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Charles Darwin University

## Editorial

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## Editorial

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This Special Edition of Learning Communities Journal celebrates ten years of delivery of the Growing Our Own program and the robust partnership between the College of Education at CDU and the Catholic Education Office, NT. Each of the papers included in this edition elucidate various permutations of both-ways learning. The contributing academic authors critique their positionalities and pedagogical practices. Articles contained here also include graduate, undergraduate students, and school based mentors who theorise their experiences as co-authors and first authors.

You will see the Growing Our Own logo on the inside cover of this edition, a yarning circle of interdependent entities facilitating, teaching, learning and growing. Within each school there is a band of people whose work supports the program, and crucially, within the Charles Darwin University seat in the circle, and the Catholic Education Office, there are the Project Coordinator (CDU) and the Project Manager (CEO) whose complementary work has ensured the longevity and integrity of the program. It has been a privilege to work alongside Therese Kersten, Ben van Gelderen and Cris Edmonds-Wathen in the College of Education in a seven-year involvement in GOO: the degree of consultation and reciprocity with colleagues at the CEO, Laura Avery and latterly Geoff Perry has been impressive. They liaise regularly with each other and with the on-site school-based coordinators and principals. Decisions are made jointly on such issues as enrolments, units to study, intensive weeks, visiting lecturers chosen and timeframes. This is a collaborative, interactive leadership structure that is clearly apparent to each of the participant cohorts, and effective because flexibility is invariably the *modus operandi*. All parties are given a significant 'voice' and this edition gives testimony to this ethos.

The program also delivers. In 2016, it received the CDU Vice-Chancellor's award for "Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning". Catholic Education Northern Territory (CENT) considers that the following empirical outcomes rightly represent success.

**Table 1:** GOO statistics

55	Enrolments over 10 years
28	Graduates – Undergraduate degree
8	Graduates – In-service (upgrade)
8	Ongoing students
11	Employed teachers in CENT
5	Employed teachers outside CENT
4	Retired teachers still leading in community
14	Students withdrawn and working as Aboriginal Teaching Assistants

Source: Catholic Education NT

However, it must be noted that the program is capital intensive and costing can render good programs vulnerable. In an internal report submitted to the College earlier this year, Therese Kersten and Laura Avery wrote<sup>1</sup> :

*It is acknowledged that studying as a GOO student is an expensive model both in terms of dollars and GOO. In truth, however, we often wonder if GOO is really as expensive as*

<sup>1</sup> A full citation of the two publications mentioned within this quote are provided in the reference section.

*the financial outlay suggests. An average university student in rural Australia who must leave home to undertake further education has to add accommodation and travel costs not encountered in GOO. One of the main aims of GOO is reducing the financial costs involved in bringing teachers, often from interstate, into a remote community, which involves additional costs of transportation, resettling and housing. While acknowledging that each external appointment is unique; the financial benefits of having long-term local teachers in their own community are significant.*

*Wilson (2014) identified the need for long-term commitment and funding (p. 200). Anyone who has worked with an organisation that is primarily funded by government knows the challenges of securing long term funding. However, each time we start a new cohort, we are mindful of whether we can take them all the way through the course and be able to financially support the new group of students for the next 3-4 years. As CENT [Catholic Education NT] and CDU are both experiencing change in system leadership, we need to take time to work together and help each other understand the critical place of this program as a system priority. CENT and CDU do not waiver from their commitment to this program because we see “the urgency for more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers [as] a specific social justice concern” (Patton et al., 2012, p.15).*

Any reader of this edition will already have a keen interest in Indigenous education and will most likely recognize the imperative that more Indigenous teachers are needed, particularly on their own country. So, we invite you the reader, as you engage with the articles – the peoples, the places, the voices, the learning – to discern what furthers this agenda, and what practices might further these imperatives throughout the next decade.

The papers in this edition fall within the four broad themes outlined below.

## **1. Why and how GOO was developed.**

*I look behind me...genesis of Growing Our Own*, by Elliott and Keenan, explains the vision and goals underpinning the development of the Growing Our Own program. It summarises the principles, rationale and foundational elements in the initial design, which informed the funding application and guided the program implementation. The authors reflect on the dynamic environment that led to GOO's creation and recognise the important relationship between three parties:

- Charles Darwin University as the provider of high-quality flexible teacher-education
- Catholic Education Office as the manager of remote schools in Indigenous communities across the NT
- Aboriginal Teaching Assistants employed by Catholic Education and candidates for the university courses offered under GOO.

## **2. GOO as experienced by the preservice teacher students and the lecturers.**

*It's just a matter of time: The perceptions of growing our own students of the Growing Our Own program*, by Barnes, van Gelderen and Rampmeyer, profiles statistical evidence of poor teacher retention in remote community schools and discusses the barriers to Indigenous people gaining university qualifications, which have been addressed by the GOO program. The paper includes information about GOO's pedagogical approaches:

- Work-integrated learning
- Place-based approach
- 'Two-way' teaching philosophy

It then explains the methodology behind a research project, designed in cooperation with GOO students, to

collect feedback about their perceptions of the GOO program. This empowering qualitative methodology ensured a high level of participant engagement and produced pertinent and thoughtful feedback. The results are presented through extracts from interview transcripts categorised as: relationships; sanctioned and embedded flexibility; cultural knowledge and the way we learn; success; and time. The paper explores the dynamic of Time and Power that operates in the GOO program and suggests that the GOO students' definitions of linear time and synchronous time provide clues about how the program could be improved.

*The red dirt stays in your shoes: Reflective practice and both-ways learning*, by Sue Erica Smith, explores the cultural interface at the heart of the GOO program, which calls on lecturers and students to learn from each other using both-ways pedagogy. The discussion of cultural competence/intelligence/humility shines light on the intricacies of forming student-teacher relationships in a remote setting and reinforces the need for university lecturers engaged in the GOO program to be open to, and interested in, a new way of seeing. Like other papers in the Journal, this paper discusses the issue of teachers being faced with a classroom of students capable of speaking different and multiple languages yet required to learn in English. The path forward calls on the Government, the university sector and preservice teachers to continue to tackle these tricky challenges.

*'More than an academic thing': Becoming a teacher in Ltyentye Apurte and beyond* by Strangeways and Pettit, theorises about the development of teacher identity using arts-based, narrative, and dialogic methods. The paper comprises a series of extracts from conversations between a GOO lecturer and an Aboriginal man who entered the GOO program as a student, became qualified and worked as a teacher, and then transitioned into a community role and returned to work as an Aboriginal Teaching Assistant. The dialogue explores teacher identity issues from an ecological perspective and recognises that many factors interplay and impact on the individual during their transition from student to teacher. Most significantly, becoming a teacher changed this man's community position and challenged his sense of identity, leading to a decision to step away from teaching in order to focus on the underlying problems of poverty, self-harm, and distress that were negatively effecting school students in his remote community. In this paper, the complex interactions of remote community reality for GOO students are brought to life through art and a well-structured dialogue with probing summations and analysis.

### **3. GOO as a driver for Indigenous student teachers to use their local history, culture and language/s.**

*Historical perspectives: Murrinh ku thepini pumpanpunmat (Nemarluk)* by Bundock, Crerar, Dorward & van Gelderen, focusses on a GOO student essay that exposes differing perspectives of historical events in a GOO community. The story comes from a book published in the local language and used to teach literacy in the school classroom. It relates to the murder of Japanese fishermen off the coast of Northern Australia in 1931 and the subsequent police hunt and criminal conviction of a local 'hero' of the people. The student author presents an alternative version of events, based on oral history from community members and relatives who were alive at the time. This juxtaposition of historical truths is likened to the 'history wars' of the 1990s, and the essay discusses the moral and ethical issues for student readers challenged to decide which 'truth' is credible. The essay also refers to heroic Aboriginal leaders in other places (NSW & WA) who were similarly portrayed as criminals, indicating that history issues are not place-specific. This paper is an exemplar of using local language resources to fully integrate Indigenous history and culture into the curriculum.

*Language at home and in the school: Resistance and compromise*, by Zemits, Mullins, and Parry, explores some of the complexities of moving between the language of home and community and the Standard Australian English used in school. The authors suggest that the level of resistance to fully adopting the colonising, dominant language of English varies from one individual to another. Those that succeed in the dominant system have adopted a measure of compromise for their benefit and for the benefit of the community in which they live. The paper features a conversation between a GOO lecturer and two GOO students who each began school with a language that was not English and managed to traverse their education and working life bilingually. It draws attention to the necessity of providing access to bilingual teachers and teaching assistants, especially for students enrolled in remote community schools.

Referring to the recommendations from the *Second National Indigenous Languages* survey, the paper concludes that schools should:

- Ensure that teachers coming to work on communities can empathise about the use of multiple languages and the practices of a community. This may be through pre-arrival training for that community.
- Extend language teaching practice based on evidence of what language activities work best for the interests of the community (Recommendation 2, Marmion et al., 2014).
- Aboriginal English speakers should be given support akin to bilingual language learning programs (Recommendation 8, Marmion et al., 2014).

This paper demonstrates the value of bilingual speaking teachers being supported by the GOO program.

*Barriers to inclusion: Aboriginal pre-service teachers' perspectives on inclusive education in their remote Northern Territory schools*, by Staley, Freeman, Tipungwuti, King, Mullins, Portaminni, Puantulura, Williams, Jason, and Busch, discusses inclusive education history and theory. Using a framework of critical multicultural equity pedagogy, the paper analyses data from GOO students' essays on inclusive education. Seventeen GOO students identified barriers to learning and suggested how to help students engage more successfully with school. At the core of the paper, essay extracts have been categorised under five themes: attendance, hearing impairment, culture, speech and language issues, and access to resources. Through numerous examples from different locations, the paper provides an excellent summary of the barriers of exclusion faced by Indigenous children trying to participate in Australian school life. The GOO students call on international conventions as sources of support, for example the United Nations General Assembly agreement to protect the 'rights of Indigenous peoples to revitalise, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems, and literatures'. This paper illustrates how GOO works to empower Indigenous teachers to assert their viewpoint through their academic work.

#### **4. GOO as an enabler for the authentic delivery of the Australian curriculum.**

*Both-Ways science education: Place and context*, by Rioux and Smith, explains why and how the author-lecturers apply both-ways pedagogy to develop place-based science lessons with GOO students in five remote community schools in the NT. The recognition and inclusion of local Indigenous knowledge about place is fundamental to the examples of place-based science education featured in this paper. Using the concept of 'border crossing', the paper shows how GOO students' specialised knowledge fields—defined in language, culture and community—are integrated into the Australian Science Curriculum. The paper demonstrates that both-ways cultural border-crossing legitimises Indigenous knowledges alongside western knowledges and makes science local and culturally relevant for Indigenous school students.

*Beyond perspectives: Integrating local Indigenous knowledge/s into humanities and social science education*, by Crerar and Mullins, employs a narrative between a GOO student and a GOO lecturer, interspersed with environmental and historical information about a remote community, to describe the process of integrating Indigenous and western knowledges. The conversation mainly focuses on the development of culturally integrated learning resources for Humanities and Social Science lessons based on a both-ways learning approach. The paper emphasises the importance of considering *how* Indigenous people would like their history and perspectives to be integrated into Australian education. It also discusses *who* has the right to teach Indigenous knowledges.

The evidence in this collection provides guidance as to how these priorities can be further advanced.

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