

## Relationships with Des Crump and Samantha Disbray

(T: Tracey K: Katelyn D: Des S: Samantha )

Welcome to Indigenising Curriculum in Practice with Professor Tracey Bunda and Dr Katelyn Barney.

T: Hi everyone. I'm Tracey Bunda and welcome to our podcast series, Indigenising Curriculum in Practice. I'm a Ngugi/Wakka Wakka woman and the professor of Indigenous Education at the University of Queensland. I'd like to start the podcast by acknowledging country and the various countries from where our listeners are located and pay my respects to elders past, present, and emerging. I acknowledge the ongoing contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to society at local, national, and international levels. I'm joined by my colleague and co-host, Dr Katelyn Barney.

K: Hi everyone. I'd also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we we're recording and also where you are listening from and pay my respects to their ancestors and their descendants who continue to have strong connections to country. I also want to acknowledge that where we are recording has always been a place of teaching and learning. I'm a non-indigenous woman living and working in Meanjin. In this series, Tracey and I interview Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics about how they're Indigenising Curriculum within the faculties at the University of Queensland.

T: Together we are going to ask questions to unravel the why, the how, and the when of Indigenising Curriculum.

K: Our theme for this podcast is based on the principle of relationships, and our guests today are Des Crump and Dr Samantha Disbray from the School of Languages and Cultures at the University of Queensland. Welcome.

T: Would you like to introduce yourselves? However you want.

D: Hello everyone. I'm Des Crump and I'm here on Yugera land. And my family origins are from Southwest Queensland. A little place called Dirranbandi top end of Gamilaroi Nation.

S: And I'm Samantha Disbray, Des' colleague. I work for the School of Languages and Cultures and my background's in linguistics, and I've worked with languages around Central Australia, and now I'm fortunate to work in Queensland.

K: Thanks, Des and Samantha. The School of Languages and Cultures developed Industry Fellow roles in Indigenous languages, and one of those roles is yours, Des. And this is also being duplicated in some other Schools here at UQ. Can you tell us a bit about that role?

D: With the Industry Fellow here at School of Languages, I guess, it's building on my past work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages coming up to over 20 odd years. It's building on those networks, those relationships that I have with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that work with languages and using that, I guess add

to the work here at University of Queensland. Part of a passionate team who share that same passion for languages and reviving languages. So that's been great. Building on those networks as well because it's important that we have those relationships, those networks with community people with industry, with other stakeholders in language. That's very important. That's why I see my role here at the uni.

- T: I think those roles were quite radical for the university and they had to really think outside the box to be able to create those positions. If I could just take up again, the work that you're doing in Indigenous languages and ask you to think about what is it that you want students to know about Indigenous languages and language revitalisation?
- D: I guess the first thing is that awareness of language and the diversity of language across Australians, especially Queensland, break down those perceptions that our languages are lost or sleeping or gone forever when there's so much great work going out in the communities around reviving, revitalising language, bringing them back to their strength. Using them in everyday life. All those things are still happening. Our languages, while some of them might be on an endangered list somewhere, but it's not really acknowledging the resilience and the strength of community to keep those languages strong. That's what I'd like to see happening with other students, especially across the university.
- T: Sam, what about you?
- S: When we are thinking particularly about non-Indigenous students and international students, we are finding, so Des is coming in and doing guest talks. We are integrating issues around language revitalisation in various of our courses, and there's a huge appetite for it. Students are really interested and there are wonderful resources out there that give indigenous community members voice. So, we're lucky to have those resources. But the other thing that we're working on is a program just for Indigenous language activists and language workers.
- T: So, I just want to probe that a little bit further. Is there a different set of objectives then for Indigenous students compared to non-indigenous students? I think that's an important question that we haven't raised in this podcast series.
- S: Yeah, there's a different set of objectives and a different set of needs for different students. Non-Indigenous students can study and have traditionally studied a degree in linguistics and anthropology and Aboriginal studies and they can carve their professional careers from that position. But Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander people are carving their careers in very different ways, and their pathway into the university is likely to be different to those young undergraduate students that make up the majority of our student population. And so, the program that we're developing, and Des can talk more about it with our project steering committee, is a really co-designed program designed to be responsive to those needs.
- D: The other thing with Indigenous students, it's a lived experience. They're wanting to reconnect for, not so much maybe the academic or that general knowledge awareness raising for non-indigenous students, they're connecting it because it's their identity. It's where they come from. And so, it's a real personal journey and I think that's the great

thing about the course here, it allows for students from different experiences and backgrounds to come in and share that knowledge and different starting points. And then through the courses we are developing, look at how we can take them on that next part of the journey.

K: So, there's a first year Aboriginal studies course that you came into, Des, and did a workshop with around Yugera language names and place names in Brisbane. So, they're mostly non-Indigenous students, but there are some indigenous students. And you also did a similar workshop for staff within the Indigenous Engagement Division that Tracey and I were both at. Can you talk a bit about that workshop and what you were hoping students learn from that?

D: Place name's a great, I guess, starting point because in a place like Brisbane and even here at the university with all the buildings and the sandstone, it's really hard to remember sometimes or overlook that you're on an Aboriginal space here. There's that connection, that strength of history that's been here for thousands of years. And often the only clue to that may be a place name. And so, it's a good starting point. It's a nice safe spot where not that anxiety around it all. "I don't know much about Aboriginal people and I'm feeling really guilty that I don't." Everybody knows a place name. They catch a train, they catch a bus, they go past a place name on so many different occasions coming here to the university. So, it's a great place to start and a lot of good response from both groups especially the first year students, a lot, as you say, international students who weren't aware of that background. And there's so much story behind the place names and the students to find out or hear about that story was... I think that's a good starting point for them. Yeah.

T: One of the things that we are doing with this podcast series is we are relating it to the design principles that we have been set up for Indigenising Curriculum, one of those design principles has been the notion of relationships. We see that as being quite central. You have an Indigenous languages team. Would you mind to talk about that team and the relationships that are there within that team and maybe the skillset as well and how it all comes together?

S: Thinking about that question, Tracey, it's, I'm even not sure where to put the boundaries around the team because the more that we do the work we do, the more people join our team from all facets of the university. We are finding such amazing responses and support. But at the core, there's Des and the other Industry Fellow, Robert McClellan. Robert works also with the Language Data Commons of Australia project, and Robert's very strong in community governance, in management. And so, he has a great set of skills that he brings to chair and convene our project steering committee.

Between the three of us, we started working together about two years ago, slowly, slowly, tentatively, gently building our relationship, which models the work of all of the steps outwards that we've taken. So, it's all about gradually building relationships, how our relationships have built, how we've become more confident with each other, how the trust is built. Our project steering committee is made up of some UQ staff members. Al Harvey, who's an indigenous amplifier fellow in our school, Gary Tudor Smith, who is a teaching and research associate with us, and a marvellous teacher, Paul Williams, who's a Gamilaroi young fella. And he's really leading the charge in some of our research and outreach work. We've got a great steering committee made up of industry

people from first Languages Australia, from education, from different schools, community groups. And then in our wider school, we've got the support of our colleagues, our head of school.

- D: Inside the uni, we have great relationships, and very respectful ones, with people outside the uni who are our critical friends, who we can go to when we are wanting to check information or sound out ideas and use them as a sounding board. And that's a great thing. As Samantha said, we all bring different skill sets, different backgrounds in our language and language work. And so, it's great to... we're all working on that same common goal wanting to see a course, some training for community language workers that's been sadly missing in Queensland here for quite a few years.
- T: I wanted to pick up on that notion of relationships just a little bit further. There is a hesitancy and anxiety around being able to develop relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Des, as an Indigenous person, can I ask you to give a little bit of advice to those who are listening about what's key for you as an Indigenous person when you are making relationships with indigenous community? Because we can't take it for granted that we are Indigenous, and so it's going to automatically work for us either. And Sam, I'll come back to you as well.
- D: Good question. Yeah. Because sometimes it's assumed because you're Aboriginal you know all the answers. Thinking back to my education days when I was a school teacher, this idea of, "We'll take an education teacher from families from Southwest Queensland, we'll put them on the Cape and that'll solve all the problems around Aboriginal education." But even then, it was a completely foreign context to me, and so it meant I had to build that trust and that relationship with the community so that they could see who I was and where I was from that so we could find those common areas where we could connect just because we're Aboriginal, we come from very different backgrounds. In my work is a lot of listening to people, a lot of going and sitting down and talking but mainly listening with people and giving them the respect and taking the time to get to know them, but also for them to see you as a person as well. Because one of the things we used to say, particularly in Aboriginal education, the students or community may not do things for you as a teacher, but they'll do things with you and for you as a person.
- T: Samantha, can you throw back to when you first started, how did you make those relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?
- P3: At the very beginning, I moved to Alice Springs and I had a little baby, and he was a great magnet and great glue. People called him my handbag. He would just hang over my arm. And that was a great way to connect with other women. And at that time, I was working with women of a similar age, similar stage in life. Although, I was a linguist with a job to do, that division between personal and professional was not a strong one. It's a whole person relationship. And those relationships that I have, particularly with those young mothers and now those sons and daughters who are young people with their own bubs, those relationships continue. And so, I guess that's, I think there are maybe two things. And that is like, I feel that what I learned at the very beginning was that my professional and personal selves were not separate and they were as accountable and as invested as each other. And that relationships last a long time.

K: It's great to hear about those long-term relationships and the importance of professional relationships, but also that that blends into the personal and also the importance of listening in those contexts. You've also been developing and you have developed a suite of short form credential modules on Indigenous languages that are for indigenous students. This sounds like really exciting curriculum developments. Can you tell us a bit about the learning objectives and where that works now going?

D: Our main goal has been developing a Graduate Certificate course in Indigenous Language Revitalisation. Rather than tell community, "Well, if you wait two and a half years, we'll have a course for you." We thought let's develop some short form credential courses and put those out there, put some research into action where they're providing the input into it, see if we're in the right tracks for the main course. So, the modules are based around some of the things that we've identified and talking to certainly with our steering committee and others. What are some of the key areas or skill sets that community language workers need to know? Like building up your language profile, building your language networks, how do you research? How do you find archival material? And then more importantly, how do you take that archival material back to your community so that in a way that they can understand, they can use for language learning, teaching and making resources.

We've had three very successful summer schools, winter schools. They've been very beneficial. Not just in terms of the work generated at the summer schools themselves, the intensives, but the feedback that they've given us about the course, about the university. And again, it's building that trust, that relationship with the community so that we know that we're wanting to check information about, "Okay, well are we on the right track with this course?" Because we had that current relationship with us, they're using that material that they've developed. Great example, I've been working with the local, younger community up at Ipswich where Lorena, one of the students from our summer school earlier this year was just grateful and thankful for that opportunity. And working with Gary and others there and getting that insight into, "Okay, well how do I break that language down to linguistic material down to put it into a way that I can work with the community?"

And so, from that, Lorena's put together a 10, 12-week course for community members to learn the languages, everyday language. Hopefully from that course they'll develop the confidence and that, to go on to become the language teachers in the schools. It's really pleasing to, and you just feel so proud that people have gone through the course already in just that short form course and taken that knowledge and skills and putting it out into the community and that broader reach already. One person there, Lorena, they've had 25 students at the language course. They'll be working in four or five schools doing language classes for Niagara language. So, there's another 400 or 500 people that are being impacted in such a positive way from that short form course.

T: That's just amazing outcome from those short form credentials, being able to maintain the Indigenous languages within our communities. We've talked broadly today, but I just wanted to ask whether you could think a little bit further about Indigenising Curriculum and what it means to you, and maybe that's a little bit unfair asking you, Des, in the sense that you're a teacher and you've been developing curriculum for a very long time. I think what you represent is something very unique for other people within the

university. They can learn from you. If you can just give us your thoughts about what does that mean for you Indigenising Curriculum in Practice?

D: As far as languages go, it means that decolonisation of language and linguistics, because there's so much linguistic material out there for our languages, but it's inaccessible, the jargon needs to be broken down. It needs to be viewed not just this compartmentalised version of, "Okay, well here's language here." And then we've got spirituality, we've got culture, we've got connection to country and all that. Al Harvey's doing some great work around looking at Sabi and that holistic worldview perspective of language, how it's intrinsic in everything they do and their way of life. It's not something that can be taken aside and put into a little box called linguistics. And so, when I think of Indigenising the curriculum, that's what comes to mind, breaking down that barrier around linguistics and making it more accessible.

Because when I started my language journey, one of the things, even though I had a background in teaching, I didn't have a background in language. And so, I undertook the Masters in Indigenous Language Ed through Uni of Sydney just to do that. To have a look at those language materials, that linguistic jargon, the dictionaries and so on that were out there, but understand it so that when I work with communities, I can explain it in community language way so that they can understand it better, but also help them in terms of that learning and language and looking at how the languages have been described. That's been a really important part that's come out of the short courses with the work of Gary and Paul, breaking down that linguistic description and then looking at, "Okay, how do community describe that language?"

T: It's a simple point, but knowledge has to have meaning within the university, and knowledge has to have meaning for Indigenous students. Samantha, did you want to add anything to that in terms of thinking about Indigenising Curriculum in Practice? What it means?

S: The school of languages and cultures is thinking really carefully and planning out strategies and setting time aside to see how it's going to take the journey of Indigenising Curriculum and starting to think about what might that look like for teachers of Russian and Korean. What's appropriate, what fits well, not what's shoehorned in, but what is really a natural fit? What we're starting to find is the interest in our collegiate, in the work that we are doing, the interest and the curiosity that people have about Des' work and Robert's work is serving as that first step in a lot of ways.

I think that the first step for a School and for colleagues, for all of us, to begin to think about how that looks in our subject area and our discipline, is to first build some relationships and to undertake some of that self-reflection and the conversations that we have and what people are learning about language revitalisation, about language dispossession, about historic factors, about prestige and non-prestige and suppression of languages is making them really reflective. And I think that's our beginning for Indigenising the Curriculum right now.

T: That's great.

D: Just picking up on what Sam said about the conversations we've been having with our colleagues in the School of Languages and one of those being Zane in the Indonesian

area. At our 21<sup>st</sup> birthday celebrations I struck up a conversation with him about the important role of relationship between the Makassans, the Indonesian Topangas who came over to Arnhem Land in that Northern Australian area, and how the languages have been blended in some ways or influenced each other where there's some Indonesian words in the language for Yolngu and everyday use and still used now over the last few hundred years.

And I was very lucky at Pulima there was a performance there by what they call the Red Flag Dance group. And this amazing singer who they took a symphony orchestra back to a little village in Indonesia and they were singing some of the songs that were carried across by the Indonesian and incorporated into the Yolngu way of life there and the songs. And that was the first time in hundreds of years that those little villages had heard those songs again. So, I think looking for those opportunities, it was just amazing. Yeah.

T: That's a really magnificent story and it just adds to that notion of Indigenising Curriculum in Practice goes international.

K: Thanks so much Des and Samantha for sharing some of your really important work you're doing in the School of Languages and Cultures, and thanks for joining us for another episode of Indigenising Curriculum in Practice.

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