagement in higher education (see Australian Human Rights Commission, 2024; Buckskin et al., 2018). Moreover, this also relates to Shergold's (2013) call for rebuilding structures recognising greater collaboration between the public and private sectors and the community. These partnerships would benefit people's everyday lives. The positive outcomes resulting from the construction of more collaborative partnerships have been evidenced in cases such as Bolivia, where the election of an Indigenous president and the development of a series of structural changes significantly improved the lives of Bolivian citizens (see Corbetta et al., 2018; Crabtree, 2017).

7.6   Institutional change and implementation requirements

This research identified several critical requirements for sustainable institutional change. These include clear accountability measures, dedicated resources, and integrated governance structures. These findings echo recommendations from the Accelerating Indigenous Higher Education report (Buckskin et al., 2018) and suggest that successful implementation of the SLCM will require:

- strong institutional commitment demonstrated through resource allocation
- clear performance measures for senior leadership
- integration of Indigenous voices in strategic decision-making
- comprehensive support structures for staff at all levels
- ongoing professional development focused on practical implementation.

These requirements align with what Ma Rhea (2015) identified as essential elements for effective change in education: disruption of the status quo, self-reflection, engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and collective movement towards new configurations.

Regarding the support required to raise the real consciousness and help they need, senior leaders, including the VC, should embed Indigenous considerations into operational plans. The importance of external and transparent reporting should be prioritised to ensure accountability. Indigenous considerations should be part of training and recruitment processes, with practical guidance to avoid tokenism. The availability of Indigenous advisers is crucial for authentic decision-making. Finally, there is a need for better planning—instead of ticking the box or band-aid solutions—realistic timelines, and resources to support Indigenous engagement. Universities need a clear and strategic plan, continuous learning, and Indigenous priorities embedded into the university's core narrative and decision-making processes.

7.7   Implications for the Senior Leadership Capability Model

The findings have significant implications for the development and implementation of the SLCM. The model will need to:

- address the gap between strategy and implementation
- help leaders develop more accurate self-assessment of their cultural competency
- provide practical frameworks for sharing responsibilities more equitably
- include sophisticated, context-specific professional development
- support the development of authentic community relationships
- incorporate clear accountability measures.

This research suggests that while there is an institutional willingness to engage with Indigenous strategies, significant work remains to develop the leadership capabilities necessary for effective implementation. The SLCM represents an essential step in this direction, but its success will depend on careful attention to the challenges and requirements identified in this research.

7.8   Recommendations for practice

This section provides explicit guidance for higher education institutions seeking to embed the SLCM into their governance structures and strategic planning frameworks. By operationalising the SLCM, universities can foster an environment conducive to Indigenous

success and leadership, moving beyond theoretical commitment to tangible, impactful change.

1. **Policy integration**

   The principles and capabilities outlined in the SLCM should be formally integrated into existing university policies. These include, but are not limited to, policies related to leadership development, diversity and inclusion, human resources, and Indigenous engagement. Policy revisions should ensure that the SLCM's emphasis on relationality, cultural protocols, and Indigenous knowledge systems is explicitly recognised and supported across all relevant institutional operations.

2. **Strategic planning frameworks**

   The SLCM should inform and be embedded within institutional strategic plans. This involves:

   - *Mission and vision alignment*: Ensure the university's mission and vision statements reflect a commitment to Indigenous leadership and success, as defined by the SLCM.

   - *Strategic goals and objectives*: Develop specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals and objectives that directly align with the SLCM's capabilities, particularly concerning Indigenous student and staff outcomes.

   - *KPIs*: Establish KPIs that track progress on Indigenous leadership development, representation in senior roles, and the overall success of Indigenous initiatives, informed by the SLCM.

3. **Leadership development programs**

   The SLCM should serve as the foundational framework for designing and implementing professional development initiatives for UeX and senior managers. These programs should include:

   - *Curriculum development*: Incorporate modules directly addressing the SLCM's capabilities, including cultural competency, ethical engagement with Indigenous communities, and fostering culturally safe environments.

   - *Experiential learning*: Include opportunities for practical application, such as mentorship with Indigenous leaders, participation in Indigenous-led projects, and engagement with Indigenous community organisations.

   - *Assessment and evaluation*: Use assessment methods that measure the development of SLCM capabilities and their impact on leadership practice.

4. Governance structures

The SLCM can inform the composition and mandate of university governance bodies. This includes:

- *Board and committee representation*: Encourage and support the representation of Indigenous leaders on university boards, academic boards, and key committees.

- *Terms of reference*: Revise the terms of reference for relevant committees (for example, Indigenous advisory committees and equity committees) to explicitly reference the SLCM and its role in guiding their work.

- *Decision-making processes*: Integrate SLCM principles into decision-making frameworks to ensure Indigenous perspectives and rights-based approaches are central to strategic and operational choices.

5. Resource allocation

The SLCM should guide the allocation of financial and human resources to support Indigenous-led initiatives and foster an environment conducive to Indigenous leadership. This includes:

- *Dedicated funding*: Allocate specific budgets for Indigenous leadership development programs, research, and community engagement.

- *Staffing and support*: Ensure adequate staffing and support for Indigenous-focused roles and departments, recognising the cultural load often carried by Indigenous staff.

- *Infrastructure*: Invest in infrastructure that supports culturally safe spaces and Indigenous ways of working.

By implementing these recommendations, institutions can systematically integrate the SLCM, ensuring it becomes a living framework that drives meaningful and sustainable change towards Indigenous success in higher education.

8. Conclusion

This research project provides valuable insights into the development of an SLCM aimed at fostering Indigenous success in higher education through capacity building for non-Indigenous leaders. The findings reveal both progress and persistent challenges in creating meaningful change within Australian universities.

The research highlights several key conclusions:

- **Strategic implementation gaps:** While most universities seem to have established Indigenous strategies (despite not always being visible to staff), the gap between policy and practice remains. Implementation often relies on individual interpretation rather than coordinated institutional approaches, leading to isolated efforts rather than systemic change. This suggests a need for more structured guidance and collective action in executing Indigenous strategies.
- **Leadership capacity and confidence:** An interesting finding emerged regarding leadership capacity and confidence. While many participants reported limited experience in Indigenous higher education contexts, they expressed high levels of confidence in engaging with Indigenous peoples and communities. This disconnect raises important questions about the depth of cultural understanding and competency among university leaders, highlighting the need for more comprehensive professional development.
- **Cultural load and support structures:** The research revealed ongoing challenges with cultural load, whereby Indigenous staff often bear disproportionate responsibility for Indigenous initiatives—inside and outside the university. This emphasises the need for better support structures and more equitable distribution of responsibilities across both Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership.
- **Training and development needs:** While most participants had undertaken some form of cultural awareness training, there is a clear need for more sophisticated, portfolio-specific professional development. Leaders expressed desire for practical guidance in embedding Indigenous perspectives meaningfully rather than tokenistically.
- **Relationship building and community engagement:** Successful initiatives were characterised by strong relationships and genuine partnerships with Indigenous communities. The research emphasises the importance of moving beyond transactional engagement to establish lasting, meaningful collaborations that benefit both universities and Indigenous communities.
- **Institutional change requirements:** The findings indicate that sustainable change requires:
  - clear accountability measures for senior leadership
  - dedicated resources and funding
  - integration of Indigenous voices in strategic governance
  - comprehensive support structures for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff
  - ongoing professional development focused on practical implementation.

Looking forward, the development of the SLCM represents an important step towards more effective Indigenous engagement in higher education. However, its success will depend on

institutional commitment to implementation, adequate resourcing, and genuine partnership with Indigenous communities. Future research should focus on measuring the impact of these initiatives and identifying best practices for sustainable institutional change.

This research contributes to our understanding of how universities can better support Indigenous success through enhanced leadership capability. It emphasises that while progress has been made, significant work remains to create truly inclusive and equitable higher education environments that value and integrate Indigenous knowledges and perspectives.

In conclusion, this research not only presents a practical SLCM but also significantly advances the theoretical understanding of Indigenous leadership, while helping non-Indigenous leaders alleviate the *unrealistic expectations* and *cultural load* on Indigenous staff. By addressing the current dearth of comprehensive paradigms, this study positions the SLCM as a foundational contribution, actively shaping the theoretical discourse on Indigenous leadership in higher education and beyond.

9. References

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Zimmerman, M. (1999). Pequeños relatos y globalización debates sobres identidades en el mundo Hispánico [Short stories and globalisation debates on identities in the Hispanic world]. *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, *23*(3), 499–519. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27763582

10. Appendices

I. Appendix 1: Senior Leadership Capability Building modules

A. Course overview

This comprehensive professional development program is designed to complement existing Indigenous-specific training and development initiatives within universities. It provides senior leaders with additional perspectives and strategies to enhance their capabilities in advancing Indigenous education and creating sustainable institutional change. The program comprises six interconnected modules that build upon institutional knowledge while developing broader strategic understanding, practical skills, and cultural competence.

B. Program objectives

The program aims to equip senior leaders with the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to:
- lead institutional transformation in Indigenous education
- develop and maintain authentic community partnerships
- create culturally safe and inclusive learning environments
- build organisational capacity for sustainable change
- implement effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks
- drive continuous improvement in Indigenous education outcomes.

C. Development note

Each module will:
- include case studies of successful practices
- provide practical tools and frameworks
- incorporate Indigenous perspectives and voices
- connect to institutional strategic objectives
- enable measurable outcomes
- support continuous improvement.

This framework will provide senior leaders with:

- strategic oversight of Indigenous education
- practical implementation guidance
- partnership development strategies
- change management approaches
- professional development pathways
- measurable success indicators.

The focus will enable senior leaders to:

- drive institutional change
- build sustainable partnerships

- create inclusive environments
- develop organisational capability
- achieve measurable outcomes
- support continuous improvement.

II. Appendix 2: Learning approach

The program employs a blend of:
- self-directed learning through guided reflection
- practical application in institutional contexts
- case study analysis
- peer learning and discussion
- Indigenous community engagement
- action learning projects.

A. Assessment

Leaders demonstrate their learning through:
- development of strategic action plans
- implementation of institutional initiatives
- partnership-building activities
- cultural competency assessment
- reflective practice documentation
- measurable outcome achievement.

B. Program outcomes

Upon completion, leaders will have:
- enhanced confidence and agency
- practical implementation strategies
- effective partnership approaches
- change management capabilities
- performance monitoring frameworks
- professional development pathways.

C. Success indicators

Program effectiveness is measured through:
- institutional change implementation
- partnership development
- Indigenous student outcomes
- organisational capability enhancement
- cultural safety improvement
- professional growth demonstration.

This program represents a research-led approach to developing senior leadership capability in Indigenous education, designed to work alongside and enhance existing institutional

initiatives. It combines broader theoretical understanding with practical application within specific institutional contexts, ensuring leaders are better equipped to drive meaningful change in their institutions.

III. Appendix 3: Module structure

1. Module 1: Introduction to Indigenous people in higher education

This module is designed to provide context and understanding about the introduction of Indigenous people within higher education. It examines historical facts, current challenges, and opportunities for the improvement of institutional leadership. The module also explores systemic barriers perceived by leaders and develops strategic approaches to advancing Indigenous participation in higher education.

1. Content summary

While Australia's first university was established over 150 years ago, the first senior Indigenous leadership position was created only 16 years ago—in 2009 (Horne & Sherington, 2010). Senior leadership positions typically include vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, provosts, pro vice-chancellors, and deans (Coates et al., 2022). Trudgett et al. (2021) stated that, at the time of writing their paper, 39 public universities in Australia employed a total of 28 senior Indigenous scholars, which is less than one per university. The creation and promotion of grants and courses specifically designed for Indigenous research students (see Bessarab et al., 2009) suggests that the importance of Indigenous leadership has been somewhat recognised. Despite these new advancements, the results remain disappointing.

Feeling underrepresented seems to amplify feelings such as marginalisation and exclusion for Indigenous peoples (Business Queensland, 2024). To create a more inclusive tertiary education system, a greater number of Indigenous leaders should be integral to the design process. Underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples seems to convey a negative message to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and employees (Universities Australia, 2011). Hence, incorporating senior Indigenous leadership positions within institutions potentially represents a significant influence that could inspire Indigenous academics and foster Indigenous academic success (see Coates et al., 2022). *Visibility shapes possibility.*

2. Key focus areas

The key focus areas for Module 1 are:

- historical context of Indigenous higher education in Australia
- current state of Indigenous participation in higher education
- understanding systemic barriers and opportunities
- policy frameworks and strategic priorities
- leadership responsibilities in Indigenous education
- key stakeholder relationships.

3. Key learning prompts/reflective questions

This activity encourages participants to reflect on the sources of their knowledge and understanding about a specific topic or module.

a.   Activity instructions (15 minutes)

Step 1: Individual reflection (5 minutes)

Each participant is to reflect independently on the following prompt:

"How do you know what you know about including Indigenous people in higher education, and where did you learn it? There are no right or wrong answers here; we are just prompting discussion."

Students should consider:

- formal learning sources (classes, textbooks, lectures)
- informal learning sources (media, conversations, personal experiences)
- prior assumptions or beliefs they brought to the topic
- how confident they are in different aspects of their knowledge
- which sources they trust most and why.

Step 2: Small group discussion (5−7 minutes)

Divide students into groups of 3−4 and have them share their reflections. Encourage them to:

- compare different sources of knowledge
- discuss similarities and differences in their learning journeys
- identify any contradictions in their collective understanding
- consider the reliability of different information sources.

Step 3: Closing activity group discussion revisiting Step 2.

b.   Additional questions to discuss in the group
- Examine your social environment: How would you describe your family, friends, and peers, including their beliefs, attitudes, and core values?
- Examine your educational environment: How would you describe your friends, peers, and teachers, including their beliefs, attitudes, and core values?
- How do you understand inclusion? How would you define it?
- In your personal/professional experience, how have you/have you not experienced it?
- Could you think of and describe examples of inclusion?
- Why do you think that the inclusion of different groups, particularly Indigenous peoples, in education is important?

c. *Here are more reflective prompt questions to guide self-directed learning for Module 1: Introduction to Indigenous people in higher education*

Historical context

- What key historical policies and practices have shaped Indigenous education in Australia?
- How does this history continue to affect Indigenous participation in higher education today?
- What lessons can we learn from past approaches, including research into Indigenous education?
- How has the role of Indigenous leadership in education evolved over time?

Current state analysis

- What are the current statistics on Indigenous participation in my sector/institution/area/discipline?
- Where are the gaps in access, retention, and completion?
- What successful initiatives exist that are improving outcomes?
- How does my institution compare with others in supporting Indigenous education?

Systemic barriers

- What institutional barriers exist in my organisation that affect Indigenous participation?
- How do our current systems and processes help or hinder Indigenous success?
- What unconscious biases might exist within our organisational culture?
- What resources and support mechanisms are currently available or lacking?

Policy framework

- What are the key policies governing Indigenous education in my context?
- How well do I understand our institutional Indigenous education strategy?
- What targets and accountability measures are in place?
- How effectively are policies being implemented and monitored?

Leadership responsibilities

- What is my role in advancing Indigenous education?
- How am I demonstrating a commitment to Indigenous student success?
- What leadership capabilities do I need to develop?
- How can I better champion Indigenous perspectives in decision-making?

Stakeholder engagement

- Who are the key Indigenous stakeholders for my institution?
- How effective are our current engagement mechanisms?
- What relationships need to be strengthened or developed?
- How am I incorporating Indigenous voices in planning and implementation?

Personal reflection

- What assumptions or biases might I bring to this work?
- Where are the gaps in my knowledge and understanding?
- What experiences have shaped my perspective on Indigenous education?
- How can I better prepare myself to lead in this area?

Action planning

- What immediate steps can I take to improve Indigenous education outcomes in my area?
- What short-, medium-, and long-term strategies need to be developed?
- Who do I need to engage with to drive change?
- How will I measure progress and success?

These questions are designed to:

- promote deep reflection on personal and institutional practice
- identify areas for improvement and development
- guide strategic thinking and planning
- support evidence-based decision-making
- enable authentic stakeholder engagement
- drive meaningful change.

Leaders should revisit these questions regularly to:

- track progress
- identify emerging challenges
- adjust strategies as needed
- maintain focus on key priorities
- ensure continuous improvement
- demonstrate accountability.

4. Focused themes and activities

Activity 1

Research leadership case studies: Assign students different Indigenous leaders (for example, Sir Douglas Nicholls, Neville Perkins, Pat Anderson, Tanya Denning-Orman, Marcia Langton, Martin Nakata, June Oscar) and have them research their contributions, their story, their experiences, and more importantly, how they could navigate the institutionalised barriers included in Australian social system.

Activity 2

Compare and contrast: Read the following information and then analyse the three texts and identify similarities, differences, and key themes. Create a mind map, summary, concept map, or flow chart to explain your findings in a concise way.

Source 1: *By the numbers: Indigenous post-secondary education in Canada* (Colleges &
Institutes Canada, 2024).

Figure A1: Canada

By the Numbers: Indigenous Post-Secondary Education in Canada

Indigenous postsecondary education in Canada is a dynamic landscape marked by
resilience, progress, and ongoing challenges. The latest data from Statistics Canada
(StatsCan), as well as the 2021 census data, sheds light on this landscape,
emphasizing the pivotal role of colleges and institutes and the need for ongoing
efforts to ensure equitable access for these students.
Let's take a look!

Indigenous Post-Secondary Education Trends

Despite facing challenges, Indigenous Peoples have made notable strides in
education. While 16% of Indigenous peoples hold a university degree (compared to
36% of the overall population), **23% have obtained a college credential**, and **11%
have completed apprenticeships—figures that surpass those of the general
population (Statistics Canada, 2021).** Nevertheless, while the share of Indigenous
adults with a bachelor's degree or higher has increased since 2016, the gap between
Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations has widened.

Source 2: *Native American students in higher education* (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2023)

Figure A2: United States

Native American Students in Higher Education

CENSUS OVERVIEW

According to the Census' American Community Survey, in 2022, 1% of the total U.S. population identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native. Among American Indian or Alaskan Native residents aged 25 or over, only 16.8% had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. This rate is up from 13.4% in 2010, but falls short of the national rate of 35.7%.

ENROLLMENT
- In Fall 2021, Native American students made up 0.7% of all postsecondary enrollment.
- In 2021, 28% of the 18–24-year-old Native American population were enrolled in college, compared to 38% of the overall U.S. population.
- Since Fall 2010, Native American enrollment has declined from 196,000 to 121,000, a 38% decrease:
  - Undergraduate enrollment declined from 179,000 to 107,000, a 40% decrease.
  - Graduate enrollment declined from 17,000 to 14,000, a nearly 18% decrease.
- Native American students are much more likely to attend public versus private institutions of higher education.
  - In Fall 2021, 77% of Native American students attended public institutions:
    - 45% attended public four-year institutions.
    - 32% attended public two-year institutions.
- Nearly 80% of the Fall 2021 enrollment at Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU) were Native American students.

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Source 3: *Informe de Matrícula 2023: La matrícula en Educación Superior creció 3% en 2023, y suma casi 140 mil estudiantes de Pueblos Originarios* [Enrolment Report 2023: Enrolment in higher education grew by 3% in 2023, reaching nearly 140,000 students from Indigenous people] (Chilean Undersecretariat of Higher Education, 2023).

Figure A3: Chile

> **Datos inéditos sobre Pueblos Originarios**
>
> El Informe SIES por primera vez incorporó información sobre las y los estudiantes pertenecientes a Pueblos Originarios (PPOO) que están en Educación Superior. Esto nos permite saber que actualmente el sistema cuenta con 139.380 estudiantes que declaran pertenecer a una etnia, siendo la que acapara la mayor parte el pueblo mapuche (106.038), seguido del pueblo aymara (13.949) y diaguita (11.618).
>
> Al comparar con la Matrícula Total de Educación Superior, vemos que las personas pertenecientes a PPOO representan el 10,4% del total de los matriculados.

Figure A4: Translation

> The SIES Report has, for the first time, included information on students from Indigenous Peoples (PPOO) enrolled in higher education. This allows us to see that there are currently 139,380 students who identify as belonging to an Indigenous group, with the Mapuche people making up the largest portion (106,038 students), followed by the Aymara people (13,949) and the Diaguita people (11,618).
>
> When comparing this to the total enrolment in higher education, we see that Indigenous students represent 10.4% of the total enrolled population.

Source 4: Mayan universities push to expand Indigenous knowledge beyond oral tradition (Mahtani, 2024)

Figure A5: Guatemala

> In Guatemala, there are six Mayan universities: Ixil, Kaqchikel, Chorti, Poqomchi, Qeqchi, and Iniciativa Mam. All are propelled by the same basic objective: "Expanding our knowledge beyond oral tradition," says Vitalino Similox, rector of the Maya Kaqchikel University, one of the centers of higher learning that have been designed for the Indigenous community. In Guatemala, this population comprises more than 60% of the country, though it continues to be referred to as "ethnic minorities." Despite their efforts, and the fact that international regulation is on their side in recognizing their rights and worldview, none of these schools have been able to certify their degree programs. In their eyes, this has much to do with the historical racism from which their people have long suffered.

Activity 3

Read *Universities Accord: There's a push to increase Indigenous students and voices in higher education. But we need more detail and funding* (Anderson et al., 2024).[2] Discuss with your colleagues. What comments and questions arise for you as you read and reflect? This piece finishes with a *call for action.* What steps would you include to develop a call for action?

5.   Recommendations for assessment activities

Brief report

Research an Australian university with an Indigenous senior leader (for example, University of Queensland, Charles Darwin University, University of New England). Write a brief report on their leadership role, experience, achievements, and impact.

Reflection piece

Write a 300-word reflection on how Indigenous visibility in leadership affects motivation and academic success.

Visioning an inclusive future

Analyse and creatively express the idea of Indigenous inclusion as a lived reality in education, governance, and society. Examine real-world examples of Indigenous inclusion and leadership.

6.   Useful resources

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Aboriginal Corporation. (n.d.). *Implementing a whole-of-university approach to improving Indigenous access and achievement*. https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/atsiheac_whole_of_university_pa per.pdf

Anderson, P., Baeza, A., Blue, L., Saward, M., & Pham, T. (2024, 4 March). *Universities Accord: There's a push to increase Indigenous students and voices in higher education. But we need more detail and funding*. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/universities-accord-theres-a-push-to-increase-indigenous-students-and-voices-in-higher-education-but-we-need-more-detail-and-funding-224739

Anderson, P., Baeza Pena, A., Yip, S. Y., & Diamond, Z. (2023). Indigenous ways of developing leadership in education: Creating a rights-based organizational consciousness. In P. Woods, A. Roberts, M. Tian, & H. Youngs (Eds.), *Handbook on leadership in education*. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800880429.00039

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[2] https://theconversation.com/universities-accord-theres-a-push-to-increase-indigenous-students-and-voices-in-higher-education-but-we-need-more-detail-and-funding-224739

Anderson, P., Pham, T., & Tapia Parada, C. (in press). Indigenous success: Creating a senior leadership capacity model (SLCM) through capacity building. Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success.

Chilean Undersecretariat of Higher Education. (2023). *Informe de Matrícula 2023: La matrícula en Educación Superior creció 3% en 2023, y suma casi 140 mil estudiantes de Pueblos Originarios.* [Report of Enrollment 2023: Higher Education enrolment grew 3% in 2023, and totals nearly 140,000 students from Indigenous Peoples]. Chilean Ministry of Education. https://educacionsuperior.mineduc.cl/2023/07/11/informe-de-matricula-2023-la-matricula-en-educacion-superior-crecio-3-en-2023-y-suma-casi-140-mil-estudiantes-de-pueblos-originarios/

Coates, S. K., Trudgett, M., & Page, S. (2022). Ain't no mountain high enough: Perceived impact of Senior Indigenous Leadership on aspiring of Indigenous academics within Australian universities. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2022.2068186

Colleges & Institutes Canada. (2024, 17 June). *By the numbers: Indigenous post-secondary education in Canada*. https://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/by-the-numbers-indigenous-post-secondary-education-in-canada/

Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. United Nations. https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples

Mahtani, N. (2024, 15 December). Mayan universities push to expand Indigenous knowledge beyond oral tradition. *El Pais*. https://english.elpais.com/education/2024-12-15/mayan-universities-push-to-expand-indigenous-knowledge-beyond-oral-tradition.html

Postsecondary National Policy Institute. (2023). *Native American students in higher education.* https://pnpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/NativeAmericanFactSheet-Nov-2023.pdf

Trudgett, M., Page, S., & Coates, S. K. (2021). Great expectations: Senior Indigenous leadership positions in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *44*(1), 90–106. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080x.2021.2003013

Universities Australia. (2011). *National best practice framework for Indigenous cultural competency in Australian universities*. https://universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/National-Best-Practice-Framework-for-Indigenous-Cultural-Competency-in-Australian-Universities.pdf

Module 2: Indigenous cultures

Focuses on developing a deep understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems, perspectives, cultural protocols, and rights-based approaches to inclusion. Leaders learn to integrate Indigenous perspectives into governance systems and create vibrant education environments

Module 3: University–community partnerships

Examines strategies for developing authentic and sustainable partnerships with Indigenous communities. Leaders learn to implement effective consultation protocols, create collaborative decision-making processes, and measure partnership effectiveness.

Module 4: Indigenous student success

Addresses specific strategies for supporting Indigenous students within university environments. Leaders explore approaches to enhancing access, participation, and success through culturally responsive practices and comprehensive support systems.

Module 5: Building organisational capacity

Focuses on developing institutional capability for strategic change, including Indigenous employment strategies, **cultural safety frameworks**, and change management approaches. Leaders learn to establish effective accountability measures and lead organisational transformation.

Module 6: Professional skills development

Develops specific leadership capabilities required for advancing Indigenous education, including cultural competency, policy development, strategic planning, resource management, and performance monitoring.

Learning approach

The program employs a blend of:

- self-directed learning through guided reflection
- practical application in institutional contexts
- case study analysis
- peer learning and discussion
- Indigenous community engagement
- action learning projects.

Assessment

Leaders demonstrate their learning through:

- development of strategic action plans
- implementation of institutional initiatives
- partnership-building activities
- cultural competency assessment

- reflective practice documentation
- measurable outcome achievement.

Program outcomes

Upon completion, leaders will have:

- enhanced confidence and agency
- practical implementation strategies
- effective partnership approaches
- change management capabilities
- performance monitoring frameworks
- professional development pathways.

Success indicators

Program effectiveness is measured through:

- institutional change implementation
- partnership development
- Indigenous student outcomes
- organisational capability enhancement
- cultural safety improvement
- professional growth demonstration.

This program represents a research-led approach to developing senior leadership capability in Indigenous education, designed to work alongside and enhance existing institutional initiatives. It combines broader theoretical understanding with practical application within specific institutional contexts, ensuring leaders are better equipped to drive meaningful change in their institutions.

2. Module 2: Indigenous cultures

This module is designed to develop a deep understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems, perspectives, cultural protocols, and rights-based approaches to inclusion. Leaders learn to integrate Indigenous perspectives into governance systems and create vibrant education environments.

1. Content summary

Indigenous knowledge continues to be a subject of intense debate and scrutiny within the intellectual and political spheres of higher education. It has been defined as follows:

> Local and indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and Indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, rituals and spirituality. (Nakashima et al., 2017, p. 8)

Indigenous knowledges are developed over centuries; they are also cumulative, dynamic, and holistic because they adapt to different social, economic, and environmental changes. Indigenous knowledges evidence a holistic model in which everything is part of a whole instead of isolated. Importantly, Nakata (2007) contended that Indigenous perspectives are possessed by Indigenous peoples while Indigenous knowledges are negotiated and understood in partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

The study of Indigenous leadership—or Indigenous knowledges within leadership—is still overlooked within mainstream leadership research. Indigenous leadership remains underexplored within the broader field of leadership research in the Western world. Scholars have linked the limited research on Indigenous leadership to a lack of understanding of culturally appropriate methodologies for studying the topic (Bolden & Kirk, 2009). Problematically, current findings within the field include the idea that while Indigenous leaders need to possess appropriate qualifications and experience, they are also expected to maintain strong community connections (Coates et al., 2022). These expectations mismatch with what is expected within Western leadership because leadership within Western research includes mainly issues related to qualifications and experience (Foley, 2007). Moreover, systems rewarding academic achievement over community engagement may support certain types of leaderships, marginalising others. For example, senior leadership and academic roles in academia require at least a PhD, strategic planning skills, and knowledge about budgeting or management (Anderson & Diamond, 2020). These requirements favour groups with greater access to higher education. Finally, the collaborative principles and community-centred approaches of Indigenous worldviews are overlooked and disregarded.

It has been argued that the performance metrics emphasised in academic research capture only a narrow aspect of leadership. As a result, Indigenous researchers are less likely to develop equivalent track records in academic achievement and performance (Kiatkoski Kim et al., 2020). Numerical track records usually include grants, publications, and citations. It is likely that focusing on "numerical" outcomes impedes the advancement of adopting a

comprehensive leadership approach. Fostering leadership informed by Indigenous ways of being is essential for interrupting power dynamics and systemic racism within institutions. Finally, reports have highlighted the need to strengthen Indigenous leadership in Australian universities. Universities have been advised that recruitment of Indigenous academics is an organisational strategic goal instead of a moral obligation. The underrepresentation of Indigenous academics can negatively affect both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and staff (Anderson et al., 2023).

2. Key focus areas

The focus areas in Module 2 are:

- understanding the diversity of Indigenous knowledge systems
- cultural protocols for institutional engagement
- rights-based approaches to cultural inclusion
- language and communication considerations
- cultural safety in educational settings
- integration of Indigenous perspectives in governance.

3. Key learning prompts/reflective questions

This activity encourages participants to reflect on the sources of their knowledge and understanding about a specific topic or module.

Activity instructions (15 minutes)

Step 1: Individual reflection (5 minutes)

Each participant is to reflect independently on the following prompt:

"How do you know what you know about Indigenous cultures, and where did you learn it? There are no right or wrong answers here; we are just prompting discussion."

Students should consider:

- formal learning sources (classes, textbooks, lectures)
- informal learning sources (media, conversations, personal experiences)
- prior assumptions or beliefs they brought to the topic
- how confident they are in different aspects of their knowledge
- which sources they trust most and why.

Step 2: Small group discussion (5–7 minutes)

Divide students into groups of 3–4 and have them share their reflections. Encourage them to:

- compare different sources of knowledge
- discuss similarities and differences in their learning journeys
- identify any contradictions in their collective understanding
- consider the reliability of different information sources.

Step 3: Closing activity group discussion revisiting Step 2.

Additional questions to discuss in group

- Why should non-Indigenous people take the time to learn about Indigenous knowledge?
- What does it mean to be an Indigenous Australian and how do non-Indigenous Australians respectfully engage?
- Reflect on your surroundings and the people you live with. Can you identify any Indigenous knowledge that they, or you, continue to practise and pass on?
- Think about the leaders you have had in your life; how would you describe their leadership/leadership skills?
- How do the leaders you have met include/exclude Indigenous knowledges and perspectives?
- Consider establishing measurable goals (KPIs) at your university that track progress in supporting Indigenous student achievement and developing Indigenous leaders. Ensure specific people or relevant departments responsible for these goals are represented, along with clear accountabilities such as hiring the right staff and creating programs that enhance Indigenous success rates and leadership capabilities.
- How can universities ensure that teaching, embedding, and respecting Indigenous knowledges is a shared responsibility?

Here are more reflective prompt questions to guide self-directed learning for Module 2:

Understanding Indigenous knowledge systems

- What distinct Indigenous knowledge systems exist in my institutional context?
- How do Indigenous ways of knowing differ from Western academic frameworks?
- What are the key principles of Indigenous knowledge transmission?
- How can Indigenous knowledge systems be respectfully integrated into higher education?
- What are the risks of misappropriating or misrepresenting Indigenous knowledge?

Cultural protocols

- What are the local Indigenous protocols I need to understand?
- How do I ensure appropriate acknowledgement of Traditional Owners?
- What processes should be followed to engage with Indigenous communities?
- How can institutional practices better align with cultural protocols?
- What mechanisms exist for checking cultural appropriateness?

Rights-based approaches

- How well do I understand Indigenous rights in education?
- What international frameworks support Indigenous rights?
- Thinking practically, how does my institution uphold Indigenous rights?
- What policies must be developed or revised to better support rights-based approaches?
- How can we ensure Indigenous self-determination in educational decisions?

Language and communication

- What is/are the Indigenous languages group/s that your institution belongs to?
- How can we better support Indigenous language revitalisation and preservation?
- What communication styles are culturally appropriate?
- How can we make institutional communications more inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community?
- What translation or interpretation services should be available?

Cultural safety

- What makes an educational environment culturally safe?
- How do we assess cultural safety in our institution?
- What measures can be implemented to enhance cultural safety?
- How do we respond to cultural safety breaches?
- What training is needed to build cultural safety awareness?

Integration of Indigenous people, knowledges and perspectives

- How are Indigenous peoples, knowledges, and perspectives currently represented in governance?
- What mechanisms exist for meaningful Indigenous input into decision-making?
- How can Indigenous leadership be strengthened?
- What structural changes would support better integration?
- How do we measure effective integration?

Personal development

- What is my current level of understanding in terms of my role and Indigenous inclusion?
- How can I deepen my understanding of Indigenous cultures?
- What personal biases might affect my leadership in this area?
- How do I model cultural respect and inclusion?
- What learning opportunities should I pursue?

Implementation planning

- What immediate changes can be made to improve Indigenous inclusion?
- What resources are needed to support these initiatives?
- Who needs to be involved in cultural change processes?
- How will success be measured?
- What accountability measures should be in place?

These questions aim to:

- deepen understanding
- guide policy development
- inform practice improvement
- support authentic engagement

- enable meaningful change
- ensure cultural safety.

Leaders should consider:

- regular cultural competency assessment
- ongoing community consultation
- continuous policy review
- resource allocation
- progress monitoring
- impact evaluation.

4. Focused themes and activities

Activity 1

Watch the TEDx video *The case to recognise Indigenous knowledge as science | Albert Wiggan*[3] and think about the following:

- What are the key points of the video?
- How would you describe Albert's experience?
- What do you think about recognising Indigenous knowledge as science—or is it science?
- How do Western societies benefit from Indigenous knowledges?
- How are Indigenous and Western knowledges similar/different?

Activity 2

Reflect and discuss the following idea:

"**I know an Elder once said that you can look at Indigenous leadership as standing in the middle of a circle, and leading that circle, and everyone is at the same height as you lead forward.**"[4]

Reflect and discuss in groups the following issues:

- What leadership means to you and how this concept shifts traditional leadership models?
- What examples of leadership have you experienced where everyone was treated as equals? Compare this to hierarchical leadership styles. Which one do you think is better, if any? Why?

Activity 3

Compare and contrast the following ads. Both pieces are about a university looking for a lecturer within the field of education. Figure A6 looks for a **Lecturer in Indigenous Knowledges – Language & Culture Education** in an Australian university. Figure A7 looks

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[3] https://youtu.be/X5QON5l6zy8
[4] See *Canada History Week 2021 – Indigenous leadership*. https://youtu.be/zLH4iWSBbmY

for a **Lecturer**. Both figures are taken from SEEK Australia.[5] The title did not include anything else. Please think about and discuss the following:

- Requirements for the different jobs. For example: Do both ads require a PhD, or does one allow for professional experience in place of academic qualifications? How do the job descriptions define "experience"? Is working collaboratively required in both of them? Is it more important in one of the job descriptions?
- Length of the ad.
- What would you identify as similarities and differences?
- Discuss what you would have included/excluded in these two job descriptions to better align with a more holistic approach. Write your own improved position description.

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[5] https://www.seek.com.au/indigenous-academic-jobs?jobId=83780159&type=standard

Figure A6: Job ad for "Lecturer in Indigenous Knowledges – Language & Culture Education"

About You

To be successful, you will require:

- A Higher Degree by Research or coursework Master in a relevant discipline and/or relevant professional experience in the fields of Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Education or ability to enroll in Research or Masters coursework.

- Demonstrated knowledge of current Indigenous social, cultural, political, and economic issues, particularly about Indigenous education and the application of this knowledge in current contexts locally, nationally, and internationally.

- Demonstrated capacity to work collaboratively and independently to sustain high-level performance, prioritisation, and work under pressure.

- Have an emerging research profile of publications/research projects or progress towards a research plan.

- Demonstrated capacity and commitment to undertake research related to Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Education.

- Strong interpersonal and communication skills with a demonstrated understanding of a university learning environment and equity programs and providing supportive education to people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and varying age groups.

- Demonstrated high-level competencies and proven ability to teach specialisations in relation to Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Education; and the ability to manage unit (subject) teaching in internal and distance education modes, including through online platforms.

- Demonstrated knowledge and application of current digital literacies development and practices in education. The ability to represent the University at a range of forums and to liaise, communicate, negotiate, and collaborate with clients, stakeholders, and partners to deliver a valued service and achieve agreed outcomes.

- Demonstrated capability to develop curriculum using the Australian Qualifications Framework and create 21st-century learning experiences for higher education students.

- Excellent professional teamwork and communication skills, including oral, written, information communication technology (ICT), and interpersonal skills.

- Demonstrated experience working with First Nations Language and Culture Education in the NT.

Figure A7: Job ad for "Lecturer"

To be successful, you'll have:

- PhD in psychology and/or other relevant qualifications and experience.

- Excellent record of scholarly learning and teaching in undergraduate health psychology or psychopathology programs, including innovative curriculum design and experience in both face-to-face and online teaching.

- Emerging reputation in research and scholarship through publications and/or success in obtaining external research funding.

- Ability to contribute to communities through research.

- Capacity to contribute to leadership of research and administration.

- Excellent interpersonal skills and a proven ability to establish good working relationships with colleagues.

5. Recommendations for assessment activities

- **Research:** Explore and analyse the demographics of three Australian universities. Look for information about which are the most common Indigenous appointments within these institutions (for example, professional roles, academic roles, and teaching roles). Then find information about the units that have Indigenous leaders—if they have one.
- **Comparative essay:** Conduct research on Indigenous leadership and mainstream leadership. Compare the principles of Indigenous leadership with mainstream governance models, analysing their similarities and differences. Then, write an essay explaining both leadership approaches, discussing their advantages and disadvantages.
- **Debate:** The group is divided into two smaller teams, each taking a position on the importance of Indigenous knowledge in governance. One team argues in favour, while the other presents opposing viewpoints. Participants contribute ideas to support their assigned perspective, fostering a balanced and thought-provoking discussion.

6. Useful resources

Anderson, P., Baeza Pena, A., Yip, S. Y., & Diamond, Z. (2023). Indigenous ways of developing leadership in education: Creating a rights-based organizational consciousness. In P. Woods, A. Roberts, M. Tian, & H. Youngs (Eds.), *Handbook on leadership in education*. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800880429.00039

Anderson, P., Maeda, K., Diamond, Z. M., & Sato, C. (2021). *Post-imperial perspectives on Indigenous education: Lessons from Japan and Australia.* Routledge.

Nakashima, D., Rubis, J., Bates, P., & Avila, B. (2017). *Links: Local knowledge, global goals.* United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259599

Nakata, M. (2007). "The Cultural Interface". *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 36, 7-14.

Wigan, A. (2019, 16 July). *The case to recognise Indigenous knowledge as science | bert Wiggan | TEDxSydney* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/X5QON5l6zy8

3. Module 3: University–community partnerships

This module is designed to examine strategies for the development of authentic and sustainable partnerships with Indigenous communities. Leaders learn to implement effective consultation protocols, create collaborative decision-making processes, and measure partnership effectiveness.

1. Content summary

Fostering collaboration between universities and communities has been highlighted multiple times in research (Povey et al., 2021; Russell et al., 2022; Wise et al., 2018). Anderson et al. (in press) reported that the majority of senior leaders within Australian universities were not very experienced working with Indigenous higher education. Their experience was either moderate, limited, or none when it came to leading projects within Indigenous contexts. This finding was evidence of a disconnection between experience and confidence in Indigenous engagement among university leader participants (see Anderson et al., 2025). Therefore, three challenges need to be addressed (Anderson et al., in press; Wise et al., 2018):

> (1) University researchers should acknowledge that Indigenous communities can actively contribute to research initiatives, bringing valuable perspectives and expertise.

> (2) Indigenous peoples should confidently express themselves within academic institutions, ensuring their perspectives are recognised and valued.

> (3) Indigenous peoples should be acknowledged as active collaborators with agency (Wise et al., 2018).

Building strong collaborations may involve structuring meetings around well-defined, practical developmental activities. Clearly outlined actions and activities can contribute to preventing pointless discussions that lack immediate impact. Additionally, establishing collaborative relationships requires a significant amount of time, during which it is crucial to foster trust and mutual respect between Indigenous leaders and universities.

2. Key focus areas

The focus areas in Module 3 are:

- developing authentic community engagement strategies
- building sustainable partnership frameworks
- implementing consultation protocols
- creating collaborative decision-making processes
- managing stakeholder relationships
- measuring partnership effectiveness.

3. Key learning prompts/reflective questions

This activity encourages participants to reflect on the sources of their knowledge and understanding about a specific topic or module.

Activity instructions (15 minutes)

Step 1: Individual reflection (5 minutes)

Each participant is to reflect independently on the following prompt:

"How do you know what you know about university–community partnerships, and where did you learn it? There are no right or wrong answers here; we are just prompting discussion."

Students should consider:

- formal learning sources (classes, textbooks, lectures)
- informal learning sources (media, conversations, personal experiences)
- prior assumptions or beliefs they brought to the topic
- how confident they are in different aspects of their knowledge
- which sources they trust most and why.

Step 2: Small group discussion (5–7 minutes)

Divide students into groups of 3–4 and have them share their reflections. Encourage them to:

- compare different sources of knowledge
- discuss similarities and differences in their learning journeys
- identify any contradictions in their collective understanding
- consider the reliability of different information sources.

Step 3: Closing activity—group discussion revisiting Step 2

Additional questions to discuss in group

- What are some key differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on education, leadership, and community engagement?
- What would you like to ask an Elder about their culture, history, and experience?
- What can you do to maintain Indigenous and traditional lifeways?
- At your school or university, have you seen any initiative including university and communities? How would you describe them?
- According to Anderson et al. (in press), many senior leaders in Australian universities have limited experience working with Indigenous higher education. How might this lack of experience affect their ability to lead projects within Indigenous contexts?
- What strategies can universities employ to build authentic and sustainable partnerships with Indigenous communities?
- How can universities ensure that Indigenous voices are meaningfully included in decision-making processes?
- What are some practical steps that universities can take to improve their consultation protocols with Indigenous communities?
- How can universities create a supportive environment that encourages collaboration and mutual respect between academic and Indigenous community members?

Here are reflective prompt questions to guide self-directed learning for Module 3:

Community engagement strategy

- Who are the key Indigenous communities we need to engage with?
- What existing relationships do we have with Indigenous communities?
- How do we ensure engagement is meaningful rather than tokenistic?
- What barriers exist to effective community engagement?
- How can we build trust with Indigenous communities?
- What resources are needed for sustainable engagement?

Partnership development

- What does a successful university–Indigenous community partnership look like?
- How do we ensure partnerships are mutually beneficial?
- What formal agreements need to be in place?
- How do we maintain long-term partnership momentum?
- What governance structures support effective partnerships?
- How can we ensure an equal voice in partnerships?

Consultation protocols

- What are the appropriate protocols for consulting with local Indigenous communities?
- How do we respect cultural protocols in consultation processes?
- What time frames are appropriate for meaningful consultation?
- Who needs to be involved in consultation processes?
- How do we document and act on consultation outcomes?
- What feedback mechanisms should be in place?

Decision-making processes

- How can we ensure Indigenous voices in institutional decision-making?
- What collaborative decision-making models work best?
- How do we balance institutional and community priorities?
- What authority and autonomy should partnerships have?
- How do we resolve conflicts or disagreements?
- What accountability measures should be in place?

Stakeholder management

- Who are all the stakeholders in university–community partnerships?
- How do we manage competing stakeholder interests?
- What communication channels work best?
- How do we maintain stakeholder engagement?
- What roles and responsibilities need to be defined?
- How do we manage stakeholder expectations?

Measuring effectiveness

- What does partnership success look like?
- How do we measure partnership outcomes?
- What indicators demonstrate effective engagement?
- How do we evaluate partnership impact?
- What reporting mechanisms should be in place?
- How do we ensure continuous improvement?

Risk management

- What are the potential risks in community partnerships?
- How do we protect cultural intellectual property?
- What protocols exist for data sovereignty?
- How do we manage reputational risks?
- What conflict resolution processes should be in place?
- How do we ensure ethical engagement?

Resource considerations

- What resources are needed for effective partnerships?
- How do we ensure sustainable funding?
- What staff capabilities are required?
- How do we build institutional capacity?
- What infrastructure supports partnerships?
- How do we allocate resources fairly?

Implementation planning

- What immediate steps can we take to improve partnerships?
- What longer-term strategies need to be developed?
- Who needs to be involved in implementation?
- How will progress be monitored?
- What review processes should be in place?
- How do we ensure continuous improvement?

Cultural considerations

- How do we ensure reciprocity in partnerships?
- What cultural protocols need to be respected?
- How do we incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems?
- What cultural training is needed?
- How do we prevent cultural appropriation?
- What mechanisms protect cultural integrity?

These questions support:

- strategic partnership development
- authentic community engagement

- sustainable relationship building
- effective governance
- measurable outcomes
- continuous improvement.

Leaders should focus on:

- building trust
- ensuring reciprocity
- maintaining momentum
- managing risks
- measuring impact
- supporting sustainability.

4. Focused themes and activities

Activity 1

Case study analysis: Examine the real-world example of a successful university–community partnership in "*It always comes down to relationships": How partnerships with Indigenous communities lead to better science* (Rogers, 2024). Identify key ideas, key strategies, and challenges, and write a summary that could be used to design your own initiative.

Activity 2

Storytelling project: Create stories (written, videos, podcasts) that highlight the positives of successful partnerships between universities and Indigenous communities. Show these creations to your peers and discuss the importance of authentic partnerships.

Activity 3

Impact assessment project: In groups, select a community engagement project that your educational institution is currently involved in. Collect as much data as you can from written documents, interviews, and site visits. Explore and evaluate the project's design, organisation, community engagement, impact, alignment with Indigenous ways of being, and sustainability. Compile your analysis and findings and write a report.

Recommendations for assessment activities

- **Design your own initiative**: Design an initiative that fosters collaboration between universities and Indigenous communities, with a focus on building strong relationships, integrating diverse knowledge systems, and ensuring community leadership. Address historical mistrust and provide training to bridge experience gaps among university leaders. Implement culturally sensitive protocols and commit to long-term partnership sustainability.
- **Research and presentation**: Research a specific example of Indigenous partnerships—with positive or negative results. Create a set of questions for understanding. Present findings to the class. Ask them the questions you designed.
- **Reflective essay**: Write a reflective essay (2–3 pages) on your personal learning experience throughout the project. Discuss what you learned about community

engagement, the challenges that might be faced, who the potential allies are, what the main purpose of developing collaborative partnerships is, and how these factors have influenced your perspective on partnerships with Indigenous communities. Include deep reflections and personal insights.

5. Useful resources

Anderson, P., & Diamond, Z. (2020). Stabilising and sustaining Indigenous leadership in Australian universities. In P. Anderson, K. Maeda, Z. M. Diamond, & C. Sato (Eds.), *Post-Imperial perspectives on Indigenous education: Lessons from Japan and Australia* (pp. 186–208). Routledge.

Anderson, P., Pham, T., & Tapia Parada, C. (in press). *Indigenous success: Creating a senior leadership capacity model (SLCM) through capacity building*. Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success.

Anderson, P., Tapia Parada, C., & Pham, T. (2025). The confidence-competence paradox: Examining leadership capability in indigenous higher education contexts. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education.* [Manuscript].

Bolden, R., & Kirk, P. (2009). *African leadership: Surfacing new understandings through leadership development*. Leadership, 5 (3), 285-302. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595808101156

Buckskin, P., Tranthim-Fryer, M., Holt, L., Gili, J., Heath, J., Smith, D., Larkin, S., Ireland, S., MacGibbon, L., Robertson, K., Small, T., Butler, K., Chatfield, T., Anderson, P., & Ma Rhea, Z. (2018). *NATSIHEC Accelerating Indigenous Higher Education consultation paper*. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium, Australia. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/215558/1/NATSIHEC_%2BAIHE_FinaL_%2BReport%2BJan%2B2018_updated_031218.pdf

Coates, S. K., Trudgett, M., & Page, S. (2022). *Great expectations: Senior Indigenous leadership positions in higher education*. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 44(1), 90-106. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2021.2003013

Foley, D. (2007). *Leadership: The quandary of Aboriginal societies in crises, 1788-1830, and 1966*. In I. M. A. M. Hanna & M. Macfarlane (Eds.), *Transgressions: Critical Australian Indigenous histories* (Vol. 1, pp. 177-192). Australian National University.

Kiatkoski Kim, M., Watkin Lui, F., Ah Mat, L., Cadet-James, Y., Bainbridge, R., & McCalman, J. (2020). Indigenous leadership in research in Australia. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *43*(4), 353–368. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080x.2020.1843220

Ma Rhea, Z. (2015). *Leading and managing Indigenous education in the postcolonial world*. Routledge.

Povey, R., Trudgett, M., Page, S., & Coates, S. K. (2021). On the front foot: Indigenous leadership in Aotearoa/New Zealand higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *41*(6), 2048–2063. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1969542

Rogers, K. (2024, 22 March). *"It always comes down to relationships": How partnerships with Indigenous communities lead to better science*. McMaster University.

https://science.mcmaster.ca/it-always-comes-down-to-relationships-how-partnerships-with-indigenous-communities-lead-to-better-science/

Russell, J., Beth, M., Wadsworth, D., George, S., Wheeler, W., & Barkhoff, H. (2022). Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion—Utilizing student voices during strategic decision-making processes. *Kinesiology Review*, *11*(4), 297–302. https://doi.org/10.1123/kr.2022-0018

Wise, G., Dickinson, C., Katan, T., & Gallegos, M. C. (2018). Inclusive higher education governance: Managing stakeholders, strategy, structure and function. *Studies in Higher Education*, *45*(2), 339–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1525698

4. Module 4: Indigenous student success

This module is designed to examine strategies to support Indigenous students within university environments. Leaders explore approaches to enhancing access, participation, and success through culturally responsive practices and comprehensive support systems.

1. Content summary

Enrolment of Indigenous students in Australia has increased over the past decade (Universities Australia, 2020). Yet, retention, success, and completion rates for this cohort of students remain low. In their analysis of the Universities Accord 2024, Anderson et al. (2024) claimed that a key recommendation was to raise Indigenous participation at university. The idea is that the university's population reflects the demographic composition of Australian society—Indigenous Australians comprise 3.7% of Australian society, yet they make up 1.5% of university completions. Another key idea that the report advocates is for an increased presence of Indigenous individuals in leadership and governance roles within universities. However, if Indigenous people do not receive adequate support, they are unlikely to succeed through university.

Anderson et al. (2022) explored some of the problems affecting Indigenous students when going through university: social isolation, lack of confidence in academic abilities, insufficient support at university (including lack of a culturally competent workforce and limited Indigenous staff), and financial hardship. The lack of Indigenous staff directly affects the results of Indigenous students because leaders and staff are not familiarised enough with the constraints Indigenous people experience throughout their education experiences (Anderson et al., 2022). Academics who can effectively engage with Indigenous students while acknowledging their social, emotional, and learning needs are essential in supporting their perseverance and success (Diversity Council Australia, 2022). Because Indigenous students rely heavily on university support, if there is no available support, they are unlikely to succeed as students or workers. Finally, Anderson et al. (2022) emphasised that the absence of a culturally competent workforce is a significant concern. They contend that such a workforce is essential for effectively delivering Indigenous-related content, knowledge, and perspectives.

2. Key focus areas

The focus areas in Module 4 are:

- understanding barriers to access and retention
- developing responsive student-centred support systems
- creating inclusive learning environments
- implementing targeted recruitment strategies
- supporting transition pathways
- measuring student success indicators.

3. Key learning prompts/reflective questions

This activity encourages participants to reflect on the sources of their knowledge and understanding about a specific topic or module.

Activity instructions (15 minutes)

Step 1: Individual reflection (5 minutes)

Each participant is to reflect independently on the following prompt:

"How do you know what you know about Indigenous student success and where did you learn it? There are no right or wrong answers here; we are just prompting discussion."

Students should consider

- formal learning sources (classes, textbooks, lectures)
- informal learning sources (media, conversations, personal experiences)
- prior assumptions or beliefs they brought to the topic
- how confident they are in different aspects of their knowledge
- which sources they trust most and why.

Step 2: Small group discussion (5–7 minutes)

Divide students into groups of 3–4 and have them share their reflections. Encourage them to:

- compare different sources of knowledge
- discuss similarities and differences in their learning journeys
- identify any contradictions in their collective understanding
- consider the reliability of different information sources.

Step 3: Closing activity group discussion revisiting Step 2

Additional questions to discuss in group

- What factors contribute to the success of Indigenous students?
- Why is increasing Indigenous participation at university considered a key recommendation?
- What role does leadership and governance play in improving university experiences for Indigenous students?
- How does the lack of a culturally competent workforce affect Indigenous students' education?
- From your experience, could you add to the list more challenges Indigenous students face while attending university?
- Why do you think that social isolation is a significant issue for Indigenous students? Do you think non-Indigenous students experience a similar problem? Why?
- How does insufficient support from universities affect Indigenous students?
- In what ways can academics better support Indigenous students to ensure their success?
- Why would financial hardship affect the educational experience of Indigenous students more significantly?
- Why do you think it is important for university populations to reflect the demographic composition of societies?
- How could universities address the barriers Indigenous students face in higher education?

Here are reflective prompt questions to guide self-directed learning for Module 4:

Understanding access and participation

- What are our current Indigenous student enrolment statistics and trends?
- At what points in their university journey do Indigenous students disengage?
- What specific barriers exist within our university structures?
- How well are our existing support mechanisms working?
- What additional data do we need to understand our Indigenous students' experiences better?
- How can we improve our tracking and monitoring systems?

Cultural safety and inclusion

- How culturally safe is our university environment?
- What aspects of our university make Indigenous students feel welcome or unwelcome?
- How effectively do we incorporate Indigenous perspectives across our faculties?
- Do our support services meet student needs?
- What processes do we have for addressing cultural safety concerns?
- What cultural competency training do our staff need?

Support systems

- What academic support do our Indigenous students most need?
- How effective are our university's mentoring programs?
- Is our financial support meeting Indigenous students' needs?
- How well do our wellbeing services support Indigenous students?
- What connections exist between our university and local Indigenous communities?
- How quickly can we identify and assist Indigenous students facing challenges?

Teaching and learning

- How responsive is our university's teaching approach to the inclusion of Indigenous content?
- Do our assessment methods accommodate Indigenous knowledges, perspectives, content, or ways of learning?
- How well do our teaching staff understand Indigenous learning and learners?
- How well do our teaching staff understand non-Indigenous learners' experiences of learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, lifeways, and cultures?
- What changes to our curriculum would better support Indigenous students?
- How can we better integrate Indigenous knowledges across disciplines?
- What additional teaching resources do our staff need?

Student experience

- What do our Indigenous students say about their university experience?
- How do we gather feedback from Indigenous students?
- How does our university celebrate Indigenous achievement?

- What leadership opportunities do we provide for Indigenous students?
- How strong is our Indigenous student community?
- What university activities specifically support Indigenous engagement?

Implementation planning

- What immediate changes can we make in our university?
- What longer-term strategies should we develop?
- Who needs to be involved in implementing changes?
- How will we monitor progress?
- What review processes should we put in place?
- How will we ensure continuous improvement?

These questions encourage:

- university-specific solutions
- institutional responsibility
- local context consideration
- practical implementation
- measurable outcomes
- sustainable change.

Leaders should focus on:

- understanding their specific university context
- identifying institutional barriers
- developing targeted solutions
- building internal capacity
- measuring university-specific outcomes
- creating sustainable change within their institution.

4. Focused themes and activities

Activity 1

Video and reflection: Watch the video entitled *Unpacking the Indigenous student experience*[6] by Matthew Provost in the Canadian system of education. After watching the video, write a reflection piece considering the following:

- How would you describe Matthew's experience at university? How is it comparable to that of a non-Indigenous student?
- How has colonialism shaped the challenges faced by Indigenous students at university?
- How does advocacy for Indigenous students contribute to systemic change within universities?
- What role do universities play in supporting Indigenous students beyond academic success?

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[6] https://youtu.be/2JmAlnEo27A

- How can non-Indigenous students and faculty contribute to a more inclusive and supportive environment?
- What lessons can be learned from Matthew Provost's experience?

Activity 2

Action plan development: In groups, design a university-wide intervention plan to enhance and support Indigenous students' success. Explore different areas, such as academic support, cultural inclusion, financial assistance, and cultural assistance. Orally present the proposed plan and receive (and give) feedback to your peers.

Activity 3

Document analysis: Search for the official policies of your current university related to Indigenous students, and identify the key ideas included in the documents. Look for the gaps and recommend improvements to better support Indigenous students' access, inclusion, and participation at university.

Recommendations for assessment activities

- **Develop a comprehensive intervention plan:** Address the barriers that Indigenous students face in higher education, ensuring increased retention, academic success, and completion rates in your plan. To do so, you will need to provide an overview and contextualise the current challenges Indigenous students face in Australian universities. Then, please provide intervention strategies supported by a strong rationale. Later, describe the implementation plan and identify some evaluation strategies. Finally, provide a conclusion to your intervention. What is expected?
- **Annotated bibliography:** Create an annotated bibliography that provides summaries and evaluations of sources relevant to Indigenous students' experiences in Australian tertiary education. Each annotation should include a summary, evaluation, and relevance. Some examples are provided in the list of useful resources for this module.
- **Informative pamphlet:** Create an informative pamphlet or infographic highlighting the various forms of support available to Indigenous students from universities and government programs. The goal is to provide clear, accessible information to help Indigenous students navigate available resources. Remember to research, tailor language for students, and make the pamphlet visually attractive. Include university support such as Indigenous student support centres, academic tutoring and mentoring programs, and cultural support initiatives. Remember to include scholarships and financial support from the different bodies.

5. Useful resources

Anderson, P., Baeza, A., Blue, L., Saward, M., & Pham, T. (2024, 4 March). *Universities Accord: There's a push to increase Indigenous students and voices in higher education. But we need more detail and funding*. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/universities-accord-theres-a-push-to-increase-indigenous-students-and-voices-in-higher-education-but-we-need-more-detail-and-funding-224739

Anderson, P., Yip, S. Y., & Diamond, Z. (2022). Universities Australia 2017–2020 Indigenous Strategy: A meta-synthesis of the issues and challenges. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *42*(4), 785–800. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2123899

Benton, M., Hearn, S., & Marmolejo-Ramos, F. (2021). Indigenous students' experience and engagement with support at university: A mixed-method study. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, *50*(2), 256–264. https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2021.1

Diversity Council Australia. (2022). *Racism at work: How organisations can stand up to and end workplace racism*. https://www.dca.org.au/research/racism-at-work

Gibbs, J., Paradies, Y., Gee, G., & Haslam, N. (2022). The effects of Aboriginal tertiary students' perceived experiences of racism and of cultural resilience on educational engagement. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, *51*(2). https://doi.org/10.55146/ajie.v51i2.27

Gore, J., Patfield, S., Fray, L., Holmes, K., Gruppetta, M., Lloyd, A., Smith, M., & Heath, T. (2017). The participation of Australian Indigenous students in higher education: A scoping review of empirical research, 2000–2016. *The Australian Education Researcher*, *44*, 323–355. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-017-0236-9

Hill, B., Nilson, C., Uink, B., & Fetherston, C. (2023). Transformation at the cultural interface: Exploring the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, *52*(2). https://doi.org/10.55146/ajie.v52i2.656

Universities Australia. (2020). *Indigenous strategy annual report*. https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Indigenous-strategy-second-annual-report.pdf.

5. Module 5: Building organisational capacity

This module focuses on developing institutional capability for strategic change, including Indigenous employment strategies, cultural safety frameworks, and change management approaches. Leaders learn to establish effective accountability measures and lead organisational transformation.

1. Content summary

As argued by Anderson et al. (in press) and Anderson et al. (2022), there is a disconnection between institutional Indigenous strategies and their practical implementation. Despite extensive policy efforts over the years, meaningful and lasting Indigenous participation in higher education has evidenced little progress. Problematically, this disconnection produces the struggles educational leaders experience in transforming ideological frameworks into actionable policies (Ma Rhea, 2015). Moreover, institutions end up relying on individual interpretation and implementation, which might be seen as isolated or tokenistic (Anderson et al., in press).

Universities need strong leadership in education that integrates different disciplines as well as the administration and change management to do more than just prepare students for a future – they must also serve the public effectively (Anderson & Diamond, 2020). Importantly, to build organisational capacity, the lack of confidence that is often generalised within teams in regard to the Indigenous agenda needs to be approached. Staff might have high commitment, yet they often fear being offensive and furthering systemic racism (Anderson et al., 2023). Therefore, educational training is crucial to build on principles of respectful engagement.

It is important to highlight that while often people think that building institutional change that supports Indigenous peoples' cultural safety and inclusion should be done by Indigenous peoples, institutional change should be all staff's responsibility (see Anderson et al., in press). Currently, Indigenous staff are expected to lead institutional change, which negatively affects their wellbeing. Indigenous academics navigate a wide range of responsibilities, balancing teaching, research, student mentorship, and leadership roles within their institutions (Trudgett et al., 2021). The extra workload that is expected from Indigenous workers has been often referred to as cultural load. However, this term has been reframed to two terms: cultural responsibility and colonial load (Weenthunga Health Network, 2023); reframing cultural load shifts the responsibility to the colonial project. Culture is a strength that keeps communities together so it should not be a "load". Moreover, Indigenous peoples should not be responsible for the colonial project; instead, settlers should be responsible. The colonial load refers to the burdens placed on Indigenous peoples by settlers and institutions, including biases, expectations, and entitlement. This pressure can lead to harm, burnout, and difficulties in maintaining cultural responsibilities. Specific challenges include tokenism, expectations to educate others, questioning of identity, negative narratives about Indigenous communities, and unpaid labour. Colonial education policies contribute to perpetuating these harmful practices (Anderson et al., in press; Anderson et al., 2024).

2. Key focus areas

The focus areas in Module 5 are:

- developing Indigenous employment strategies
- creating culturally safe workplaces
- implementing institutional change management
- building cross-cultural competence
- establishing accountability frameworks
- leading organisational transformation.

3. Key learning prompts/reflective questions

This activity encourages participants to reflect on the sources of their knowledge and understanding about a specific topic or module.

Activity instructions (15 minutes)

Step 1: Individual reflection (5 minutes)

Each participant is to reflect independently on the following prompt:

"How do you know what you know about building organisational capacity, and where did you learn it? There are no right or wrong answers here; we are just prompting discussion."

Students should consider:

- formal learning sources (classes, textbooks, lectures)
- informal learning sources (media, conversations, personal experiences)
- prior assumptions or beliefs they brought to the topic
- how confident they are in different aspects of their knowledge
- which sources they trust most and why.

Step 2: Small group discussion (5–7 minutes)

Divide students into groups of 3–4 and have them share their reflections. Encourage them to:

- compare different sources of knowledge
- discuss similarities and differences in their learning journeys
- identify any contradictions in their collective understanding
- consider the reliability of different information sources.

Step 3: Closing activity group discussion revisiting Step 2

Additional questions to discuss in group

- How can an organisation be more socially inclusive?
- Should universities incline for an Indigenous-focused cultural competency framework or adopt a more comprehensive approach to social inclusion and diversity in their strategic planning?
- Considering your position in the organisation: What would you do to move towards a focused change?

- How can universities ensure that Indigenous employment strategies are effectively implemented and sustained?
- What barriers might exist within the institutions to develop strategic change? How could you address them?
- How can leaders foster an inclusive culture of continuous improvement for the benefit of all people, especially Indigenous groups, at university?
- What role does Indigenous leadership play in shaping university employment strategies? Why is it important for them to play a role?
- How can universities create environments that prioritise cultural safety for Indigenous staff and students?
- What challenges do universities face in implementing cultural safety frameworks, and how can they overcome them?

Here are reflective prompt questions to guide self-directed learning for Module 5:

Strategic change leadership

- What is our current organisation's readiness for Indigenous-focused change?
- How effectively does our leadership team champion Indigenous initiatives?
- What resistance might we encounter, and how will we address it?
- How do we ensure sustained commitment to change?
- What governance structures support Indigenous-led transformation?
- How do we align Indigenous strategies with broader organisational goals?

Indigenous employment

- What is our current Indigenous employment profile?
- How effective are our Indigenous recruitment strategies?
- What barriers exist to Indigenous career progression?
- How do we create meaningful career pathways?
- What retention strategies are working/not working?
- How do we measure employment strategy success?

Cultural safety development

- How do we assess cultural safety across our organisation?
- What makes our workplace culturally unsafe?
- How do we embed cultural safety in policies and procedures?
- What training do staff need?
- How do we respond to cultural safety breaches?
- What accountability measures should be in place?

Change management

- What change management framework best suits our context?
- How do we communicate change effectively?
- Who are our change champions?
- What resources are needed to support change?
- How do we maintain momentum?

- What measures indicate successful change?

Cross-cultural competence

- What is our current organisation's cultural competence?
- How do we build cultural capability systematically?
- What professional development is needed?
- How do we assess cultural competence improvement?
- What standards should we set?
- How do we ensure continuous development?

Accountability frameworks

- What accountability measures currently exist?
- How do we track progress against targets?
- What reporting mechanisms are needed?
- How do we ensure transparency?
- Who is responsible for outcomes?
- How do we address underperformance?

Resource allocation

- What resources are needed for effective change?
- How do we ensure sustainable funding?
- What infrastructure supports are required?
- How do we build internal capability?
- What external expertise is needed?
- How do we measure return on investment?

Risk management

- What are the key risks in organisational change?
- How do we mitigate identified risks?
- What contingency plans should be in place?
- How do we manage stakeholder expectations?
- What crisis management processes exist?
- How do we ensure ethical practice?

Implementation planning

- What immediate actions can we take?
- What longer-term strategies need development?
- Who needs to be involved?
- How will we measure progress?
- What review processes should be in place?
- How do we ensure continuous improvement?

Stakeholder engagement

- Who are our key stakeholders in organisational change?
- How do we maintain effective communication?
- What consultation processes work best?
- How do we manage competing interests?
- What feedback mechanisms exist?
- How do we ensure meaningful engagement?

These questions support:

- strategic alignment
- sustainable change
- cultural transformation
- organisational development
- measurable outcomes
- continuous improvement.

Leaders should focus on:

- building commitment
- managing change
- developing capability
- ensuring accountability
- measuring impact
- sustaining transformation.

The emphasis should be on:

- systematic change
- cultural safety
- capability development
- strategic alignment
- measurable outcomes
- sustainable transformation.

4. Focused themes and activities

Activity 1

Text analysis: Read the *NATSIHEC Accelerating Indigenous Higher Education consultation paper* (Buckskin et al., 2018). Summarise, reflect, and select the different recommendations that make sense for developing institutional capability for strategic change. Why do they make sense? What would you further do with them?

Activity 2

Research a case study: Look for a real-world case study of universities around the world that have succeeded (or partially succeeded) in implementing Indigenous-focused policies.

You need to analyse the challenges, opportunities, and successes of the case. Write a short summary/bullet points including recommendations to improve institutional capability and accountability.

Activity 3

Personal Reflection: Revise *The official Yes/No Referendum pamphlet*,[7] and analyse its message. Think about your own experience throughout this important process in Australia. Find some news to enrich your opinion. Write a reflection about this process and think about the following:

- Examine the arguments presented in both the Yes and the No cases.
- Identify the key themes, persuasive techniques, and underlying assumptions.
- Consider how the pamphlet frames the referendum and its potential impact.
- Think about why the "No" won. Why do you think people voted no?
- How do you think a "Yes" vote would have transformed universities' capacity to address Indigenous disadvantage meaningfully and sustainably?

Recommendations for assessment activities

- **Case study analysis:** Choose an Australian university and find their documents regarding employment strategies, cultural safety frameworks, and management. Pay special attention to their approach to Indigenous employment strategies. Identify strengths and areas for improvement based on established best practices. Finally, provide recommendations to enhance institutional practices, resources, and potential.
- **Policy review and critique:** Review the existent policies on Indigenous employment and cultural safety in your institutions. Assess their effectiveness and alignment with change principles. Suggest a modification to improve outcomes.
- **Implementation plan:** Develop a strategic plan for enhancing Indigenous employment strategies and cultural safety at a university. Describe key initiatives, involved stakeholders, and steps for implementation. Address challenges and propose solutions.

5. Useful resources

Anderson, P., Baeza Pena, A., Yip, S. Y., & Diamond, Z. (2023). Indigenous ways of developing leadership in education: Creating a rights-based organisational consciousness. In P. Woods, A. Roberts, M. Tian, & H. Youngs (Eds.), *Handbook on leadership in education* (pp. 445–457). Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Anderson, P., & Diamond, Z. (2020). Stabilising and sustaining Indigenous leadership in Australian universities. In P. Anderson, K. Maeda, Z. M. Diamond, & C. Sato (Eds.), *Post-imperial perspectives on indigenous education* (pp. 186–208). Routledge.

Anderson, P., Pham, T., & Tapia Parada, C. (in press). Indigenous success: Creating a senior leadership capacity model (SLCM) through capacity building. Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success.

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[7] https://www.aec.gov.au/referendums/files/pamphlet/your-official-yes-no-referendum-pamphlet.pdf

Anderson, P., Yip, S. Y., & Diamond, Z. (2022). Universities Australia 2017–2020 Indigenous Strategy: A meta-synthesis of the issues and challenges. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *42*(4), 785–800. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2123899

Buckskin, P., Tranthim-Fryer, M., Holt, L., Gili, J., Heath, J., Smith, D., Larkin, S., Ireland, S., MacGibbon, L., Robertson, K., Small, T., Butler, K., Chatfield, T., Anderson, P., & Ma Rhea, Z. (2018). *NATSIHEC Accelerating Indigenous Higher Education Consultation Paper*. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/215558/

Cummings, T. G., & Worley, C. G. (2017). *Organization development & change* (6th ed.). Cengage Learning Australia.

Larkin, S., Ireland, S., MacGibbon, L., Robertson, K., Small, T., Butler, K., Chatfield, T., Anderson, P., & Ma Rhea, Z. (2018). *NATSIHEC Accelerating Indigenous Higher Education consultation paper.* National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium, Australia. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/215558/

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Russell, J., Beth, M., Wadsworth, D., George, S., Wheeler, W., & Barkhoff, H. (2022). Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion—Utilizing student voices during strategic decision-making processes. *Kinesiology Review*, *11*(4), 297–302. https://doi.org/10.1123/kr.2022-0018

Trudgett, M., Page, S., & Coates, S. K. (2021). Great expectations: Senior Indigenous leadership positions in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *44*(1), 90–106. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080x.2021.2003013

Weenthunga Health Network. (2023, 16 November). *Reframing "cultural load"* [Images attached] [Status update]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/weenthunga/posts/weve-been-rethinking-the-term-cultural-load-language-matters-powerfully-and-our-/637026355308572/

6. Module 6: Professional skills development

This module focuses on specific leadership capabilities required for advancing Indigenous education, including cultural competency, policy development, strategic planning, resource management, and performance monitoring.

1. Content summary

Although there is broad recognition that enhancing leadership skills is crucial for effectively supporting workers, the current literature does not seem to show explicit direction on how to develop these skills, particularly within Indigenous contexts. As Russell et al. (2022) emphasise, meaningful change requires more than intent; it must be grounded in training and institutional commitment. They argue that comprehensive training is essential across all levels of the institution:

> Still, nothing could be changed without comprehensive training for faculties, staff and administration. That training includes the skills to create an environment in which students feel safe and comfortable to not only share their story/voice but also express their needs and identify possible barriers and obstacles. It is imperative that programming is aligned with and produces the expected outcomes of established strategic goals and objectives. (Russell et al., 2022, p. 301)

There is a need to empower leaders and promote institutional change for Indigenous success in higher education as well as move beyond the generic training on cultural awareness to a deeper training that truly supports Indigenous students and staff (Anderson et al., in press). Universities need to develop clear institution-wide implementation frameworks guiding action across all levels of leadership. To do this, universities need to better integrate Indigenous voices instead of imposing what they think Indigenous students and staff need. Therefore, to move forward, integration and community building are required (Anderson et al., in press).

2. Key focus areas

The focus areas in Module 6 are:

- leadership capability development
- cultural competency training
- policy development and implementation
- strategic planning and evaluation
- resource allocation and management
- performance monitoring and reporting.

Here are reflective prompt questions to guide self-directed learning for Module 6:

3. Key learning prompts/reflective questions

This activity encourages participants to reflect on the sources of their knowledge and understanding about a specific topic or module.

Activity instructions (15 minutes)

Step 1: Individual reflection (5 minutes)

Each participant is to reflect independently on the following prompt:

"How do you know what you know about professional skills development, and where did you learn it? There are no right or wrong answers here; we are just prompting discussion."

Students should consider:

- formal learning sources (classes, textbooks, lectures)
- informal learning sources (media, conversations, personal experiences)
- prior assumptions or beliefs they brought to the topic
- how confident they are in different aspects of their knowledge
- which sources they trust most and why.

Step 2: Small group discussion (5–7 minutes)

Divide students into groups of 3–4 and have them share their reflections. Encourage them to:

- compare different sources of knowledge
- discuss similarities and differences in their learning journeys
- identify any contradictions in their collective understanding
- consider the reliability of different information sources.

Step 3: Closing activity group discussion revisiting Step 2

Additional questions to discuss in group

- What is your current level of cultural competency?
- How is it important for you to develop cultural competences?
- What gaps do you identify in your cultural knowledge?
- How do you demonstrate cultural respect? How do people around you?
- How do you engage with Indigenous cultural perspectives in your job?
- How could cultural competency be integrated into organisational policy and practices?
- How do current policies support or impede Indigenous participation in leadership?
- What methods could be used to assess the impact of cultural safety strategies?
- How can every worker influence and contribute to decision-making around policies and resources?
- Should your institution focus specifically on an Indigenous "cultural competency" approach or take a broader view of social inclusion and diversity in planning its change?
- What are the positives and negatives of focusing particularly on Indigenous issues in my organisation?

Leadership capability development

- What leadership capabilities do I need to develop for Indigenous education?
- How do I model cultural competence in my leadership?
- What professional development will enhance my effectiveness?

- How do I build capacity in others?
- What mentoring or coaching support do I need?
- How do I measure my leadership growth?

Cultural competency enhancement

- What is my current level of cultural competency?
- What gaps exist in my cultural knowledge?
- How do I demonstrate cultural respect in practice?
- What ongoing learning opportunities should I pursue?
- How do I apply cultural learning in my role?
- How do I support others' cultural development?

Policy development skills

- How effective am I at developing Indigenous-focused policies?
- What policy development skills do I need?
- How do I ensure cultural appropriateness in policies?
- What consultation processes should I use?
- How do I measure policy effectiveness?
- What review mechanisms should I implement?

Strategic planning capabilities

- How do I incorporate Indigenous perspectives in planning?
- What strategic planning tools work best?
- How do I ensure meaningful consultation?
- What evaluation frameworks should I use?
- How do I align Indigenous and institutional strategies?
- What indicators demonstrate strategic success?

Resource management

- How effectively do I allocate resources?
- What resource management skills do I need?
- How do I ensure equitable distribution?
- What budgeting processes work best?
- How do I measure resource effectiveness?
- What sustainability measures should I implement?

Performance monitoring

- What performance indicators should I track?
- How do I develop effective reporting frameworks?
- What data collection methods work best?
- How do I analyse and interpret data?
- What feedback mechanisms should I use?
- How do I ensure continuous improvement?

Professional development planning

- What are my immediate learning needs?
- What longer-term development do I need?
- How do I create a balanced development plan?
- What learning methods work best for me?
- How do I measure my professional growth?
- What support do I need?

Implementation skills

- How effectively do I implement new initiatives?
- What project management skills do I need?
- How do I ensure successful execution?
- What change management approaches work best?
- How do I maintain momentum?
- What measures indicate implementation success?

Relationship building

- How do I build effective relationships?
- What communication skills do I need?
- How do I maintain stakeholder engagement?
- What networking approaches work best?
- How do I manage difficult conversations?
- What feedback mechanisms should I use?

Reflection and growth

- How do I reflect on my practice?
- What self-assessment tools work best?
- How do I learn from experience?
- What feedback do I need?
- How do I maintain professional growth?
- What success measures should I use?

These questions support:

- professional development
- skill enhancement
- knowledge building
- practice improvement
- performance monitoring
- continuous learning.

Leaders should focus on:

- building capabilities
- developing knowledge
- enhancing skills
- improving practice
- measuring growth
- sustaining development.

The emphasis should be on:

- practical application
- continuous improvement
- measurable outcomes
- professional growth
- sustainable development
- strategic alignment.

4. Focused themes and activities

Activity 1

Action plan: Brainstorm ways to make academic environments more inclusive spaces. Use these ideas to create an action plan for creating culturally safe spaces where Indigenous students and staff feel empowered to express themselves. Present your plan to your peers and receive feedback to improve it.

Activity 2

Write a reflective piece: Read the report *Make us count: Understanding Aboriginal women's experiences in Victorian public sector workplaces* (Bargallie et al., 2023).[8] Write a summary of the key ideas, highlighting the essential points. Then, compose a reflective piece on the significance of integrating Indigenous workers into the workforce and implementing policies that ensure their wellbeing, as well as the overall wellbeing of the institution.

Activity 3

Read and reflect: Read *Global Failure to consult Indigenous peoples on future pandemics will further harm children's education*[9]. What is your initial reaction after reading this? Share your thoughts with your peers. Consider the impact of excluding Indigenous perspectives— why does inclusion matter? Reflect on the potential consequences of failing to consult Indigenous communities. How does your reality match the idea from the piece of news? Write down a reflective piece including your thoughts and your peers?

Recommendations for assessment activities

Research: Research university data on Indigenous participation and leadership. What are the current statistics? How have universities achieved these numbers? What areas are they

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[8] https://apo.org.au/node/323192
[9] https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/02/global-failure-to-consult-indigenous-peoples-on-future-pandemics-will-further-harm-childrens-education/

excelling in, and what improvements could be made? Create a brief infographic or summary highlighting key findings.

Community building: Look for at least three successful case studies of Indigenous-led program initiatives in higher education. Analyse the three cases, paying special attention to how Indigenous voices are included and translated into institutional policies. Build a proposal for integrating Indigenous voices into governance. Include ideas on how institutions could move beyond superficial awareness to a more impactful frame.

Design a training program/workshop that could contribute to a deeper cultural awareness. Follow these steps:

- What would you like to contribute to? Set a goal, whether it is fostering respect, understanding cultures, or developing meaningful engagements. Define your goal.
- Who is your audience? Think about your group. Is it faculty, students, or administrators?
- Who is working with you? Make sure to include Indigenous voices in your ideas for design.
- Write your plan. Develop a set of ideas that should be included in your workshop. Be mindful of including practical exercises and providing resources.
- Show your plan to the whole group, seeking feedback. Take their comments and refine your idea.

The following articles might be of help/inspiration:

Australia-first report reveals Indigenous students' educational outcomes strengthened through new programs. (2024, 30 April). *Education Daily*. https://educationdaily.au/general/australia-first-report-reveals-indigenous-students-culture-and-confidence-strengthened-through-new-programs/

Griffith University. (2024, 14 October). *One year on, it's important that Indigenous education rights are advocated for by all despite the Voice result*. https://news.griffith.edu.au/2024/10/14/one-year-on-its-important-that-indigenous-education-rights-are-advocated-for-by-all-despite-the-voice-result/

University of Technology Sydney. (2025, 7 May). *UTS launches centre for Indigenous people and work*. https://www.uts.edu.au/news/2025/05/uts-launches-centre-for-indigenous-people-and-work

5. Useful resources

Anderson, P., Pham, T., & Tapia Parada, C. (in press). *Indigenous success: Creating a senior leadership capacity model (SLCM) through capacity building*. Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success.

Bargallie, D., Carlson, B., & Day, M. (2023). *Make us count: Understanding Aboriginal women's experiences in Victorian public sector workplaces*. Griffith University; Macquarie University. https://apo.org.au/node/323192

Ma Rhea, Z. (2015). *Leading and managing Indigenous education in the postcolonial world*. Routledge.

Price, K., Rogers, J., & Radoll. Peter. (2019). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education: An introduction for the teaching profession* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Russell, J., Beth, M., Wadsworth, D., George, S., Wheeler, W., & Barkhoff, H. (2022). Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion—Utilizing student voices during strategic decision-making processes. *Kinesiology Review*, *11*(4), 297–302. https://doi.org/10.1123/kr.2022-0018