

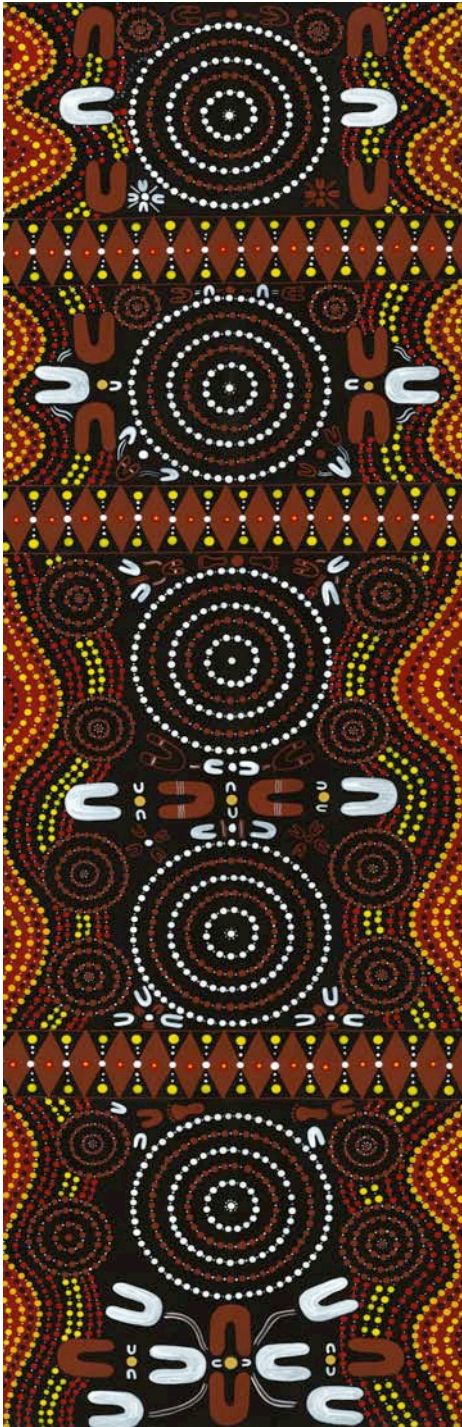
# The Power and the Passion: Can Indigenous teachers change the world?



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# ‘Learning to Communicate’

**Tex Skuthorpe** is an Aboriginal artist from Goodooga, north western NSW. Tex was privileged to be taught his people’s traditional culture by the Noonghaburra elders from Noonghal country:

‘In each of the 26 communities there were completely different ways of communicating, which young people had to learn in order to show respect. Traditionally, the women lived with their husband’s community so, within each community, there were women from every one of the other 25 groups. As such, the women taught the young boys and girls how to communicate in each different group. This ensured that when the boys went on their initiation journey, they knew how to show respect to each community they lived with. Some of the different ways of communicating are depicted in the painting—speaking through a third person, speaking over an object, speaking back to back, speaking back to back and through another person.’

<http://www.tuckandee.com.au>



# Australian Learning & Teaching Council (ALTC) Teaching Fellowship

## Goal:

To gather and disseminate research-based exemplars for good practice in Indigenous teaching

## How to identify/record such exemplars?

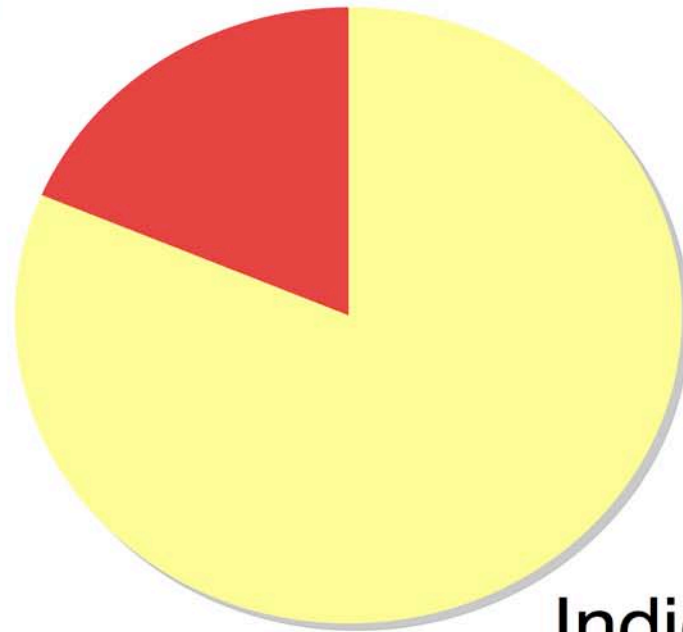
- Literature
- Advisory Group/Critical Friends
- Research interviews with teaching staff
- Today's Forum:
  - presentations
  - feedback



Promoting excellence in higher education

# Advisory Group/Critical Friends (N = 16)

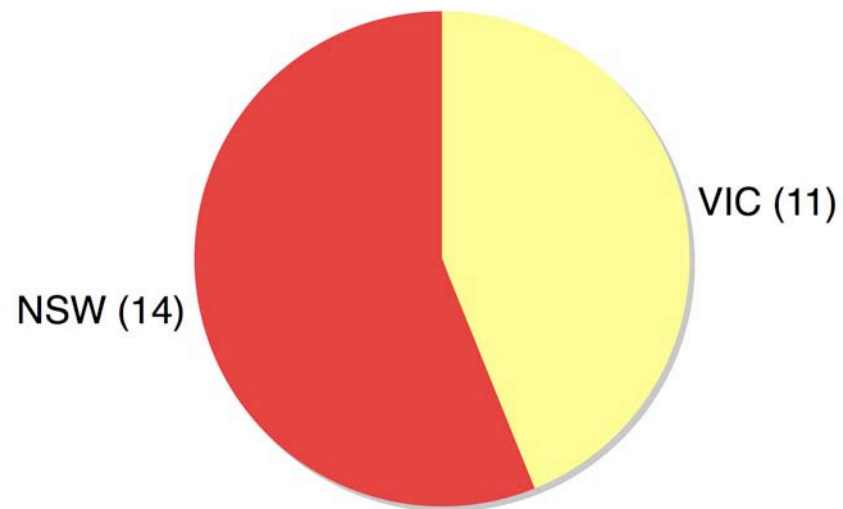
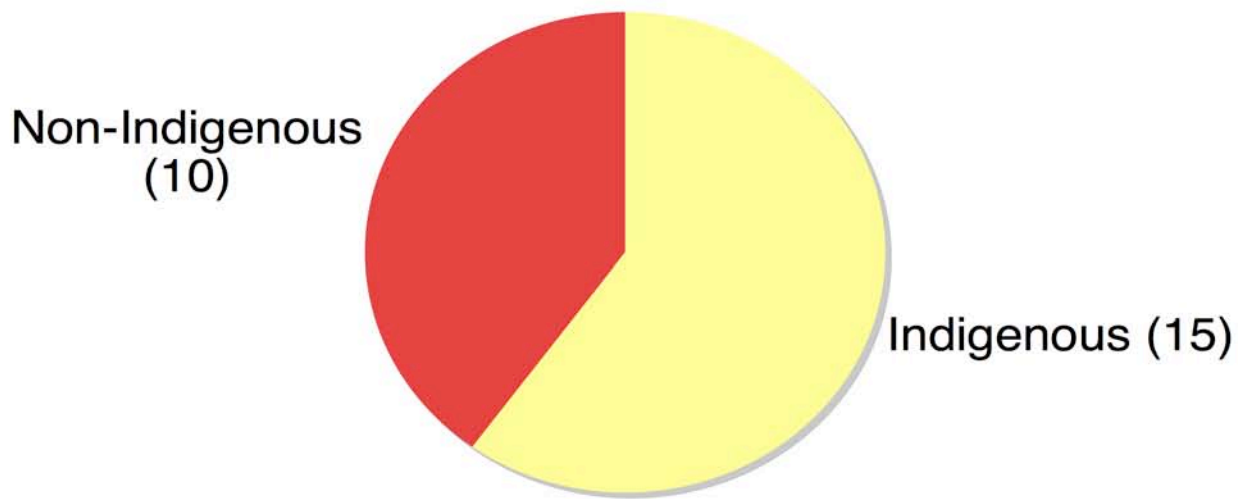
Non-Indigenous  
(3)



Indigenous  
(13)



# Teaching Staff Interviewed (N=25)



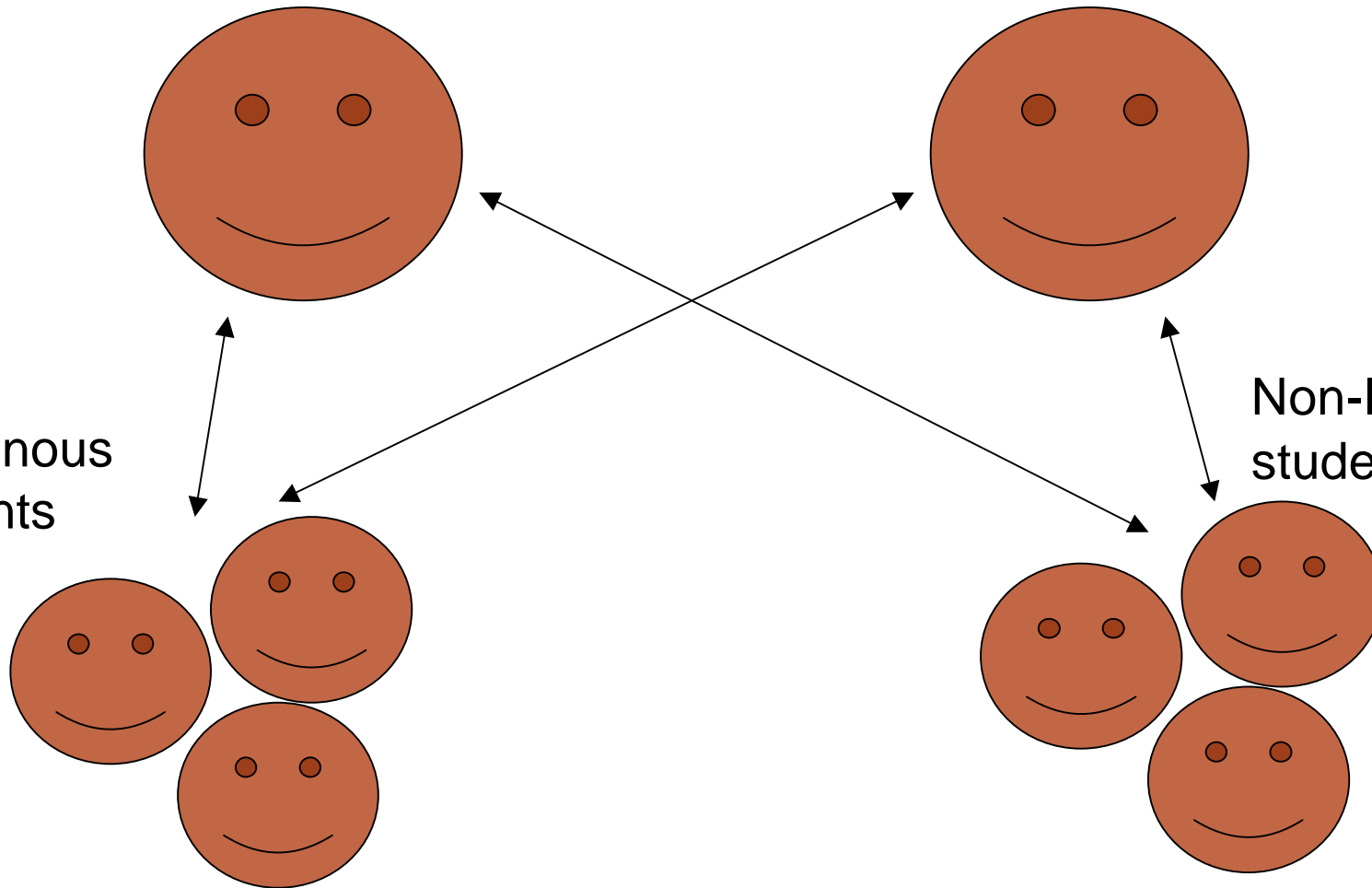
# 'Indigenous teaching': Who is involved?

Indigenous Teacher

Non-Indigenous Teacher

Indigenous students

Non-Indigenous students





# Do teachers in this field see Indigenous teaching as different, and if so, why?

YES - over 3/4 of Indigenous teachers  
- over 2/3 of non-Indigenous teachers

WHY?

The main reason for both groups, was:

**The attitudes of commencing non-Indigenous students, towards Indigenous issues and peoples**



## What do the teachers say?

‘One issue is the *assumptions* students bring – some very negative attitudes, stereotypical.’ (#01)

‘They often come with kitchen table prejudices in their heads.’ (#23)

‘What sets it apart: (in) the context of Australian society, Indigenous Australians have been obliterated from popular consciousness.’ (#11)

Yes, it is different... There is much more at stake *personally* ... It can be wonderful or it can be highly problematic.’ (#04)





## Now, a question for you:

*In your own teaching (or other work with students), is 'making a difference' one of your goals?*

- A. No, 'making a difference' is not really what I try to do
- B. Yes, I'm trying to make a difference to my discipline/profession
- C. Yes, I'm trying to make a difference to society/the world



# Do teachers in this field try to make a difference?

YES, for both groups.

However:

- Most Indigenous teachers talk about making the world a better place for Indigenous peoples and communities.
- Most non-Indigenous teachers talk about making a difference in the context of their discipline or profession.



# What do the teachers say?

‘I want them to take a more realistic view into the field as anthropologists’. (#05)

‘I consider my contribution is all a contribution to Indigenous Studies in the future.’ (#14)


‘We have to make sure that, as educators, they don’t go out and bring down the self-esteem of the Indigenous children they teach.’ (#03)

‘It comes back to: Would my grandfather agree, and what does this mean for my kids?’ (#17a)



# So: Can we change the world?

- Non-Indigenous teachers focus on change in relation to their *discipline*
- Indigenous teachers focus on change in direct relation to *community*
- **Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers both want to change the world**



*Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers both teach so their students will make change happen:*

‘I want them to feel confident about being an agent of change.’ (#08)

‘You have to open their eyes to the idea that you can change the world, not just yourself.’ (#02)

# THANK YOU



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