



**Yanna Jannawi – Walk with Me.
Centering Indigenous Ways of Knowing
in Early Education and Care Services**

Michelle L Locke

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

under the supervision of Professor Susan Page, Professor
Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews and Professor Michelle Trudgett

University of Technology Sydney
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Centre for the
Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges.

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Michelle Lea Locke declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution. This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

This thesis includes Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) belonging to Indigenous participants from a variety of Aboriginal Nations including Dharug, Wakka Wakka, Wiradjuri, Gamilararray, Anaiwan Nganjaywana, Yorta Yorta, Bundjalung, Dharawal

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ABSTRACT

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008) and the *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009) (DEEWR) prescribe that Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives be included in the curricula of early education and care services (EECS), to effectively value and support Indigenous families. However, the literature suggests there are substantial gaps in non-Indigenous teacher educator understandings and engagement with Indigenous Peoples and cultures. As a result, early childhood education too often includes stereotypically defined curricula interpreted from the dominant Western standpoint, which fails to value the complexity and diversity of Indigenous Knowledges. Using Indigenous research methodology, in a qualitative inquiry, this study sought to privilege the voices of Indigenous Peoples in identifying and exploring successful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in formal early learning settings. The study included thirteen Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children, and eight non-Indigenous educators, who shared their views and experiences of Indigenous inclusion in the EECS with which they were engaged. Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children identified and acknowledged positive approaches and examples of inclusion as well as sharing their views on additional needs and requirements to improve on the efforts of inclusion. Non-Indigenous educators demonstrated commitment to effective inclusion; however, the dominant positioning of Western worldviews over Indigenous epistemologies remained evident. In response, a relational model of inclusion

grounded in Indigenous Knowledges is proposed. The model illustrates the diversity, complexity and value of Indigenous Peoples and our Knowledges. Critically, the model relieves the burden on non-Indigenous educators to be the authorities on Indigenous inclusion by positioning Indigenous Peoples as the experts and owners of Indigenous Knowledges, and the custodians of the lives and interests of the Indigenous children. Finally, the model champions ongoing respectful and meaningful collaboration between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous educators as paramount to attaining genuine inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in Western-based EECS.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this PhD to my Mum, Denise Saunders, who has supported, guided and contributed to this journey in more ways than she could ever know.

I also dedicate this work to my sister Dannie and my Grandmother, Winifred Olive Harkins (nee Locke), who are watching over us in spirit.

I offer my respects to my Dharug Ancestors and all First Nations Ancestors who have walked and continue to walk this Country (land, sea and sky) for many thousands of years; past, present and future.

Ngalawan – We live we remain.

I wish to note that this thesis speaks with respect of people who have travelled
back to the Ancestors.

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Danielle (Dannie) Saunders 26th June 1973 – 28th November 2014 (My Sister)
Aunty Chris Burke 23rd April 1953 – 29th January 2016 (My Cousin)
Winifred Harkins 10th Sept 1921 – 15th April 2016 (Little Grandma)
Aunty Valerie Aurisch 30th Sept 1938 - 2nd September 2019 (Dharug Elder)

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACECQA	Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ARC	Australian Research Council
BBF	budget based funding
CCB	Child Care Benefit
CIRCA	Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EECS	early education and care services
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
LDC	Long Day Care
MACS	Multifunctional Aboriginal Children’s Services
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Observance Committee
NATSIEP	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NQF	National Quality Framework
NQS	National Quality Standard
ORIC	Office of Registrar of Indigenous Corporations
OSHC	out of school hours care
PM&C	Prime Minister and Cabinet
SNAICC	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Yanna jannawi: this is Dharug language, which when translated to English means 'walk with me'. As a Dharug researcher I strive to honour my Ancestors, family and community with the use of Dharug language in the title of this work.

Indigenous Peoples: it is understood and acknowledged that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples consider the term 'Indigenous' to be too generic (AIATSIS 2018). As a Dharug woman I am more than aware of the challenges, restraints and stresses that terminology can inflict on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. As an Indigenous researcher, I wish to acknowledge and honour the voices and vast diversity of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander educators and families participating in the research. In light of this, the term 'Indigenous Peoples' is used with respect, throughout this research in reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. However, as these are all Western imposed labels (Carlson, 2016), I ask the reader to respect the immense diversity of Indigenous Peoples and communities when reading this thesis.

Indigenous educator: The title 'Indigenous educator' refers to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person who is engaged on a regular basis by one or more Early Education and Care Services (EECS) to share and guide educators on the inclusion of Indigenous culture, languages and/or Ways of Knowing.

Non-Indigenous educator: this term refers to non-Indigenous early childhood educators who are employed in one of the four nominated EECS as Director or teacher and who have successfully completed a Degree and/or Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care.

Parents/Carers of Indigenous children: these research participants are parents or legal guardians of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children who are enrolled and attend one of the four nominated EECS. As children were not directly involved in the research (see Chapter 3) these people are integral to identifying the needs and interests of their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and of sharing their children's experiences in the EECS.

Indigenous Knowledges: refers to the diverse and complex worldviews, languages, cultural practices and protocols of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In this paper Indigenous Knowledges are recognised as part of a relational ontology that sits within the epistemological framework of Knowing, Being and Doing (Martin, 2008). This term recognises and identifies that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems predate colonisation and that they remain valuable and relevant to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples living and working in Australia.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing: in this research, this recognises and identifies that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems predate colonisation and that they remain valuable and relevant to both Indigenous and

non-Indigenous Peoples living and working in Australia. This term is an abbreviation of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. It respects and is inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews, cultural protocols, cultural practices, values and beliefs.

Early Education and Care Services (EECS). For the purposes of this research EECS include services that provide early childhood education and care to children from six weeks old to five years old. In regard to EECS represented in this research it specifically means long day care or pre-school settings. Overall, the research recognises that occasional care and other service types also fall under this heading.

CHAPTER 1. CENTERING INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING IN EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Early education and care services (EECS) in Australia vary in licensed capacity, modes of operation and age range of children enrolled. For example, long day care centres (LDC), operate forty weeks per year and cater to children from six weeks to five years old while preschools (sometimes called kindergartens) often operate only during the formal school terms for children aged from three to five years old. Aside from these differences, research (Nicholas, 2010; Torii, Fox, & Cloney, 2017) and government reports (Australian Government, 2017; Wyatt, 2020) have identified that engagement in quality early education and care is key to addressing disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student achievement. Specifically, since its inception in 2017, the governments', 'Close the Gap' campaign has included access to early childhood education as one of its seven targets (Holzinger & Biddle, 2015; Kathryn, 2019; Krakouer, 2016) aimed at addressing disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy, child mortality, educational achievement, and employment outcomes.

Research shows quality early childhood education (ECE) is particularly important for vulnerable Indigenous children and can have a positive impact on school attendance and academic success. (Australian Government, 2018, p. 42)

This positioning of early childhood education as a tool for addressing disparity in academic engagement and success between Indigenous and non-Indigenous

students (Australian Government, 2019) is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, the majority of early education and care services in Australia are established and governed from a system of education that is grounded in Western worldviews, which are significantly different to Indigenous Knowledges (Martin, 2017; Nakata, 2010; L. Smith, 1999). Secondly, while the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and National Quality Standard (NQS) dictate that Indigenous Knowledges be included in all early education and care services, they fail to support and/or advise educators on how this might be achieved (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2013) (SNAICC). Thirdly, in relation to the lack of support and guidance, the literature suggests there are substantial gaps in non-Indigenous teacher education, understanding and engagement with Indigenous Peoples and our Knowledges. As a result, Indigenous Knowledges may too often be stereotypically defined and interpreted from the dominant Western standpoint which fails to understand or genuinely value the complexity and diversity of Indigenous Knowledges.

This chapter provides an overview of this research. Firstly, in accordance with cultural protocols, it introduces the researcher and shares lived experiences that situate this work. Secondly, it provides an outline of the research including an explanation of significance and an acknowledgment to Indigenous scholars who have paved the way for research such as this to be realised. Thirdly, is an overview of the research design, and finally an outline of the structure and presentation of this thesis.

1.1 SITUATING THE RESEARCHER

It is culturally appropriate that I begin by introducing myself as an Aboriginal woman and explain my connection to Country. Positioning in this way enables me to move beyond false notions of neutrality and objectivity (Martin, 2008) and to counter the Western societal and academic constructions of Indigenous Identity (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Fredericks, 2013). It is also relevant that I situate the research to myself (as the researcher) through the specific life experiences that have resulted in this thesis. In doing so, I wish to honour my Ancestors and hope to evidence my commitment to early education and care that is socially and culturally inclusive of all families, but specifically of Indigenous families who have for too long been silenced in Western society and systems of education.

1.1.1 My Country, My Story, My Motivation

I am a Boorooberongal woman of the Dharug Nation through my maternal Grandmother's (Winifred Olive Harkins—nee Locke) line to Gombeèree, a Dharug Kuradji (doctor, chief) (Tench, 1979). His son Yarramundi, is father to Bolongaia (also known as Maria Lock), the first Aboriginal child enrolled in the Parramatta Native Institution, who topped the school in the end of year exams (Locke, 2018; Sydney, 1819, April 17). To position myself in a culturally appropriate manner, the following is part of my story, which I share in order to clarify my position as an Aboriginal woman and my aspirations for this research.

When I was a child, I did not know about my connection to Dharug Country.

When I was a child, I believed I had no culture - unlike many of my friends whose families came from other countries around the world. I considered myself

most fortunate when my friends' families invited me, at different times, to share in their cultural celebrations. These experiences were exciting and fascinating to me, but they reiterated my belief that my family did not actually have any culture. However, in my late thirties all this changed when I learned about my Aboriginal family. My Grandma Win, who was born in 1921, was not told that her Father is Aboriginal. This important information was kept from her. It was a secret designed to avoid the attention of the Aborigines Protection Board who would have undoubtedly taken my blue eyed and fair skinned Grandma Win from her family (Wilkie, 1997; Wilson-Miller, 2011).

Grandma Win was well into her eighties when we received confirmation from a book documenting Dharug men who served in World War One (WWI) (Scarlett, 2011). On the front cover of this book is a photograph of Grandma Win's father (Olga Cecil Locke), her uncle and aunt (William Locke and Enid Williams) and her grandfather with his second wife (Jerome Locke and Jane Magee). The book shares information about the Locke/Lock men who enlisted and served in WWI and provides copies of their Attestation Papers that were completed at enlistment.

After receiving her own copy of this book, Grandma Win began to recall things that had made no sense when she was a child. She told us a story about a young man that approached her and her father in the street one day. She recalled that he spoke and laughed with her Dad, while she, a young girl of seven or eight, quietly looked on. When the men parted company, she asked her Dad about who he was. She said that her father laughed when he told her

that the man's name was Lesley and he was her cousin. Grandma Win told us she thought her Dad was joking round with her because the man had red hair like her, but unlike her his skin was very dark. After thinking on it, she lamented that this man probably was her cousin Lesley, but she never saw him again.

In listening to her childhood memories, I learned that as an only child Grandma Win was very lonely. Her mother discouraged her from bringing friends home from school and she was strongly discouraged by her mother from playing with dark skinned children. Even so, Grandma Win shared many fond memories of her Dad and his brothers who taught her to swim and to fish. Her Dad, Olga Locke; was quite a clever man who was very good with his hands, he made her toys and enjoyed much success with his garden and aviary, in which he raised finches and other small birds. Grandma Win talked about the times that her Dad and his brother would go out bush and spend a few nights away. She recalled a peculiar story about a time when they camped in a cave they had found. During the night, her father was woken by the sensation of a child climbing over him and both the men heard the distressed cries of a small child. Olga and his brother (William) looked but did not find any other person in the cave. They were so unsettled by the experience they decided to pack up and return home that night. Although this story may seem inconsequential it was of great value to me, as talk about and experiences with spirit are routine in my family.

For example, it is an accepted fact in my family that our Mum often knows about things before they happen. Sometimes for example a black bird will warn her when bad news is coming. As children, my siblings and I used to believe that

our Mum was a good witch; as we grew older, we just accepted this gift as a part of her persona.

However, when I was in my late 30s, a Dharug Uncle shared with me the story of the 'Death Bird', a black bird with red eyes and a flash of white under its wings. Dharug people call this bird '*duwan*' (Brook, n.d.) and it warns Dharug people when someone in their family is very ill or dying (Francis, 1936 January 20). On hearing this story, I realised the connection between Mum's gift and our ancestry. Clearly, as a Dharug woman, Mum speaks with spirit and although she was not at first aware of our Aboriginal ancestry, she has known all along how to listen to and heed the messages of the Ancestors.

These are just some of the memories and experiences that connect my family to Dharug Country, and to cultural knowledges and practices that have existed for many thousands of years. For myself, I have also heard that '*duwan*' it cried to me in 2014 when my little sister Dannie died, and again in 2016, a few weeks before Grandma Win left this place. I understand that through this bird the Ancestors help to prepare me, to enable me to brace myself for difficult times. I am proud to be a member of the Dharug Nation and am most grateful to have learned this truth in time to share it with my Grandma Win and my little sister before they left this place. The Ancestral stories and knowledges that have since been shared with us through our Dharug Elders, family and community have enabled us to feel pride and to better understand our responsibilities through interactions with Dharug family, community and Country.

As a Dharug woman and an early childhood educator, I want all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to know and embrace their connections to Country. I do not want any Indigenous child believing, as I did, that they have no culture. My wish is that this research will contribute to the increasing number of Indigenous voices advocating the validity and value of Indigenous Ways of Knowing for and with Indigenous children and their families.

1.1.2 Personal Commitment to Early Childhood Education

My role as an early childhood educator/carer began long before my enrolment in university. As the eldest of four siblings and of all my cousins, I was the designated role model and protector on my mother's side of our family. This role, that was assigned by the adults in my life (parents, aunts, uncles and neighbours), and was also, I believe, ingrained in my own sense of self and personality. This is reflected in a story my mother tells about how protective I was of my sister Julie when she was first born. At the time I was only fifteen months old, and when friends and family came to see the new baby, I would sit in front of my sister's bassinet and do my very best to stop anyone picking her up. Apparently, whenever anyone approached, even just for a look, I would scowl at them and repeat the words, 'MY Baby!'.

Of course, this is probably not too different to many other children who are protective of their younger siblings, although I remember always feeling a strong sense of responsibility and accountability to children younger than myself, and I recall many times when I would make myself available to supervise, feed, dress and/or entertain any baby or young child that came to visit our home. What

motivated me most was that young children were nearly always comfortable in my presence, and, once they knew me, they would always seek me out to assist and/or play with them.

In my very early teens, I was responsible for getting my siblings fed, dressed and out to school as Mum and Dad both worked at a factory and had to be out of the house quite early. I was in my first year of high school at this time and part of my job was to walk my brother to and from kindergarten, which was fortunately next door to the high school. When we got home from school, we were all expected to help out with specific chores and to do our homework. It was my responsibility to make sure these things were done. It was also my job to prepare the vegetables for the evening meal, so they were all ready to go when mum came in from work.

I never questioned this level of responsibility or felt burdened by it, although I must admit that I probably had somewhat of an inflated sense of self, which my sisters acknowledged with disgruntled faces when Mum would say to them, 'Listen to Michelle, I have put her in charge'. My siblings were expected to behave themselves and know what their chores and responsibilities were without me telling them. However, our father could be a very angry man and my desire to avoid anyone getting into trouble with him also drove me to over mother my siblings when our parents were at work.

From thirteen years of age I was often enlisted and trusted to babysit younger relatives and neighbourhood children. I was sometimes successful at

convincing my younger sister Julie to join me and would share any earnings with her, but she didn't find it quite as rewarding or enjoyable as I did. In Year 10 I attended a local preschool as part of the school's two-week work experience program and from that point my career trajectory of 'preschool teacher' was set clearly in my mind.

Following the HSC in which I failed English for the first time in my school career (that's another story), I was accepted into an Associate Diploma of Arts at what is now known as the Western Sydney University (WSU). After completing the first year, my application to transfer to a Diploma in Education (Early Childhood) was accepted. At the completion of the Teaching Diploma I worked full-time for a year in a council sponsored, long day care centre, after which I continued to work full-time and study part-time (two years) to earn a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood). I was the first person in my family to have earned a university degree, which was both rewarding and at times awkward, due to personal perceptions held by certain family members and peers.

For twenty-two years I continued to work in the field of early childhood education. During this time, I held different positions that included Early Childhood Teacher/Director in a variety of early education and care services, and as a teacher in Child Studies at TAFE. After the birth of my second child I continued at TAFE in child studies, and at the same time I was employed in the newly established TAFE Early Childhood Degree, and as a Transition to School Coordinator in a government-funded project that targeted children in the year

before kindergarten, who had not attended formal childcare, and included a high proportion of Indigenous children.

I have always enjoyed working in early education and care. I am always inspired by the joy and curiosity that young children express about the world and people about them. I have been fortunate to support children and their families at times of crisis, grief and challenge as well as celebrating milestones and life experiences. This has made my life full and my growth and development as an educator and a person all the better. I have the fondest memories of the times when I have been put in my place by a child and when I have been reminded to value the little things. I agree that children are often underestimated in society and education (Berryman, 2013; Martin, 2017) and that actually this world would be a much better and more caring place if we took more time to see and experience life through the eyes of our children. I have often thought that children have the answers that we as adults have forgotten to remember or else choose to ignore.

If you don't have changes in your life, then you won't grow and then you have to come back to this world to do it again because you didn't learn anything. (Nicholas Howie, 2003 - four years old)¹

1.1.3 Indigenous Higher Degree Research Indigenous (Masters – PhD)

It was a long time between completing a Bachelor of Education (1995) and enrolling into a Masters of Indigenous Education (2012). However, this was a

¹ This comment is a true reflection of my son's comment, which was documented by me in a journal at the time. In 2020, at the age of twenty, Nicholas Howie provided his permission for the inclusion of this comment in this section of the thesis.

point in time when being Aboriginal and an early childhood educator presented additional stresses and challenges. As the only Aboriginal person employed in the child studies unit at TAFE (Western Sydney), at that time I was often asked questions and was expected to advise on all things relating to Aboriginal and even Torres Strait Islander peoples and education. This, I am aware is a position that is familiar to many Indigenous people working in Western-based education (Santoro, Reid, Crawford, & Simpson, 2011; Walter & Butler, 2013) and it certainly had me questioning my rights and ability to act in this capacity. Nonetheless, through my Dharug family and community connections, I was volunteered by Aunty Val Aurisch as an appropriate candidate for a Research Assistant position with Dr Neil Harrison at Macquarie University. Through this position I was most fortunate to be introduced to Dr Michelle Trudgett who invited me to apply to the Masters of Indigenous Education.

The next five years turned out to be a period of significant change and challenge in my life. My engagement with the Masters of Indigenous Education enabled me to work at improving and strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit offered at Western Sydney TAFE in Certificate 3 and Diploma Child Care courses. I also advised and collaborated to help develop the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit for the Early Childhood Degree that TAFE NSW was launching at the time. My connections and commitments to Dharug community also increased which was essential to my increasing responsibilities as a Dharug representative in a variety of educational institutions. Whilst I studied part-time, I was also employed in three different part time/casual teaching positions.

On top of my family (including two children), study and work commitments, between 2013 and 2016 my family had suffered three unexpected and painful losses. Firstly, my youngest sister, Dannie in November 2014, then a cousin, Aunty Chris Burke, in January 2016, followed by Grandma Win in April 2016. Also, in June 2015, I separated from my husband of twelve years. I can honestly say that if it wasn't for the strength, courage and love of my family (Mum, my sister Julie and my two boys), and the support I received from my colleagues at TAFE and Macquarie University, I would not have completed the Masters and certainly wouldn't be submitting this thesis. Thus, this work is the culmination of my personal and professional life experiences to date. It is what I have and wish to contribute to the field of early education and care. With determination my intention is to support Indigenous children and their families in advocating the strength, value, relevance and beauty of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Doing and Being in society and specifically in Western-based early education and care services.

1.2 RESEARCH OUTLINE

This thesis, '*Yanna Jannawi. Centering Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Early Education and Care Services*' aims to investigate the most culturally respectful and relevant ways in which to include Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Western-based early education and care services (EECS) in Australia. The use of the term 'centering' in the title advocates that this study is interested in inclusion that is holistic as opposed to the presentation of 'one off' or 'special' activities that are offered in services during annual Indigenous events such as NAIDOC Week or Sorry Day. For the purposes of this research, it is expected that 'centred' inclusion is demonstrated through collaboration and commitment from

all stakeholders (EECS owners/managers, educators, children and their families) in recognition of the strength and value of Indigenous Peoples and our knowledges to the field of early education and care. It is important to clarify meanings and intentions of the terminology used in this research as it crosses between Indigenous and non-Indigenous epistemologies.

Even though we use the same words and phrases in our discussions of Aboriginal early childhood, we cannot be sure we are applying the same meanings. Where terms such as 'inclusive programmes', 'integrated services', and 'cultural safety' are used often, and we agree with the principles that underpin them, they are not neutral, and are embedded in particular theories based on particular concepts of learning, teaching, child rearing, children, families and early childhood education. (Martin, 2007, p.17)

A fundamental assumption that underpins this research is that Indigenous Peoples are the experts and owners of Indigenous Knowledges and as such we are the custodians of the lives and interests of our Indigenous children.

Accordingly, this work draws on and is inspired by the work of Aboriginal and First Nations scholars who continue to challenge and decolonise knowledges in the disciplines as a method for emancipating colonised peoples (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Nakata, Nakata, Keech, & Bolt, 2012; L. Smith, 1999, 2012).

Specifically, this research is strongly influenced by and indebted to Karen Martin's extensive work in articulating and advocating Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing in the academy and in the field of early education and care (Martin, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Martin & Walter, 2017).

Additionally, this work is inspired and guided by the dedication and official representation of Indigenous children by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC). In April 1979, the first Aboriginal Child Survival Seminar was held in Melbourne. Led by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), a national campaign for a legislated national network of Aboriginal childcare agencies began. As a result of this campaign, the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care was established in 1981 (SNAICC, 2020; VACCA, 2018). Since then, SNAICC have been actively engaged with Indigenous communities, governments and other organisations to advocate and action change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. In their own words:

We work in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, mainstream services and governments to develop legislation, policies, programs and practices that support safety, development and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We also produce policy and research papers, submissions, resources for services and media releases spanning early childhood development, child safety and wellbeing, and child rights. (SNAICC 2017b)

In accordance with the research intention of centering Indigenous Ways of Knowing in early education and care services this thesis endeavours to privilege the voices of Indigenous scholars. The literature has provided significant examples that support the view that when Indigenous voices are heard and heeded negative discourses can be challenged and replaced with a strengths-based approach to understanding and working with Indigenous children and

their families (Sarra, 2011; SNAICC2012b; Walter, Martin, & Bodkin-Andrews, 2017; Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011).

Significance of the Research

This research is important as it seeks the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples to identify culturally respectful and relevant inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in Western-based early education and care services (EECS). These perspectives are valuable and necessary as the EECS are established in and governed by Western educational frameworks and standards.

This research recognises that the perspectives of Indigenous educators and parents are almost certainly going to be different to non-Indigenous educators as they are operating from two very different worldviews. More importantly, (Martin, 2017) notes that Indigenous parents are rarely asked about their choices and/or expectations in regard to their child's early childhood education. Critically, the research recognises that the responsibility to include Indigenous Knowledges in EECS has been inappropriately assigned to non-Indigenous educators employed in the EECS. Thus, inclusion is managed from within a Western-based system and this results in misrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples and our knowledges.

1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research involves a qualitative inquiry employing Indigenous Standpoint Methodology (Rigney, 2001). It entrusted Indigenous educators to participate and lead the recruitment of additional Indigenous and non-Indigenous

participants. Thus, in accordance with Indigenist research practices, recruitment is Indigenous led and priority of interpretation is given to Indigenous Peoples participating in the research. Importantly, the diversity of Indigenous voices is purposely valued and presented to prevent a homogenised representation of Indigenous perspectives and/or Ways of Knowing.

In research yarning sessions the concepts of Indigenous family, Country and history were explored as focal points in identifying approaches to and understanding of culturally respectful and relevant inclusion. Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children identified positive approaches and offered suggestions of additional needs and requirements to improve on existing efforts. A smaller, third cohort provided perspectives from non-Indigenous educators employed in the Western-based EECS. These non-Indigenous educators demonstrated a common commitment to effective inclusion and shared specific examples of the use of Indigenous languages, arts and culture in their EECS. However, the dominant positioning of Western worldviews over Indigenous Knowledges was evidenced by underlying stereotypical views and assumptions expressed by non-Indigenous educators. This indicates that despite the best of intentions, non-Indigenous educators continue to rely on Western worldviews and values to interpret and include Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

In response, a relational model of inclusion grounded in Indigenous Ways of Knowing is proposed. The model illustrates the diversity, complexity and value of Indigenous Peoples and our knowledges. The model also acknowledges and

values non-Indigenous educator qualifications, levels of experience and motivation towards inclusion. However, in positioning Indigenous Peoples as the experts and owners of Indigenous Knowledges and custodians of what is passed onto Indigenous children, the model relieves the burden on non-Indigenous educators to be the authorities on inclusion. Finally, the model champions ongoing respectful and meaningful collaboration between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous educators as paramount to attaining genuine inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Western-based EECS.

1.4 STRUCTURAL OVERVIEW OF THESIS

Chapter One offered an overview of the research. It introduced the research, the researcher and situated the research in the lived experiences of the researcher. It provided an outline of the research, with an acknowledgement to specific Indigenous scholars that have influenced and strengthened this study. This overview also included an explanation of the significance of this research and an overview of the research design.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature relevant to this study. This chapter is divided into four main sections that address different but interrelated topics. Section 2.1 of this chapter explores Indigenous Knowledges from both an Indigenous and a colonial perspective. Firstly, the definition and critical importance of Country is explained from an Indigenous perspective. Additionally, the work of Martin (2008) and other Indigenous scholars is employed to provide a sound understanding of the three principles of Indigenous Knowledges. That is Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and

Doing. Secondly Section 2.1 reviews colonial perspectives and assumptions of Indigenous Peoples and our knowledges throughout the eras of invasion, protection, assimilation and integration. This historical review is necessary to better understand the ongoing negative positioning of Indigenous Peoples that continues in society and Western-based education today.

Section 2.2 focuses specifically on early education and care (EEC) in Australia. It reviews the history of EEC including political and private sector influences. This section addresses the exclusion and silencing of Indigenous children in Western-based EECS and provides a structural overview of EECS.

Section 2.3 examines government policies and early education frameworks that advocate to engage Indigenous families and/or include Indigenous Knowledges with a view to addressing the disparity in educational achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. In theory, the government's Closing the Gap initiative and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) proclaim to encourage and support Indigenous families to engage with and participate in EECS. However, critiques from the literature, in particularly literature authored by Indigenous scholars, evidence challenges and limitations that exist in the implementation of 'Close the Gap' and the EYLF. In addition, this section examines an Italian early educational framework, known as *Reggio Emilia*, (hereafter referred to as 'the Reggio Emilia approach') which is highly recognised and valued by Australian early education and care professionals. The level of interest and attention afforded to the Reggio Emilia approach is

considered and compared with the level of understanding and engagement with Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Australian EECS.

In Section 2.4 inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in EECS is assessed and classified into one of three different levels of understanding and engagement: *Core Inclusion, Collaborative Inclusion and Superficial Inclusion*. These levels were identified and informed by earlier research that investigated engagement and satisfaction of Indigenous families with EECS. Section 2.5 provides a summary of Chapter Two.

Chapter Three describes the qualitative nature of this project and identifies Indigenous Standpoint Methodology as the theoretical basis. In the first part of this chapter an overview of Indigenist Research and specific ethical considerations in researching with Indigenous Peoples is addressed. In the second part of the chapter Indigenous participant involvement in recruitment is outlined, as well as a comparison of Indigenous Ways of Knowing with the Western Early Years Learning Framework to identify the similarities and tensions these different worldviews bring to the research. The third section provides an outline of the Indigenous method of yarning as a culturally appropriate method for data collection. It also presents the research question in detail and in regard to the three different participant groups.

Chapters Four, Five and Six share data from the three different participant cohorts: firstly, Indigenous educators, secondly non-Indigenous educators and thirdly parents/carers of Indigenous children attending one of the four

nominated EECS. Each of these chapters is organised under the same three headings to enable analysis and comparison between the different participant groups. These headings are as follows.

(i) *Indigenous Knowledges and Perspectives – Respect*. Information shared in the yarning sessions related to Indigenous perspectives of Country, family and/or history was organised and discussed under this heading. The sub-heading of *Respect* indicates that while both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives were sought, Indigenous Peoples are recognised as the owners and experts of Indigenous Knowledges.

(ii) *Early Education and Care Service – Responsibility*. Information shared by participants that related specifically to the role of the early education and care service (and the educators employed there) was recorded under this main heading. Sub-headings were assigned in relation to the concepts that each participant group raised. Therefore, while there were some similarities, sub-headings are not consistent across all three participant groups. Responsibility is included in this title in direct reference to responsibility of educators and the EECS as a whole to their Indigenous families.

(iii) *Inclusive Practices – Reciprocity*. Again, sub-headings reflected the concepts addressed by participants in the different cohorts. However, the overarching theme of this section was for participants to provide examples of effective and culturally respectful inclusion. Under this heading reciprocity acknowledges the efforts and commitment of non-Indigenous educators to listen

and learn from Indigenous Peoples for the benefit of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous families engaged with the EECS. The overarching concepts of Respect, Responsibility and Reciprocity are reintroduced and explored in greater depth in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven is the discussion chapter in which the data from Chapters Four, Five and Six are considered with regards to coherency and contradictions across the identified concepts. This chapter reflects critically on challenges and barriers to effective inclusion and specifically discusses the positioning of non-Indigenous educators as the authority on inclusion. Finally, a relational model grounded in Indigenous Ways of Knowing is offered as a culturally appropriate and relevant means of establishing respectful, responsible and reciprocal relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders in early education and care. It is proposed that, in establishing and maintaining such relationships, authority over inclusion can be controlled and guided by appropriate Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous educators are relieved of the burden to include a knowledge system that is not their own.

Chapter Eight provides a conclusion to this research that includes the researcher's reflection on the research process and design, recommendations and future research opportunities that are developed from three identified limitations of this research. Following Chapter Eight are the thesis references and appendices.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) (MCEETYA) identified the necessity to include Indigenous Peoples' Knowledges in education to ensure that all children 'understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (p.9).

Likewise, *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* states that 'for Australia it [respecting diversity] also includes promoting greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being'. (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009, p. 13) (DEEWR)

The literature indicates that while these policy developments are important, they create challenges for non-Indigenous teachers who struggle to meet this criterion (Baynes, 2016; Nakata, 2010). More significantly, a lack of understanding of Indigenous Knowledges results in examples of tokenism that foster inaccurate stereotypes and create culturally unsafe environments for Indigenous children and their families.

Research has identified vast foundational differences between Indigenous Knowledges and the curricula of formal Western-based educational institutions

(N. Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Santoro et al., 2011; Semann, Proud, & Martin, 2012). As result, the literature argues that interpretation of Indigenous Knowledges from a Western educational framework produces inaccurate and at best superficial representations in Western-based educational settings (Nakata, 2010). Such misrepresentations create barriers to Indigenous engagement and participation due to a distinct lack of cultural safety and/or respect. In conjunction to this, it has also been argued that Indigenous children are confronted with unfamiliar expectations in Western-based educational settings that fail to understand and reflect Indigenous home environments (Ball & Pence, 2000; Kitson & Bowes, 2010; Taylor, 2011).

As Indigenous Knowledges are entrenched in the land on which Aboriginal people live (N. Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Kerwin, 2011; Martin, 2003, 2007, 2008; Nakata, 2002, 2007, 2010) addressing misrepresentation and stereotypical inclusive practices demands that non-Indigenous educators work with Indigenous Peoples to develop and implement relevant educational policies, frameworks and programs (Guilfoyle, Sims, Saggars, & Hutchins, 2010; Santoro et al., 2011; Semann et al., 2012). However, past government policies and practices that segregated and attempted to assimilate Indigenous Australians have created issues of trust throughout Indigenous communities towards government organisations, such as schools. In turn, this exacerbates disconnection of communities and Indigenous families from mainstream educational settings (N. Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Trudgett & Grace, 2011; Welch, 1988; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009), which has therefore affected the

extent to which Indigenous Knowledges are included, if at all, in Western-based early education and care services.

The focus of this thesis is to investigate how Indigenous Knowledges can be successfully included in early education and care services (EECS) in a manner that is culturally respectful, appropriate and relevant to the lives of firstly Indigenous children, and secondly to all children attending the service. Specifically, this inquiry prioritises Indigenous voices as it recognises Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children as the experts in defining, understanding and enacting Indigenous Knowledges.

Examining culturally relevant and respectful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges from an Indigenous perspective is fundamental to this study. However, to fully understand the barriers and challenges to culturally respectful and relevant inclusion it is necessary to consider the views and perspectives of non-Indigenous educators and more so to examine colonial attitudes and government policies that have impacted the lives of Indigenous Peoples since colonisation.

Section 2.1 begins by exploring the definition of Indigenous Knowledges from literature authored predominantly by Indigenous scholars and/or non-Indigenous scholars who are recognised as reputable advocates of Indigenous Peoples due to their extensive work with Indigenous Peoples. Following this, Section 2.1 goes on to examine and critique colonial literature on invasion and colonisation. This involves a review of how colonial biases through the eras of

invasion, protection, assimilation and integration have impacted and shaped non-Indigenous perspectives and attitudes towards Indigenous Peoples and our Knowledges.

In Section 2.2 the establishment and changing role of EECS in Australia are explored. A review of early education and care history reveals the motivation for the establishment of EECS and the political agendas and policies that impacted the development and provision of EECS. This section illustrates an absence of Indigenous children from mainstream EECS, which is indicative of the historical exclusion and segregation of Indigenous Peoples from Western-based educational institutions throughout Australia. Finally, this section provides an overview of the structure and accessibility of different EECS, including a description of EECS that have been specifically designed with and for Indigenous families.

Section 2.3 focuses on the ways in which Indigenous voices have been suppressed if not silenced, in Western-based EECS. Critiques of *Close the Gap* policies demonstrate firstly their disregard for Indigenous perspectives, and secondly negative discourses and comparisons of Indigenous students' achievement against their non-Indigenous peers. This section also indicates challenges and/or limitations of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and a preoccupation with the Reggio Emilia approach, an early education philosophy developed in Italy.

Section 2.4 investigates the literature on current practices and approaches to the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Western-based EECS. Three levels of inclusion are identified and discussed in this final section, with specific reference to and consideration of Reconciliation Action Plans in EECS.

Finally, Section 2.5 provides a summary of this literature review. It identifies the impact of colonisation and successive government policies on the development and operation of EECS in Australia. More specifically, it reiterates the ways in which Indigenous Peoples and our Knowledges have been misinterpreted, misrepresented and excluded from Western society and educational institutions. Critique of such practices provides a clearer understanding of contemporary challenges faced by non-Indigenous educators to engage in and provide EECS programs that are culturally relevant and respectful of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. This section concludes with the view that culturally respectful and relevant inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing continues to be hindered by policies and frameworks that are developed and implemented from an educational system grounded in Western worldviews.

2.1 INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES: TWO PERSPECTIVES

A humanitarian approach that respects Indigenous perspectives and knowledge could lead to an Australia where all Australians have an investment in Indigenous history and culture. It wouldn't be a case of 'us' and 'them'; rather Indigenous culture would be seen as a central part of Australian culture. It could lead to an inclusive nationalism that celebrates diverse perspectives and experiences. (Behrendt, 2016)

Understandably, Indigenous Peoples view and value Indigenous Knowledges very differently to that of peoples living and working within Western epistemological worldviews (Behrendt, 1995, 2016; Semann et al., 2012; L. Smith, 2012). However, to define Indigenous Knowledges is no simple task. From an Indigenous perspective, our knowledges are as diverse as the geographical landscapes of Australia which include ocean beaches, rivers and streams, mountain ranges, deserts, bushlands and rainforests (Kerwin, 2011). Like the landscape, our Knowledges are fluid, breathing and growing over time and space in response to ongoing seasonal and human intervention (Moran, Newlin, Mason, & Roberts, 2011; Nakata, 2010). In contrast, non-Indigenous views of Indigenous Peoples and our knowledges are perceived through a very different lens forged in Western epistemological understanding.

Among the new settlers, a myth quickly developed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were uneducable. For a long time, it was seen by many that our children were only fit to learn to sew, launder, cook, clean, garden, build fences, tend livestock and generally participate in more menial tasks. There was little or no formal education and certainly any of little value. (Price & Rogers, 2019, p. 5)

This review of the literature explores varying Indigenous and non-Indigenous standpoints in education. It illustrates the powerful roles that Western-based research and practice play in appropriating, distorting and erasing Indigenous Knowledges in favour of biased Western worldviews.

2.1.1 Indigenous Knowledges: An Indigenous Perspective

Literature that centres Indigenous voices (Behrendt, 1995; N. Harrison, 2011; Kerwin, 2011; Nakata, 2010) reports that prior to invasion Indigenous Knowledges encompassed many languages, lore and protocols which were dictated by Country, Kinship and Ancestors. A number of Indigenous scholars (Grace & Trudgett, 2012; Kerwin, 2011; Martin, 2003, 2007; Moreton-Robinson, 2003; Townsend-Cross, 2004) have referred to this holistic approach to learning and living as 'Indigenous Ways of Knowing'. Martin (2003; 2008) identifies Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing as a relational ontology, in which relationships are inclusive of all interactions that people have with one another, the natural world and the spirit world. This understanding of Indigenous Knowledges as relational is supported by many Indigenous scholars who, like Martin (2003; 2008), identify Country as core to Indigenous life and Ways of Knowing (Fredericks, 2013; Kwaymullina, 2017; Nakata, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009).

2.1.1.1 Country

For many Indigenous people 'Country' is an entity, not unlike a human relative, and as such is indicative of identity and is the core of Indigenous belonging (Martin, 2016a; Nakata, 2010; Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011). Indigenous links to Country involve complex kinship systems that connect people to the landscape, plants and animals. When Indigenous people move across the land, they seek permission to enter into the Country of another and contemporary protocols of 'Acknowledgement to Country' and 'Welcome to Country' continue across Australia today. Before invasion when all Indigenous Peoples had full

sovereignty over the lands on which they lived, Indigenous people from different nations would come together at significant times of the year, to share knowledge, resources, to settle disputes and to strengthen kinship ties through marriage (Bodkin & Bodkin-Andrews, n.d; Bodkin & Robertson, 2013; Kohen, 1993, 2009).

The Country on which an Indigenous family resides defines and dictates Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing (Behrendt, 1995; Burgess et al., 2009; Dudgeon, Herbert, Milroy, & Oxenham, 2017). Each Country has specific rules for all facets of Indigenous life, from the harvesting and hunting of food to Lore regarding relationship conventions and marriage. Elders of each community continue to share stories, through yarning and song lines that were created by the Ancestors at the very beginning of time—‘The Dreaming’ (N. Harrison, 2011; Kerwin, 2011; Kwaymullina, 2005; Nakata, 2010; Verran, Christie, Anbins-King, Van Weeren, & Yunupingu, 2007). These stories explain and enforce the expectations and accountabilities of all Indigenous people living together in a specific area. (Kerwin, 2011; Martin, 2003; Nakata, 2002, 2010; Semann et al., 2012). Prior to invasion all Indigenous children learned to identify and care for the plants and animals through instruction on their Country, which ensured positive health and welfare of all people, plants, animals and the natural environment.

In Aboriginal society, intellectual property is used in much the same way, [as Western knowledge is recorded in text books], intangible knowledge is converted into a tangible cultural expression through the vehicle of storytelling, song, dance, lines drawn in the dirt, into symbolic rock art, carved figures and ornaments, or the crafting of the various organic materials such as wood and stone into useable functional objects. These

provided the means for Elders to establish their position in the clan group and to teach. Other methods used to convert intangible knowledge into a tangible teaching medium are, for example, body paintings and ground paintings. (Kerwin, 2011, p. 254)

In the Indigenous space, education and learning involves all aspects of life and is particularly centred on relationships in which respect, responsibility and accountability are mainstays (Martin, 2003, 2007, 2008). Herbert (2017) also includes reciprocity to this list, which indicates that, for these relationships to be successful, respect, responsibility and accountability must be reciprocal. Martin (2008) presents Indigenous Knowledges as a relational ontology that sits within the epistemological framework of Knowing, Being and Doing.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing continue to be passed down from generation to generation through storying, yarning, songlines, and dance as well as via various art forms. Invasion and colonisation have dramatically changed the Australian landscape in many ways. Thus, the ways in which Indigenous Australians engage, interpret and interact with Country have changed accordingly. For example Verran et al. (2007) explored a variety of contemporary digital databases and interfaces to share and preserve Indigenous Knowledges for future generations. This, without question, contrasts practices of oral storying and songlines; however, the core of these actions is the continual validation and passing down of Indigenous Knowledges to the next generations of Indigenous custodians.

2.1.1.2 Indigenous Knowledges: Pre- and Post-Invasion

Whilst education prior to invasion did not involve the production of journal articles, text books or digital databases, evidence of information sharing and documentation exists in the form of our Ancestral stories (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Francis, 1936 January 20; Kerwin, 2011; Kwaymullina, 2017), rock engravings, Indigenous art, tools as well as in colonial records (Pascoe, 2014). Evidence is present also in the survival of a small number of some two hundred and fifty Indigenous languages and the remnants of other Indigenous languages that are categorised as Aboriginal English today (N. Harrison & Greenfield, 2011). Many Indigenous artefacts which have suffered the effects of examination, assessment and interpretation through a Western lens remain valid examples of the diverse nature of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and the ways in which these knowledges were and continue to be shared between generations.

Despite the divisive intrusion of the British, Indigenous Ways of Knowing continue to exist. Admittedly, many of the ways in which Indigenous Knowledges are practices have changed since invasion. Cultural practices and languages that are imbedded into the physical attributes of land, sea and sky cannot go unaffected when the land itself is torn up, the waterways redirected and the skies polluted (Moran et al., 2011). However, change does not equal extinction; change in this way provides a sound and definitive example of the strength and resilience of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Indeed Fredericks Fredericks (2013, p.4) notes that, despite physical changes to urban areas, Indigenous people retain "*Indigenous belonging and Indigenous ownership of*

place”, through our ancestral connections to the Country on which towns and cities are built. This is of particular importance to EECS that operate in urban areas, whose educators may assume that buildings, roads and other human made structures eliminate connection to and the significance of Country to Indigenous Peoples living and/or working in urbanised locations.

In addition, the forced removal and dislocation of Indigenous Peoples from our families and Countries has given strength and credit to a non-Indigenous view that Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing are ‘traditional’ ways of living and therefore extinct or without merit in contemporary society (Behrendt, 1995; M. Dodson, 1994; Fredericks, 2013; L. Smith, 2012).

However, Indigenous Knowledges are and have always been inclusive of past, present and future practices and life experiences of Indigenous Peoples. Whilst contemporary practices are not identical to those of Indigenous Peoples prior to invasion, they remain the intellectual property and lived experience of Indigenous Peoples (Janke, 2005; Watson, 2005). In response to these inaccurate assumptions, the next three sections of this chapter specifically explore Martin’s (2003, 2008) demonstration of Indigenous Knowledges under three separate but related actions of ‘Knowing’, ‘Being’ and ‘Doing’.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Indigenous Ways of Knowing are entrenched in our connection to the land which we are both connected to and responsible for (N. Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Kerwin, 2011; Nakata, 2010; Ngurra et al., 2019). When an Indigenous

child is born into the world, they are considered as an individual with the capacity to grow and learn through all interactions with people and the Country to which they are connected (Behrendt, 1995; Martin, 2003, 2008, 2016b; Nakata, 2010). Indigenous children are often afforded more autonomy from parents and Indigenous community members than that of non-Indigenous children (Berryman, 2013; Guilfoyle et al., 2010).

Martin (2007) states that Indigenous Ways of Knowing are based on a relational ontology and, as such, learning occurs all the time through ongoing interactions with people and the environment. Unlike the Western system of education, Ways of Knowing are not focussed on specific subject matter or skills that will be tested and measured by specially manufactured assessments (Welch, 1988). Ways of Knowing involve watching, listening, talking, practising and engaging in everyday life experiences that in turn develop and build on skills, ability, understanding, responsibility and accountability to others (N. Harrison, 2011; Nakata, 2010; Wilson, 2008; Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011). These same skills are also valued in Western-based education systems; however, there is a clear demarcation of participant roles in Western systems of education. Relationships of power and control of the knowledge holder (teacher) over the learner are accepted conditions of this system. Formal instruction from an academically qualified teacher is expected to result in evidenced-based adoption and replication of specified skills and abilities. In contrast to this, Martin (2008, p.72) informs us that:

The core conditions of Ways of Knowing are to know, as fully as it is possible, 'who your People are', 'where your Country is' and 'how you are related to the Entities'. That is to know your Stories of relatedness,

the individual and communal Stories and through this, your identities unfold.

In this case, identity and belonging are crucial components of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and as a result involve knowledge transference from many participants that are not dictated solely by academic qualifications, age, time frames or species (Kwaymullina, 2017).

Indigenous Ways of Being

A recent collection of works by Dudgeon et al. (2017) shares the voices of fifteen Indigenous women, all of whom explained their own stories of 'Being'. Whilst each story is unique in content and detail, the underlying core of each story revolves around the role that relationships to people and places play in their lives as Indigenous women. These include relationships with self, family, community, society and in the case of this particular book the relationships that these women have to one another as Indigenous academics (Oxenham & Milroy, 2017).

The themes and topics that are presented by these Indigenous women range in diversity from identity, gender, sexuality and Indigenous role models to storying, colonisation and self-reflection. However, in each story examples of respect, responsibility and accountability can be found. According to Martin (2008), from the Quandamookah epistemological perspective, respect, responsibility and accountability are the three conditions that dictate Indigenous Ways of Being and these conditions enable Indigenous Peoples to confirm and retain their

relatedness with '*self and the Entities*', the '*Entities*' meaning all aspects of Country (animals, plants, earth, waterways and sky).

From this perspective, Ways of Being are not confined by written forms of identification or qualifications, such as those required by Western laws and organisations. Rather, 'Being' is demonstrated in the way one shares knowledge, stories and themselves with all entities. Kwaymullina (2017) provides an excellent example in which all three conditions of respect, responsibility and accountability are visible:

What stories can we as women now tell to ourselves and our children that will enable us to value our holistic Indigenous selves? That will equip us to perceive and sustain the connections between people and people, and people and Country, which have always been the core of an Indigenous way of being? And that have allowed us to so far overcome the devastation of colonisation so that we can imagine the possibility of a better world for ourselves and for future generations of Indigenous people. (p.100)

This comment is respectful in the way that it acknowledges Indigenous people as holistic and recognises the value and significance of connections to people and Country. It expresses responsibility to one's self and to Indigenous children in all time frames, past, present and future. Additionally, it expresses accountability in the way that it speaks to the strength and abilities of Indigenous people to overcome the effects of colonisation and of providing Indigenous children with a future in which they have the potential to be proud and strong in their Indigenous identities.

Nakata (2010) also exhibits these three conditions of 'Being', respect, responsibility and accountability, in his paper that addresses the cultural interface between Torres Strait Islander Knowledge of Dugongs and that of Western-based science. Firstly, he demonstrates a high level of *respect* for the vast knowledge and skills of his Ancestors and family in hunting Dugongs. Secondly, he expresses his *responsibility* to learn this knowledge and skills in listening to the stories told by his parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and in actively participating to attain these skills. Finally, Nakata (2010) acknowledges his *accountability* to ensuring this knowledge and skills are passed onto future generations of Torres Strait Islander children in his community.

In this paper, Nakata (2010) also identifies the challenges of upholding Torres Strait Islander beliefs and methods with the conflicting views and expectations of Western approaches to conservation. He identifies that there are benefits to working with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges and approaches in protecting the Dugong from extinction. However, he emphasises that it is of critical importance that Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives are included in research agendas and policies developed from such research.

Frustrations occur when research agendas do not always appear to respond to Islander concerns about sustaining the marine environment and its resources in the interests of our people (Nakata, 2010, p.54).

It is clear that whilst Martin (2008) is able to express and engage with Indigenous Ways of Being from a strong and well documented Indigenous Quandamookah epistemology, there is more than one way in which to enact

Ways of Being. Understandably this is indicative of the diverse nature of Indigenous Ways of Knowing; however, Ways of Being has also been reframed by the effects of invasion. This point has been clearly articulated by Moreton-Robinson (2000) in the text below:

Individuals learn to acquire new knowledge in order to act and function in contexts not of their choosing or control within the dominant culture. Indigenous women have had to gather knowledge about white people and use it in order to survive in white Australian society. The accumulation of such knowledge does not mean that we have become assimilated. Instead, what it points to is that Indigenous subjectivity is multiple because of the conditions under which it has been and is shaped. (p.89)

Indigenous Ways of Doing

Indigenous Ways of Doing is the third aspect of the Quandamookah epistemological framework identified by Martin (2008). It is reliant on '*knowing*' how one is related to Country, and the associated entities, as well as '*being*' clear on the expectations of respect, responsibility and accountability within that same space. Doing then is about how one engages with Country and the entities; from Martin's (2008) point of view it is a complex system which involves both the process and the practices of engaging and enacting relatedness to Country with all entities across all paradigms, from physical to spiritual.

However, it is important to note that enacting relatedness to Country in the manner prescribed by Martin (2008) has been severely impacted for many Indigenous Peoples. Discriminatory government policies of segregation, protection and assimilation have impeded our ability to access our Ancestral

stories and enact our relatedness to Country and this has given rise to non-Indigenous views that question our identities (Carlson, 2016; Fredericks, 2013). However, when considered from a broader viewpoint, which recognises that Indigenous Ways of Doing is directly related to how Indigenous 'business' is done, it can be seen that, despite forced removal from Country, Indigenous Peoples continue to engage in Ways of Doing.

Although the Australian social, political and physical landscapes have been changed as a result of invasion, practices such as respecting Elders, caring for and connection to Country and responsibility to community are all evidenced in the literature (Behrendt, 1995; Fredericks, 2013) as well as in the lives of Indigenous Australians. For instance, there are Indigenous scholars and researchers who are advocating and implementing Indigenous research methodologies in Western institutions (Kovach, 2010; Martin, 2003, 2008; Rigney, 2001; L. Smith, 2012). In mainstream society and in Indigenous communities across Australia there are Indigenous people actively fulfilling a wide diversity of roles from politicians to artists and filmmakers to homemakers. Arguably, these are all examples of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing (Behrendt, 1995; Dudgeon et al., 2017; Fredericks, 2013).

For myself, a Boorooberongal woman of the Dharug Nation, the very act of writing and engaging in this thesis is a genuine expression of my Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. In the process of meeting the requirements of this PhD process I endeavour to remain respectful, responsible and accountable to my Aboriginal Ancestors, family and community. The fact that

my Grandmother (an only child) was not told about her connection to this Country and did not learn this truth until she was in her eighties meant that my family for at least two generations were in some ways lost. On learning in 2008 about her father's identity and her connection to Dharug Country, my Grandmother cried, and she said, '*There are things in my childhood that make sense to me now*'. From this point in time, my Grandmother began to remember more and more experiences from her childhood and youth, which she shared with laughter, tears and pride. For myself, this journey brings me back to centre, back home to Country. As a young person I believed I personally had no culture, I knew that my mum and her mum were born in Australia and that my father was born in England, and we didn't observe any specific religious or cultural obligations. Yet, through mum and Grandma Win, my siblings and I understood the presence and protection of spirit, of the people that have passed and of the natural world. Despite the silence about our Indigenous connections to Country (our Knowing), Indigenous Ways of Being and Doing have always been a part of my life and now because I am privileged to be a PhD candidate one of my responsibilities is to speak up for my Grandmother and our Ancestors who were silenced.

2.1.2 INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES: COLONIAL MISREPRESENTATIONS

Indigenous Australian Peoples and our way of life have been overwhelmingly viewed and documented by non-Indigenous people since before Captain Cook first explored the coast of Australia (M. Dodson, 1994; Pascoe, 2014; Williams, 1981). Some Indigenous authors have gone as far as to say that Indigenous Australians are in fact one of the most studied and documented groups of

people on the earth (Martin, 2003; L. Smith, 2012). This could lead one to think that much is known and understood about Indigenous Knowledges in this Country; however, this could not be further from the truth. British explorers and subsequent colonists that came to inhabit the land largely failed to understand the complexities of Indigenous Australian lives. Relying only on their own Western views and values, they produced racially biased accounts and records of Indigenous Peoples and our Ways of Knowing (Nakata, 2014a; L. Smith, 2012).

In order to understand contemporary perspectives and positioning of Indigenous Peoples and our Ways of Knowing in Western society and education it is necessary to examine Indigenous policy in Australia from invasion through the eras of protection, assimilation and integration.

2.1.2.1 Invasion

Journal entries from Captain James Cook and Joseph Banks' expedition on board the HMAS Endeavour in 1770 provide clear examples of the way in which Indigenous Peoples were studied and assessed by values and standards grounded in Western worldviews. Whilst expressing his opinion that the '*natives*' are a happy people, Cook's statement that, "*they covet not magnificent houses or household stuff*" (Williams, 1981, p.499) demonstrates his assumption of Indigenous Australians as simple and uncivilised.

Similarly, in regard to his own accounts, Banks acknowledges that his observations of Indigenous Australian Peoples were strongly influenced by

preconceived ideas founded in the earlier records of William Dampier (1703). It is important to note that whilst Dampier's records were highly derogatory, they were valued as a reputable source of information for over a century (Mulvaney, 1958). Dampier's (1703) specific observation of an Aboriginal man whom he assumed to be a chief or leader, due to the 'paint' on his body, clearly expresses his disregard and general lack of respect for Indigenous Peoples in his assessment of the Aboriginal people he came in contact with on the Western Australian coastline (note that 's' replaces 'f' in the text below).

This his Painting adding very much to his natural Deformity ; for they all of them of the moft unpleafant Looks and the word [worst] Features of any People that ever I faw, tho' I have feen great variety of Savages. Thefe N. Hollanders were probably the fame fort of People as thofe I met with on this Coaft in my Voyage round the World ; [See Vol. I. p. 464, &c .2 for the Place I then touch'd at was not a- hove [above] 40 or 50 Leagues to the N. E. of this : And thefe were much the lame blinking Creatures (here being alfo abundance of the fame kind of Flelh-flies telzing them) and with the fame black Skins, and Hair frizld, tall and thin, etc. as thofe were. (Dampier, 1703, p. 148)

Clearly this interpretation of Indigenous Australian Peoples is derived from difference to himself and his Western epistemology (M. Dodson, 1994). From these examples, it is clear that Indigenous Australians were considered as curiosities and as subjects to be studied (M. Dodson, 1994; Martin, 2003; Nakata, 2002; L. Smith, 2012). Cook himself admits that they failed to gain any understanding of the culture of Indigenous people:

We could know but little of their customs as we never were able to form any connections with them, they had not so much as touch'd the things we had left in their hutts on purpose for them to take away. (Williams, 1981, p.502)

It is interesting to note that Cook appears bewildered by the fact that the Indigenous people did not use the items that were left in their huts by the explorers. The fact that the explorers entered the huts without permission and left foreign items in the homes of the Indigenous people was clearly not acknowledged as trespassing, or in the least as disrespectful. This highlights the assumed superiority these non-Indigenous men assigned themselves over Indigenous Peoples (Parbury, 2011b; Welch, 1988). Historical records show that Governor Phillip as leader of the First Fleet was instructed specifically:

You are to endeavour by every possible means to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoying our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them. (Bladen, Alexander, & Cook, 1892, p.89)

However, as mentioned previously, the intentions of the British were underpinned by so little understanding that any good intention was bound to fail due to their deep-seated view of 'natives' as inferior (Behrendt, 1995; Pascoe, 2014; Tripcony, 2000). This belief was inspired by Dampier (1703) and consolidated by the philosopher Rousseau (1712–1778) who was first to propose the concept of 'the noble savage'. This overly romanticised notion was initially afforded to Indigenous Peoples of Australia by English explorers and missionaries (J. Miller; Nakata, 2014a; L. Smith, 2012). Certainly, Cook's expectations and approaches to Indigenous Australians reflected that of his peers and predecessors of his time.

Cook's backers expected him to see a Noble Savage and he did not disappoint them. He was a man of his times who came home with the expectations of his times. (J. Miller, 1985, p. 22)

Schools of Western Science (including archaeology and anthropology) investigated, discussed and categorised Indigenous Australian peoples as inferior in all ways to European peoples. These are only a small selection of examples set in a time of 'exploration' and 'discovery'. Arguably, they offer a sound representation of the attitudes and opinions of non-Indigenous people at the time, which inevitably underpin the very foundations of today's contested histories and understanding of Indigenous Knowledges. Indigenous scholars report that the unquestioned acceptance of the superiority of Western knowledge and practices over that of Indigenous Knowledges is still prevalent in society today (Behrendt, 1995; Herbert, 2013; Hutchins, Frances, & Saggars, 2009; Kearney, McIntosh, Perry, Dockett, & Clayton, 2014; St. Denis, 2011).

Specifically, L. Smith (2012) notes:

The collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about Indigenous Peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the west, and then through the eyes of the west, back to those who have been colonised. (p. 1)

It is from this beginning that Western sciences and schools of thought began their control of the literature produced about Indigenous Australians and our knowledge systems (Battiste, 2005; Behrendt, 1995, 2016; Christie, 1994; Coopes, 2009; Martin, 2003; Nakata, 2010; Welch, 1988).

2.1.2.2 Protection

Following invasion, the policies of protection² were established across Australia in response to the predominant idea that Indigenous Australian peoples were dying out (Behrendt, 2010; Parbury, 2011a).

By the time Australia's constitution came into force in 1901, it was assumed that Aboriginal people were a dying race. The framers of Australia's constitution did not reserve any place within the foundational document for the recognition of Aboriginal people nor for their laws or sovereignty. (Behrendt, 2010, p.187)

However, under the guise of 'protection', Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their families and communities. Indigenous children were placed in foster care with non-Indigenous families or in institutions, such as missions (Behrendt, 2013) and reserves where their daily lives were governed by non-Indigenous people (Wilkie, 1997). This forced removal of children was a deliberate and effective act that severed critical Indigenous links to Country which have been evidenced as core to Indigenous Ways of Knowing (Martin, 2003; Nakata, 2010). Identified today as the 'Stolen Generations', extensive research and literature document the ongoing and intergenerational impacts of the government's removal policies (Douglas & Walsh, 2013; Wilkie, 1997; Williams-Mozley, 2019).

During the protection era, attitudes and beliefs of prominent non-Indigenous

² Aborigines Protection Acts were passed in each state beginning in Victoria (1886), Queensland (1897), Western Australia (1905), New South Wales (1909) and South Australia (1911). Under these acts Aboriginal People were excluded from being British subjects and alternatively made wards of the state in which they lived. In each state a Chief Protector was appointed to oversee and govern the lives of all Aboriginal people in his jurisdiction (N. Harrison & Sellwood, 2016).

men, such as anthropologist Sir Baldwin Spencer (1860–1929) supported the development and implementation of government policies and practices that firstly excluded and later segregated Indigenous children from formal education.

The structural simplicity of the Indigenous Australian brain meant that 'he is like an overgrown child in matters of character and emotional expression, and ill-suited to higher forms of education. (Sir Baldwin Spencer, as cited in Parbury, 2011a)

Thus, formal Western education for Indigenous children involved experimental schools, such as the Parramatta Native Institute in New South Wales which was established by Governor Macquarie in 1814 (Cruickshank, 2008; Parbury, 2011a) and the Merri Creek Aboriginal School in Victoria 1848–1851 (Christie, 1994). These schools were established with the specific intention of 'civilising' Indigenous children through the provision of Western knowledge and the indoctrination of Christianity, under the general policy of protection. These first mission schools were relatively short lived. Lippman (as cited in Tripcony, 2000) suggested three factors that led to the failure of such institutions:

- a) Elders feared that the school was destroying Aboriginal values and did not give their support.
- b) Children found the curriculum irrelevant; and
- c) British colonists resented government expenditure on Aborigines whom they believed to be inferior.

Exclusion of Indigenous children from mainstream schools was supported by legislation that identified children as uneducable; in fact Parbury (2011a, p.133) notes that in 1848 in NSW it was deemed 'impracticable to provide any form of educational facilities for the children of the Blacks'.

To address the number of Indigenous children excluded from mainstream schools the Protection Board³ developed a policy that justified the segregation of Indigenous children to specialised schools whose educational aims ironically centred on assimilation (Prochner, 2004). Such schools were often located on Aboriginal missions, run by missionaries or stations which were reserves of land that Aboriginal people were forcibly relocated to (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2019) (AIATSIS). This is a clear example of the perpetuation of negative stereotypical attitudes and biases surrounding Indigenous intellect and social acuity.

2.1.2.3 Assimilation

In a government policy shift from protection to assimilation⁴ from 1937 until the late 1960s Indigenous children were expected to attend Western-based mainstream schools (N. Harrison & Sellwood, 2016). However, this endeavour was severely hampered by non-Indigenous parents who did not want their children attending schools in which Aboriginal children were also present. In response, authority was given to school principals to exclude Indigenous children if non-Indigenous parents protested (N. Harrison, 2011; N. Harrison & Sellwood, 2016; Parbury, 2011a).

³ 'A Board of Protection to the Aborigines' was established by the NSW Government on 2 June 1883 (Stuart, 1883).

⁴ 'The assimilation policy means in the view of all governments that all aborigines and part-aborigines are expected to eventually attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians' (Hasluck, 1961, p. 1). It is important to note that whilst the terminology used in this government document i.e., 'aborigines', 'part-aborigine' was often used at the time, it is now considered racist due to its association of identity to skin colour, rather than ancestral connections to Country.

Education provided in mission schools that were run exclusively for Indigenous children was of poor quality in comparison to mainstream schools for non-Indigenous children. Unqualified, non-Indigenous teachers with minimal and low quality resources were employed; more importantly these teachers were not offered any instruction on Indigenous Ways of Knowing (Parbury, 2011a; Partington, 2002). Cultural racism and deficit theory were the driving forces behind the agendas of these schools. Whilst reading and writing were taught, the level to which Indigenous children could progress was controlled, due to beliefs in Western science that Aboriginal Australians were less intelligent and therefore not capable of achieving the same standards in formal education as non-Aboriginal people (Parbury, 2011a). In contrast to this deficit positioning, Indigenous children were expected to conform to and adopt the beliefs and values of the Western education system (Battiste, 2005; Moreton-Robinson, 2009; Wilson-Miller, 2011).

The ideology underlying the assimilation era had been that if Aboriginal Australians could adopt the values and behaviours of white Australia, they would be accepted into the majority society. Education was seen as the vehicle for assimilation. (Malin & Maidment, 2003, p. 86)

The policy of assimilation involved and continued the forced removal of Indigenous children into non-Indigenous homes and institutions right up to the 1970's (Wilkie, 1997). Western education was viewed as a means to assimilating what remained of the Indigenous population into Western society.

The Inquiry's process of consultation and research has revealed that the predominant aim of Indigenous child removals was the absorption or assimilation of the children into the wider, non-Indigenous, community so

that their unique cultural values and ethnic identities would disappear, giving way to models of Western culture. (Wilkie, 1997, p. 237)

Assimilating Indigenous Peoples into Western society eliminated the need to understand or support Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Thus, education of Indigenous children was defined and controlled by the government and its purpose was to erase Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

2.1.2.4 Integration and Beyond

Under the policy of integration, which was introduced in Australia in 1965, Indigenous Australian peoples were able to live according to their own cultural practices and protocols, providing there was no conflict with laws established by the colonial government. However, this policy did not automatically change or address the segregation or exclusion of Indigenous Peoples in public places or in schools (N. Harrison & Sellwood, 2016). In fact, in NSW public school principals retained their right to refuse entry to Aboriginal students until 1972 (NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc, 2020; Price & Rogers, 2019).

Prior to the 1967 Referendum each state and territory of Australia oversaw the care, welfare and education of Aboriginal peoples living in their jurisdictions. Following an affirmative vote, from over ninety percent of the population, the Commonwealth Government was given the power to make national laws with respect to Aboriginal people and to include Aboriginal Australian people in the national census. This meant that the Commonwealth Government was responsible now for the education of Indigenous Peoples.

Over the next eight to ten years bodies such as the Commonwealth Department of Education (CDE) and the Aboriginal Consultative Group to the Commonwealth Schools Commission made recommendations to address the educational needs of Indigenous Peoples in Australia (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975). From such recommendations, the Commonwealth Government provided some funding for Indigenous educational initiatives such as grants for secondary Aboriginal students and the appointment of Aboriginal Teacher's Aides (Price & Rogers, 2019). However, a report presented in 1978 by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) advised that the disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educational attainment indicated Indigenous students were 'handicapped' by the school system and that this would impact negatively on future Indigenous education and employment opportunities (Keeves, 1978). In 1977 with an increasing focus on Indigenous self-determination the Aboriginal Consultative Group was replaced by the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC) to 'Advise the Commonwealth Minister for Education and his Department on the educational needs of Aboriginal people and the most appropriate ways of meeting these needs'. (NAEC, as cited in Price & Rogers, 2019)

In 1979, research conducted by the NAEC strongly advocated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be provided opportunities to gain qualifications and employment as teachers. Encouragingly, one specific recommendation which proposed a goal for 1000 Indigenous teachers to be in classrooms by 1990 was met, with the support of teacher education scholarships through the CDE. Additionally, the NAEC organised major national

conferences and effectively enabled consultations with Indigenous parents, families and scholars to provide Indigenous perspectives to the development of the National Aboriginal Education Policy (AEP). This policy later became known as the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NATSIEP) (Price & Rogers, 2019).

Initially, the implementation of the AEP was considered a positive indication of the government's commitment to improved educational outcomes for Indigenous students. However, Holt (2016) points out that the final AEP that was approved and implemented by the government failed to reflect or define key aims and philosophies that were integral in the NAEC policy document. Additionally, Holt (2016) noted that the NAEC's influence and control over the AEP was severed when the NAEC was dissolved in 1989 and replaced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) in 1990.

Contemporary Indigenous Scholars also critique the length of time it took the government to seriously consider the perspectives of or seek advice and guidance from Indigenous Peoples in regard to Indigenous education. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NATSIEP), originally known as the Aboriginal Education Policy (AEP), came after two centuries of exclusion, segregation, racism and assimilation in society and education. In a presentation to the National Education and Employment Forum, Tripcony (2000) noted that, before the emergence of the NATSIEP in 1989 the fundamental right to education had not been effectively extended to Indigenous

students from the 'long-term generic policies and practices of which education was merely one component'.

Almost ten years after Tripcony's (2000) presentation, scholars are increasingly vocal in the literature and active in the echelons of power in critiquing NATSEIP. Coopes (2009) identified that little attention was paid to the actual curriculum and making changes so that it would become relevant to the cultural knowledge and ways of learning of its Indigenous Australian students. Likewise, Arbon (2008) states that the NATSIEP was focused on addressing issues of equity and access of Indigenous students to mainstream educational measures and requirements and so in this way the NATSIEP is representative of Indigenous inclusion in the hands of non-Indigenous controls and measures.

In exploring the positioning of Indigenous Peoples in educational policy development, Herbert (2012) argued that non-Indigenous policy makers are central in the dominant system and that policies were developed to ensure that this position is maintained, with Indigenous Australians on the periphery. This signifies an ongoing expectation of Indigenous participation in a system of education that continues to disregard Indigenous Ways of Knowing. In regard to the representation of contemporary Indigenous voices in education, Holt (2016) maintains that:

Although we have seen significant improvements initiated by the work of the NAEC, there are still challenges. These are no longer the same challenges that Aboriginal people endured prior to the 1970s, but new challenges with some of the old flavours of assimilation, integration and racism. We now witness the continued challenge of maintaining a space and a voice within the Australian education system. Since the era of the

NAEC, never has there been an independent body that has had a consolidated viewpoint spanning all levels of education nationally. Not since, has there been the level of collectiveness and shared vision that was created by the NAEC. (p. 296)

Evidently, as non-Indigenous voices hold the power to influence educational policy, Western worldviews will continue to dictate not only what constitutes valid knowledge, but also control who is entitled to access this knowledge (Coopes, 2009; Moreton-Robinson, 2003). While there have been significant changes in Indigenous policies since invasion, the fact remains that all levels of education continue to be dominated by Western worldviews and values.

2.2 EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE IN AUSTRALIA

This section of the literature review provides an overview of the development of early education and care services and policies in Australia. It begins with a distinct lack of information about how the establishment of early education and care services affected, involved or specifically impacted Indigenous children. Indigenous children were not considered in the development or implementation of early education and care services from the time of colonisation until 1981 when a National Indigenous Advisory Board was established *'to guide the development of policies and programs by government and the non-government sector'* (SNAICC 2017b). Research in Canada, Australia and New Zealand by Prochner (2004) and others (N. Harrison, 2011; Parbury, 2011a) notes that there were no consultations or agreements made with Indigenous Australians about the education or care of Indigenous children. The education of Indigenous Australians largely took the form of assimilation and Christianisation. O'Brien

(2008) provides an insight into the reasoning behind this position in stating that: 'The British government's vision of a reformed capitalist outpost needed the Indigenous population to be civilised and Christianised.' (p.161)

Therefore, the information presented in this section of the literature review is representative of the exclusion and silencing of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Indigenous voices in the arena of early education and care in Australia up until 1981. It is necessary to understand the establishment and development of early education and care in Australia as the contested roles and values of early education and care services in Australian society have influenced subsequent Indigenous engagement and participation.

2.2.1 Brief History of Early Education and Care Services in Australia.

In the late 19th to early 20th century, childcare centres emerged in Australia as charitable welfare services for poor non-Indigenous families (Elliott, 2006; Henrich, 2013). During WWII, the provision of early childhood services expanded to enable women to work in support of the war effort, after which debates about the role of women and the pros and cons of early childhood care arose and continued well into the 1980s. In the 1950s and 60s early education gained popularity when 'families sought enhanced preparation for school and a break from day-to-day parenting' (Elliott, 2006, p. 3). Commonwealth Government funding of preschools and kindergartens began as late as the 1970s to enable a greater number of families access to the educational benefits of early education.

More recently, from 2008 the Australian Government specifically identified the value of early education to Indigenous students in the ongoing 'Close the Gap' campaign. Thus, the engagement of Indigenous children with early education is intended as a means to increase and retain Indigenous students in formal schooling. However, a review of the history of early education in Australia evidences an absence of Indigenous families as a result of government policies of protection and assimilation. Thus, the history of early education in Australia also provides clear insight into the challenges and barriers to Indigenous inclusion in this level of education.

2.2.1.1 Early Education and Care from Colonisation

R. Harrison (1985) identifies that during the colonisation of Australia no provisions for the care or education of young non-Indigenous children were evident. Additionally, Henrich (2013) and Elliott (2006) cite the extremely poor and destitute conditions that many colonial families were living in which exacerbated health and welfare issues of children. Consequently, education and care began as a response to the high levels of poverty and ill health experienced by many of the colonial families, which is described in more detail below (Elliott, 2006; R. Harrison, 1985; Henrich, 2013).

Distinction between the classes, specifically free settlers and convicts, emerged swiftly which also led to a divide between attitudes and perceptions of 'care' verses 'education' (Elliott, 2006; R. Harrison, 1985). Interestingly there is evidence that these distinctions are still prevalent in the field of early education and care today, especially in relation to families who are identified as low socio-

economic or marginalised people where issues of access to affordable high quality services are apparent (Baxter & Hand, 2013; Elliott, 2006).

In the mid to late 1800's free services provided by private beneficiaries and charitable organisations were clearly labelled as child care (K. Smith, Tesar, & Myers, 2016). These nonprofit child care centres were also established by charitable welfare organisations, such as the Victorian Creche Association, Sydney Day Nursery and Nursery School Association, in the late 19th and early 20th century (Brennan, 2007a; Elliott, 2006). Reports of the overcrowded and inhospitable living conditions experienced by many families evidenced a need to act on behalf of the colony's children these actions, mostly by men of good financial standing were posited as philanthropic in nature (Henrich, 2013). Harrison (1985) cites a report presented by a select committee in 1859 whom investigated the conditions of working-class people living in the areas of Glebe, the Rocks and Woolloomooloo. This report states that:

A block of twenty to twenty-five wretched hovels affords shelter for perhaps a hundred human beings. The rooms, two in number are ten or eleven feet square, and scarcely high enough for a man to stand erect; the floor is lower than the ground outside; the rain comes in through the floor and filth of all kinds washes in at the door; the courtyard that is common to all is covered in pollution that must be endured by all, and inside and out everything is an object of disgust and wears a look of loathsomeness that would terrify men away. (Walker, as cited in R. Harrison, 1985)

The first of the Ragged Schools in 1860; also referred to as Free Schools, was developed by philanthropists who aimed at addressing the issues faced by

families living in conditions such as those presented above. The main difference between Ragged Schools and other schools was in the role of the teachers (Henrich, 2013; O'Brien, 2008) who would visit family homes with a view to recruit students and to develop an ongoing support system for the children's family which relied heavily on the charity of benefactors. The three main goals of these schools were:

to make the children love God and their parents; to get them on in reading and writing, and to put them in the way of earning their own livelihood. (The Sydney Mail, as cited in Henrich, 2013)

Despite express goals towards reading, writing and employment, Ragged Schools were not regarded in the same league as government funded schools or nonprofit organisations which were established to provide childcare for working women. Ragged Schools were established to expressly meet the needs of the poorest families.

The term 'ragged school' was used as a deterrent to those who could afford to avoid its associations of dirt, filth, poverty and disrepute. (Henrich, 2013, p.62)

It is clear from this comment that Ragged Schools were undeniably regarded primarily as care services for poor non-Indigenous families rather than schools for early education. Henrich (2013) also notes that:

With more working-class children attending school, and a greater expectation that all children deserved equal educational opportunities regardless of their family's economic or social circumstances, the attitudes and methods of Sydney's Ragged Schools were rendered unjustifiable and old fashioned. (p.61)

In contrast to Ragged Schools, preschools and kindergartens were also established in the late 19th century and catered specifically to three and four-year-old children; it was widely accepted that these services provided early education in preference to care (Henrich, 2013). Kindergarten and Day-Nursery Associations highly regarded Fredrick Froebel's (1782–1852) approach to early education. Frederick Froebel was a German educator who opened the first 'kindergarten' (Children's Garden) in 1837. Briefly, his educational philosophy advocated social play, exploration, creativity and engagement with the natural world. The fact that one of the Sydney Kindergarten Teachers' College buildings was named 'Froebel House' is a testament to the value and placed on Froebel's theories of early learning and education (Ailwood, 2007; R. Harrison, 1985).

It was, in part, an approach to ECEC practice that he had carefully observed, collected and classified from the daily lives of mothers and their young children. It also reflected his belief in the natural unfolding of human life, from infancy, through childhood, to adulthood. (Ailwood, 2007, p. 158)

Curiously, Froebel's philosophy that identified the important links between home and the EECS, as well as his views on human development, bears some similarities to Indigenous Ways of Knowing and a child's '*lifehood*' stages (Martin, 2007, 2008), which from the perspectives of colonial Australia was at the time largely negated as uncivilised.

2.2.1.2 Early Education and Care in the 20th Century

In 1905 a group of well-connected working women established the Sydney Day Nursery (SDN). Certainly, the actions and achievements of these women can

be considered progressive for the rights of women, and today SDN promotes a specific strategy to engage and support Indigenous families. However, at the time of its birth it is clear that Indigenous children were not at all considered.

On 3 August 1905, SDN's founding women held their first meeting, in Darlinghurst, with the purpose of "organising a movement to establish a crèche". It was to be "no cold, remote charity" but an institution started by fellow women, who fully realise the difficulties that beset the paths of working mothers. (Sydney Day Nursery Children's Services, 2020)

Later, in the 1950s and 1960s, kindergartens and preschools increased in popularity as preparation for compulsory primary education gained more attention from educators and parents (Elliot 2006). Clearly the social and political agendas of the time influenced both the provision and expectations of early education and care services. An example of this can be seen in the increase in demand for early care services during WWII (1939–1945) when a greater number of women participated in paid employment to provide for families and 'support the war effort' (Elliott, 2006). The 1950s and 60s also saw an increase of private home-based childminding services in answer to the increase in demand that was not being sufficiently met by government or community providers (Brennan, 2007a).

In the 1960s and 1970s a small number of scholarships were made available to students attending the Nursery School Training College, Redfern, to work in the Northern Territory with Aboriginal children. Later, in 1975 a small number of Aboriginal students were enrolled in the college following visits by the college lecturers to '*Murawina*', an Aboriginal children's centre in Redfern.

Lack of previous adequate schooling and the difficulties often associated with Aboriginal family and community life meant that a lot of hard work was needed on the part of both students and staff if they [Aboriginal students] were to graduate, and the dropout rate was high. (*Huntsman, 2013, p 24*)

Interestingly, the comment above appears to attribute low completion rates to a lack of education and to the student's cultural background. However, it is clear from the previous chapter that the efforts of Aboriginal students were greatly impeded by the Australian Government's policies of segregation, protection and assimilation. (Parbury, 2011a; Price, 2012; Wilson-Miller, 2011)

Also, in the 1970s the 'Community Controlled Child Care' movement began in Victoria which advocated for nonprofit, community managed childcare services. This created a social justice agenda for the provision of early education and care and advocated for equality and equity for all families. The Australian government's commitment to this agenda was evidenced in 1972 with the Child Care Act that, 'directed Commonwealth funding exclusively to nonprofit organisations' (Brennan, 1998, as cited in Brennan, 2007).

However, by the late 1970's the government's early education and care initiatives began to move from a social justice to an economic focus when the benefits to productivity in the form of increased workforce participation of women reset the childcare agenda. Initially, government funding was provided to nonprofit long day care services over pre-schools as the hours of operation were better suited to the child care requirements of working women (Brennan, 2007b). However, a report by Freestone (1977) into the provision of child care

in Sydney identified a significant lack of services, particularly in urban communities as compared with other states and territories in Australia.

Freestone (1977) noted that:

In the Western suburbs, the interrelated mix of high rates of population influx, lower incomes and lack of community organisation has had distressing implications. In funding nonprofit, community-based services the government had shown its support to the provision of affordable high-quality services, however both the number and the location of these services failed to meet the demand. (p.323)

From the early 1990s the government's economic agenda of child care took precedent over that of quality care and education when funding that offered fee assistance was made available to users of for-profit early childhood services (Goodfellow, 2005; Sumsion, 2006). The impact of this decision was witnessed by a rapid increase of control from public to the private sector in the childcare industry.

2.2.1.3 Growth of the Private Sector

Brennan (2007a) reports that between 1991 and 1996 the number of childcare places in for-profit services increased by 233 percent while the increase of nonprofit services was a mere 15 percent. Commitments to continue the operational subsidy to nonprofit services and the establishment of a national planning framework were gravely dishonoured when, in his first budget, then Prime Minister John Howard abolished operational subsidies, reduced the level of childcare assistance and withdrew previously allocated funds for the construction of 5,500 nonprofit centre based places (Brennan, 2007a).

In 2000, the Howard Government introduced the Child Care Benefit (CCB) which was linked to family payments and the tax system. This change in funding provided a higher level of financial support to high income earners (Brennan, 2007a) and, as CCB was paid directly to the child care services, it substantially increased the cash flow and hence profit margins of for-profit services. This was evidenced by the rapid establishment and financial growth of ABC Learning, a child care company that entered the private market in 2001 and by 2006 had become the largest corporate child care provider in Australia and claimed to be largest provider of child care in the world (Press & Woodrow, 2009). This was a very unstable time for the early childhood industry as the power wielded by ABC Learning had significant effects on the viability of nonprofit services, regulations, overall accessibility, choice and affordability of early education and care services for families (Goodfellow, 2005; Nyland & Ng, 2016). Despite its financial success ABC Learning went into receivership in early 2008, which was reportedly due to the global financial crisis (Logan, Sumsion, & Press, 2015). The Australian Government paid \$22 million to 'bail out' ABC Learning until December 2008 when it's six hundred and fifty centres were sold. Sumsion 2012 surmised:

The collapse of ABC Learning created uncertainties about childcare arrangements and the ability to undertake paid employment for many families as the company provided childcare for over 100,000 children and *employed approximately 16,000 staff* (as cited by Logan et al., 2015, p. 6).

Goodfellow (2005, p. 62) shared ongoing concerns of nonprofit advocates in stating that, 'a business-oriented view to childcare provision focuses on the

parent as consumer; a concern for cost; and a return on investment'. Strictly speaking this view maintains that when early education and care is controlled by private providers access and quality are more often than not at the mercy of profit and commercial gain (K. Smith et al., 2016; Sumsion, 2006). The downfall of ABC Learning Centres and the over-representation of private providers helped to empower nonprofit advocates such as the Community Child Co-operative to refocus government attention towards a need for national regulations and a national system.

Continued lobbying from early education and care advocates saw the development of the National Quality Framework (NQF) (Appendix 7), which was introduced in 2012 with a view to establishing and maintaining high quality (profit and not for profit) early childhood services throughout Australia. The Australian Children's Education Quality Authority (ACEQA) was developed to oversee the implementation and assessment of the National Quality Framework (NQF). The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) was developed to guide and support educators to meet new national standards and regulations developed as an integral components of the NQF. This framework (EYLF) will be explored and critiqued later in this chapter in relation to the inclusion of Indigenous children and Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

2.2.2 Early Education and Care Service Structural Overview

Early Education and Care Services (EECS) in Australia aim to meet a diverse range of family requirements through a vast variety of early childhood service types. These include long day care (LDC), preschool (sometimes referred to as

kindergartens), occasional care, mobile services, family day care, multipurpose Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) and Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFC). The cost of these services to families is dependent on differences in management structures, licensed places, operating hours, ages of children, provisions (such as food and personal care items), staff qualifications and government funding. The dramatic change in the allocation of government funding to for-profit services from the early 1990s has undeniably impacted on the quality and affordability of early education and care services, particularly for families from lower socio-economic, minority and marginalised groups (Logan et al., 2015; Press & Woodrow, 2009).

Up until 2018, some early education and school-aged out of school hours care (OSHC) services were funded by the federal government under the Budget Based Funding (BBF) scheme. This scheme was established to meet early education and other community needs such as, aged care and health services, in communities where the provision of such services was not financially viable or sustainable for the local market. Often a BBF service was the only service of its type available to the local community.

In January 2017, the Department of Education and Training reported that there were approximately three hundred 'childcare and early learning and school aged care services in a limited number of approved locations'. Two years prior SNAICC reported that there were three hundred and thirty seven BBF services, 80 percent of which were identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (SNAICC 2017a). This appears to be a significant decrease in service

delivery over a relatively short period of time. Especially taking into consideration that the government's 'Close the Gap Policy' aims to increase engagement and participation of Indigenous children in formal education from early childhood to high school and that additionally that the BBF program was specifically aimed at providing an affordable service to families who would otherwise have nothing.

2.2.2.1 Misconceptions and Information about Service Types

In researching access to early childhood education in Australia, Baxter and Hand (2013) found that there is some confusion among parents about the different types of early childhood services and the programs they offer. Firstly, they noted a misconception that day care centres only provide 'care', and that preschools are places of 'education'. Secondly, they found that EECS operating on school premises were misconstrued by some parents as school programs.

In their research on preschool participation of Indigenous children, Hewitt and Walter (2014) found Indigenous parents also made assumptions about the type of service, i.e. care or education, provided by day care centres as opposed preschools. Some families were under the impression that that long day care services only provided care and preschools offered an educational program, not childcare. This signalled, for the researchers, a need to ensure that families were not inadvertently excluded from participating in the research.

If that parent responded: "Day care centre where the child goes to a pre-school program", then that child was considered to be attending preschool. (p.44)

The delineation of the two service types (long day care and preschool) by parents suggests there is a lack of information available to families about the roles and responsibilities of these services. Certainly, it would be valuable for parents to understand that long day care centres and preschools operate under the same regulations and are accountable to provide both care and education for young children. In 2017 information for parents about the different early education and care services was available on a website developed by the NSW Government. A main aim of this site was to assist parents in identifying and choosing the most appropriate services for their child. However, this public website, which has since been updated (Department of Education, 2020) does not include information about Multifunctional Aboriginal Services (MACS) or Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFC) (Appendix 6).

This exclusion or absence of information relevant to Indigenous families is indicative of the way in which the needs of Indigenous families are ignored or promoted as 'other' in comparison to what is accepted as the 'norm' in mainstream society (Fleer, 2004; Kearney et al., 2014). This view is corroborated in the literature that identifies the 'taken for granted' practices of education (Reid & Santoro, 2006; Taylor, 2011). Specifically in regard to early education, Fleer (2004, p.65) notes the 'mono-cultural perspectives within early childhood education', and the resulting problematic discourses of Indigenous gaps and disadvantage within the dominant Western system.

More recently, researchers (Byers, Kulitja, Lowell, & Kruske, 2012; Dockett, Perry, & Kearney, 2010; M. Miller, 2015) stress the necessity for educators to

revaluate perspectives of Indigenous gaps and disadvantaged, which are continually reiterated by government policy, and consider the value and diversity that Indigenous Ways of Knowing offer both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in early education and care services, a point which is plainly expressed by Bowes and Grace (2014):

It needs to be acknowledged that the Indigenous experience in Australia is one marked by strength and resilience as much as by inequity and disadvantage. (p.2)

This perspective is certainly evidenced in the reported success of Indigenous engagement and support in community established and driven EECS such as Multipurpose Aboriginal Children's Centres (MACS) across Australia and Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFCs) in NSW.

2.2.2.2 Aboriginal Early Education and Care Services (MACS and ACFCs)

A substantial number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attend services including Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) and Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFCs). MACS and ACFCs provide culturally centred, community-based services that offer long day care and at least one other form of child care or support service, and often many additional forms of child, family and community support. (SNAICC 2019, p. 60)

Multipurpose Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) were established in recognition of the rights and ability of Aboriginal communities to develop and operate childcare services that meet the needs of Indigenous families (Lee-Hammond, 2013). In a National SNAICC report, Bond (2000) reported that there was a total of twelve MACS operating in NSW. Some of which have been operating since 1987 (L. Harrison, Sumsion, Bradley, Letsch, & Salamon, 2017;

Lee-Hammond, 2013). In addition, in 2014 nine purpose built Aboriginal and Child Family Centres (ACFC) opened across NSW in the suburbs of Mt Druitt, Doonside, Minto, Gunnedah, Toronto, Brewarrina, Lightning Ridge, Nowra and Ballina (Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA), 2014) (CIRCA). Reports on both MACS and ACFC have presented evidence which demonstrates successful ongoing engagement with Indigenous families.

Specifically, the final evaluation of NSW ACFC's said the following:

It is estimated that on average 78% of children attending childcare had not accessed this service previously. While it is too early to assess long term outcomes, the success of the Centres in reaching 'hard-to-reach' Aboriginal families highlights the potential of the Centres to continue to positively impact Aboriginal children and families into the future. (CIRCA 2014, p. 8)

Similarly, Trudgett and Grace (2011) noted the establishment of MACS as one of the most significant actions in addressing enrolment disparity in early childhood services between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. However, in July 2018, despite documented evidence of highly successful outcomes, the government ceased the Budget Based Funding program, which MACS operated under. Evidently, nine of the original twelve MACS were able, with some financial challenges, to transition to the new Child Care Fund (CCF), two MACS were liquidated and closed by the government, and one ceased operating its long day care service (Bond, 2000; Collins, 2018; Delaney, 2008; Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations (ORAC), 2006). Although nine MACS continue to operate in NSW, the Family Matters Report (SNAICC 2019) revealed that both MACS and ACFC (CCF actually excludes most ACFC) are now facing financial issues as a result of this change in funding.

Since transitioning from the BBF to the CCP, services have identified three main issues that are impacting on their financial viability. Firstly, 45 percent of services reported that Indigenous children have reduced the number of hours of attendance. Secondly, services have been burdened with additional administration and family support costs that are not covered by this funding. Finally, services are facing an increase in accumulated debts from families who are no longer able to pay as a result of specific conditions of this new funding model. SNAICC Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care et al. (2019) has clearly stated that the issues raised by the implementation of the New Child Care Package (CCP) require urgent attention to ensure 'that these evidence-based models of practice and empowerment are supported, built upon and not lost'. (p. 60)

From this perspective the government's commitment to 'Closing the Gap' could be considered simply as purely rhetoric for its lack of action in two main areas: firstly, in reference to the point made previously, the lack of information for parents on the Government NSW website about MACS and ACFC. Secondly, the inconsistent and unreliable provision of sufficient and ongoing funds that would ensure the long-term viability of successful services such as MACS and ACFC.

2.3 SUPRESSING INDIGENOUS VOICES IN EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE

Research investigating Indigenous engagement and participation in early education and care services has provided valuable insights to the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous families. However, the value of these findings is

reliant on government and institutional commitment to listen and act on the research and literature. Despite the rhetoric of governments to address inequality and inequity, the reality is that Indigenous Ways of Knowing continue to be excluded, silenced or at best misrepresented in Western-based early education and care services (Kearney et al., 2014; M. Miller, 2015; Nakata, 2010; Nakata et al., 2012; Santoro et al., 2011; Semann et al., 2012). The next section of this literature review will bring to light several specific factors, in the form of government policies, educational frameworks and pedagogy, which illustrate the ways in which Indigenous achievement and inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing are silenced or else presented through negative discourses. In addition, this chapter will explore an early education approach from the town of *Reggio Emilia* in Italy which is highly regarded and valued by early educators in Australia. This exploration includes an examination of attention paid to both Indigenous Ways of Knowing and the Reggio Emilia approach.

2.3.1 National Partnership Agreement 2008 and Closing the Gap.

The second goal in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) focuses on all young Australians becoming active and informed citizens and it specifically identifies the importance of the inclusion of

Indigenous Australians' knowledges. This emphasis is to ensure that all children

understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008, p.8).

Reports such as the *Review of Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* (Buckskin et al., 2009) identified the need for governments to commit more time to the implementation of policies and projects towards successful outcomes in Indigenous education. Justification for focusing specifically on early childhood education was prompted by research into child brain development (Cheeseman, 2007; Price & Rogers, 2019; Thompson, 2008) and the findings of the benefits of quality early childhood education on school transition and engagement (Bagdi & Vacca, 2005; Brennan & Adamson, 2014; Sims, 2011).

In 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) developed the ‘National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Early Childhood Development’. This agreement began on the first of January 2009 and was due to expire on June 30, 2014. However, it was prematurely superseded on the second of July 2009 by the ‘National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage’, in which it was stated that:

Indigenous children have a lower level of participation in Early childhood education than non-Indigenous children. Without pre-school learning opportunities Indigenous students are likely to be behind from their first year of formal schooling. (COAG 2009, p.4)

Rhetoric of disadvantage is clear from the title alone (i.e. Indigenous Disadvantage), thus a change of policy had resulted in a change of approach from ‘a national partnership agreement’ to a national strategy focussed on Indigenous ‘gaps’ and ‘disadvantage’, which was also indicative of past patriarchal policies of assimilation (M. Miller, 2015; Moreton-Robinson, 2009;

Wilson-Miller, 2011). A lack of genuine reflection and evaluation on the part of the governments towards the development of Indigenous policies was noted by Calma (2007) in his speech at the 6th annual IQPC conference, where he argued that:

There is a hasty transition from the findings to new or different policy settings without sufficient time to reflect on what lessons should be learnt and acted on.

One of the main aims in the 'National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage' was to enrol and engage Indigenous families in early education and care services with a view to fostering a smooth transition into formal schooling and the expectation that this would lead to consistent school attendance (COAG 2009). This was certainly an ambitious plan as the literature exhibits a lack of consideration as to why Indigenous families would be motivated to enrol their children into Western-based early education and care services in the first place (SNAICC 2012a; Trudgett & Grace, 2011). In actuality, programs that have been found to be most successful in the engagement and participation of Indigenous families are community-controlled services in which Indigenous families and community members have control over management and decision-making processes. This is evidenced in a number of reports by SNAICC (2012a, 2012b, 2013) and supported by a substantial amount of research (Guilfoyle et al., 2010; Herbert, 2013; Jackiewicz et al., 2008; Kitson & Bowes, 2010; Rigney, 2010; Sims, 2011; Trudgett & Grace, 2011). Specifically, Kitson and Bowes (2010) stated that community initiated programs which employed Indigenous staff and collaborated with the local Indigenous community were considered by Indigenous families to be more responsive to

their family and cultural requirements. Likewise, Trudgett and Grace (2011) noted trust as an overarching theme to engagement and participation barriers of Indigenous families and that levels of trust were increased when a service was owned/managed by the Indigenous community or else the service employed Indigenous educators.

They argued that Indigenous preschools should be more widely available or that an Indigenous early childhood worker should be employed in every mainstream centre. (Trudgett & Grace, 2011, p. 22)

Although the main focus of the 'National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage' was on Indigenous engagement with early education and care services, it is important to note that the main contributors to this agreement were actually representatives of health and welfare organisations (Cheeseman, 2007). Indigenous health and welfare issues had been on the government's agenda prior to the focus on early childhood education and funding was mostly provided to organisations such as the Department of Community Services (DOCS) who were engaging specifically with families categorised as 'at risk'. Targeted issues of this agreement were therefore centred on deficit health and welfare issues with little to no consideration of early education pedagogies or Indigenous Ways of Knowing (Cheeseman, 2007; Herbert, 2012; Martin, 2017; M. Miller, 2015).

Consequently, the identified policy issues were not representative of all Indigenous Australians as the development of the National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage (COAG 2009) disregarded the 'strengths of Indigenous children in living across two worlds' (Krakouer, 2016, p.

6). As such, the education and care of Indigenous children is often relegated to a deficit model of service delivery (SNAICC 2012a; Walter et al., 2017).

Closing the Gap is an overarching policy of Indigenous welfare that has become part of the commonplace vernacular, particularly with regard to Indigenous education (Australian Government, 2017; M. Miller, 2015). As part of his apology to the Stolen Generations, the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd listed ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians could aim at working together, specifically he alluded to:

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity. (Rudd, 2008)

Burridge (2011) acknowledges that the apology validated the stories about the mistreatment of Indigenous Australians by Australian governments and was considered by some as a positive first step towards reconciliation. However, while it may have given Indigenous Australians a reason to hope for a more promising future, the main agenda continued to position Indigenous Australians as disadvantaged. There was little mention of Indigenous resilience or any attention paid to the value and diversity of Indigenous knowledge, languages and/or cultures. Closing the Gap continues to be a Western-based comparison of Indigenous Australians to non-Indigenous Australians using only Western-based values and expectations (Bowes & Grace, 2014; N. Harrison, 2011; Krakouer, 2016).

In the 'Apology to the Stolen Generations' Kevin Rudd also identified the provision of early childhood education as one of the key strategies in addressing Indigenous academic outcomes and achievements.

Let us resolve over the next five years to have every Indigenous four-year-old in a remote Indigenous community enrolled in and attending a proper early childhood education centre or opportunity and engaged in proper pre-literacy and pre-numeracy programs. (Rudd, 2008)

This is a broad over-generalisation that assumes one of the most pressing needs for Indigenous children (specifically children in remote areas) is positive results in school-based assessment, such as the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). This focus is solely related to the acquisition of skills in relation to academic literacy with no consideration of supporting first languages and/or ensuring culturally relevant learning as a key to accessibility and/or engagement of Indigenous students (Martin, 2007). Clearly, it is evidence of the continuation of an assimilationist approach that disregards Indigenous value systems and life outside the dominant, Western education system (Coopes, 2009; Hunter, 2009; A. Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019; K. Smith et al., 2016; L. Smith, 2012).

The lack of significant progress in the 'Close the Gap' campaign begs consideration and queries the government's ongoing commitment to it. In 2015 it was clear to the government that the target would not be met in the designated five year period and so in response the government simply modified the target by decreasing the number of children to be enrolled whilst increasing the time frame in which to achieve it, 'aiming for 95 per cent of all Indigenous

four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025 (Australian Government, 2017, p.7). In total, this new timeframe affords the government seventeen years from its inception in which to ensure that 95% of Indigenous four-year olds have access to an early childhood service. Disappointingly for Indigenous Australians, the key point of early childhood education in the Close the Gap Report (2017) is based on the premise that:

There are strong links between participation in early childhood education and academic success. (p.28)

This is representative only of Western values and measures. Despite strong supporting evidence in the literature, (Baxter & Hand, 2013; Guilfoyle et al., 2010; Jackiewicz et al., 2008; Kitson & Bowes, 2010; Klenowski, 2009; M. Miller, 2015; SNAICC 2012a; Sims, 2011; Trudgett & Grace, 2011), there is no mention in this report of the necessity for early education and care to be provided in a manner that is both culturally respectful and relevant. Nor does it advocate respectful or collaborative partnerships with Indigenous families and communities, thus, Indigenous children continue to be measured in deficit within an education system that both disregards and silences Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

2.3.3 Early Education and Care Pedagogy

From an Indigenous perspective it is both interesting and somewhat disheartening to witness the value placed on the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Reggio Emilia approach in Western-based EECS in Australia. Interestingly, both the EYLF and the Reggio Emilia approach are grounded in value and belief systems that have been imported to Australia and

are acknowledged as benchmarks of best practice by early education and care professionals and academics (DEEWR, 2009; Gandini, 1993; Giamminuti, 2012; Mitchelmore, 2012; Sumsion & Wong, 2011). However, Indigenous Ways of Knowing, which by design are imbedded in the Australian landscape, are at best undervalued or misrepresented and at worst silenced in mainstream education (Kearney et al., 2014; Nakata, 2010; Nakata et al., 2012; Santoro et al., 2011; Semann et al., 2012).

This position does not in any way intend to devalue the knowledge or applications of EYLF or the Reggio Emilia approach, for non-Indigenous children in Western-based EECS. Rather the intention is to query the level of attention and recognition afforded these approaches over Indigenous Ways of Knowing. In the next two sections aspects of the ELYF and the Reggio Emilia approach are explored and examined, to evidence the privileged position afforded to both the EYLF and Reggio Emilia over Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS.

2.3.3.1 Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

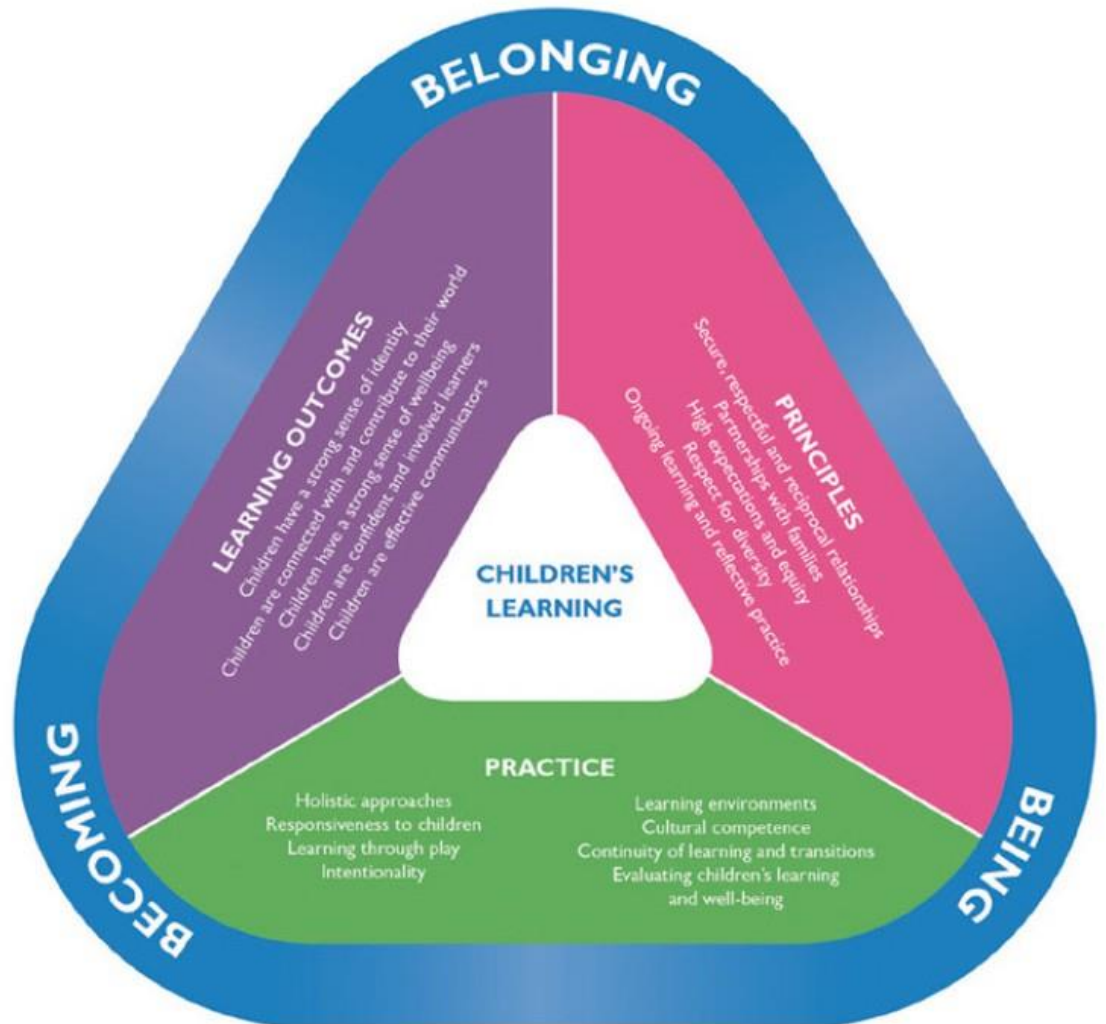
Belonging, Being, Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR 2009) is an integral part of the National Quality Framework. The EYLF, is the guiding framework for educators who are responsible for early education and care of children birth to five years of age in Australia. The introduction of this document states that:

The Council of Australian Governments has developed this Framework to assist educators to provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in

learning. In this way, the Early Years Learning Framework (the Framework) will contribute to realising the Council of Australian Governments vision that: 'All children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation'. (p. 5)

It is important to note that this document is a framework for educators employed in early education and care services. It does not constitute a guarantee of equitable access to these services, despite its proclamation that the Early Learning Framework will contribute to an outcome in which, 'All children have the best start in life'. This framework in no way addresses issues faced by many families in regard to access or affordability of such services. As mentioned previously, with the majority of providers hailing from the private for-profit sector, equity and affordability of services present a challenge for many Australian families (Goodfellow, 2005; Logan, Press, & Sumsion, 2012; Nyland & Ng, 2016; K. Smith et al., 2016; Sumsion, 2006). The figure below concisely illustrates the Early Years Learning Framework and the components of belonging, being and becoming, which encapsulate learning outcomes, principles, and practices.

Figure 2.0: Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)



(DEEWR, 2009, p.10).

It is not the purpose of this paper to go into an in-depth discussion of this framework; however, it is useful to point out some of the assumptions of this framework.

The EYLF outlines the key principles and significant practices that underpin and guide the work of all early childhood educators and clarifies current understandings about how young children learn. (Goodfellow, 2009, p. 2)

The assumption that the underpinning key principles and significant practices in the EYLF are universal, and the reference to 'current understanding about how children learn' are in no doubt based in Western beliefs and values. This point is illustrated by Sumsion and Wong (2011) when they openly acknowledge that their mapping of the meaning and salience of 'belonging' in the Early Years Learning Framework is limited in its use of non-Indigenous literature, and that the authors Sumsion and Wong relied upon their own '*positioning as white Australians*'. In an attempt to address the absence of Indigenous voice the authors note that:

The cartography only gestures at Aboriginals' and Torres Strait Islanders' rich and complex perspectives and experiences of belonging/not belonging. (Sumsion & Wong, 2011,p .36)

It is designed in such a way that more experienced educators can use it as a foundation on which to include a range of diverse interpretations and understandings of belonging, including those of Indigenous Australians.

Therefore, the components of the Early Years Learning Framework, and specifically in this case the aspect of 'belonging', are based in what Krakouer (2016) identifies as a colonial education system, which continues to focus on and consolidate negative discourses of gaps and disadvantage in the assessment of Indigenous engagement and participation (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Klenowski, 2009; Krakouer, 2016; M. Miller, 2015).

Publications such as; 'Introduction to ELYF Factsheets (SNAICC 2011) and 'Learning from Good Practice' (SNAICC 2012) provide information on embedding the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR) in Early Childhood Services from an Indigenous perspective. However, it would be interesting to

investigate the number of Western-based services that are aware of the existence of such resources, as they do not appear to be promoted or recommended in mainstream early learning courses or online forums. A report by (SNAICC, 2013, p.14) pointed out that, while the guiding principles of EYLF state the importance of cultural competence, its application is insufficient as it 'does not provide a mechanism or tool for implementing the guiding principle'. Additionally, the same report notes that, as the National Quality Standard (NQS) under which EYLF operates makes no mention of Indigenous cultural competence, it therefore undermines the EYLF goal to 'value' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This is supported by S. Macfarlane and Macfarlane (2013) who advocate that:

Cultural competency requires practitioners to extend their cultural understanding, knowledge and skills, but must also be supported by policies that enable these new learnings to be actualised in practice. (p. 67)

The terms *Belonging, Being, Becoming* (DEEWR, 2009) may appear to non-Indigenous educators to be similar to Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing, but these elements are created in two very different epistemological worldviews. Therefore inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing when interpreted from a Western standpoint is likely to be superficial and/or inaccurate (SNAICC 2013; Duhn, 2014). In addition, misrepresentation is likely to occur when non-Indigenous educators fail to recognise that Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing are diverse and complex (Martin, 2003, 2007, 2008).

2.3.4 The Reggio Emilia Approach

The Reggio Emilia approach to early education and care was established in the town of Reggio Emilia in Italy following World War II (Gandini, 1993). It is highly regarded by early education practitioners worldwide (Ardzejewska & Coutts, 2004; Balfour, 2016; Giamminuti, 2012; Hewett, 2001; Mitchelmore, 2012). The Reggio Emilia approach is continually evaluated and modified to address the lived experiences of children in the city of Reggio Emilia. As such, practitioners of the Reggio Emilia approach, in Italy, advise against the adoption of these approaches outside of the physical parameters of the city itself. The Reggio Emilia approach was established and exists as ongoing manifestations of the families, educators and local community of the town of Reggio Emilia (Rinaldi, Dahlberg, & Moss, 2006).

Organised women's movements proliferated in post-war Italy, led primarily by former members of the Resistance. This included the Italian Women's Union (UDI), the largest women's organisation that Italy has ever known. The UDI fought for the foundation and growth of schools for young children. It managed over 40 schools in Reggio Emilia after the war. (Balfour, 2016, p.146)

Clearly this indicates that the Reggio Emilia approach is not a specific product that can or should be packaged up and exported for application in another location (Hewett, 2001). Gandini (1993) advises that:

Educators in Reggio Emilia have no intention of suggesting that their program should be looked at as a model to be copied in another country. (p.5)

And yet, in the same paper, Gandini (1993) reported that over 10,000 international educators had visited Italian schools operating under the Reggio

Emilia approach. Scholars and authors around the world have researched and written in support of the Reggio Emilia approach (Ardzejewska & Coutts, 2004; Balfour, 2016; Hewett, 2001; Mitchelmore, 2012). This attention includes Australian educators who advocate and promote the inclusion of the Reggio Emilia approach in early education and care journals, such as *The Australian Journal of Early Childhood* (Ardzejewska & Coutts, 2004), *Early Childhood Education Journal* (Hewett, 2001) and forums such as the *Reggio Emilia Australian Information Exchange* (Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange, 2011). Further to this point, Ardzejewska and Coutts (2004) noted that the early education and care philosophies developed in the town of Reggio Emilia are also being adopted by Australian educators within primary school settings. This action provides evidence of the enthusiasm of Australian educators to adopt this particular approach to education. From the literature, similarities in pedagogy and the importance of relationships of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and the Reggio Emilia approach are apparent. However, there are also significant differences, due mainly to the diversity of the locations in which these knowledge systems operate. For this reason, it is strongly suggested that while the values and beliefs of the Reggio Emilia approach are worthy of the respect and praise given, it is not possible for this approach to meet the demands, needs or expectations of EECS in Australia.

2.3.4.1 Pedagogical Similarities

One of the valued strengths of the Reggio Emilia approach is its acknowledgement of the rights and abilities of children to participate in and affect the environments in which they live (Gandini, 1993; Hewett, 2001; Katz,

1998). This is somewhat reflective of a point made earlier in this literature review which noted that Indigenous children are often provided more independence and a higher level of responsibility than non-Indigenous children (Fasoli & Ford, 2001; Guilfoyle et al., 2010; Nelson & Allison, 2000).

In the Reggio Emilia approach 'the hundred languages of children' (Katz 1998) concept enacts the belief in the capacity of children to engage in learning. It involves the provision of various mediums and resources through which the children are able to communicate and record their memories, observations, feelings, hypotheses, predictions and ideas. Visual media resources, created by the children, are used as provocations to revisit, rehearse and further develop their understandings and skills related to these investigations (Katz, 1998).

Similarly, Kerwin (2011) provides a clear explanation of the diverse number of ways in which Indigenous Australians share and teach Indigenous Knowledges to our children.

They acculturated the land by painting it, by managing the resources, by walking it, by singing about it, by mapping it, by naming it and by developing stories of place. (p.250)

Both Indigenous Ways of Knowing and the Reggio Emilia approach engage children in diverse learning and teaching experiences that view learning as the attainment of knowledge and understanding through ongoing engagement, and participation as opposed to seeking a specified end goal such as the attainment of a specific grade, certificate or qualification. An excellent Indigenous Australian example of this same philosophy is provided by Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009) in the quote below:

In the Gamilaraay worldview, learning pathways are not direct and the outcomes and the journey are one and the same. This logic can be seen in the language. For example, the word for search and find is the same – ngaawa-y, and the word manila-y means hunt, search and find simultaneously . This indicates that the process is as important as the outcome, or rather that the outcomes are integral to the process. (p. 62)

In both Indigenous Ways of Knowing and the Reggio Emilia approach, child participation in discussions and investigations is considered more valuable than learning specific skills and/or information to meet predetermined curriculum or developmental expectations. However, there exists an additional barrier for Indigenous children who attend Western-based EECS. In Australian EECS, discussions and investigations are invariably derived from Western worldviews as that is the knowledge system on which the overwhelming majority of EECS are developed from and operate in. Thus, while educators may encourage children to actively participate in their own learning, this is not realistically possible for Indigenous children if Indigenous Ways of Knowing are not respectfully and/or effectively included in the EECS.

2.3.4.2 Relationships

Like Indigenous Ways of Knowing, the Reggio Emilia approach recognises the critical role that reciprocal partnerships between educators, families, local and wider communities play in providing successful learning environments for young children (Gandini, 1993; Katz, 1998; Martin, 2007, 2008). It is explained that in the Reggio Emilia approach:

Education has to focus on each child – not each child considered in isolation but each child seen in relation with other children, with the

family, with the teachers, with the environment of the school, with the community and with wider society. (Gandini, 1993, p.5)

This aspect of the Reggio Emilia approach emulates Indigenous child rearing and teaching practices, which also emphasise the critical importance of relationships (Bamblett, Frederico, Harrison, Jackson, & Lewis, 2012; Guilfoyle et al., 2010; Martin, 2003, 2008; Nelson & Allison, 2000).

An important point made by Aboriginal early childhood practitioners, in understanding Indigenous practices, was not so much to modify programs to include Indigenous content but rather to focus on relationships as critical when dealing with Indigenous children in an early childhood setting. (Fasoli & Ford, 2001, p. 22)

The importance of relationships is clearly recognised in both Indigenous Ways of Knowing and the Reggio Emilia approach to early education and care.

However, for Indigenous Australians relationships are arguably more diverse and complex due to the vital links to Country that shape and define Indigenous identity and belonging. As previously discussed, Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing is a relational ontology inclusive of all physical and spiritual entities on our Ancestral Country (Kwaymullina, 2005, 2017; Martin, 2003, 2008; Nakata, 2010; Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011). In addition to our relational responsibilities to family, community and Country, Indigenous children must also participate in Western-based formal schooling that does not necessarily recognise, value or include relevant aspects of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in its educational curriculum.

Nakata (2007, 2014a) identified this as the ‘cultural interface’ of contested knowledge systems. Indigenous approaches such as the *Eight Ways Indigenous Pedagogy* (Bangamalanha Centre, 2012; Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011) and the *Young Doctors for Life* (MALPA, 2017) program seek to combine Western-based frameworks with Indigenous Ways of Knowing, to create place/space in which both knowledge systems can be offered at the same time, in a manner that ensures neither one overwhelms or invalidates the integrity of the other (Biermann & Townsend-Cross, 2008; Priest, King, Brown, Nangala, & Nangala, 2007; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). The *Both Ways – Garma Theory* from the Northern Territory (Frawley & Fasoli, 2012; Parbury, 2011a) is an excellent example of an approach that addresses the cultural interface of Indigenous and non-Indigenous contested knowledge systems.

In an address to the National Press Club, P. Dodson (1996) illustrated the concept of ‘Both Ways’ in his description of reconciliation:

The river is the river and the sea is the sea. Saltwater and fresh, two separate domains. Each has its own complex patterns, origins, stories. Even though they come together they will always exist in their own right. My hopes for reconciliation are like that. (pp. 2-3)

In the Reggio Emilia approach the rights of the child to actively affect and control their own learning is a core element that strongly influences educator interactions with children and the physical design of the early childhood environment (Gandini, 1993; Hewett, 2001; Katz, 1998). Opportunities for an Indigenous child to actively affect and control their own learning are entirely reliant on the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in the EECS they attend.

Without respectful and relevant inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing the child's own cultural connections and understandings will be absent and thus their level of participation impeded.

Arguably, the literature evidence similarities between the Reggio Emilia approach and Indigenous Ways of Knowing. The Reggio Emilia approach is a world renowned early education and care pedagogy that was established in a city in which children had experienced war. However, this does not qualify this approach as relevant or appropriate to addressing the specific challenges of including Indigenous Knowledges into Western-based EECS.

In reality, Australian Indigenous worldviews and epistemology could very well be Australia's Reggio Emilian type approach for three main reasons. Firstly, Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing ensured the survival of Indigenous Peoples, land, plants and animals for many thousands of years in Australia, before colonisation (Bodkin & Robertson, 2013; Kerwin, 2011; Kohen, 2009; Pascoe, 2014). Secondly, although mainstream society is now dominated by Western ideals and values, Indigenous Ways of Knowing exist and continue to guide and shape the lives of Indigenous Peoples in contemporary Australia (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Fredericks, 2013; Moran et al., 2011).

Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing are a product of Australia's physical and spiritual landscape which has been respected, heeded and sustained by Australia's First Peoples for many, many generations (Martin, 2003, 2008; Nakata, 2010). For these reasons, it is recommended that educators in Australian EECS reconsider the value and

attention paid to the Reggio Emilia approach and the way that this level of attention contributes to the silencing of Indigenous voices and knowledges.

2.4 INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING IN EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE

In 2012 SNAICC produced *Introduction to EYLF Sheets*, which is a resource developed to offer guidance to EECS in implementing the EYLF in a manner that is both culturally relevant and respectful to Indigenous educators and families. This resource was developed in collaboration with fourteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early childhood education centres and six Indigenous Professional Support Units across Australia (SNAICC 2012b).

The documents provide specific examples of the way in which Indigenous educators, services and families meet the requirements of the Western-based Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), while continuing to honour and engage in Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Additionally, these fact sheets are offered as a guide for use by non-Indigenous early educators to support understanding and inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in conjunction with the EYLF in their services.

The EYLF is underpinned by both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) and the Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Children (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) and under these guidelines early education and care services are required to develop an understanding and include the cultural practices of all families. Arguably, one of the most significant

aspects of these fact sheets is the way in which each participating service identifies needs and strengths, through ongoing collaboration with their Indigenous families and local Indigenous community. This critical point is noted by Guilfoyle et al. (2010):

For a childcare program to be considered best practice, practices must be locally defined, culturally appropriate and relevant to the values of the local community. (p.68)

To achieve this, it is clear from much of the literature (Grace & Trudgett, 2012; Guilfoyle et al., 2010; N. Harrison, 2011; Santoro et al., 2011; Semann et al., 2012; Trudgett & Grace, 2011) that service providers must develop respectful, collaborative relationships with their Indigenous families and local Indigenous community. Despite directions and goals in the EYLF, the extent to which Indigenous Ways of Knowing are incorporated in an early education and care services varies. The final section of this literature review explores the level of inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in early education and care services in Australia.

2.4.1 Indigenous Experience with Early Education and Care in Australia

It is necessary to consider what the value of early education and care might be to Indigenous Australians, rather than relying solely on the aims and agendas of government policies, such as *Close the Gap* (Australian Government, 2017), as policies such as Close the Gap continuously compare Indigenous children to non-Indigenous children irrespective of the history and treatment that Indigenous Peoples have experienced since colonisation. Government policies which centre on disadvantage and gaps (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Krakouer,

2016; M. Miller, 2015) have been shown to contribute to poor educational outcomes for Indigenous students (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Kickett-Tucker, 2009). Contemporary Indigenous literature provides evidence that a sound understanding and connection to Indigenous identity can foster development of positive social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous students (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Sarra, 2011). Furthermore, Kickett-Tucker (2009) argues that:

A strong racial identity is important for cultural security and safety and provides a base for positive self-esteem as well as practical skills of coping with racial prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. (p. 131)

Indigenous families value inclusion that is embedded and respected in educational settings, as this approach to inclusion is more likely to repair the damage done by the political and social stereotyping and shaming of Indigenous Australians. This approach to inclusion can also assist in providing education that is both culturally respectful and relevant for Indigenous children. Research with Indigenous parents (Morgan, 2006; Nelson & Allison, 2000) reveals that Indigenous families want access to quality mainstream education with the provision that it does not prevent Indigenous children from learning and engaging with their Indigenous Ways of Knowing. This was also supported in other research in which Indigenous parents were shown to both value and advocate for equitable access to early education and care for their children (Dockett et al., 2010; Kearney et al., 2014). In regards to engagement and participation in early education and care services, Trudgett and Grace (2011) found that while affordability and transport often acted as barriers to Indigenous engagement, services which genuinely collaborated with local Indigenous

families to develop culturally safe and relevant programs fostered higher levels of engagement and participation. Similarly, Maher and Buxton (2015, p.8) argue if education is to be both relevant and effective for Indigenous students, then 'local knowledge must be a non-negotiable in the curriculum'. These same results have been corroborated by other Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers including Dockett et al. (2010), Guilfoyle et al. (2010) and Rigney (2011a). In a later study, Grace and Trudgett (2012) also report that learning environments need to be culturally safe if they are to foster the full participation of both Indigenous families and Indigenous staff.

However, providing education and care that is both relevant to and inclusive of Indigenous families and their Ways of Knowing is yet to be achieved in many services, particularly when services are staffed exclusively by non-Indigenous educators. Nakata (2010) and Baynes (2016) agree that non-Indigenous teachers are struggling to include Indigenous perspectives in their classrooms. Herbert (2013) cites the work of Osbourne who argues that many non-Indigenous educators have a lack of understanding in regards to the diversity of Indigenous Australian cultures, which can inadvertently result in the use of culturally inappropriate and insensitive teaching methods in early education and care services.

Additionally, misrepresentation of Indigenous Ways of Knowing often occurs when they are interpreted from a non-Indigenous perspective (Grace & Trudgett, 2012; N. Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Santoro et al., 2011; Semann et al., 2012). Too often an incompatibility of the Indigenous Ways of Knowing,

Being and Doing within the curriculums of formal Western-based educational institutions results in Indigenous content that is superficial at best (Nakata, 2010). Grace and Trudgett (2012), Semann et al. (2012) and Santoro et al. (2011) all subscribe to the view that the only way to overcome misrepresentations is to work with Indigenous Australians in the development and implementation of early education and care policies and curriculums.

2.4.2 Three Levels of Inclusion

Early education and care services in Australia cater to a diverse range of family needs and requirements, from fulltime care and education to services which offer occasional and home-based care and/or additional support services (Bond, 2000; Government NSW, 2017; Lee-Hammond, 2013; SNAICC 2012a; 2017a). As a result, and despite the directives of government policies and early childhood regulations and frameworks, the extent to which these services incorporate Indigenous Ways of Knowing into their programs can vary from core practice to tokenistic approaches that sustain inappropriate stereotypes of Indigenous Australians. For the purposes of this study early education and care services will be categorised according to three different levels of acknowledgement and inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in policy and practice. These levels range from the most inclusive approach, 'core inclusion, to 'collaborative inclusion' and end with the least inclusive approach which is identified as 'superficial inclusion'.

2.4.2.1 Core Inclusion

Understandably, early education and care services which are managed and operated by Indigenous organisations and peoples such as MACS, ACFCs and those that participated in the production of the *Introduction to EYLF Sheets* (SNAICC 2012b) have Indigenous Ways of Knowing at the core of the service's philosophy, policies and everyday practice. Understandably, Indigenous family values and care practices are better understood and enacted by Indigenous educators. Examples of such services include Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) (Bond, 2000; L. Harrison et al., 2017; Trudgett & Grace, 2011), which were established in Australia in 1987 to provide a variety of early education and care services that specifically address equity issues. This includes access to culturally respectful and relevant services.

In MACS centres the staff are predominantly Aboriginal and the environment is Aboriginal. Thus, just by attending the centre and being in constant touch with Aboriginal staff, the children absorb and learn about their heritage incidentally. (Bond, 2000, p. 14)

These factors are of course absent from mainstream services as educators are predominantly non-Indigenous, and curriculum content and programs reflect dominant Western-based culture values and beliefs. It is vital at this point, however to take heed from Trudgett and Grace (2011) who stress that the existence of MACS centres does not in any way extinguish the responsibility of all early education and care services in providing culturally safe and relevant programs and environments to all children, including Indigenous children. Mainstream early education and care services, which employ predominantly non-Indigenous staff and Western-based philosophies and values, do not fit this

first category of inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. This does not mean that mainstream services are unable to effectively recognise and/or address the needs of Indigenous families; however, it does require non-Indigenous educators to engage with and develop reciprocal and respectful relationships with their local Indigenous families and community members (Grace & Trudgett, 2012; Guilfoyle et al., 2010; M. Miller, 2015; Santoro et al., 2011). To do this staff must have a sound understanding of the situations and circumstances Indigenous families have endured since colonisation and be willing to work collaboratively with Indigenous people to overcome barriers and challenges that have been created by non-Indigenous people and organisations in this Country. The following category, 'collaborative inclusion, includes mainstream services that endeavour to build these relationships and position Indigenous families as central to the education and care strengths and needs of their children and families.

2.4.2.2 Collaborative Inclusion

This level of inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing involves non-Indigenous early educators seeking out and developing respectful and reciprocal working relationships with local Indigenous families and community. In order to achieve this it is often necessary for staff to receive professional training to understand the inequities faced by Indigenous Peoples as non-Indigenous narratives of colonisation have dominated mainstream education and society (Behrendt, 1995; Herbert, 2013, 2017; Nakata, 2010; Rigney, 2001, 2011a; L. Smith, 2012). Organisations operating in the area of early education and care, such as

SNAICC, produce resources and provide training that can be accessed by early educators employed in mainstream services.

Similarly, mainstream services that could be included under this category would include those that have, or are developing, Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) (Reconciliation Australia, 2017), as these involve the reporting, maintenance and evaluation of ongoing genuine engagement with local Indigenous families and community members. In order to be categorised under this heading, early education and care services need to provide ongoing documentation to evidence the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, which are collaboratively designed and supported by the custodians of the Indigenous Country on which the service is located. The reported number of early learning services that had current RAPs in 2017 (see Table 2.2) is discouragingly low, considering that there were 15,593 early education and care services registered in Australia at that time (ACECQA, 2017, p. 4). This would indicate that an overwhelmingly number of mainstream early education and care services in Australia would fall into the final level of superficial inclusion.

Table 2.0: Early Learning Services with RAPS.

State or Territory	No. EECS with a RAP 2017	No. EECS with a RAP 03/2020
NSW	18	286
ACT	1	28
NT	0	11
QLD	8	298
SA	1	58
TAS	1	11
WA	4	79
Total	33	771

(Narragunnawali, 2020; Reconciliation Australia, 2017)

Table 2.0 above shows a substantial increase in the number of EECS that have currently (as of 02/03/2020) published RAPS across all states and territories. Although there appears to be minimal literature on RAPS in early education, (aside from Reconciliation Australia’s own publications), a potential factor influencing this significant increase could well be the development of a specialised site for educators from early childhood to high school. Between 2017 and 2018 Reconciliation Australia launched an online platform called *Narragunnawali Reconciliation in Education*. This site provides professional learning and curriculum resources that meet components of the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum for schools whilst aligning with actions in RAPS.

It is reported on the Narragunnawali site that there are over 5,000 schools and early learning services that are currently developing RAPS (Narragunnawali, 2020). Which would indicate that many educators across early education and

primary education (at least) are actively engaging and relying on this platform to meet curriculum and framework requirements.

2.4.2.3 Superficial Inclusion

The third level of inclusion involves early education and care services which implement aspects of Indigenous culture in tokenistic ways as a result of a lack of understanding, commitment and most crucially engagement with Indigenous people in their community, which have been frequently identified in the literature (Fasoli & Ford, 2001; N. Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Nakata et al., 2012). In their study Harrison and Greenfield (2011) point out that non-Indigenous educators often misinterpret teaching from an Aboriginal perspective and teaching 'about' Aboriginal Peoples to be one and the same .

Most teachers struggled to define Aboriginal perspectives, opting for a gloss such as, 'knowledge about Aboriginal people and their past and culture' and 'respect', 'acceptance' and 'an awareness of culture' as adding an Aboriginal view across all KLAs by including information, resources. (N. Harrison & Greenfield, 2011, p.69)

Clearly, without input from local Indigenous people, curriculum content about Indigenous Australians can equate to little more than a superficial interpretation through a non-Indigenous lens. It is at this point that further research is required to investigate how non-Indigenous educators can successfully engage with their local Indigenous communities. More importantly research must seek guidance and support from Indigenous people to identify the conditions under which they are comfortable, willing and able to share Indigenous Ways of Knowing with non-Indigenous educators in mainstream services.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

History has been an integral part of this literature review, although there are two very distinct perspectives which inevitably collide in the contested spaces of identity, belonging, knowledge and respect. The literature has shown that perspective can be considered a powerful tool, and its use by non-Indigenous people since colonisation has framed and controlled the lives of Indigenous Australians (Behrendt, 1995; M. Dodson, 1994, 1997; Moreton-Robinson, 2000, 2003, 2005; L. Smith, 2012) within ongoing negative discourses. The domination of Western-based values, laws, science and education dismantled the complex lives of Indigenous Australians in this Country. Government policies founded in British laws systematically excluded, segregated, undermined and attempted to extinguish Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing (Nakata, 2002; Nakata et al., 2012; L. Smith, 2012).

In the field of education, the literature has shown that Indigenous people and Ways of Knowing have been misrepresented, silenced and excluded by Western beliefs and values (Pascoe, 2011, 2014; Rigney, 2011a; L. Smith, 2012). More importantly literature authored by Indigenous scholars and authors has provided sound evidence that, despite colonisation, discriminatory government policies and ongoing stereotyping and racism, Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing continue to exist and strengthen the lives of Indigenous families and communities (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Bodkin-Andrews, Newey, O'Rourke, & Craven, 2013; Fredericks, 2013; Martin, 2003, 2008; Moran et al., 2011). Understandably some of the cultural practices have changed due to the impacts of colonisation; however, the core elements of

respect, responsibility and accountability to Indigenous Country remain (Blair, 2017; Herbert, 2017; Kwaymullina, 2017; Martin, 2007, 2008; Nakata et al., 2012).

In the field of early education and care, the literature has again evidenced the silencing and exclusion of Indigenous children and Ways of Knowing (Kitson & Bowes, 2010; Martin, 2007, 2017; Santoro et al., 2011). Government discourse involving the early education and care needs of Indigenous children is indicative of the ongoing ignorance and disregard for Indigenous Ways of Knowing, when its focus swiftly changed (Calma, 2007) from a national partnership agreement to the implementation of the 'Closing The Gap' campaign with its entrenched rhetoric of disadvantage. The literature has also shown that early education and care is viewed by the government as a solution to entrenched issues that contribute to poor educational performance of Indigenous children in a Western education system (Bagdi & Vacca, 2005; Brennan & Adamson, 2014; Sims, 2011).

The literature provides evidence of a significant lack of knowledge, understanding and respect for Indigenous Ways of Knowing in mainstream Western-based services, despite the implementation of frameworks that propose to value and include the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in early education and care. Furthermore, it was established that neither the National Quality Standard nor EYLF provided non-Indigenous educators with sufficient support or tools to address the gaps in their own understanding and knowledge (SNAICC 2013). This illustrates the longstanding

and continuing issue of non-Indigenous systems misinterpreting and undervaluing Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

Finally, it is clear from the literature that the gaps in equity and inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in mainstream early education and care services in Australia are impacted by a serious lack of commitment and engagement of non-Indigenous educators to the very Indigenous families and communities they are accountable to (DEEWR, 2009; Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008; United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This study, *Centering Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Early Education and Care Services* utilised Rigney’s (2001) three-point framework and Martin’s (2008) Indigenous Ways framework to employ an Indigenous methodological approach in attaining and analysing the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children. The work has been undertaken in accordance with ethical research principles and guidelines to address the distinct and diverse needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian research participants (AIATSIS, 2012; 2015; 2003; NHMRC, 2015). Table 3.0 below provides an outline of the way in which the Indigenous frameworks of Martin (2003, 2008) and Rigney (2001) are woven together across this chapter. In addition, the table identifies AIATSIS (2012) research guidelines and provides a brief outline as to where specific guidelines were considered most relevant to this study.

Table 3.0 Indigenous Frameworks and Ethical Guidelines

Chapter Section	(Martin 2003,2008)	(Rigney 2001)	AIATSIS Guidelines 2012
Section 3:1	Indigenous Way of Knowing , defines Indigenous identity, belonging and responsibility	Resistance as Emancipation , frees us from Western interpretations of our own identities	Guidelines 1–9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights respect & recognition • Negotiation, consultation, agreement & mutual understanding

Chapter Section	(Martin 2003, 2008)	(Rigney 2001)	AIATSIS Guidelines 2012
Section 3:2	<p>Indigenous Ways of Being, involves relationships with all entities on one's Country in accordance with the three core conditions of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Responsibility • Accountability 	<p>Political Integrity refers to Indigenous ownership and control of Indigenous Knowledges.</p>	<p>Guidelines 9 & 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation, consultation, agreement & mutual understanding • Participation, collaboration & partnership
Section 3.3	<p>Indigenous Ways of Doing, requires the researcher to seek, understand and honour community protocols and includes the condition of reciprocity</p>	<p>Privileging Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander voices, includes the ability to control the way in which Indigenous voices are represented and preserved in society</p>	<p>Guidelines 11–14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits, outcomes and giving back • Managing research, use, storage & access • Reporting & Compliance

It can be seen, from the table above that Section 3.1 enlists the first principle in Rigney (2001) Indigenist research, *resistance as emancipation*, which is also engaged with Martin's (2003, 2008) Indigenous Ways of Knowing. The content of this section addresses Indigenous identity, positioning and autonomy with the application of ethical practices relevant and crucial to this research. Section 3.2 moves on to *Political Integrity* where Rigney (2001) and Martin (2003, 2008) reflect on the qualitative nature of Indigenous research methodology. It also explains the way in which Indigenous educators directed recruitment and involvement of research participants in phases 2, 3 and 4. Additionally, this section provides a comparison of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing with the Western Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) to expose the similarities and tensions that occur between them.

Section 3.3 presents the way in which data collection, analysis and ownership engaged Rigney's (2001) concept of *privileging Indigenous voices*. Indigenous

experiences, knowledges and perspectives are core to this research and, as such, an Indigenous form of communication known as *yarning* (Bessarab, 2018; Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) was used. This *yarning* method is reflective of Indigenous protocols and practices grounded in Indigenous Ways of Doing (Martin 2008).

Section 3.4 provides a summary of this chapter, highlighting the ways in which Indigenous Ways of Knowing are weaved throughout the methodological design and process.

3.1 RESISTANCE AS EMANCIPATION — INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

The purpose of [I]ndigenous education and the production of indigenous knowledge does not involve “saving” indigenous people but helping construct conditions that allow for Indigenous self-sufficiency while learning from the vast storehouse of Indigenous Knowledges that provide compelling insights into all domains of human endeavour. (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008, p.135)

The choice of methodology is important to the validity and rigour of any research project. Critical discourse from Indigenous scholars in regards to the use of methodological tools designed and grounded in Western-based theory and practice has challenged mainstream approaches to research about and with Indigenous Peoples (Denzin, 2010; Dunbar, 2008; A. Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019; Martin, 2003; Nakata et al., 2012; L. Smith, 1999; Walter, 2010). Research and theorising by Indigenous scholars with Indigenous people have created valuable alternative approaches that address and speak to the

rights, strengths and abilities of Indigenous Peoples. Such an approach is critical in challenging erroneous narratives of Indigenous Peoples, authored by non-Indigenous scholars that dominate Western research (Hogarth, 2017).

In the academy, Indigenous scholars (Kovach, 2010; Moreton-Robinson, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2009; Rigney, 2001; L. Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008) are developing, advocating and implementing Indigenous research methods that aim to dismantle the short-sighted views of Western research paradigms and methodologies. Also, in the field of education, Indigenous scholars are developing and successfully implementing Indigenous Ways of Knowing into Western systems of education. Indigenous Ways of Knowing such as the 'Aboriginal Eight Ways Pedagogy' (Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009) and Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing (Martin, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2016b) are moving beyond non-Indigenous *objectifying* and *dehumanising* approaches (N. Harrison & Greenfield, 2011) to embedding Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives into contemporary curriculums. These programs and others like them are actively engaged in the validation of Indigenous Ways of Knowing to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers and students.

Indigenous scholars advocate that by understanding and following cultural protocols and practices, research can be both ethical and beneficial to Indigenous Peoples involved and/or effected (Nakata, 2014b; Rigney, 2003). In support of this approach, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (2012) and the National Health and Medical

Research Council (NHMRC) (2003, 2017) have developed ethical principles and guidelines. The aim of such guidelines is to ensure ethical conduct and practices are maintained throughout the entirety of any research that involves, or has the potential to affect, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples or communities (Behrendt, 2016).

The components of Section 3.1 are guided by the works of Rigney (2001) and Martin (2008) as they relate directly to the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-identification and self-determination. This section begins with positioning of the researcher in accordance with Indigenous protocols surrounding identity, belonging and accountability to family and community.

3.1.1 Research from an Indigenous Perspective

Yanna jannawi is the language of my Ancestors, the Dharug people of Sydney. It translates in English as, 'walk with me'. My connection to this Country is through my maternal Grandmother, I am seventh generation descendent of Yarramundi, Kuradji (chief) of the Boorooberongal clan of the Dharug Nation. I am accountable to my relations to tell their truth and advocate their wisdom, strength and resilience as it is these things that have led me to this place, a daughter, sister, parent, educator, friend, PhD candidate and a strong, proud Dharug woman.

Indigenous Australian research constitutes research about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and is often conducted and controlled by non-Indigenous scholars (L. Smith, 2012). This type of research others Indigenous Peoples as the subject rather than active co-researchers, or leaders, and as a result has been instrumental in the marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples in Australia (Battiste, 2008; Behrendt, 2016; Nakata, 2014a; L. Smith, 2012).

Indigenous-related research conducted in this manner can potentially create and maintain stereotypical and racist assumptions and attitudes about Indigenous Peoples. Findings from such research fail to recognise and address Indigenous perspectives and subsequently position Indigenous Peoples as the problem. L. Smith (2012) provides a clear example, which illustrates this point:

Researchers investigating poor health or educational under-achievement among Indigenous communities often focus on the community as the sole source of the problem and, because this is their focus, obviously fail to analyse or make sense of the wider social, economic and policy contexts in which communities exist. Often their research simply affirms their own beliefs. (p.95)

The systems in which Indigenous Peoples live and work in Australia today are governed by laws that were created to meet the tenets and expectations of responsibility and accountability within a Western society (Moreton-Robinson, 2009). As a result, these laws often overlook or simply override the Lore and protocols of Indigenous Australians, resulting in the development of government policies and initiatives that continue to segregate, stereotype and marginalise Indigenous Peoples (Behrendt, 2010; Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Wilson-Miller, 2011). One example which is relevant to this research is the over-representation of Australian Indigenous children in out-of-home care (Krakouer, 2016). The disparity between the numbers of Indigenous children removed from their families as compared to non-Indigenous children can be at least partially attributed to differing views as to what constitutes good parenting. Western child rearing practices and standards are the accepted benchmark for all families. This often means that child rearing worldviews of Indigenous families are dismissed, if not overtly overlooked, in the dominant Western system (Byers et

al., 2012). In addition to this, Funston and Herring (2016) report concerns of Aboriginal families that highlight undertrained, non-Indigenous child protection workers who begin actions of child removal largely based on confusion between poverty versus wilful neglect. Douglas and Walsh (2013) found that a lack of experience and/or cultural competence training greatly impacted the way in which child protection workers viewed and interacted with Indigenous families. This is indicative of existing structural racism that systematically views Indigenous families and the challenges they may face through a non-Indigenous lens, which then fails to acknowledge or consider external pressures that families are likely to have no control over.

In contrast, to avoid the risk of misinterpretation and/or misrepresentation, Indigenist research positions Indigenous people with greater agency as they have power and control over the research projects rather than being listed as othered subjects of research (Martin, 2008; Rigney, 2001; L. Smith, 2012). An Indigenist research approach acknowledges capacity and empowers Indigenous people to identify the challenges and solutions they face in a Western driven and dominated society.

To ensure that the ethical considerations of all Indigenous participants have been considered and respected, this research is guided by all fourteen principles of the *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* (AIATSIS, 2012) and the *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research* (NHMRC 2003). More specifically, the research methods were developed in accordance with the six core tenants of

Respect, Responsibility, Equality, Survival and Protection, Reciprocity, Spirit and Integrity (NHMRC, 2006).

As a Dharug women and an early childhood educator, I am mindful of my responsibilities and accountability to Aboriginal communities and families. In regard to this research, I recognise that all data remains the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual property of the participants who choose to share their knowledge, experiences and insights with me. In light of this understanding, each participant received an audio copy of his or her research yarn as well as a hard (printed) and digital (USB) copy of the transcription.

To meet the requirements of accountability and reciprocity, as firstly an Aboriginal (Dharug) researcher and secondly as an early childhood educator, there are a number of ways that I am able to offer support and/or guidance to the different groups of participants involved in this research.

- a) To support and assist **Indigenous families** in their interactions and engagement with early education educators and services. For example, some parents and carers participating in this research have expressed a desire for the inclusion of cultural knowledge and/or language from their child's Aboriginal Country in the early childhood service. With the use of my cultural and professional contacts, I was able to seek out relevant resources and/or people to assist in supporting Indigenous children and their families.
- b) As a mentor and/or support person to Indigenous Early Childhood Educators.

During the research yarns, some non-Indigenous educators expressed a desire for more interaction and guidance from Indigenous people. In response to this I

have offered to meet with staff to identify specific concerns and/or questions in relation to the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the EECS.

Engagement with the participating EECS is intended to be ongoing with a view to assisting these services in building stronger links with Indigenous families, communities, and services.

3.1.2 Indigenist Standpoint Theory

The development of Indigenous Standpoint Theory was born from the tenets of Feminist Standpoint epistemology (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). Rigney (1999) identified commonality in the struggles of oppression faced by women and Indigenous Peoples. Feminist Standpoint Theory began in the 1970's and has since been utilised by marginalised groups whose experiences or voices are excluded from dominant society (Moreton-Robinson, 2000, 2013). However, it has been argued that standpoint theory must be developed and implemented with reflexivity, as a researcher's standpoint is unequivocally determined by their own social position, which then predicates values and worldviews (Martin, 2003; Pohlhaus, 2002; L. Smith, 2012).

Nakata (2014a) argues that Indigenous Standpoint Theory demands far greater diligence than the simple consideration of Indigenous perspectives. He emphasises that, in the case of Indigenous research, the term 'standpoint' additionally involves a thorough understanding and recognition of the social constructs which have positioned Indigenous Knowledges and peoples as 'other' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Nakata, 2014a; L. Smith, 2005, 2012).

Indigenous Standpoint Theory has been instrumental in justifying the silencing

of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in mainstream research and education. Indigenous Standpoint Theory therefore insists that past and present lived experiences of Indigenous people are researched and documented with, if not by, Indigenous people. This then enables the status quo of the coloniser to be contested and empowers Indigenous people in our fight for self-identification and self-determination. Nakata (2007) states that a useful starting point for Indigenous Standpoint Theory is the concept of 'contested space'. More specifically, he identifies the challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples in mainstream environments where Western knowledges dominate Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Nakata (2007) named this contested space as 'the cultural interface'.

When considered from the perspective of an Indigenous family, mainstream early childhood environments provide a clear example of Nakata's (2002) 'cultural interface'. Mainstream EECS are environments in which Western-based values and theories of child development dominate. It is, therefore, a contested space for Indigenous families whose child rearing practices and cultural beliefs are likely to be contradicted by the policies and procedures of the mainstream early childhood services (Behrendt, 1995; Guilfoyle et al., 2010; Martin, 2007). In these contested early-childhood cultural interfaces, investigation into relevant and meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing requires direction and guidance from Indigenous families and educators engaged with the EECS.

3.1.3 Indigenist Research Methodology

In 2001 Rigney defined Indigenist research as:

A body of knowledge by Indigenous scholars in the interest of Indigenous Peoples for the purpose of self-determination. (p.1)

This statement specifies the use of Indigenous Knowledges for the benefit of Indigenous Peoples to attain and secure control over our own intellectual property and cultural knowledges. Resistance as the emancipatory imperative, the first principle of Rigney's (2001) Indigenist Research Methodology, focuses on Indigenous Peoples; fight for recognition and self-determination. Foley (2003) states that:

This approach rejects the dehumanizing characterization of Indigenous Peoples as the oppressed victims in need of charity by challenging the power and control that traditional research has had on the knowledge over the 'other'. (p.48)

Quandamooka scholar Martin (2008) builds on Rigney's (1999, 2001) principles of Indigenist Research with her work that identifies the meaning and value of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing from an Indigenous perspective. Through the decolonisation of Western research in the Indigenous space, Martin's (2008) work brings to light the crucial components of belonging and accountability to one's own country. In communicating Indigenous responsibility and accountability to all human and non-human entities, Martin (2008) provides a perspective that is vastly different to that of Western worldviews. With this deeper understanding and engagement, the sometimes stereotypical views of Indigenous Knowledges, promoted by non-Indigenous researchers are challenged and redefined from an Indigenous Worldview.

A specific inquiry of this research is the definition and significance of Country in education to Indigenous Peoples. As Martin's (2008) work points out, Indigenous identity and belonging are inextricably linked to the Indigenous Country you are connected to. However, as mainstream early education programs are grounded in non-Indigenous Knowledges and value systems this crucial aspect of an Indigenous child's life may be superficially represented or else be absent from the early childhood environment (Krakouer, 2016). It is for this reason that the research aims to seek the voices and perspectives of parents and carers of Indigenous children who are currently attending mainstream early education and care services.

3.1.4 Ethical Research Practice

Many of the articles in the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People* (United Nations General Assembly, 2007) advocate for Indigenous participation and control over our lives. For example, Article Three specifically relates to self-determination, whilst Article Eleven speaks to the protection, maintenance and development of culture. However, as research about Indigenous Peoples has overwhelmingly been instigated and controlled by non-Indigenous researchers and institutions (Martin, 2008; Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Nakata, 1998; Rigney, 1999; L. Smith, 2012), Article Eighteen might be considered as most pertinent to the advocacy of Indigenous research methodologies in advocating that:

Indigenous Peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to

maintain and develop their own Indigenous decision-making institutions.
(United Nations General Assembly, 2007)

To date, non-Indigenous researchers have documented, qualified and quantified the lives of Indigenous Peoples who were positioned as savage, exotic and wholly different to the non-Indigenous people conducting the research (Behrendt, 2016; L. Smith, 2012). The results of such research produced biased and sometimes grossly inaccurate assumptions and interpretations of Indigenous Peoples and the lives we live.

Research that has an emancipatory imperative repositions Indigenous people as active participants rather than as the subjects of research (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008; Rigney, 2001; L. Smith, 2012). Analysis of the ethical research guidelines indicates that relational worldviews of Indigenous Peoples (Kovach, 2009; Martin, 2008; Wilson, 2008) are recognised and reflected in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2015) through its identification of reciprocity, respect, equality, survival and protection and responsibility as core values for ethical research with Indigenous Peoples. Interpreted from an Indigenous standpoint, these core values are bound by both spirit and integrity.

Spirit is indicative of the timeless nature of Indigenous Knowledges that is; that all things are connected through spirit and across time, from the past to the present and into the future. It recognises Indigenous connection to Country and Ancestors who dictate cultural protocols and relationships. The diversity of Indigenous Peoples is addressed with the principle of integrity, which like spirit

remains a constant across all timeframes. In this way, Indigenous people's ways of Knowing, Being and Doing are not assumed to be homogenous or easily interpreted by the outsider. Interpretation and application of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing with the use of these core values (NHMRC, 2015; NHMRC, 20005) honours and ensures Indigenous ownership and control over research practices and outcomes.

In this research an unforeseen issue became apparent when I asked participants to choose their own pseudonyms. During research design, ethics application and after some discussion with my supervisor, I decided to use pseudonyms. My intention behind the use of pseudonyms was to maintain participant confidentiality. Specifically, it was written in my ethics application that:

I am aware that the sharing of experiences and perspectives has the ability to cause concern and discomfort for participants as they may fear negative repercussions of their input. For example, Indigenous and non-Indigenous 145

may not feel comfortable or safe to yarn about their place of employment, particularly if there are topics that raise discontent. Likewise, parents/carers of Indigenous children may choose not to participate in the research if they feel that their comments may in some way disadvantage their child(ren's) experiences at the service they attend. For this reason, it is essential that all information provided by any participant:

- (a) Remains anonymous
- (b) Will not be identifiable in any reports or literature produced in relation to this research
- (c) Will remain the sole property of the participant

However, in choosing to use pseudonyms, I was conflicted by the need to protect the identity of the people choosing to participate in the research and my goal of centering and honouring Indigenous voices. The question that arose was, is it possible to fully honour Indigenous voices if I do not name the individuals sharing their knowledge and experiences? This concern for respect and recognition was compounded by the fact that Indigenous research participants are identified in Chapter Four of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* as members of a *vulnerable population*.

It is noted that identifying Indigenous participants as vulnerable attempts to recognise and reduce, if not eliminate, previously adopted unethical research practices of Indigenous Peoples and communities by non-Indigenous researchers. However, I questioned if such positioning of Indigenous Peoples may inadvertently promote negative stereotypes that could in effect diminish the perceived value and importance of Indigenous perspectives and experiences in research. This is a clear example of a complication that exists when Indigenist research is governed by the rules of a Western system of academia (Chilisa, 2011; Wilson, 2008).

To best meet the intention of genuinely honouring and representing the voices of all participants and maintaining confidentiality, two actions were taken. Firstly, pseudonyms were used for all participants and each participant had complete control over choosing their own pseudonym. Interestingly, all Indigenous educators chose a name that had some connection to their Indigenous Country and/or family. Non-Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous

children mostly chose a person name, i.e. James, Jenny, Regina etc. Secondly, following their research yarn, all participants were provided a copy of the voice recording and a typed transcript which provided an opportunity to further reflect on, comment on and/or modify their contributions.

3.2 POLITICAL INTEGRITY - INDIGENOUS WAYS OF BEING

Self-determination in a research agenda becomes something more than a political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains. It necessarily involves the process of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as peoples. (L. Smith, 2012, p.20)

The second principle of Rigney's Indigenist research methodology, political *integrity* speaks to research that is undertaken to enable Indigenous scholars to lead research. Research must be driven by Indigenous Peoples to ensure it is both accountable and beneficial to the Indigenous people involved and affected. Likewise, the research engages Indigenous Ways of Being in its approach to defining, understanding and promoting Indigenous perspectives and ownership of Indigenous Ways of Knowing (Martin, 2008).

This approach speaks directly to ethical practice in the way that Indigenous Peoples are viewed and positioned in research. A core expectation of Indigenous research methodologies is the ability of Indigenous Peoples to determine the direction, approaches and limitations of any research project (Martin, 2008; L. Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Additionally, it is imperative that Indigenous involvement and control continues from the beginning to the

completion of the project. With this approach the research project emulates Indigenous Ways of Being (Martin 2008) as it is underpinned by conditions of respect, responsibility and reciprocity.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research with Political Integrity

The nature of qualitative research lends itself to the tenets and aims of Indigenous leadership (political integrity) in research through the range of methods that can be employed and the recognition of the roles and responsibilities the researcher has to his/her participants. In support of this view Kovach (2009) asserts that:

Indigenous forms of inquiry find an ally in the qualitative approaches that assume the relationally constructed aspect of knowledge production. (p. 34)

This research seeks to understand participant experiences of the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in early education and care services from two distinctly different groups of people. The first group of participants includes Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children who are engaged with an early childhood service, such as a preschool or long day care centre. The second group of participants are non-Indigenous educators who are employed in the same early childhood services that the first group are engaged with.

Indigenous research methodologies which aim to achieve Indigenous emancipation and self-determination (Rigney, 2001) are critical qualitative approaches to research. With a focus on Indigenous perspectives and

experiences, this research pursues an alternative to the views and practices of mainstream Western-based early education and care services. Liamputtong (2010) offers an insight to the emancipatory nature of qualitative research in saying that it enables researchers to go beyond studies about peoples that are silenced, othered and marginalised, to inquiries with and from the perspectives of these people. Research undertaken with an Indigenous research methodological approach critiques and re-positions dominant epistemologies by privileging and employing Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Martin, 2008).

Specifically, relevant to this research is the way in which Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing are interpreted and positioned in mainstream Western-based early childhood curriculums. *The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)* (DEEWR2009) aims to guide early childhood educators in providing high quality and equitable education and care to a diverse cohort of families. EYLF components include the concepts of *belonging, being and becoming*, which might be considered by non-Indigenous educators as similar to Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. However, variations in the definition and scope of these terms reveal assumptions in the EYLF about the growth and development of children that are not wholly representative of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. Table 3.1 compares the concepts and definitions of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing with the EYLF components of belonging, becoming and being.

Table 3.1: Comparison of the Early Years Learning Framework with Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

INDIGENOUS WAYS	EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK (2009)	CRITICAL DIFFERENCES
<p>Knowing:</p> <p>Awareness and knowledge of the deep connections to all entities (people, land, animals, waterways, sky, spirit-Ancestors)</p>	<p>Belonging:</p> <p>Knowing where and with whom you belong.</p>	<p>Two different terms of <i>'belonging'</i> & <i>'knowing'</i> which are in some ways similar in that they relate to identity and belonging, however the depth of relationships differs greatly.</p> <p>In EYLF belonging involves human family members and communities of people. Pets might also be considered from an ownership perspective rather than as equals.</p> <p>Indigenous Ways Knowing involves understanding one's connection to wider kinship systems and all the entities (animals, land, water, sky, and spirit Ancestors).</p>
<p>Being:</p> <p>Relationships with all entities with 3 core conditions: Respect, Responsibility, Accountability</p>	<p>Being:</p> <p><i>"Childhood is a time to be, to seek and make meaning of the world. Recognising the significance of here and now in children's lives"</i></p>	<p>The most significant difference in the concept of <i>'being'</i> is the interpretation of the term itself.</p> <p>EYLF confines 'being' to the present. What the child is doing, seeing etc in a specific time (early childhood) and place, within the childcare centre and immediate family.</p> <p>Indigenous Ways Being are specifically about the ways in which relationships are engaged in and the protocols of respect, responsibility and accountability. The level of responsibility and accountability children have is different to adults, however Indigenous children are often afforded a higher level of autonomy over their own lives and</p>

		responsibility to their younger relations (siblings, cousins etc) than non-Aboriginal children. (Bambllett et al., 2012; Fasoli & Ford, 2001; Guilfoyle et al., 2010)
<p>Doing:</p> <p>Enacting knowledges and cultural practices and protocols appropriate to expectations of life stage.</p>	<p>Becoming:</p> <p><i>“Reflects the process of rapid and significant change that occurs in the early years as young children learn and grow”.</i></p>	<p>The main difference between becoming and doing is that one can be interpreted as working towards a particular skill or ability whilst the other indicates a level of action. Clearly, a child’s level of experience and skill is very different to that of an adult and this is the very defining factor that sets the expectations of the EYLF and Indigenous Ways of Doing apart.</p> <p>In the EYLF becoming ‘emphasises learning to participate fully and actively in society’ (DEEWR, 2009 p. 7). Children are identified as becoming, as the focus is on the fact that children will in time become adults.</p> <p>Indigenous Ways of Doing indicates that children are viewed as already being active participants in society. A child’s level of involvement and engagement is different to that of an adult. Doing is not an indicator of a child’s development toward becoming an adult, it is the recognition of a child’s contributions to family and community.</p> <p>By Aboriginal terms of reference, our children are regarded as capable, autonomous and active in contributing to the world. They are not helpless, hopeless and childish. (Martin, 2007, p.18)</p>

The purpose of the table above is not to measure the value or importance of the Western-based EYLF against Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Rather, it is to demonstrate and illuminate the differences in worldviews on education and care between the dominant mainstream frameworks and that of Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

3.2.2 Research Participants and Recruitment

In this study there were a range of participants who were recruited using an Indigenist sampling and recruiting process. This section first outlines the participants and study phases and then explains the recruitment process.

Participants were drawn from four different cohorts, each with a specific connection to an early education and care service (EECS), such as a preschool or long day care centre.

Participants

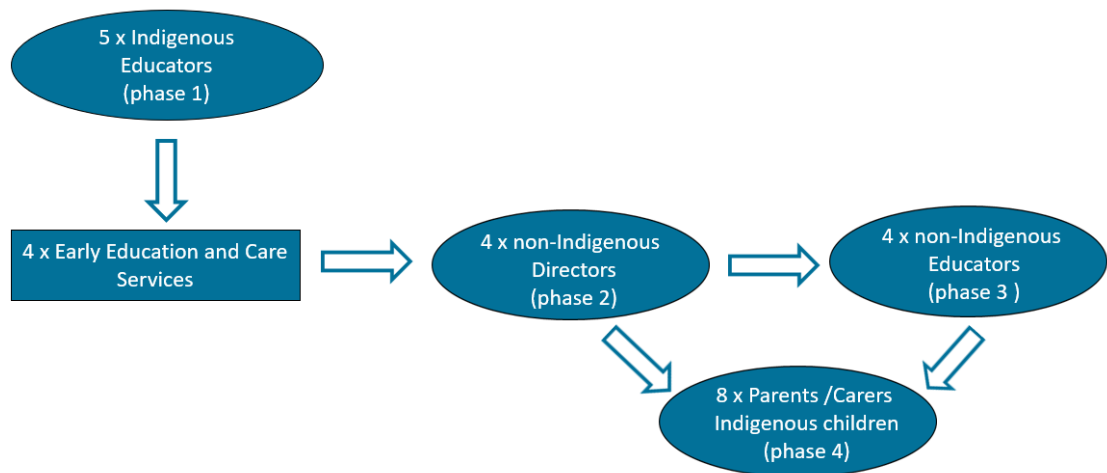
The four cohorts included Indigenous educators, non-Indigenous EECS directors, non-Indigenous EECS Educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children. The first cohort included five Indigenous educators who were invited to identify a mainstream early education and care service, that they are engaged with, that in their opinion was making positive efforts to include Indigenous Knowledges in their service. Overall, four services were nominated. Participants from the nominated services were four directors, four early childhood educators and eight parents/carers of an Indigenous child(ren). A brief overview of the twenty two participants is as follows:

(i) There were two males and twenty females.

- (ii) Of the five Indigenous educators, three work and live on their Ancestral Country.
- (iii) All parents/carers of Indigenous children stated that they live off Country.
- (iv) Distance from home Country for Indigenous participants varied from a different Local Government Area in NSW to a different state or territory.
- (v) The four participating EECS are located across four different Local Government Areas: however,
- (vi) all four EECS operate on Dharug Country one of the services acknowledges both the Dharug and Gundungurra Peoples.
- (vii) all four EECS, nominated by an Indigenous educator (Phase One) fall into the category of 'pre-school', as they cater to children from three to five years of age and operate during the school term between the hours of 8–9am to 3–4pm. However, the EECS are diverse in regard to the specific needs of their communities, families, and children. For example, the participating EECS have differing religious, cultural and/or organisational structures.

Specific details and information provided above are not attributed to individual participants in accordance with maintaining confidentiality for participants and the EECS that generously agreed to share their knowledges, perspectives and experiences. Figure 3.0 below illustrates the way in which the participants from different services were organised into their specific participant cohorts.

Figure 3.0 Research Participant Cohort



3.2.2.1 Indigenous Educators

The title 'Indigenous educator' refers to an Indigenous person who is engaged on a regular basis by one or more early education and care (EEC) services to share and guide educators on the inclusion of Indigenous culture, languages and/or Ways of Knowing. These people may be in a paid or voluntary position with EECS. This phase does not include Indigenous early childhood carers or teachers employed in a permanent position in a specific early childhood service.

3.2.2.2 Non-Indigenous Early Childhood Directors

Phase Two of the research aimed to engage Indigenous and/or non-Indigenous early childhood directors. These participants were employed in the position of Director in a long day care or preschool setting that was nominated by an Indigenous educator in Phase One. Similar to the focus in Phase One, these participants were asked to share their experiences and thoughts in regard to how their EEC service includes Indigenous Ways of Knowing in its program.

Unfortunately, none of the four services nominated, employed an Indigenous Early Childhood Director and consequently no Indigenous directors were interviewed for the study. This outcome will be explored in the analysis section of this chapter.

3.2.2.3 Non-Indigenous Early Childhood Educators

Phase Three of the research aimed to involve Indigenous and/or non-Indigenous participants who have an Early Childhood Education Diploma or Degree qualification. These participants were employed in an EEC service that was nominated by a Phase Two participant employed in the role of Director in that service. The questions for these participants were based on the same focus questions as participants in Phase Two. Like the participants of Phase Two a total of four non-Indigenous early childhood educators participated in this phase of the study. All services that were nominated do not currently employ an Indigenous teacher which meant that no Indigenous teachers were interviewed.

3.2.2.4 Parents/Carers of Indigenous Children

Phase Four participants were parents or carers with one or more Indigenous children enrolled at one of the nominated early childhood services. As it was decided not to include children in this research (see Section 8.3.1) the role of these participants was to share their own cultural and educational aspirations for their children and to represent their Indigenous child(ren)'s perspectives. These parents/carers were invited to participate in the research and were introduced to the researcher by the service Director (Phase Two) in consultation with the early childhood educator (Phase Three). Eight parents/carers of

Indigenous children participated in this phase of the research. Six of these participants identified as Aboriginal, and two identified as non-Indigenous although they were the main parents/carers (through marriage or law) of an Indigenous child or children who attended a nominated EEC service.

Recruitment

The purposive participant recruitment for this research is akin to a snowball or chain sampling method (Punch & Oancea, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Indigenous educators (Phase One) were integral to the selection and invitation of participants for Phases Two, Three and Four.

Participants in Phase One were deliberately invited by the researcher, as they have extensive experience working with non-Indigenous educators in Western-based EECS and as such were able to guide the researcher as to the most appropriate EECS to engage. EECS directors (Phase Two) were invited to participate and were introduced to the researcher by one of the Indigenous educators. In the first meeting the researcher provided the Director with a written letter of introduction and invitation (Appendix 3), to be provided to Indigenous parents engaged with the EECS.

Four of the five Indigenous educators were all familiar to the researcher through community and/or professional networks. The fifth Indigenous educator was introduced to the researcher by one of the four Indigenous educators also participating in Phase One. Indigenous educators were asked to share their experiences and thoughts on the way in which Indigenous Ways of Knowing are

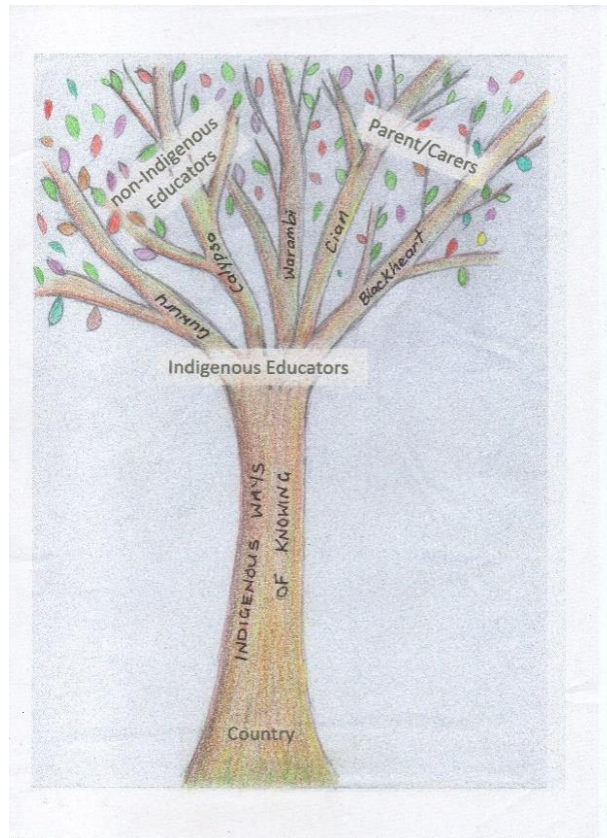
included in Western-based early education and care services. In accordance with snowball sampling technique these participants were also asked to nominate an EEC service they are engaged with that in their opinion effectively and respectfully includes Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Indigenous educators made first contact with the director of their nominated service to provide preliminary information about the research and to seek approval for the researcher to contact the service Director. Indigenous educators are therefore positioned in this research as the cultural brokers (Eide & Allen, 2005; Liamputtong, 2010) who can support both the researcher and Indigenous participants in forming trusting and reciprocal relationships.

In the case of this research it is important to note that while the researcher is an Aboriginal person, this does not exclude her from the need to seek the guidance and permission from Indigenous participants and community members (Martin, 2008; L. Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). In fact, understanding and meeting the requirements of Indigenous protocols is comparable to ethical requirements of the academy from which this research is generated.

In accordance with the research aim of centering Indigenous Ways of Being, the method of snowball sampling has been reimagined by the researcher to illustrate participant recruitment from an Indigenous perspective. That is, rather than an image of a snowball gathering more snow as it rolls down a hill, in the image below the trunk of the tree is the base from which boughs (Indigenous educators) and branches (all other participants) divide and spread to include an

increasing number of participants. An image of a tree is used as the symbol of Country through which all of the entities are connected.

Figure 3.1 Participant Tree



The Participant Tree is representative of Indigenous Country: it shows Indigenous Ways of Knowing as the main body (or trunk) of the tree, as this is the core focus of the research. The five main boughs represent and name (using pseudonyms) the five Indigenous educators who participated in Phase One. These are the strong solid main boughs of the tree as these are the first people to participate in the research. It was these Indigenous people who identified and selected EEC services from which Phase Two, Three and Four participants would be invited. It is important to note that the size of the branches in this figure is not indicative of the importance or value of the participants

represented. As all parts of the tree are critical to the existence, health and strength of the entire tree, so too all participants are valued and respected for their individual and collaborative contributions to this research.

From these main boughs there are branches which represent the parents/carers of Indigenous children and the non-Indigenous early childhood directors and teachers that also shared their knowledge, experiences and perspectives to the research. The leaves scattered about the top of the tree are representative of all the children who spend time growing, learning and sharing in EEC services. In all, the tree acknowledges the many and varied voices involved with the research through the use of Indigenous methodological approaches (Martin, 2008; Rigney, 2001) which recognise and enlist Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing.

As mentioned previously, participants in Phase One were asked to nominate an EECS they were engaged with that, in their opinion includes Indigenous Ways of Knowing in a way that is culturally respectful and relevant to all children. Overall, four of the five Indigenous educators were able to readily identify an early childhood service. One Indigenous educator found this request difficult and related this to issues recently experienced in regard to engagement and expectations from the management committees and educators of a specific organisation. After some thought and consideration, this Indigenous educator was not comfortable to nominate an early childhood service to participate in the research. Alternately, the Indigenous educator was able to identify and introduce the researcher to another Indigenous educator, whom they held in

high regard both as an educator and an Indigenous community member. This was most beneficial to the research as one of the Indigenous educators who had initially agreed to participate in the research was no longer available. Thus, this recommendation ensured that a cohort of five Indigenous educators and four EECS participated in this research. This was significant in maintaining the initial research goal of engaging a higher number of indigenous participants with the intention of privileging Indigenous voices in this research.

To summarise, the participant cohort included thirteen Indigenous participants and eight non-Indigenous participants. It is worth noting that three of the Indigenous educators who participated in Phase One of the research are also parents/carers of Aboriginal children that are currently or have recently (in the last two years) attended mainstream early childcare services. During their yarning sessions each of these participants included the experiences of their own children, along with their own personal thoughts and experiences in their narratives about the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in early education and care services. The use of yarning as a data collection tool will be explored in section 3.3.1 of this chapter

3.3 PRIVILEGING INDIGENOUS VOICES - INDIGENOUS WAYS OF DOING

From an Indigenous methodological framework, the research questions we find compelling and how we ask them, of whom and when will differ from those emanating from an Anglo-Australian socio-cultural framework. Even more critically, the answers to those research questions will likely be different. (Martin & Walter, 2017, p.47)

Worldviews play an important role in how research participants are positioned. This is particularly pertinent to Indigenous Peoples, who have overwhelmingly been the 'subject' of Western designed and controlled studies. First Nations Indigenous scholars (Kovach, 2005; Martin, 2008; Nakata, 2014a; L. Smith, 2012; Walter, 2010) have identified that decolonising research should involve privileging the voices of Indigenous Peoples who have been categorised as 'other' by Western-based research practices since colonisation (Martin, 2008; L. Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). 'Othering' of marginalised peoples is a phenomenon that has been inflicted on Indigenous Peoples by research controlled and driven by Western knowledge systems (L. Smith, 2012).

3.3.1 Centering Indigenous Voices

The voices of Indigenous educators and families need to be heard and actioned in order to address challenges that exist with the aim of embedding Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Western-based EECS. That is, Indigenous experiences and perspectives are understood and used to drive change that enables culturally appropriate inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing into the philosophy, policies and everyday practices of early education and care services. In order to effectively hear the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples, it is necessary to use a method which engages Indigenous participants in a culturally respectful and meaningful manner. The next section presents and discusses the rationale behind the use of the Indigenous practice of yarning in this research.

3.3.2 Research Yarning

Although yarning is grounded in Indigenous Ways of Doing, it is only in the last decade or so that it has been accepted by the academy as a legitimate data collection method (Dean, 2010). Other methods with similar attributes that were employed in research prior to the inclusion of 'yarning' include semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann, 2018) and conversation methods (Feldman, 1999; Kovach, 2009, 2010). Research yarning involves the collection of data from a narrative shared from a participant's perspective about a particular event or experience (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Walker, Fredericks, Mills, & Anderson, 2014). Yarning has been identified as a conversational process that is both reciprocal and respectful of the diversity of Indigenous Knowledges, languages and cultural protocols (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Kovach, 2005, 2010; Walker et al., 2014), hence it aligns with both Indigenous Ways of Knowing, and with Rigney's (2001) Indigenist research methodology.

A major strength of the yarning method is the ability of the researcher to establish a genuine relationship that is accountable to the needs and preferences of the participant. Therefore, unequal levels of power and control between the researcher and research participant can be diminished with the use of this method. When engaging in research yarning, a culturally 'safe' space can be created in which Indigenous participants are able to be actively involved and engaged in the research project process and outcomes. This view is supported by the work of Fredericks et al. (2011) who concluded that:

Yarning techniques, coupled with empowerment strategies, can be adopted in part to suit Aboriginal liberation struggles for broader

empowerment, self-determination, self-management and sovereignty.
(p.21)

However, for the purpose of this research, yarning is more than a casual or social conversation between the researcher and research participant(s). Yarning for research has a purpose in that it enquires about the views and/or experiences of a specific event, situation or environment. It is essential when using a yarning method that validity and rigour of its use is established and justified (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). Misunderstanding or misinterpretation of yarning as a research tool can hinder the researcher's ability to frame and guide the yarning session which may result in a lack of relevant data. Thus, the success of the yarning method as a data collection tool is directly related to the researcher's level of understanding and skill in implementing this technique.

From their own research, Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) identified four types of yarning: social yarning, research yarning, collaborative yarning and therapeutic yarning. Each type of yarning has its own role in establishing and maintaining respectful relationships throughout the research project.

Social yarning is the first type of yarning identified by Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) who point out that the social yarn enables researchers to develop trusting and respectful relationships with Indigenous participants prior to engaging in research yarning. Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) stress that the social yarn does not need to be extensive; in the case of this research the length and content of the social yarn depended greatly on the level of contact that the participant had with the researcher prior to the research meeting. For

instance, participants from Phase One were all familiar to the researcher through community and/or professional networks. Thus, the social yarn involved 'catching up' conversation in which the participant and researcher updated each other on shared community and professional information before moving onto the research yarn.

In the case of early childhood directors and educators (Phases Two and Three), the social yarn included casual introductions and sharing of information about the participant and researcher's employment in the field of early childhood education along with a brief discussion to address any questions the participant may have had about the researcher or the research project.

In the case of Phase Four, parents/carers of Aboriginal children, the social yarn firstly and importantly involved the researcher introducing herself (as an Aboriginal, Dharug person and an Early Childhood Teacher) and thanking the participant for allowing her to meet with them. A question about the number of children enrolled in the nominated service was posed by the researcher to establish a topic of common interest and to alleviate any stress or discomfort the participant may have been feeling prior to beginning the research yarn. This question was useful with all participants in this phase as they easily shared information about all of their children's stages of education, which definitely aided in establishing a relaxed, respectful and reciprocal environment.

The social yarning aspect of this research was not audio recorded as the aim of the social yarn is to allow the participant time to become comfortable and build

trust with the researcher (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). Once the researcher is confident that the participant is comfortable, and the social yarn has drawn to a natural close then the researcher can guide the participant into the research yarn.

The second type of yarning as identified by Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) is the research topic yarn. The research yarn is less conversational than the social yarn as the aim is for the participant to share their own experiences and perspectives which relate to the research topic. In a research yarn the researcher avoids sharing their own thoughts or experiences; rather, they query or prompt to guide the yarn so that the research questions will be addressed naturally through the storying of the participant (Bessarab, 2018; Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). It is very important that the participant is aware of the transition from a social yarn to a research yarn. Research participants were notified of the transition between the social yarn to the research yarn through a number of clear indicators provided by the researcher. Firstly, the researcher asked the participant if they were happy/comfortable to begin the discussion about their child's experiences at the childcare centre. Secondly, once the participant indicated that they were ready the researcher then double checked that the participant understood and agreed to the use of an audio recorder before beginning.

The third type of yarning is known as collaborative yarning which is identified by Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) as a:

Yarn that occurs between two or more people where they are actively engaged in sharing information about a research project and/or a discussion about ideas. (p.40)

The distinguishing feature between a collaborative yarn and research yarning is that collaborative yarning occurs outside of the research topic yarn and can include the exploration of new ideas or insights about the research and research process in general. An example of this could be meetings held between the researcher (PhD candidate) and her supervisor to review the research process and outcomes. Likewise, in the case of research that is conducted by more than one researcher collaborative yarns would include discussions between the researchers that are directly related to their project. Additionally researchers may engage in collaborative yarns with colleagues that have a vested interest or are engaged in similar research Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010).

Therapeutic yarning is the fourth type of yarning which can occur during the research topic yarn. Research yarning has been reported by numerous Indigenous scholars to provide a more holistic approach which produces a deeper level of understanding of the participant's perspectives and experiences when compared to Western-based formal or semi-structured interviews (Fredericks et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2014). However, with this deeper level of comfort and engagement the researcher may find that a participant, 'discloses information that is traumatic or intensely personal and emotional' (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010, p.40). This is not an uncommon occurrence in research that involves Indigenous participants, as government policies that excluded and

segregated Indigenous people have left an indelible impact on lives and collective minds of Indigenous people. These lived experiences can include Stolen Generations; stereotyping and racism mean that many Indigenous families are living with unresolved pain and trauma (Towney, 2005).

In the case of participants engaging in therapeutic yarning, Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) advise:

Allowing the participant, the space to voice our story without judgement enabled the yarn to keep moving, almost akin to a winding down process to a safe space where the conversation could be re-directed back into the research yarn and continued. (pp. 45-46)

Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) highlight that it is not the place of the researcher to act as a counsellor or as an advocate to fix a situation for the research participant, rather that the researcher be guided by the participant's choice to continue with the research either at that time or a later date. In doing so, the safe sharing of stories can become a therapeutic process for participants.

The research yarning process is indicative of Indigenous Research Methodology (Martin, 2008; Rigney, 2001) as protocols of respect and reciprocity are adhered to throughout the entire process. Despite the possibility of encroaching on sensitive and painful experiences, yarning remains an Indigenous way of doing business as it allows for the safe recognition and inclusion of Indigenous worldviews (Martin, 2003; Wilson, 2008), as opposed to dissecting Indigenous experiences with pointed research questions.

All research yarns were recorded with written permission from each participant. Once the recordings were transcribed each participant received their transcripts and recorded interview on a USB device to provide them with an opportunity to make any changes that they felt appropriate and to ensure that they retain ownership of the knowledge and information they shared.

3.3.3 The Research Question

The overarching question in this research is how Indigenous Ways of Knowing can be centred in Western-based EECS. In order to address the question broad topics of family, Country and history were used to inspire discussion and reflections on participant views and experiences of examples of positive inclusion as well as recommendations to achieving a high level of respectful inclusion.

Prior to conducting the research yarns, guiding questions were devised with the position/role of each participant in mind (Appendix 5). For example, Indigenous directors would be asked if they feel supported to include Indigenous Knowledges in the service, whilst non-Indigenous directors are asked if they feel confident to include Indigenous Knowledges in the service. Also, Indigenous directors were to be asked about the relevance of Country to education, whilst non-Indigenous directors are asked to share their understanding of what the term 'Country' means to Indigenous people. These subtle differences are designed to elicit appropriate information in a comfortable manner.

Five broad questions were developed for each phase. These questions were not to be asked directly as with a formal interview. Rather, the researcher used them as a guide to ensure concepts of family, history and Country were thoroughly explored. In certain cases where the theme of a question was not explored, the researcher participated in the yarn to prompt or query the participant with open questions. The quote below provides one example where the participant began to address the topic of 'Country' and then lost track of what they were saying, at which point the researcher posed an open question about the significance of 'Country' to education.

Calypso: and paying respect to those local people because it's their Ancestors, it's their Country, where their people have walked for thousands and thousands of years so, [long pause]

Researcher: So, from an Aboriginal perspective can you explain what the importance, or the importance of Country is in education?'

The focus questions ensured that common concepts, such as Country, were addressed with all twenty-one participants. However, the perspectives from which they were addressed differed depending on the role and race (i.e. Indigenous or non-Indigenous) of the participant. For example, the narrative about the importance of Country in education was framed differently to Indigenous participants than to non-Indigenous participants. For a non-Indigenous participant, the query was firstly in regard to their understanding of the Indigenous definition of 'Country'. If the participant expressed a clear understanding of the meaning and significance of 'Country' to Indigenous people, the yarn was also guided to their view on the importance of this interpretation of 'Country' in education. Whilst Indigenous participants were

queried in the course of the yarn as to their views on the importance of 'Country' in education, no assumptions or judgements were made in regard to the level of cultural knowledge or engagement of Indigenous participants with their Aboriginal Country and/or culture.

3.3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis requires much thought and consideration of the theoretical framework employed and the purpose of the research. As this research began with four separate participant cohorts, *Indigenous educators*, *Early childhood directors*, *Early Childhood Teachers* and *Parents/Cares of Indigenous children*, there were multiple ways in which the data could have been organised for analysis. More importantly, the aim of this research, which is to privilege Indigenous Ways of Knowing, required that data from Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants be analysed independent of one another.

Bazeley (2007) suggests that prior to identifying themes from the data it is important to review details about the sources of data to identify important demographic features between sources and to detect if there are any demographic interrelationships between the sources. This is a particularly pertinent point in this research, as the actual participants were not an identical match to the anticipated cohorts envisioned in the planning stages. This outcome is the direct result of the level of control given to Indigenous educators. An important role, requested of Indigenous educators, was to identify an EECS that, in their opinion, is making positive efforts towards the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges. Thus, specific characteristics of individual participants,

as previously anticipated by the researcher were not necessarily met. This does not mean that the participants were not appropriate, merely that anticipated characteristics of specific participant cohorts needed to be reconsidered and reorganised to effectively recognise and value actual participants.

For example, there were unfortunately, no Indigenous Early Childhood Directors or Teachers among the participants for Phases Two and Three. Thus, the data obtained from Early Childhood Directors and Early Childhood Teachers was combined into one data set, identified as non-Indigenous educators. This decision was also influenced with the establishment, from the research yarns that teachers and directors employed in the same EECS worked collaboratively to include Indigenous Knowledges.

Further to this, although Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children both provided an Indigenous viewpoint, the data gained from these two cohorts was not combined into a single data set, due to the alternate perspectives they offered. Specifically, Indigenous educators were involved with the implementation of Indigenous Knowledges in EECS while parents/carers represented the experiences of Indigenous children who attended an EECS. Data collected from two parents/carers who identify as non-Indigenous was also included in the data set of parents/carers of Indigenous children. That is, they participated in the research as representatives of Indigenous children that attended one of the four nominated EECS. One parent/carer in particular had married into the Indigenous family, while the other is a legally recognised parent/carer of an Indigenous child. Both of these participants were actively

engaged with the children's Indigenous family and community. The decision to include these parents/carers in this cohort for analysis is also presented in greater detail in Chapter 8, specifically, 8.2.3.

Overall, in order to effectively represent the shared knowledges and experiences of all twenty-one participants, the collated data was analysed across three participant cohorts: *Indigenous educators, non-Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children attending a nominated EECS*. Specialised software was utilised to effectively and thoroughly analyse the data shared by twenty-one participants. Software known as NVIVO was used to assist in the management and organisation of data, and to ensure thorough and accurate analysis. Bazeley and Jackson (2013) state that:

The efficiencies afforded by software release some of the time simply used to 'manage' data and allow an increased focus on ways of examining the meaning of what is recorded. (p.2)

However, while software such as NVIVO is useful in identifying and organising recurrent themes within the data, it is the role and responsibility of the researcher to conduct in-depth analysis (Bazeley, 2007; Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

This research began with a broad thematic analysis, on paper (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). However, once the research yarns of all five Indigenous educators were transcribed and uploaded into the NVIVO software, three overarching categories that aligned with Indigenous methodologies became apparent (as can be seen in the Table 3.2 below). After all twenty one participant transcripts

were added to NVIVO and coded to the three categories, further analysis (coding) produced concepts that identified specific characteristics and understandings expressed in the different participant groups (Bazeley, 2007).

Table 3.2. Data Analysis – Categories and Concepts

Categories	Concepts	1	2	3
Indigenous Knowledges and Perspectives - Respect	Country	✓	✓	✓
	Family	✓	✓	✓
	History	✓	✓	✓
Early Education and Care Service - Responsibility	Centre management & philosophy	✓	✓	X
	Centre program and environment	X	X	✓
	Ownership & delivery expectations of Indigenous knowledges	✓	✓	X
	non-Indigenous educator needs & confidence	X	✓	X
Inclusive Practices - Reciprocity	Professional development	✓	✓	X
	Engaging local Indigenous Peoples and resources	✓	✓	X
	Effective practice	✓	✓	✓
	Parent Carer aspirations for their children	X	X	✓

Key:

1 = Indigenous Educators, 2 = non-Indigenous Educators and 3 = Parents/Carers of Indigenous Children.

The first column in Table 3.2 provides an overview of the three main *categories* that were established in reference to the research questions and the Indigenous methodologies used in the research (Martin, 2003, 2008; Rigney, 2001). In column two, each category was further divided into related *concepts* that were identified in the data from one or more participant cohort. Columns three, four and five indicate which concepts Indigenous educators, non-Indigenous educators and/or parents/carers, respectively, discussed.

In analysing the data, it was important to note which concepts were predominantly discussed. However, it is equally if not more important to consider the concepts that were not identified by any one of the three cohorts (Bazeley, 2007). Existence and absence of concepts provides insight into the specific priorities and interpretations of Indigenous inclusion across the three cohorts. With this in mind, it is critical to note that whilst a concept may have been identified by all three participant cohorts, there were many examples in which interpretation, value, understanding and experiences of that concept differed significantly between cohorts and individual participants.

3.3.4 Sharing and Reporting

In order to ensure that the voices of all participants are both accurately and respectfully represented in the research, it is paramount that they are provided with an opportunity to hear and to comment on the findings of this research. This is particularly important to Indigenous participants as the focus of this research involves Indigenous Ways of Knowing (Battiste, 2008; National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003). As an Indigenous researcher I acknowledge that the data collected remains the intellectual property of the participants who generously shared their thoughts, experiences and time with me. To honour this, each participant received individual copies of the recording and transcription of their research yarn. Additionally, discussions between the researcher and the research participants identified opportunities in which the researcher can reciprocate the time and effort given by participants in support of the research. These include but are not restricted to the researcher returning to the service to provide a presentation on the outcome of the research and to

share information, resources and further networks with services to build on their engagement and inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the early childhood centre.

3.4 SUMMARY

In order to properly represent Indigenous voices, it is essential that the methodology employed is presented from an Indigenous standpoint (Kovach, 2009; Martin, 2008; Rigney, 2001; L. Smith, 2012). For this reason, this chapter has been framed by the works of Rigney (2001) and Martin (2008) with the specific intention of designing a methodological approach that listens to and engages with Indigenous Peoples in a manner that is responsible, accountable and reciprocal in all of its intentions and processes.

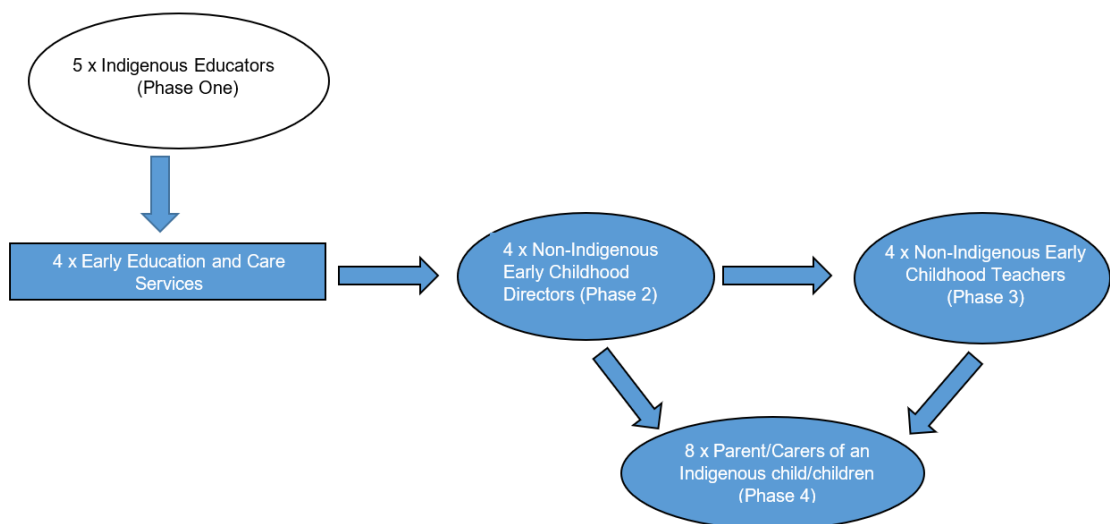
Indigenous Research Methodology works to strengthen and consolidate the strength and validity of Indigenous perspectives and approaches to research. This research requires an Indigenous methodological approach, as it seeks to identify Indigenous perspectives on the most appropriate methods for including Indigenous Ways of Knowing in mainstream EECS. Failing to use an Indigenous methodological approach would likely result in a study 'of' or 'for' Indigenous Peoples. Instead this research seeks to emancipate, honour and recognise the critical importance and value of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS.

CHAPTER 4. VOICES OF INDIGENOUS EDUCATORS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In keeping with the Indigenous methodological approach, this chapter will present the perspectives shared in Phase One of the research which focused on the experiences, views and expertise of five Indigenous educators. For the purposes of this research, Indigenous educators were identified as any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons who are engaged on a regular basis by one or more early education and care services (EECS) to share and guide educators on the inclusion of Indigenous culture, languages and/or Ways of Knowing. This person may be in a paid or voluntary position with an EECS. However, this does not include Indigenous early childhood carers or teachers employed in a permanent position in a specific EECS.

Figure 4.0 Indigenous Educator Participants - Research Phase One



Research yearning sessions with five Indigenous educators provided the first Indigenous accounts and experiences of the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in mainstream EEECS. Initially, twenty broad themes were manually identified on paper and analysed with the use of post it notes and highlighters. After attending a training session, the Indigenous educator transcripts were uploaded to NVIVO; a software program, that enables effective identification and cross matching of themes present in the data.

The main headings for each section in this chapter reflect the three main categories used to analyse the data and are linked with the three main tenets of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing, which are respect, responsibility and reciprocity (Martin, 2003, 2008; Rigney, 2001). This is explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Section 4.1 investigates Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives from the perspective of Indigenous educators. It recognises that to effectively include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS non-Indigenous educators must first understand how Country, family and history shape and influence Indigenous identity and belonging. *Respect* is included in the title as it is a condition of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and it dictates the requirement to listen and consider the perspective of others. In this chapter it is the perspectives of Indigenous educators that are voiced.

Section 4.2 investigates Indigenous educators' experiences and observations of the responsibility and accountability of the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges

and perspectives in mainstream EECS. Specifically, it explores service management structures and policies, the ownership of Indigenous Knowledges and identified challenges of Western-based qualifications. Overall, this section is about the attitude and motivation of non-Indigenous educators to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in mainstream EECS. Accordingly, *responsibility* is included in the title as this is the second condition of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing.

Section 4.3 explores relationship building that comes from effective staff development, recognition and collaboration with local Indigenous people and Country. It provides Indigenous educator standpoints about the ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators can walk together to provide an environment that is culturally relevant and respectful for all educators and families. Thus, this section is about *reciprocity* and the creation of EECS that thrive on diversity.

Section 4.4 summarises the main points from the experiences and observations shared by Indigenous educators in the research yarning sessions. It reiterates that Country is the core of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing and that these knowledges are the intellectual property of Indigenous Peoples. Thus, it emphasises the view that, to properly engage and include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS, educators must be guided by Indigenous Peoples. In particular, non-Indigenous educators should seek to build trusting and reciprocal relationships and networks with Indigenous Peoples who are connected to the Country on which their EECS is located.

4.1 INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES AND PERSPECTIVES - RESPECT

Indigenous Ways of Knowing are very different to the Western concept of knowing which is often used interchangeably with terms such as knowledge and facts. This position was clearly asserted by Indigenous educators through views and experiences shared in the research yarning sessions. From their own experiences, all five Indigenous educators surmised that non-Indigenous educators cannot and should not attempt to teach children about Indigenous Peoples and/or culture until they have listened to the perspectives and lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples.

This position was justified by one participant in particular, who has studied and worked in the field of early childhood education and care for many years and who has witnessed the ongoing exclusion of Indigenous identity and knowledges.

So, including Aboriginal knowledges to me and culture to me was really important. But I guess over the years, there was next to nothing and even in [early childhood] organisations that I've worked when I tried to historically trace back to see if there had been Aboriginal children coming, it was always felt and to this, until fairly recently it was, 'Let's not talk about their culture. Let's assimilate these kids, because that'll be the best, in their best interest'. (Blackheart)

This Indigenous educator clearly speaks of the dominant positioning of Western views and the way in which these views are inaccurately assumed by non-Indigenous educators as the best option for Indigenous children. Such views effectively contribute to the exclusion of Indigenous Cultures and Ways of Knowing under the guise of child welfare, the result of which continues the

assimilation of Indigenous children to Western ways of knowing, while at the same time maintains a workforce of non-Indigenous educators who are deficient in understanding and respect for the value and validity of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS. Ironically, these very educators are directed by early childhood policy and legislation to include Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in early childhood programs.

Each of the five Indigenous educators who participated in the research yarns asserted that to include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives effectively and respectfully in the classroom, non-Indigenous educators must be informed and guided by the very people they are claiming to teach children about. All Indigenous educators reiterated that, to understand and learn about Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives, non-Indigenous educators must first listen to the voices of Indigenous educators and families. In fact, the word *listen* was recorded no less than twenty-one times across all five research yarns—that is, by all participants and each time in direct reference to learning, as can be seen in the two examples below:

We're not above anyone, we're not below anyone. You listen, you learn.

They listen, they learn - two ways of learning. (Guwuru)

I think they [non-Indigenous educators] really need to listen for a long time before they start to try and teach. (Blackheart)

Information shared in all five research yarning sessions indicates that Indigenous concepts of history, Country and family are often misinterpreted or misunderstood by non-Indigenous educators. Moreover, there is a lack of

understanding of the way in which these concepts and perspectives shape and influence Indigenous Identity and belonging which is core to Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing.

4.1.1 Country

All five Indigenous educators involved in this research advocated the necessity for non-Indigenous educators to hear and understand the viewpoint of Indigenous educators and families. The main concepts that were raised and discussed by Indigenous educators, in relation to Indigenous Ways of Knowing, were Country, family and Australia's history from an Indigenous perspective.

The most prominent theme which was raised passionately by all five Indigenous educators throughout the research yarns was Country. Thoughts and experiences shared in the research yarns revealed that Country is inextricably linked to education, but many non-Indigenous teachers do not understand what Country means to Indigenous Peoples, and worryingly many non-Indigenous educators remain ill-informed that there are many Indigenous Countries across Australia, as the quote from Warambi clearly attests:

...because it's [Country] not separate [to education]. Well it's not only important for the children, it's important for the early childhood teachers to learn because more often than not I go in there and they don't know anything about Aboriginal culture and I say things like 'how many Countries in Australia' and they look at me funny and go, 'there's only one country', and I go 'no there's more', and we have that education and understanding and it opens up the early childhood teacher's eyes.

In relation to this lack of understanding, a resounding observation throughout all research yarns reiterated that, before anything else, educators must know whose Country their early childhood service is on and what this means to Indigenous Peoples, as the concept of Country and belonging is central to the lives of Indigenous families.

It's not about where you live, it's about where you're connected to. Oh it's, it's essential, essentially it should underpin everything. (Calypso)

All Indigenous educators spoke about Country as an entity that is core to who they are and the roles and responsibilities they have. Warambi also frequently uses the term 'Mother' when referring to Country, which personifies land in a way that may be unfamiliar to non-Indigenous Peoples.

Crushing up ochre, kids painting their faces with ochre and knowing that comes from Mother and then we talk about, well everything comes from Mother and it's how we dispose of it and how we look after it; you know that we don't want plastics in the ocean etc but that it all originally comes from Mother. (Warambi)

Indigenous educators explicitly endorsed the fact that Country is not a separate entity to education and that it is in fact the core of identity, belonging and knowing for Indigenous Peoples. It is clear from the comments made by Indigenous educators that these concepts can be challenging to non-Indigenous people who are not brought up to view Country as an entity which equally includes all other living entities.

*They've gotta get beyond that tokenism and build the importance, there is a need because this is Aboriginal land that you're sitting on and the more that you **respect it** and understand that and work with it the more the land's gonna give back to you, and those rivers and those beaches*

and those mountains and lands and the community are gonna give back to you the more of a blessing your centre's gonna have. (Cian)

It is clear from the information shared in all five yarning sessions that the importance and value of Country cannot be underestimated by non-Indigenous educators if they wish to include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives into their programs. This was particularly significant in discussions around how early childhood services develop and conduct an Acknowledgement to Country.⁵ All Indigenous educators recognised some examples of good practice; however, the common crucial factor in what constitutes a culturally appropriate and respectful Acknowledgment to Country hinged on the level of understanding that educators and the children displayed about Country and most importantly, that they were not just reciting an Acknowledgement to Country without purpose or meaning.

Well, if you think about our, you think about any government organisation, you think about Department of Education, schools, there is this standard spiel, which I know was developed originally to [pause] as the first step to Acknowledge Country. But how many of these primary students hear this and they're on [Aboriginal name] land or they're on traditional land and ten years at school they don't really know what that means. (Calypso)

Although the comment above is related to primary school, this observation was shared across the participants as relevant to all levels of education - from early childhood to high school and beyond. The emerging practice of early childhood

²Acknowledgement to Country is a traditional protocol that involves recognition and respect of the Aboriginal Custodians, in particular the Elders, of the Aboriginal Country on which an event or meeting is held. Acknowledgement to Country can be enacted by anyone, whereas as a Welcome to Country can only be offered by an Aboriginal person (usually an Elder) who is connected to that Country.

services developing their own Acknowledgement to Country scripts was viewed as a positive approach to recognising and including Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives when it was done in consultation with local Indigenous Peoples. However, Indigenous educators also reported being conflicted about this practice as a result of a genuine lack of understanding of what Country means to Indigenous Peoples.

People start doing this acknowledgments 'and will look after', you know blah blah blah blah and then their last sentence will be 'we look after the animals the plants and the people too', like they're all separate, and I'm, I'm struggling with that because these are good people that are well intentioned and I'm going, 'What do you mean and the people too, we're all one, you don't get that connection to Country'. (Blackheart)

An important aspect of Country that was discussed explicitly by three of the five Indigenous educators was the Dreaming, which was presented as a crucial component to Indigenous Ways of Knowing and connection to Country. Indigenous educators expressed the Dreaming as the crucial link between Indigenous Law and identity.

Because we don't have pedagogy, we have the Dreaming [pause] and see once you give it to them [non-Indigenous educators] in that context and you talk to them about the Dreaming and what is, and how it is a set of rules and a set of guidelines that, you know, that the creators and [Aboriginal name] and all the creator spirits left us to live by, then they kind of go, 'Yeah people don't really think that Aboriginal people had law'. (Guwuru)

It was clear in the yarning sessions that the concept of the Dreaming is considered as much of a challenge to non-Indigenous educators as the

Indigenous concept of Country. Indigenous educators who talked about the Dreaming reflected on the interplay of spirituality, connection to Country and Indigenous Ways of Knowing. It was noted that in EECS the Dreaming is often misinterpreted and related to the past, which fails to recognise the value and validity of the Dreaming in the lives of Indigenous children and their families.

It's not a religious thing it's a spiritual thing and that's the Dreaming. I think that's what we've missed in early childhood education. It's been talked about a lot, the spirituality of a child, but in essence that's you know their connection to Country. I like the fact that the Elders have said to me 'that's the Dreaming', you know, 'not the Dreamtime as past time but the Dreaming as the present'. (Calypso)

Although the researcher did not specifically mention the Dreaming during the research yarns, all Indigenous educators identified the role of spirit and connecting to the Ancestors who guide and support Indigenous Peoples with messages sent through Country. One Indigenous educator referred specifically to 'Sky Country' when talking about ancestral knowledges, whilst two other Indigenous educators recalled specific experiences in which information and/or messages were communicated to them through Country. Such experiences were expressed as an integral part of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, and more often than not, were noted as being misinterpreted or discounted by non-Indigenous Peoples.

I think that they don't understand that there are those things that we read in the wind or in the sky or, you know, a shooting star that tells us something's coming, you know baby's on its way or just those things that we see and feel. And even if we don't really understand them, until we sit with our people who tell us. I see it in little kids that kind of feel it, they know. (Blackheart)

It is clear from the information and experiences shared that Country is a multifaceted concept that involves all living entities, including spirit and the Dreaming. These concepts are vastly different to Western knowledge systems and as a result Indigenous educators report examples of misunderstanding and misinterpretation by non-Indigenous educators which hinder relevant and respectful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS programs.

4.1.2 Family

A common theme that came through most of the research yarns in regard to Indigenous families was the roles of siblings and extended family. Specifically, that Indigenous children may have a number of people who are considered directly responsible for their upbringing. This challenges the Western-based notion of family which tends to be more focussed on what is termed *immediate* family, such as mum, dad and their children. EECS policies and documents such as enrolment forms have been identified by some Indigenous educators as problematic, which was clearly expressed below by Calypso:

I still cringe, the fact that you only got two or three people to pick your child up you know on an enrolment form; is that because I'm an Aboriginal family I don't think so. I think just generally you know that view that [pause] Indigenous kids you know can have a broader range of people that are responsible for them.

Further to this was a retelling of an enrolment interview in which non-Indigenous educators were directing all of the questions and information towards an Indigenous child's Mother despite the fact that the Grandmother was answering

and asking the questions. Blackheart explained that the educators were confused by the situation as they were unaware of the role that the Grandmother has in this family.

A Mother came to enrol her child, but she had her mother in law with her and when they were asking questions of the mother, the mother in law answered, and the Director was struggling with that and I walk by, and I knew the family and I said, this is Grandma, Grandma, you know, because I then said, you know, Grandma's really involved, you know, she would be behind these [enrolment and child care arrangements] because they were trying to talk to the parent as they didn't understand the connection, the relationship between Grandma being a Mother as well, and also the Elder. (Blackheart)

In this example, it is clear that an assumption that the child's mother was the most appropriate person to be addressing was made by the EECS Director. Despite the best of intentions, this enrolment interview could have significantly hindered the ability of educators to form trusting and respectful relationships with this family. Without intervention from the Indigenous educator, the family would likely have left the EECS feeling misunderstood by the educators who could easily appear insensitive and/or disrespectful of the Grandmother's accountability to her grandchild and daughter in law. EECS educator perspectives of the roles grandparents and older siblings fulfil was also commented on by Calypso:

I think grandparents are recognised better now as carers but often because of negative things because the parents can't look after them or the parents can't pick up yeah, whereas not seen as grandparents as the significant person who has a good relationship with that child, that they're the one that you know and older siblings in my case, I struggle with; I have struggled with centres recognising and accepting the fact that my

seventeen-year-old child who has a car is able, you know, is quite capable of coming into a service.

The acceptance of grandparents as carers in lieu of parents discounts the important and crucial roles that extended family play in Indigenous families. In addition, this view also positions parents in a negative light as it assumes that they are not effectively meeting their responsibilities to the child. This view was strongly challenged by Indigenous educators who specifically make mention of the way in which children are considered in Indigenous families and communities. In particular, the comment below expresses the way in which children are valued and the expectation of adults is to build caring relationships with them.

I see some of those kids mucking up because they are not getting that one-on-one connection and that care and that love, I think. And that's universal but that's really important within Aboriginal culture that, you know, that we hold our children right up there. (Warambi)

Warambi notes that children in Aboriginal families are held in high regard and loving relationships are considered essential to a child's development and behaviour. This is not to say that this isn't the case in other families, but to rebuke the point made earlier about grandparents having to look after their grandchildren instead of parents. Another view that was expressed by all five Indigenous educators clearly expresses the ability of children to share knowledge and experiences with others.

If you've got young children, and we all know children learn from each other better than they learn from adults. And if we've got Aboriginal children there and I have seen two-year-old children whose

fathers have taught them to dance and shake leg and all of that. Why would an adult try? (Blackheart)

This perspective about the autonomy of children was consistent across all research yarns. Indigenous educators shared the belief that sometimes children are the most appropriate people to teach a new skill or knowledge. All five Indigenous educators reflected on different examples of Indigenous children engaging in knowledge sharing with other children and/or adults.

You gotta listen to the kids cause within our culture they've just left the Sky Country okay, and I believe personally they've got old fellas in them and you know stories and things like that, and they come out with things and their imaginations. (Warambi)

This approach challenges mainstream Western educational settings in which adults are positioned as the teacher and children as learners. Most EECS tend to be less structured in this manner than primary and high schools; however, the level of autonomy granted to children in any EECS is understandably reliant on the EECS philosophy and each educator's personal viewpoint.

Indigenous educators provided clear evidence of the roles of older siblings and specifically of grandparents in Indigenous families. These roles are not considered as stand-in positions for parents, they are additional relationships between the child and other family members. The purpose of these relationships is not to supplant parents but to provide Indigenous children with additional support and trusting interactions which extend to social engagements and responsibilities.

4.1.3 History

The misinterpretation of Indigenous concepts of Country and family was identified as a consequence of invasion. Specifically, Guwuru noted that mainstream education in Australia is founded on the beliefs and values of the coloniser which dominates all others, to the point where these beliefs and values have become the norm.

Well I think that's still us living with a colonial sense of being, people still living with a colonial sense of being. They go to school, they hear the colonial sense of being because their parents are still living the colonial sense of being etc, etc. So, being, belonging and everything else from a colonial perspective. (Guwuru)

This positioning of Western knowledges over all else leads to the development of policies and practices which are ignorant of the perspectives and needs of Indigenous educators and families. This means that Indigenous people are faced with uncomfortable and confronting situations that non-Indigenous educators are oblivious to. A straightforward example of this was provided by Blackheart in regard to legal documents such as enrolment forms in EECS which require families to divulge personal information. It can be reasonably argued that non-Indigenous educators that have no knowledge or understanding of past policies and/or the treatment of Indigenous families have no reason to question the suitability of records and documents to Indigenous families.

Not everybody feels comfortable filling out all those forms because of our history and our baggage and our distrust of what, where that information might go. (Blackheart)

Ultimately, Early Childhood policies and procedures are developed and implemented in a Western framework which overlooks conditions that may be contradictory to the health and welfare of Indigenous families. Therefore, control over policies and practices is in the hands of a non-Indigenous system and Indigenous educators and families are left to deal with the effects of legislation that they had no hand in shaping. Calypso spoke to the complex issues of proving Aboriginal identity as a result of the forced displacement of Indigenous Peoples from Country and the policy of assimilation. Specifically, Calypso was denied the right to apply for an Indigenous identified early childhood position as it was discovered that her Grandparents had applied for Exemption Certificates.

It was my father that said to me, 'Are you going to let them tell you who you are; because that's not okay. He said, 'they are basically then saying we are not who we are, which is denying our identity'. (Calypso)

This experience shared by Calypso provides a clear example of the way in which past government policies continue to impact on Indigenous families today. Such complications continue to be the burden of Indigenous Peoples today. The fact is that despite best intentions without knowledge and understanding of past practices and policies non-Indigenous educators are not at all able to perceive the potential impact that Western-based requirements and curriculums might have on Indigenous families.

This was explored more broadly by Blackheart in her observation of the way in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are displayed and presented to children in EECS. The intention of these displays was acknowledged as providing evidence of the inclusion and acceptance of Indigenous Australian

people. However, the point was made that such action can only be considered as superficial when there is no understanding of how these flags came to be or the significance and meaning of them to Indigenous Australians, beyond a description of the representation of colours.

I think they [non-Indigenous educators] should understand the history of flags, because people put the flags up, and they teach the colours and the meaning of all that. And I said to them 'where did these flags come from?' Well, they weren't flying here when the first ships turned up.
(Blackheart)

This comment relates directly to the point about the importance of how Western education positions Indigenous Peoples in society by the depth of knowledge and understanding that non-Indigenous educators have. For instance, understanding the representation of colours on a flag is factual information; however, to properly engage with Indigenous perspectives it is also necessary to understand how, when and why the flags were created in the first place. Information such as the fact that these flags were not recognised as official flags of Australia until 1995 (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2018) speaks volumes to the concealment and exclusion of Indigenous Identity and Ways of Knowing in Australia. Guwuru succinctly summed up this reality, when noting the resistance, she has experienced to information she shares about Australia's history and the lived experiences of Indigenous families. It is a reality that can be difficult for different reasons for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples to accept and reconcile.

It's so hard to break and I think some of that is weighted down with the fact that to look in a mirror and look back at yourself and acknowledge that what you have today has come off the back of so much trauma and

loss to other people is something that people don't want to deal with, Australians don't want to deal with. (Guwuru)

Interestingly, it was noted by Blackheart, Guwuru and Calypso that educators from countries other than Australia were often less resistant and more understanding of the perspectives of Indigenous families than educators who were born and raised in Australia.

Colleagues who, two were part-time, both of non-Australian background, both non-English speaking background, but could relate to Indigenous history, displacement. (Calypso)

*When you go and talk to people from another culture, that are working in early childhood, they are **so more** open to what we have to offer and what we have to bring than Australian early childhood workers [pause], culture understands culture, they understand the importance of culture and they understand the need to influence or to balance what the children get outside of the centre with some equality. (Guwuru)*

The overall message here was that the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous Australians were compatible with experiences of isolation and exclusion by peoples of diverse backgrounds in their home countries and in Australia. In addition, the value and importance of beliefs and values that are not represented in the mainstream was also understood and familiar to people from diverse backgrounds.

4.1.4 Summary

In section 4.1 the shared experiences and observations of Indigenous educators involved in this research have illustrated the necessity to listen to and

respect the voices of Indigenous Peoples. This enables non-Indigenous educators to understand Indigenous concepts and perspectives of Country, family and Australian history. Clearly, all three concepts play a major role in defining Indigenous identity and belonging. However, if they are not respectfully considered and understood from an Indigenous perspective they can easily be misrepresented, if not overlooked, by non-Indigenous educators, even by those with the best intentions at heart.

While the Indigenous educators involved with this research have identified genuine challenges to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS, they have also shared some positive examples of recognition and inclusion and these will be explored in Section 4.3.

4.2 EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES — RESPONSIBILITY

Early Education and Care regulations and frameworks make EECs *responsible* for the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. However, conflicting values and perspectives of Western and Indigenous Ways of Knowing create contested spaces. Additionally, Indigenous educators in this research have expressed their concerns that as Western Ways dominate mainstream education, Indigenous ownership and the delivery mode of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives is often challenged and questioned. Two key aspects were important here, centre management and philosophy, along with ownership and delivery of Indigenous Knowledges.

4.2.1 Centre Management and Philosophy

In all research yarns it was noted that the management structure and philosophy of EECS has a significant impact on the educator's ability to engage with Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. Interestingly, all four services that were nominated to participate in this research are not-for-profit services. That is, all funds raised by the service are allocated to pay the ongoing costs of running and maintaining the EECS, although, as only four EECS services were nominated to participate in this research, it is not feasible to draw any specific or broad findings from this. However, it is worth noting that each service was located in different suburbs; and in areas that were economically diverse and span both urban and regional areas.

Although the participating EECS represent only not-for-profit EECS, Indigenous educators also identified that the philosophy and legislative requirements of these services control the ability of educators to meet the diverse needs of Indigenous children and families.

So, I sometimes have directors say to me, 'I really don't want to have to do it this way, but I have to do it because of government legislation' or because they're, one centre in an overarching organisation of centres so, 'head office says we've got to do it this way'. (Guwuru)

The way in which the managing body, be it an organisation or parent committee, considers the value of the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives sets the attitude and motivation for staff and educators employed in the EECS. Even well-intentioned staff, such as the director in the comment above, must adhere to legislative and organisational policies and practices.

Warambi spoke of EECS in which educators constantly carried iPads to make notes and keep records on the children's activities and development. Whilst acknowledging that this is necessary for accountability to parents and funding bodies, the main concern raised was that educators are not building respectful relationships or interacting with the children. Instead, it appeared that the main priority for educators was seen as documentation:

To constantly tick all the boxes for their funding or whatever and the children aren't getting that one-on-one. (Warambi)

The concept of ticking boxes was voiced by all five Indigenous educators in reference specifically to the motivation behind the way in which many EECS attempt to include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS. There was a clear consensus that attempts of inclusion were often superficial when they were driven by a need to meet legal requirements rather than a commitment to understanding the needs of Indigenous families.

As somewhat of a contradiction, one Indigenous educator stated that legislation is necessary to ensure that educators were committed to including Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in their programs. This alternate view outlined that without legislation many EECS will not commit to include Indigenous Knowledges and/or perspectives.

*It's basically about social change, gotta create the social change, it doesn't just happen by doing a course [laughs], yeah yeah and it has to work from top down so the government, so when it's top down when we can get the government to do this top down and then **they** [mainstream child care services] will listen, if it's not top down then it's tokenistic. (Cian)*

This perspective of inclusion being mandated is linked to Calypso's observation that the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives has to be a commitment of all educators and that it must be embedded in the EECS pedagogy. The reasoning behind this came from an example shared about an EECS in which one particular staff member actively consulted local Indigenous people in regard to a new garden that was being established and to develop an appropriate Acknowledgment to Country for the children. However, it was a very large service and this inclusion was only occurring in that particular educator's room, so only a small number of children were benefitting from this.

I spoke to the trainee about what happens in that room and how does that look like with older children; the response from the trainee was, 'Oh well the older kids don't do it'. But the older kids would have done it if they were in that two-year-old room. (Calypso)

Continuity of inclusion was also raised by Cian who commented on the way in which staff turnover can undermine genuine effort and time spent on educator training and relationships with local Indigenous people. It was her experience that when an educator position became vacant and new educators were employed, the level of engagement and inclusion reduced or completely stopped as new educators were not aware of the EECS commitment to Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. Cian stressed this was especially damaging when a new EECS Director was appointed. A strong recommendation offered to combat this situation was that EECS policies and procedures related to Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives need to be included in the induction process for new educators and potentially families.

Which is why I'm saying put it in your induction process because so many directors have left and I ring up and I go [gestures to say what is happening here?] and then they go, 'oh ah ah ah ah we don't know nothing about this program'. Nobody's inducted them. (Cian)

Whilst one Indigenous educator expressed their strong distaste for the word 'embed' and another to the word 'pedagogy', views about the need for the provision of cultural training were unanimous. Professional development is addressed in greater detail in Section 4.3.1. Nonetheless, the message from the experiences and observations of Indigenous educators is that the attitude and motivation of educators towards the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS can be fostered or hindered by management policies and procedures. However, all Indigenous educators insist that relevant cultural training can assist all management, staff and educators in an EECS to develop genuine appreciation and motivation for the benefits and necessity to understanding culturally respectful and relevant inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives.

4.2.2 Ownership and Delivery of Indigenous Knowledges

The Indigenous educators were concerned about non-Indigenous educators who considered themselves competent to teach Indigenous culture, languages or art, with little to no interactions with the local Indigenous community. This practice was regarded to be disrespectful to Indigenous Peoples and our rights over Indigenous Knowledges and Perspectives. Guwuru held particularly strong views in regard to this and explained inequities in the way that Indigenous Knowledges and Skills are considered by non-Indigenous educators.

So, I think, you know, overall, one of the first things that we need to address is, what is a qualification? What is it worth? I can't go in and teach, I can't ring [name of a school] and say, '[Principal's name] I want a job... as a teacher'. I don't have a four-year degree and a teacher's certificate. But I have early childhood centres that ring me and say, 'Can you come in and train my staff in language so that we can teach the children?' Sorry, hang on, where's your qualification in being a black person? (Guwuru)

In this comment, Guwuru points out that Indigenous Knowledges are not valued by many non-Indigenous educators. It is clear from the comment above that some non-Indigenous educators do not place the same degree of emphasis to the ownership or attainment of Indigenous Knowledges and skills as they do to Western qualifications such as an early childhood certificate or diploma.

I think they need to understand that they're getting expertise and that needs to be remunerated. I think they want it for free all the time, but they would never ask the Spanish dances in or the potter in for free or anything else; they will pay. (Blackheart)

This point was reiterated by Calypso who spoke of the engagement of Aboriginal Liaison Officers that get worn down as the remuneration for their expertise is not consistent with the high demand on their time. The comment below speaks of an assumption that the provision of lunch is adequate payment for a guest Indigenous speaker or presenter.

But while we say it's an important part to have these Aboriginal people employed, it's gotta be a rewarding job and it just can't be, you know, sort of come to this and feed me (Calypso).

Both Guwuru and Blackheart support this position that non-Indigenous educators must understand that they are receiving expert knowledge and skills and that there must be no question in regard to payment for services.

Just through the week I have already had someone say to me, 'what would it cost to do A, B, C, D?' Well that's gonna cost this. 'Oh well is there anyone that can do it cheaper?' (Guwuru).

Sharing of Indigenous Knowledges proved to be challenging to Indigenous educators on a number of levels. In Section 4.3.2 all Indigenous educators agreed that Indigenous Peoples are bound by Indigenous protocols.

However, these protocols are not always understood or followed by non-Indigenous educators. As an Indigenous educator, Blackheart expressed personal conflict over the rights and abilities of non-Indigenous educators teaching Indigenous culture to children:

As a community person, I think, bugger off, don't teach my, it's not your job to teach my children culture. But as an educator, I think what if people don't know this, we're just going to be on the same treadmill, in the same mouse trap running around, around, around, so it's a real struggle. (Blackheart)

In addition, Blackheart also spoke about a lack of reciprocity, which is an important tenet of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing and is contrary to the values of the Western-based system of education. Warambi also noticed that as children get older in mainstream education they are taught to compete, but Indigenous Ways teach children how to share and care for one another and Country. The comment below speaks directly to this conflict of perspective and values.

I guess the other thing that's missing is the give back to community, the reciprocity is not there, yeah, it's a lot of services want to take, take, take the knowledge because it's all about me and I don't think about what the give back is so there's no kind of true walking together I suppose.

(Blackheart)

Non-Indigenous educator expectations and assumed rights over the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS raised a number of questions and concerns for Indigenous educators. Differences in Indigenous and non-Indigenous values of teaching and learning create a space that requires careful navigation to ensure genuine engagement of, and collaboration with, appropriate Indigenous Peoples.

4.2.3 Summary

This section has explored the views and experiences of Indigenous educators in regard to the attitude and motivation of non-Indigenous educators to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS. This is a space where non-Indigenous Knowledges dominate but EECS are legislated to include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. Three of the five Indigenous educators specifically identified that the EECS philosophy and policies play a crucial role in the development and promotion of positive attitudes and motivation towards the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. Non-Indigenous educator inexperience and general lack of understanding signposts an obligation to collaborate with and engage Indigenous Peoples as the rightful owners of Indigenous Knowledges.

4.3 INCLUSIVE PRACTICES - RECIPROCITY

It is clear from sections 4.1 and 4.2 that relevant and meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives requires engagement and guidance from local Indigenous Peoples. Section 4.3 is informed by the insights of Indigenous educators who advocate that the establishment of trusting relationships between local Indigenous Peoples and EECS will result in programs that are beneficial to all educators, children and their families. The reasoning behind this view is directly linked to an understanding that Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives are reciprocated with ongoing recognition of the lived experiences and knowledges of adults, children and Country.

4.3.1 Professional Development

All Indigenous educators shared experiences that provided clear examples of the lack of knowledge, and at times the lack of respect, that they have witnessed in regard to Indigenous Knowledges and Peoples in EECS. These examples indicate a great need for culturally relevant and respectful training that focuses on the lived experiences of Indigenous Australian Peoples.

While Indigenous educators expressed frustration and dismay at some of the assumptions and attitudes displayed by non-Indigenous educators, they also recognised that these inappropriate responses are the result of the silencing and exclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in mainstream education since invasion. In response to this, Guwuru believes that non-Indigenous educators need to be provided an environment in which non-Indigenous educators felt safe to ask questions that might be considered

offensive. This environment would also allow the Indigenous educator to answer honestly, which as was previously noted includes information that can be very difficult to hear and accept.

Honesty, you have to give a safe space. You know you can't help staff um, understand things if they don't feel safe enough to ask those offensive questions. (Guwuru)

This of course involves cultural training which four of the five Indigenous educators yarned specifically about, and in doing so they all positioned Indigenous Peoples as the knowledge holders. Any references made to anything other than Indigenous-led training was relegated to ticking boxes, superficial and inappropriate. Thus, the crucial aspect of cultural training as identified by Indigenous educators is training that it is coordinated and implemented by Indigenous Peoples and specifically Indigenous people who are representative of the local Indigenous community.

I think those teachers who get that professional development have to have Aboriginal people talking to them or a relationship with them so that they understand some of these fundamental things. (Calypso)

Guwuru questioned the value of training programs/workshops that are often presented in classroom-like settings. It was surmised that formal training sessions often provide participants with examples or template plans to utilise in their own EECS. Yet, such resources fail to effectively demonstrate to or provide participants with an opportunity to actively engage or experience the physical act of connecting to Indigenous Peoples and Country which is core to Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing.

I think so much of the training is done from an academic perspective, as well that they [non-Indigenous educators] walk out with a lot of paper, but they still don't walk out with a connection (Guwuru).

The action of engaging with local Indigenous Peoples to create and build such connections was also addressed by other Indigenous educators. Calypso specified that the most beneficial way for non-Indigenous educators to engage with Indigenous Knowledges and Peoples is to participate in Indigenous events, specifically those occurring in their local area. This involves understanding and making connections by actively leaving the EECS to attend an Indigenous event that is coordinated and implemented by local Indigenous Peoples.

I think staff need engagement with Aboriginal events. I think we had a chat earlier about getting physically out there and going to something, even if it's a dance group or you know, not about early childhood, but just putting that on your calendar. (Calypso)

In Section 4.1 it was identified that understanding the Indigenous concept of connection to Country is imperative to including Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS. This was repeated by Indigenous educators when the topic of cultural training was raised. In considering and reflecting upon cultural training, each Indigenous educator automatically yarned about Country and insisted that, to properly understand the meaning and significance of Country, children and adults must not only hear and talk about Country, they must also have opportunities to physically experience Country. One Indigenous educator even went as far as to suggest the option of repeated training sessions that are provided outside a formal academic or classroom setting.

So, I think more authentic training and I think some of the things that are needed is for, even if it's once a year, that staff go away on Country somewhere and actually do an on-Country compulsory weekend training. (Guwuru)

When you [non-Indigenous educators] gonna talk about Country you actually have to sit on Country and shut up and listen and feel before, you do need that, and you can't do that alone. (Blackheart)

Blackheart's comment also supports the position of the need to engage with Country physically and emotionally/spiritually. Additionally, there is reference to the position that sitting on and listening to Country should not be a solitary activity for peoples who have not been brought up with this teaching. That is, it is essential that non-Indigenous educators are guided and supported by local Indigenous Peoples to properly understand how to really see and listen to Country. All Indigenous educators note that teaching and learning in Indigenous communities involve sitting, listening and talking with others, and that this collaborative approach to learning operates with an understanding that no one person holds all of the knowledge. This view is contrary to the expectations that non-Indigenous educators impose on Indigenous educators, which was specifically demonstrated by Calypso's reflection of the experiences of Indigenous Early Education Trainees.

And even if they, you know, come from the strongest of Aboriginal families and culture, they can't walk into a centre and be, the be all and end all of information about implementing experiences that are culturally appropriate for zero to fives (Calypso).

From the reflections and experiences of Indigenous educators it is clear that cultural training must be developed and implemented by Indigenous Peoples. A necessary and important aspect of such training involves opportunities to experience Indigenous Knowledges as opposed to solely reading or hearing about them in a formal setting. Such experiences may begin with an investigation and participation in local Indigenous events and would ultimately involve opportunities to physically experience Country under the guidance and support of Indigenous Peoples.

4.3.2 Engaging Local Indigenous Peoples and Resources

Two of the most prominent challenges for non-Indigenous educators in including Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives that emerged from the research yarning sessions was a general lack of understanding of the diversity of Indigenous Peoples and little to no recognition that Indigenous Knowledges are the intellectual property of Indigenous Peoples. This situation has again been attributed to a lack of engagement with Indigenous Peoples, specifically with the Traditional Owners of the land on which an EECS is located.

It was clear from the research yarns that many non-Indigenous educators are unaware of the diversity of Indigenous Australian peoples and that there are a number of misconceptions and inappropriate practices as a result of this. This issue was raised previously by Warambi and is clearly articulated in the quote below:

I say things like how many Countries in Australia, and they look at me funny and go, 'there's only one country' [name] and I go, 'no there's

more' and we have that education and understanding, and it opens up the early childhood teacher's eyes. (Warambi)

In conjunction with this are the notions about identical practices and beliefs of Aboriginal peoples. When non-Indigenous educators are not aware of the number of different Aboriginal Countries in Australia, not to mention the difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, it is hardly surprising that there is an expectation of sameness. This was an issue raised and discussed by all Indigenous educators.

You know someone said to me, 'Oh come on [name] you might not do it down here but all of Australia does dot paintings'. And I said, 'you know there's only two mobs, two mobs in this whole of this country that traditionally do dot painting. Two out of three hundred plus, two!' I said, 'but all the world thinks that there's two that don't and three hundred that do'. (Guwuru)

The issue flagged by Indigenous educators involved a lack of understanding about the inappropriateness of engaging people who did not represent the local Indigenous Community. Which then led to EECS implementing inappropriate activities and resources in their programs that foster inaccurate information about the local Indigenous Culture and practices.

Where I think it doesn't work, people meet one Blackfella, who may be from anywhere, that's an artist and they'll have that person back every year doing art and the kids enjoy it. And of course, they like it. But it doesn't relate that art, that person's art doesn't relate to the land they're on or the Country they're on, or the stories of those people or any of that stuff. (Blackheart)

A further complication that was noted by Guwuru was the assumption that Indigenous people from the same Country or clan group will make the same choices or act in the same way. In this case non-Indigenous educators are aware that there are many Aboriginal Nations across Australia, but they assume uniformity within those nations. To illustrate the diversity of Indigenous Peoples within their own families, Cian spoke about her own children's ability to speak a number of Aboriginal languages and the experience of attending a mainstream EECS.

And with my kids they [becoming emotional] I'm so passionate about this because with [children's names] we speak [three different Aboriginal languages] and their Dad's [two Aboriginal language groups] so they're got five language groups and so I taught them the [two Aboriginal languages] and so they went to preschool and I said to them look you're gonna have to learn their language because for all the basics [toileting, eating & sleeping] that they do, that you're gonna do here, they only know the Aboriginal words. (Cian)

The language diversity emphasises the necessity to seek information from Indigenous families and the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the early education and care service is situated. Interestingly, three Indigenous educators explained that Indigenous families enrolled in the service may not necessarily be members of the local Indigenous community - they may in fact be living far away from their home Country. In this case, Indigenous educators recognised that the Indigenous family's cultural practices and protocols are likely to be different to that of the local people. However, as Indigenous Australian peoples these families may be willing and able to provide vital links to the local community and insights into broader Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

Listen to the parents and listen to the kids that are in the centre - they want to guide you in what they want their kids to learn (Cian).

They should first know what, whose Country they're on, and those people should be consulted first before they do anything. And then families that may be in their centre should maybe be represented in what they're, you know, what's in the programming and should be inspired by those people giving them some ideas and clues around that. (Blackheart)

Indigenous educators all reported that, in their own experience, many non-Indigenous educators rely on information and reports produced by government agencies or resources that are downloaded from the internet and are not always culturally relevant or produced by local Indigenous people. These practices were not only labelled as inappropriate; they were also considered disrespectful and dismissive of the Traditional Custodians.

This point was raised by all Indigenous educators, not only in relation to non-Indigenous people but also to Indigenous people who are living and working off Country. The consensus across the board, in regard to Indigenous people who are not representatives of the local Indigenous community, was that it is acceptable to work with an Indigenous person who is not on their own Country as long as they acknowledge and network with local Elders and/or community members. One Indigenous educator made mention of how a particular service ensures that acknowledgement and respect to the Traditional Custodians is maintained.

*They [early childhood centre] do acknowledge that knowledge needs to come from local people. Local knowledge needs to come from local people. They do, they're **very** strong in that belief. So, they've had a few people into the centre, but if people come into the centre that don't acknowledge the [Traditional] people, they don't have them back, in the centre. (Guwuru)*

Subsequently, it was also agreed that it is okay to investigate and include Indigenous languages and cultures from different Indigenous Countries as long as it is not at the expense of the local knowledges and protocols. That is, it must be made clear where different knowledges and practices come from; that is, which Country they belong to.

Whilst it was acknowledged that sourcing local Indigenous people and resources can be difficult, the key message was that non-Indigenous educators should not assume or expect that a local Indigenous person will automatically be willing and/or able to visit an EECS. Rather, all Indigenous educators talked about taking time to build trusting networks and connections with local Indigenous Peoples and organisations. It was stated that the best way to do this was for educators to attend local Indigenous events and/or exhibitions. Cian suggested that this might be organised as a staff training activity or else an excursion with the children that are enrolled in the service.

*They need to go **out** of their workplace to go and find them [Indigenous organisations & people] so we've got some people during the holidays, some preschools, actually attending NAIDOC events now. (Cian)*

This was considered as one of the most appropriate ways to find and establish networks that can be developed over time. It was reported that when non-Indigenous educators attend Indigenous events, they display a genuine interest and commitment to understanding and engaging with Indigenous Peoples and cultures. The Indigenous educators identified that this approach involves a significant commitment of time on the part of non-Indigenous educators.

It takes time and they may never get everything that they think they are because it takes time, it takes us a lifetime. (Blackheart)

In fact, time was repeatedly mentioned throughout the yarning sessions in recognition of the role it plays in the establishment of trust and working relationships with local Indigenous community and peoples. Indigenous educators held strong views that non-Indigenous educators must have realistic expectations about the amount of time that genuine relationship building, and collaboration may take.

4.3.3 Effective Practices

Indigenous educators were asked to consider and share examples of effective and relevant inclusion that they had witnessed in EECS. Additionally, Indigenous educators were also asked to nominate an EECS they have been engaged with that, in their opinion, are making a conscientious effort to include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives into their environments and programs. Four of the five Indigenous educators nominated an EECS that they were confident and comfortable to contact and introduce the researcher to.

After much thought and consideration one of the Indigenous educators decided that they were not comfortable nominating a specific EECS, due to a change in motivation and a decrease in collaboration from a particular EECS in an organisation they had worked with for a number of years.

What bothers me, and the reason I don't want to go back there, is because what they are getting out of it is pushed so hard to make [raises hands to gesture at a higher level] up here [management] look so brilliant, 'look at me!'. (Guwuru)

This Indigenous educator observed a significant change in the motivation and commitment to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. Initially, staff were very welcoming and interested in the information and knowledge that was being shared by the Indigenous educator. However, the motivation to collaborate with the Indigenous educator changed when the EECS began to attract positive attention from other services and assumptions were made about the skill level and authority of non-Indigenous educators to include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. This behaviour was not confined to the experience of just this particular Indigenous educator. Blackheart's comment below and discussions around delivery-mode expectation and Indigenous ownership in Section 4.2.2. provide further evidence of this.

I think that's what they don't do. They don't check with our people to see if what they're doing is okay, they want to take over and they'll google it or go to books or whatever. And again, they'll do that without asking people and then they'll be the Aboriginal art experts. (Blackheart)

Despite this Indigenous educator choosing not to nominate an EECS, they were confident and eager to introduce the researcher to another Indigenous

educator. Introduction to the fifth Indigenous educator enabled the researcher to engage with four EECS for Phases Two, Three and Four of the research.

All Indigenous educators identified a number of activities and actions that they recognised as fitting examples of relevant and respectful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. These examples were obtained from a range of different services over the duration of time that each individual Indigenous educator has been engaged with EECS.

Warambi's observation of the way in which a certain EECS organised educators, to ensure that there are always adults available to engage with the children, is indicative of the roles and responsibility of adults to children.

There's other staff giving the one-on-one and there's one other staff member recording everything on the iPad and, you know, stories songs and it's not complete focus on ticking a box just for the money.

(Warambi)

This particular comment is an extension of a previous observation of a service in which all educators carried iPads throughout the day. For Warambi, the development of respectful and caring relationships with children that foster autonomy and responsibility is paramount. In particular, Warambi speaks to the belief of children as knowledge holders and therefore capable of participating and contributing in ways that are not always recognised by EECS.

That's the key thing I think with early childhood and what I've learnt from two well; I work in many, many early childhood centres but the two leaders are [preschool name], three leaders [repeats first preschool

name] [second preschool name] and [third child care centre name] because they've got it, they listen to the children. (Warambi)

This understanding of children as knowledge holders was presented in Section 4.1.2 with Warambi stating that children have the knowledge of the Ancestors as they have only recently come here from the 'Sky Country' where the Ancestors reside. While other Indigenous educators did not express the knowledge of children in exactly the same manner, it was certainly articulated that EECS that listen to voices of children are engaging with the same beliefs and values that Indigenous Peoples have of children. Again, this was discussed and presented in Section 4.1.2.

Like Warambi, Guwuru's example of effective inclusion focused on outcomes and experiences that are meaningful for the children attending that EECS. This includes experiences to investigate the local neighbourhood and to engage with a variety of Indigenous Peoples.

Those kids understand everything they're saying. They leave the centre, they go on little walks around their area; the last time I went in there one of the little boys actually came up and said to me, 'Aunty [name], I did this painting and I want to tell you about it'. I said, 'Oh, when did you do that?' And he goes, 'Yesterday but I didn't take it home because I wanted to show you today.' And I said, 'Oh come and tell me the story', and it was amazing. Like he talked to me about, you know, he made his own little Dreamtime story up, but he backed that up with things that he had been learning about going out and, 'I remember when you said and I know Uncle [name] told us'. Because [Aboriginal person] goes into their centre quite a bit. (Guwuru)

The way in which Guwuru views the success of an EECS's ability to include Indigenous Knowledges and Perspectives is from the way in which the children engage and express their understanding to others. For example, when the children have a full understanding of the meaning and purpose of the EECS's Acknowledgment to Country, it becomes a practice that is both relevant and valid to all of the children and educators in that particular EECS.

Calypso's reflection also offered examples that display the level of understanding and engagement that EECS have with Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. For example, one particular service displayed a written copy of the Apology in the entry foyer as an addition to their Acknowledgement to Country. This for Calypso indicated a deeper understanding of the significance and meaning of the Acknowledgement as oppose to a symbolic gesture that lacked genuine understanding and commitment. Another example that displayed a deeper level of understanding of Indigenous history was through the recognition and promotion of events such as Sorry Day on the service noticeboard or in newsletters that are sent out to all families.

Visual aesthetics when you walk in; if you see your flags up and you see an Acknowledgement to Country and you see something that is significant to Sorry Day and you see reference to the Apology to the Stolen Generations about your history; if you see, you know, that stuff you know that service has some idea about the history of Aboriginal people in Australia and, and what that means. (Calypso)

However, the most valuable example of respectful inclusion identified by Calypso was in regard to the level of trust and comfort that Indigenous parents have in leaving their children at that service.

Relationships with educators so that consistency of staff, that know that child; you know, when you're handing those kids over to those educators, you're family, you have to be family for those parents. That's how I feel about it and that doesn't happen overnight, you know but you can have that level of confidence. I think also environments where families are just encouraged to stay and play or be there or grandparents. (Calypso)

Again, the perspective of positive relationships between educators and Indigenous families is viewed as crucial. It is plausible to assume that a lack of trust from local Indigenous families would also seriously impede an EECS's ability to engage local Indigenous community to support the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives.

This relates directly to Cian's reflection about EECS that seek out the advice of local Indigenous Peoples and work collaboratively with Indigenous Elders and Community to ensure that their programs are culturally appropriate and respectful. Like Calypso, Cian identified services that take the initiative to make connections and build ongoing respectful relationships.

A lot of people are doing yarning circle now, a lot of people are doing a lot of cultural stuff in the mornings and Acknowledging Country; they worked with the Elders to do a proper Acknowledgement to Country. They're not doing it on their own, but they are making the initiative to build the connections to knowing, they're doing it right, to becoming confident and to rolling it out knowing what they're doing. (Cian)

In line with this, Blackheart notes that the most successful EECS are those that value and accept Indigenous Peoples as holders of Indigenous Knowledges.

I suppose the successful approaches that I've seen is where the educators get that, and they go slow, and they listen. And they ask, and they reflect and they accept, also that they don't have to be the experts and they accept it. If they do something that doesn't work and they have the maturity, the emotional maturity to be told by an Aboriginal person in community that that's not the way, they don't get defensive and righteous and all of that stuff, they actually have better relationships and better outcomes and the children have better, all children in the service have better understandings. (Blackheart)

In Blackheart's view, educators who are willing to be guided by Indigenous Peoples in a process that is respectful, ongoing and unrushed are better able to provide education and care inclusive of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. In this example it is also noted that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children benefit from his level of engagement.

4.3.4 Summary

It is important to note that examples of the most effective inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives has not resulted in a comprehensive list of activities or plans that can be implemented by educators in EECS. While there were some specific examples of locally sourced natural resources and meaningful Acknowledgements to Country, they were not viewed as the most important aspects of inclusion. Without doubt the existence and promotion of respectful collaborative relationships between EECS and Indigenous Peoples, families and children was identified as the most crucial to successful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives.

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Analysis of individual research yarning sessions with five Indigenous educators initially identified twenty concepts that were grouped and categorised under three main headings. In Section 4.1 concepts of Country, family and history were explored and defined from Indigenous perspectives to better understand ways in which these concepts challenge non-Indigenous educators employed in mainstream EECS. Section 4.2 presented the experiences of Indigenous educators with EECS management structures and policy that reflects on the impact they can have on staff motivation and commitment to Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. Finally, Section 4.3 discussed the concepts of cultural training for non-Indigenous educators, the engagement of Indigenous Peoples and examples of effective inclusion.

In summary, it is clear that if non-Indigenous educators are to successfully include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in mainstream EECS three factors are essential. Firstly, non-Indigenous educators must have a sound understanding of Country, family and the history of Australia from an Indigenous perspective. Secondly, Indigenous Knowledges must be recognised and valued as the intellectual property of Indigenous Peoples. Thirdly, effective and culturally respectful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS can only be accomplished through ongoing respectful and collaborative relationships between educators and Indigenous Peoples.

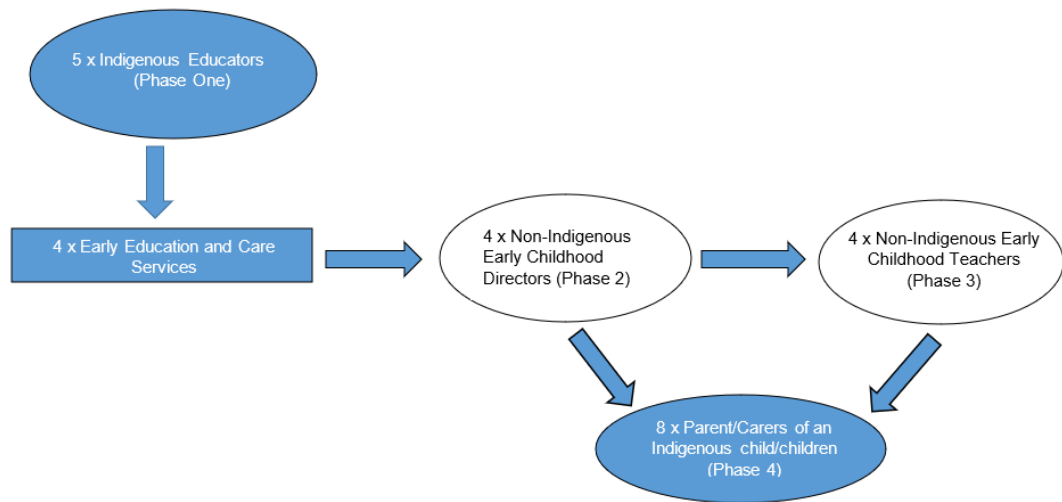
CHAPTER 5. VOICES OF NON-INDIGENOUS EDUCATORS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In Phase One of the research, Indigenous educators were asked to nominate an Early Education and Care Service (EECS) they were engaged with that they considered to be making a genuine effort towards effective inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. Participants for Phases Two, Three and Four were recruited from the four EECS nominated by four of the five Indigenous educators. Phase Two participants were employed in the position of Director whilst Phase Three participants were Early Childhood Teachers employed in the nominated EECS. Each nominated EECS was represented in the research by one early childhood Director and one Early Childhood Teacher. Thus, in total there were eight non-Indigenous participants from four different EECS.

The perspectives collated from non-Indigenous directors (Phase Two) and non-Indigenous educators (Phase Three) were combined and analysed collectively as both phases involved the views and experiences of non-Indigenous educators in regard to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in the Early education and care services (EECS). As a result, participants from Phases Two and Three will be referred collectively as non-Indigenous educators from this point on. Figure 5.1 below shows where non-Indigenous educators are positioned in the research.

Figure 5.0 Non-Indigenous Educator Participants - Research Phases Two and Three



In Section 5.1 non-Indigenous educators' understanding of the concepts and perspectives of Country, family and history to Indigenous Australian Peoples are reported. It also provides insight to the way in which non-Indigenous educators perceive Indigenous identity and belonging.

Section 5.2 provides the experiences of non-Indigenous educators to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in the EECS. Some of the most common concepts that arose included service leadership, funding and the engagement of Indigenous families.

Section 5.3 explores specific examples of inclusive practice from the perspective of the non-Indigenous educators involved in development and implementation of the services programs. Specifically, this section examines the perspectives related to professional development, engaging Indigenous Peoples and relationship building.

Section 5.4 provides a summary of the main points and perspectives raised by non-Indigenous educators in relation to their own experiences in including Indigenous Knowledges and/or perspectives in a Western-based EECS

5.1 INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES AND PERSPECTIVES - RESPECT

In Section 4.1 Indigenous educators identified the significance of Country, family and the history to Indigenous families. This chapter investigates these same three concepts from the perspective of non-Indigenous educators employed as teachers and/or directors in four different EECS. The depth of knowledge and understanding about the meaning and significance of these core concepts varied across the EECS, however, all non-Indigenous educators expressed genuine respect and a desire to learn more about Indigenous Peoples, knowledges and perspectives. Personal experiences of engagement and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and family members were shared by the participating non-Indigenous educators.

More importantly, Chapter 5.1 provides insight into the challenges that arise when Indigenous concepts are interpreted from a non-Indigenous perspective. Despite the best intentions and demonstrated commitment of non-Indigenous educators there is evidence that stereotypical assumptions about Indigenous peoples and culture are prevalent in participating EECS. Research yarns with non-Indigenous educators have provided examples of the ways in which Indigenous identity and culture are defined and included in EECS by non-Indigenous educators.

5.1.1 Country

All eight non-Indigenous educators considered and shared their own understanding of the meaning of 'Country' to Indigenous Australian peoples. Additionally, all eight participants expressed the belief that the Indigenous concept of Country is directly related to land. However, the way in which this was explained, and the depth of understanding varied between participants. In response to the query about the meaning of Country all non-Indigenous educators confidently identified the Traditional Custodians and/or the Aboriginal Country on which the EECS is located. Most also went into further detail by including additional aspects that in their mind, encapsulated the Indigenous concept of Country.

I think it's their land. I would think Country would be the people, the land and you, know, the animals, everything about the land that they're on.
(Lily)

This understanding that Country is inclusive of land, plants and animals was specifically noted by seven of the eight participants. Elizabeth and Pal used the term 'mother nature' in association to the definition and value of Country to Indigenous Peoples. Both participants specifically stated that in their own experience Country is considered by Indigenous Peoples to be one's Mother. Additionally, all eight non-Indigenous educators articulated that Indigenous people maintain a physical connection with Country. However, Regina and Rose also noted a spiritual connection, which from their perspective, binds Indigenous people to Country in a way that cannot be separated.

Well I think it is basically something that is a spiritual thing. I think it's a practical thing. And I think it's actually something that is so deeply

ingrained into Indigenous people that you can't have them without the Country. (Rose)

My understanding is that it's their identity. They are, it is a spiritual and physical connection. Like there's no separating one or the other. (Regina)

Daisy also reflected that the way in which Indigenous Peoples connect and engage with Country is often different to the way a non-Indigenous person, such as herself, might see and interpret the natural landscape.

My understanding would be connection to the land, the physical area where they're from, so [suburb name] or wherever it happens to be. And yeah, the best way I can describe it is connection with the land. So, you know, I might look at a tree, I will think that's really pretty, but someone else [Indigenous Person] might look at a tree and go, well, we can, you know, use the bark for this and we can use the leaves for that. And it's medicine. (Daisy)

Whilst it is not specifically stated that all Indigenous Peoples view trees in this manner, Daisy's expectation that Indigenous Peoples view the natural world differently to herself, a non-Indigenous person is evident. This perspective of difference was reiterated by the majority of non-Indigenous educators, however Tabitha's comments about Country suggested a broader understanding. Tabitha articulated an understanding of Country as the life giver and provider and inferred that all people are responsible to care for each other.

That life comes from the land and that everything has a place, and everything belongs. And we look after one another. (Tabitha)

The comment above is insightful and inclusive of the value of Country to all people, not only Indigenous people. The wording here is critical as it does not segregate Indigenous people with references to Indigenous Peoples as ‘them’ or ‘their’. Whilst all non-Indigenous educators participating in this research displayed a high level of respect and consideration for the knowledges and rights of Indigenous Australians, there remained a noticeable sense of separateness, that is the differentiation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as ‘them’ and ‘us’. This is an important point to make as it directly impacts on the ways in which non-Indigenous educators may include and represent Indigenous Peoples in EECS programs. This point will be explored in more depth in Section 5.3.3 where specific practices, such as developing and implementing an Acknowledgement to Country in EECS, are explored and discussed.

5.1.2 Family

The topic of family was explored from a very different point of view by non-Indigenous educators (Phase Two and Three) than with Indigenous educators (Phase One). The main concepts raised and discussed by Indigenous educators related to the roles Indigenous family members play in the lives of Indigenous children and to the value placed on the autonomy of Indigenous children in Indigenous families. In contrast, non-Indigenous educators reflected less on the concept of family to Indigenous Peoples and more on aspects of identity and engagement. Section 5.1.2 reviews the experiences and views of non-Indigenous educators in regard to interactions with Indigenous families, Indigenous identity and fee subsidies for Indigenous families.

In regard to interactions with Indigenous families, three of eight non-Indigenous educators shared specific instances in which Indigenous family members provided knowledge, support and/or feedback to educators in the EECS. For example, Pal spoke of an Aboriginal father/grandfather who came into the EECS and shared his knowledge of tracking, bush tucker and bush medicine with the children. Daisy spoke of support and resources provided to the EECS through Indigenous families that have connections to local Indigenous people and organisations. In another EECS both the director and teacher talked enthusiastically about some positive feedback they received from an Indigenous family attending the service.

We had one little girl who started a couple months ago. Then when the family came to pick her up, her brothers and sisters came in and wrote, 'this school is deadly' on the chalk board. We got a picture of it. (James)

Each of these examples reported on positive interactions that non-Indigenous educators experienced with some of the Indigenous families attending the EECS. However, six of the eight non-Indigenous educators defaulted to discussions around Indigenous identity and the experiences and challenges they faced in supporting Indigenous families enrolled in the EECS.

Specifically, two non-Indigenous educators openly shared their shock and surprise when they learned of a particular family's cultural background after the family had already been engaged with the EECS for some time. Specifically, Regina recalled an unexpected outcome from the creation of an Indigenous display in the entrance foyer of the EECS. The display included Aboriginal artifacts, art and a welcome sign written in the language of the Traditional

Custodians. The purpose of the display was to show recognition and respect for Aboriginal People and in particular to acknowledge and inform families of the Traditional Custodians of the land that the EECS is located on. However, Regina's experience provided her with a new insight into the value and importance that such a display held for an Indigenous family engaged with the EECS.

One Aboriginal family we have said, 'I saw that; it grabbed my eye and it made me feel like I knew I'd be welcome there'. Which was really, you know, it was impactful for me because I didn't think about it on that level.

(Regina)

In this example Regina illustrates her understanding of the responsibility of educators to openly exhibit and advocate respect and acknowledgement of Traditional custodians to all families attending the EECS. However, what is most significant is Regina's realisation of the value of such efforts and actions to creating a welcoming environment to Indigenous families attending and/or visiting the EECS.

In another example, Lily described an occurrence in which a parent unexpectedly commented on a craft activity that the educator and children were involved in. The parent was invited to join in the activity and after participating for a short time the parent began to tell Lily about the Indigenous classes that she attended all through school and how much she loved learning about her own culture.

One of our Moms was sitting around while I was doing it [craft activity] and she's like, 'I love this' and she joined it. I didn't even know she was Aboriginal. (Lily)

In this singular experience Lily unwittingly provided a space in which the parent felt safe to openly share personal information. During this shared experience, the parent also accepted Lily's invitation and came back into the service on a number of occasions to help plan and lead additional craft activities. Lily recalled her joy and gratitude for the ongoing relationship that had been established from this unplanned interaction.

Not dissimilar to Lily and Regina's experiences other non-Indigenous educators noted circumstances in which Indigenous families had withheld information regarding cultural identity at the time of enrolment. Specifically, the concealment of identity was noted by four out of eight non-Indigenous educators who openly discussed and provided specific instances in which this took place.

I know last year we actually had a child here and the Mum actually said, 'You know I am actually Aboriginal from this area'. And it hadn't really been talked about before then. And you could see there's a lot of hurt that's gone on, obviously. And so she was being careful, you know, to say. (Rose)

Like Rose, Pal, Daisy and Lily all shared experiences in which Indigenous parents refrained from informing the EECS of the family's Indigenous identity; however, aside from Rose's brief mention of the parent *being careful* there was no discussion or reflection on what might be the rationale for choosing to stay silent. Pal reported on the fact that some Indigenous families actively chose to

only disclose their identity to certain educators in the service, such as the Director or the child's main caregiver. This practice was acknowledged by non-Indigenous educators as problematic in regard to EECS policies that are designed to engage and provide support to Indigenous families. Certainly, EECS are unable to provide evidence that they are supportive of Indigenous families if they have no knowledge of which families in the service are Indigenous. However, it should be noted that these reflections only consider the way in which this affects EECS educators. There were no comments or consideration of how choosing to disclose a child's cultural background might impact the lives of Indigenous families engaged with the EECS. Further to this, non-Indigenous educators appear to view the number of Indigenous families enrolled in the EECS and the number of Indigenous families that disclose their cultural background to EECS as directly related, if not the same thing.

And you know people don't always identify as Aboriginal. And so, we made a few changes to our fee system to try to encourage Aboriginal families to come to the preschool. And so now I just say, when someone comes in to enrol, 'Are you Aboriginal?' (Daisy)

In a perfect world fees would be either non-existent or super low because they're now currently super low and it's the highest amount of Aboriginal children we've had, and go back two years ago when they were like fifty something dollars we had one [Aboriginal child] which was [ex staff name] daughter. (Regina)

These comments represent correlations made by the non-Indigenous educators between affordability and the rate of disclosure of Indigenous identity in the EECS. It is understandable that cost can be a factor that affects the number of enrolments in an EECS. However, it is unclear as to how EECS fees might

influence whether or not Indigenous parents choose to make their cultural identity known to the EECS.

In regard to cost, Tabitha spoke about a scholarship program that was designed and implemented to attract and support Aboriginal families. Similar to Daisy the main focus was affordability; however, Tabitha also explained the EECS' motivation to increase enrolments of Indigenous children.

I think that is why we are trying so hard to have Aboriginal representation inside our preschool, through our scholarship program with the children. So that we try and attract a lot of children to our program, so that we have that knowledge, but also then talking with the families and the relationships we build with the families, we can have genuine connections with Aboriginal people. (Tabitha)

Again, this view is considered and presented from the perspective of the EECS. That is, how an increase in the enrolment of Indigenous children might benefit the EECS. While this is obviously important it fails to consider the perspective of parents/carers of Indigenous children. It was apparent that non-Indigenous educators involved in the research were making genuine efforts to engage with and identify Indigenous families. However, limiting this challenge to an issue of cost exposes an underlying assumption, by non-Indigenous educators that most if not all Indigenous families are poor. Such a stigma is likely to result in families choosing not to identify and so forgo not only financial support but support in the form of culturally respectful care and education. If cost is the only issue identified as a barrier to the enrolment and/or disclosure of Indigenous families, then approaches by the EECS to engage these families will remain, despite best intentions, superficial.

The experiences shared by non-Indigenous educators participating in the research evidence different levels of understanding and engagement with Indigenous families. Non-Indigenous educators from all four EECS expressed best intentions to engage and represent Indigenous Peoples and families. However, affordability was the only factor, discussed as a barrier to enrolment and disclosure of culture. This suggests that the number of Indigenous children enrolled in the EECS and the number of Indigenous families that chose to identify their child's Indigenous ancestry and perceived by non-Indigenous educators as one and the same.

5.1.3 History

Whilst three non-Indigenous educators reflected on certain aspects of history, very few references were made to the colonisation of Australia in relation to Indigenous families and their engagement or experience of EECS. This is an indication that little to no consideration has been given to Australia's history and its continuing impact on the engagement of Indigenous families with EECS. This view is supported by the fact that Elizabeth was the only non-Indigenous educator to identify the need for educators to learn about the history of Indigenous Australia. Elizabeth explained her experience and thoughts in regard to the way some non-Indigenous people attempt to separate themselves from the lives of Indigenous Peoples.

You hear about the Sorry Campaign and how 'well it's not really our problem'. It's, you know, it's not okay, well, alright, well, you know, I wasn't born in that type of generation, but then that's just being ignorant to, you know, our [Australian] culture. It's like, my personal belief is that's

just being ignorant to what actually happened to those people
[Indigenous Australians]. (Elizabeth)

While Elizabeth is advocating for truth telling about the treatment of Indigenous Peoples, a divide was also created when referring to Indigenous Peoples as '*those people*'. While it is probable that this was an unintentional act, the use of this expression ultimately positions Indigenous Peoples as 'different to' or 'other than' the norm, which is contrary to the aims of inclusion and reconciliation. Similarly, James and Daisy's position on the appropriateness, for young children, of the topics of colonisation and the treatment of Indigenous people, risks the silencing or at the very least restriction of Indigenous perspectives. James reflected on a conversation he had with a five-year-old child:

We talked about how the, this land used to be only populated by the Indigenous people and how their lives had to change because other people came in. (James)

James admitted that he was unsure how much of the conversation the child understood and stated that this topic is difficult for a five-year-old to understand. Daisy reflected that while she was personally affected by an Aboriginal Elder who shared her life story at a training workshop, she questioned the suitability of the information for pre-school aged-children.

I think it just really brought home the importance of, of acknowledging that, yes, there has been a past that wasn't so wonderful. But, um, you know, that's not really appropriate, I think, for this age group. (Daisy)

It is feasible to consider that the way in which the Aboriginal Elder's story was described and delivered to the adult audience may not be appropriate for young

children. However, the content of her story unquestionably expresses the reality of what it is to be an Indigenous person and stories such as hers are the stories that connect with and define the lives of Indigenous children today. Daisy also inadvertently offers another explanation for the lack of discussion about the colonisation of Australia. In her comment she alludes to colonisation but quickly switches focus to the future and changes that could be achieved.

By learning about the culture, you know, we're respecting that, and I guess it's our way of acknowledging that, yes, that's happened. But now we're here and, you know, moving forward, you know, these things, knowledge is power. So, we understand the culture, then, you know, hopefully relations can improve and education and all those statistics that we see can change. (Daisy)

In this honest remark, Daisy illustrates a superficial approach to the topic of colonisation, and this could offer an explanation as to why this topic was not discussed by most non-Indigenous educators. It is conceivable to consider that the lack of attention non-Indigenous educators paid to the topic of colonisation is due mainly to their own limited understanding of this history from an Indigenous perspective. As educators/carers of young children it is fair to say that the main focus is on the immediate care and development of children's abilities and interests. Thus, history and particularly unpleasant events are more likely to be considered inappropriate or irrelevant to young children.

In support of this view, in Phase One of the research Indigenous educators noted that the truth about the history of Australia can be a difficult reality for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples to accept and reconcile. Thus, this perspective may provide some insight into the reason why only three of

eight Indigenous educators discussed the history of Australia and perhaps why two of those participants specifically questioned the appropriateness of this topic for young children. Nevertheless, this is a significant issue that should not be overlooked or underestimated, as the reality is that history has shaped the lives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples and as such it is imperative that educators develop age appropriate ways in which to discuss and examine Australia's true history with young children. Excluding this information under the guise of protecting children will only serve to silence Indigenous voices, perspectives and knowledges in EECS.

5.1.4 Summary

Non-Indigenous educators in the research have shared contrasting levels of understanding and engagement with Indigenous concepts of Country. Connection to land was a common theme expressed and considered by all eight participants and it was this connection that was viewed to be a crucial component of Indigenous identity. Daisy, Pal and Rose specifically spoke about Indigenous families they have engaged with and commented on the level of engagement and understanding these families exhibited in the EECS.

Over the years we've had families that were really connected with their culture, and then at other times not so much, or maybe they just don't want to share it. (Daisy)

Interestingly, there appeared to be some question as to the validity of Indigenous identity in regard to some families. While there were no outright statements questioning a family's right to identify as Indigenous, there was a sense that the depth of cultural knowledge and/or connection is a measure of

Indigenous identity. Importantly, non-Indigenous educators participating in the research demonstrated an assumed entitlement to comment on and define Indigenous identity.

Well, I think at the moment we have some Indigenous children here, but they haven't actually come from this particular Country right here in the [area] and a lot of them don't really know much about their history or they might have just found out, it's not like they have the knowledge either.
(Rose)

Such comments are reflective of non-Indigenous views of what it is to be an Indigenous person. Information shared by non-Indigenous educators focused greatly on expectations and views about connection to and respect for the land. The framing of Indigenous identity and belonging in this way is problematic as it negates those families who have been removed from family, culture and/or Country. Additionally, it exemplifies a lack of understanding of the experiences and reality of connection to family, culture and/or Country from an Indigenous perspective.

I'm talking like, the Aboriginal people that have, you know, have known a lot about their own culture, because it's really sad how a lot of, we've had a lot of Aboriginal families that don't want to acknowledge it, that their Aboriginal, and then that gets lost down the line. (Elizabeth)

There is evidence in these statements of an inference that Indigenous families who have been removed from Country and/or culture are perhaps not as genuine as Indigenous people who have been raised in an Indigenous community with exposure to traditional languages and cultural practices.

They don't have, you know, perhaps that connection that others who spend all their lives thinking about these things and working on these things, you know, if they've grown up out of that community. (Pal)

A thorough understanding and recognition of the history of Australia and the treatment of Indigenous people would go a long way in promoting a broader view and understanding of the diversity of Indigenous Australian peoples. In addition, educators would benefit from training that not only provides perspectives of Indigenous Peoples but engages them in a way to firstly identify and secondly challenge the assumptions they hold about Indigenous Peoples. From this position inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives could shift from teaching about Indigenous Peoples and culture to an approach that is collaborative and guided by parents/carers of Indigenous children engaged in the EECS as well as appropriate Indigenous custodians, community members and/or organisations.

5.2 EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES — RESPONSIBILITY

It is important to reiterate at this point that all four EECS participating in the research were recognised by an Indigenous educator (participating in Phase One) as a service that is proactively working towards appropriate and respectful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. Therefore, the educators employed in these particular EECS are accepted by the researcher as having demonstrated some level of responsibility and/or accountability to the rights of Indigenous children and families and to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in the EECS.

There's nothing that no one can benefit from, even if you've learned it before, and you learn it again, you learn something like just this one different thing that then adds to your experience. (Tabitha)

Arguably overarching organisational aims and goals that are handed down by management have a major influence on educator motivation and ability to support and include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in the EECS. It is interesting to note that all four EECS participating in the research are classed as not for profit services. As this is only a very small sample it is not possible to draw general conclusions from this. However, it might be indicative of further research into whether or not management structures of EECS specifically influence the level and engagement of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives.

5.2.1 Centre Management and Philosophy

Clearly, all licensed EECS must adhere to relevant legislation and curriculum frameworks that act to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all families and staff engaged with the service. A role then of management is to ensure the EECS has relevant and valid policies in place to ensure all staff are in a position to meet all codes and requirements. Service philosophy, policies and practices will ultimately be influenced by the EECS management/organisational structure. That is, whether the EECS is part of a private organisation or an independent community/parent managed service. Funding, leadership and service philosophy were identified by non-Indigenous educators as management factors that directly affect successful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives.

5.2.1.1 Funding

Firstly, the topic of funding was explored in reference to a variety of aspects, from the purchasing of relevant resources to staff development and community engagement. Regina commented on a need for funds so that educators can attend local Indigenous events to build and maintain a collaborative working relationship with Indigenous Peoples and/or organisations in the local and wider community.

So, we make those connections. Because I think being out there is the best connection you can make. But there's nothing in the budget that allows for that. And I think how committed can you be if there isn't? I'm not asking for a lot, just a little bit to say, yeah, you know, you want to go to that thing on that day. Yep, go. I can replace you. (Regina)

Regina openly questioned commitment to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in lieu of a lack of targeted funding. She commented on a need to purchase relevant Indigenous resources as did James who mentioned a desire to purchase local Indigenous Art that could be displayed in the EECS to visually acknowledge and engage Indigenous families. Regina and Rose also argued that there should be an allocated budget to invite Indigenous Elders and/or Community members into the service and pay appropriately for the privilege of their time and expertise. The fact that Rose referred to the receipt of funding to employ local Indigenous people as lucky demonstrates that this type of funding is not commonplace.

Well, we're very lucky because we may have, I think we do have funding for Indigenous people to come in and do [local Aboriginal] language with us. (Rose)

Elizabeth and Daisy also expressed a desire to have the funds in which to employ Indigenous people to work with and guide non-Indigenous educators. In addition, Elizabeth specifically pointed out the value and importance of employing Indigenous staff for Indigenous families.

Just to help guide, well just, to be in that team environment and to actually have those Aboriginal families that are a little bit standoffish, to come into the service and think, 'well, hang on a minute, they're trusting that Aboriginal staff member in the service.' (Elizabeth)

It would appear from the comments made by Elizabeth, Rose, Regina and James that the EECS budget is lacking when it comes to purchasing Indigenous resources and/or employing Indigenous Peoples. Certainly, Rose's example indicated that it was necessary to apply for specialised funding outside of the EECS to engage Indigenous educators. While this may be indicative of a bigger issue of government funding to EECS, it is also necessary to note that each EECS manages its own budget and perhaps there is some need to specifically identify and allocate funds to this purpose.

5.2.1.2 Leadership

Moving on from the identified need for funding, non-Indigenous educators also discussed the importance of having a proactive and capable leader. Rose, James, Tabitha and Pal acknowledged the value of a strong Director who is able to support and motivate the staff team in the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in the EECS.

Yep. So that's where you really do need to have a supervisor or your Director who is actually aware, on-board, willing to try things. (Rose)

Rose spoke to the value of having a Director who is supportive of the efforts of educators to investigate the local community to invite people and to implement appropriate experiences for the children in the EECS. James attributed his increasing willingness and ability to include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in the program to the Director's high-level enthusiasm and activism.

Yeah, having her so confident and so wanting to do this and being on top of it. It helps me do it as well. (James)

Pal recognised the guiding and supporting role of the Director as an important contributing factor to non-Indigenous educator confidence and commitment. It was also noted that a united attitude towards the value of diversity plays a significant role in fostering positive approaches to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives.

Just to have this really easy, open conversation with all people and that all people belong, and all people are normal, and all people are included. Which I think then turns into the philosophy of inclusion. (Tabitha)

Tabitha's comment on a philosophy of inclusion was reiterated by Regina, Lily and Elizabeth in comments around the necessity for educators in an EECS to work as a collaborative team, as opposed to having one person assigned the role of Indigenous activities and inclusion. In order for this to occur it is necessary that educators are provided with funds, resources and an

organisational structure that will support and enable engagement and collaboration with appropriate Indigenous Peoples and organisations.

5.2.2 Ownership and Delivery of Indigenous Knowledges

Non-Indigenous educators participating in the research recognised their own limitations in representing the knowledges and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples. In fact, all non-Indigenous educators indicated that, without input, support and/or guidance of local Indigenous Peoples and/or organisations, inclusion can only be superficial as Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives are the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples.

No matter how much I understand, I couldn't know everything. But I am not Aboriginal, and I can't have that voice that somebody else [an Aboriginal person] would. (Regina)

It was openly acknowledged that Indigenous people are the experts and owners of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives and that non-Indigenous educators are not in a position to speak for Indigenous Peoples. Daisy mentioned that the most effective experiences in the EECS have been as a result of participation in Indigenous specific programs in which Indigenous Peoples came into the EECS to share and work with educators and children. As an extension to this, Pal noted that non-Indigenous people can learn about Indigenous Ways of Knowing but non-Indigenous people cannot understand or engage with Indigenous Knowledges in the same way that an Indigenous person does.

I guess just having people like Uncle [name] come in and just looking at the way he respects Mother, the Mother Nature thing. We've got those kinds of feelings from being with Uncle [name] and have this relationship

with him we can see that in a superficial way, but we don't have that connection that he has. (Pal)

In the comment above the relationship between an Indigenous person and Country is clearly highly regarded by Pal but is also considered to be a relationship that is exclusive to Indigenous Peoples. This was reiterated in the way that all eight non-Indigenous educators expressed concerns about misrepresenting Indigenous culture and peoples. The term *tokenistic* was used by five of eight non-Indigenous educators in relation to practices they considered to be inappropriate or ineffective examples of inclusion. James offered the following comment as an explanation of the term *tokenism*:

If it's just there for the sake of being there, it doesn't have a purpose. (James)

In order to avoid such tokenism all eight non-Indigenous educators identified a need to be guided by an Indigenous person or people. More specifically, three non-Indigenous educators strongly advocated that EECS employ Indigenous educators and engage local Indigenous Peoples.

In the perfect world, we'd have Aboriginal staff in the service, and we'd be working together with the Aboriginal people in our community. Like I said, I've been here 15 years and even having more connection with Elders to visit regularly and to have a regular time to come in and visit the children and do these experiences. (Elizabeth)

Thoughts and experiences shared by non-Indigenous educators participating in the research have evidenced genuine respect for and interest in Indigenous Knowledges. However, what is more pressing is that non-Indigenous educators

have identified the risk of inaccurate and/or potentially offensive approaches to inclusion without input and guidance from appropriate Indigenous Peoples.

5.2.3 Non-Indigenous Educator Confidence and Needs

In acknowledging that Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives differ from that of Western-based education, non-Indigenous educators openly attested to their concerns and apprehensions in including Indigenous content into the EECS.

This concern was not confined to the content alone but also to the mode of delivery.

I'm fearful. I'm not doing it in a respectful way, or in the right way. (Lily)

So I think the first thing is the confidence to actually do something. I think a lot of the time you want to do something, you do a bit of research and you think, I don't know if it's right. And so then you end up doing nothing at all, which I'm sure is not the right thing to do. (Daisy)

Regina and Daisy mentioned that having the confidence to include Indigenous Knowledges in a mainstream EECS is critical. Both non-Indigenous educators commented on the temptation to refrain from doing anything for fear of making mistakes or offending people. Tabitha also shared her experience of building up the confidence of non-Indigenous educators to Acknowledge Country. In her experience non-Indigenous educator confidence was increased through ongoing discussions about the importance and value of this protocol and witnessing an Acknowledgement to Country being role-modelled each day at group time with the children.

Non-Indigenous educators viewed Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives as different and separate to what they have come to know and expect in Western-based EECS. As a result, they expressed a need for ongoing guidance and support from an Indigenous person that they could collaborate with.

I guess, I don't know enough, it's not, I'm confident, but I'd be more confident, I think, if we had Aboriginal staff here and then I would say, look, I want to do an experience with the kids that, you know, this is what I want to do. And then we discuss it. (Elizabeth)

The main suggestions regarding support for non-Indigenous educators involved employment of and/or collaborations with relevant Indigenous people, such as Indigenous educators, Elders, community members and/or Indigenous families already enrolled in the EECS. As well as appropriate support people, appeals were also made for Indigenous specific resources and information registers that could be referred to when developing programs and experiences for the EECS environment.

I don't want to say, like, a guidebook but a guidebook [laughing] you know, just for and just for the Country that I'm on, and what's important to th, Indigenous people that are on this Country, what they may find offensive, the do's and don'ts, like a general one. Like if there was a website that would say, you know, for this Country, in general, we find, and even a list of people we can contact. I know not everyone has the time and I don't want to be contacting people and saying, hey, I need your help. (Regina)

The comments and suggestions made by non-Indigenous educators participating in the research clearly display an awareness of the importance of connecting with local Indigenous people and community rather than relying on

resources and/or information that are not representative of the Country on which the EECS is located. Regina also expressed an understanding of the demands on Indigenous Peoples and her concerns not to make assumptions about the availability and/or willingness of Indigenous Peoples to engage with EECS. Pal's comment below also displayed an understanding of the diversity of Indigenous Knowledges and posits respect as a critical factor.

Well, I guess you need to know what's culturally appropriate for your area. And for the people that you're working with, not that the children are all going to be from that particular area. I think you need to; you need to have respect; I think that's the beginning. (Pal)

Tabitha advised that educators need a mentor and emphasised that educators themselves must have open minds. In relation to seeking out mentors Rose shared her own experience and noted that one of the reasons she felt comfortable to contact a certain Indigenous person was that she already had an indirect connection with this person through her own sister. Clearly there is a common theme of comfort and/or confidence on the part of the non-Indigenous educators in seeking appropriate support people. This position in connection to professional development is explored in greater detail in Section 5.3.1.

5.2.4 Summary

Overall, non-Indigenous educators expressed and exhibited genuine positive attitudes and motivation towards the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS. For the most part non-Indigenous educators consider this inclusion as important and valuable to all children and their families. Lily,

Rose and Daisy specifically commented on a desire to share and advocate the knowledges and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples throughout the EECS properly and respectfully. However, in order to do this, all non-Indigenous educators pointed out the necessity to ensure that the information and resources they use are culturally appropriate, relevant and respectful.

I guess having someone with that knowledge that could pass it on, to be willing to pass it on. I think that's the biggest downfall is just a lack of knowing and knowledge. And sometimes we do feel like, yeah, we're doing this, but why are we doing this? Are we just doing it just to go 'look at us aren't we wonderful?' But yeah it's having that deeper understanding. (Daisy)

Like Daisy, Pal commented on the motivation behind the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives, however Pal's focus was focused on creating social change in the way Indigenous Peoples are viewed and considered in the wider community.

I want the kids to have some respect, I don't care if they don't get actual knowledge or language or anything like that. I want them to, I'm hoping they grow up with a respect that maybe a lot of their parents haven't had and it's respect I want them to achieve, so that's really our motivation I think, my motivation. (Pal)

Six out of eight non-Indigenous educators all specifically commented on the value of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives to all peoples engaged with the EECS. Regina, Daisy and Elizabeth specifically noted that inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives should not be dependent on whether or not the EECS has Indigenous families enrolled. There was a resounding consensus that all people living and working in Australia should be aware and

respectful of the Traditional Custodians of the Indigenous Country they live and work on.

Yeah, it should be, it doesn't matter whether there is one Indigenous person or zero it's where we are. It's, now a place where we're residing, and everybody should know about it. And everybody should pay respect to the people whose Country we are on, I think it's something that is very, it's important to know; regardless, it should be mainstream everywhere.
(Regina)

Even if we don't have a lot of Aboriginal children. And even if it's just one or two, it doesn't matter, it's still showing these children about the Country they live in and its history. (Elizabeth)

The inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives was viewed by all non-Indigenous educators as an integral component of EECS philosophies and policies that promote and value diversity in EECS. All non-Indigenous educators made at least one comment in support of the benefits of engaging and including Indigenous Peoples, knowledges, and resources. Finally, all non-Indigenous educators expressed a genuine desire to build and strengthen collaborative relationships with Indigenous Peoples to expand on their own level of knowledge and engagement. Most non-Indigenous educator comments and reflections evidenced a sound understanding of the responsibility that early childhood educators have toward relevant and respectful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS.

5.3 INCLUSIVE PRACTICES — RECIPROCITY

Research yarns with all eight non-Indigenous educators exhibited a common belief that the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives is important and of benefit to all educators and families in the EECS. These educators were encouraged by the prospect that building reciprocal relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples can also help to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous children.

Pal, Elizabeth and Tabitha all identified EECS as significant environments in which the value of Indigenous Knowledges and rights of Indigenous Peoples can be advocated with respect and understanding. Non-Indigenous educators identified that a high level of engagement and commitment is required, as there is much that non-Indigenous educators can learn from the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples. Tabitha spoke of hope in this and future generations of children as she has witnessed an increasing level of respect and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

So, I've been teaching 15 years and the importance in our early childhood education that we put on, we're paying respect to the First People of Australia. This is coming through and I see it in my children's day care centre as well, but they're huge works. And they're all campaigning now to get a flag on the [Sydney] Harbour Bridge and all this great stuff. But I see early childhood start with building up acknowledgement, comfort, advocacy for Aboriginal people as being, I'm hoping a really positive change for Australia, for acceptance for all.
(Tabitha)

Non-Indigenous educators participating in the research shared various experiences and levels of success in including Indigenous Knowledges and

perspectives in EECS. However, a need for further professional development and training was identified. Moreover, it was recognised that an increase in learning and understanding can only be achieved through Indigenous leadership and collaboration.

5.3.1 Professional Development

The topic of training and/or professional development was raised by all non-Indigenous educators as crucial to building their own level of understanding, engagement and confidence with Indigenous Peoples and knowledges. Examples of professional development included formal workshops run by government or community organisations and mentoring from Indigenous educators and/or community members. Six of the eight non-Indigenous educators specifically stated that educators in their EECS want more training. Comments and reflections about training sessions that non-Indigenous educators had attended varied. Regina reported on a workshop in which participants were advised that

If your intentions are good and you're trying, that's what matters, you've just got to try. (Regina)..

Interestingly Pal also reflected on an experience in which an Indigenous parent came into the EECS and verbally chastised an educator over the appropriateness of an activity the children were involved in. This particular EECS operates in a location in which the identity of the Traditional Owners is in some parts contested. Local Council signage identifies and acknowledges two distinct Nations; however, exact Traditional boundaries are disputed in some parts of this Local Government Area. This then has been problematic for

non-Indigenous educators wishing to appropriately include local Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. Pal said that she met with the parent and explained that the educators were aware that there are two different Aboriginal Nations in the area and as non-Indigenous educators they are doing their utmost to be respectful and inclusive of both groups of people. Her response to the parent, below, exhibits a focus on how this issue is viewed, as problem for the EECS and that the solution must involve a compromise on the part of the parent.

If you scare people, then they're not going to attempt to do anything. So, would you rather we do nothing? Or do you rather take risks and maybe do something that isn't you know on Country? (Pal)

During this discussion Pal stated that she provided the parent with information about which Indigenous Peoples (Elders and community members) the educators had been working with to show that non-Indigenous educators were not relying on only one source of information. As some of these people were known to the parent, Pal resolved that this approach addressed the parent's concerns. Whilst Pal demonstrated an awareness of the tensions between Indigenous people in that area, her perspective and understanding of this tension as a non-Indigenous educator is undoubtedly far removed from that of the parent who expressed the concern.

This particular situation illustrates the impact that colonisation continues to have on Indigenous identity and belonging. Traditional ownership of Country was significantly impacted when Indigenous Australians were forced onto the lands of others by Western settlers and forcibly removed from Country under Western

laws and governance. When non-Indigenous educators' knowledge of the ongoing consequences of history is primarily interpreted from a non-Indigenous viewpoint misunderstandings and stereotypical assumptions can easily be made about the reactions and expectations of Indigenous Peoples.

This was supported by Elizabeth's reflection that in her experience cultural training sessions/workshops are often superficial and require a different focus.

I think not just sending staff off to in-services [workshops] on how to do craft and how to sit and paint rocks and stuff like that, and I think they actually need a deeper understanding on that timeline of Indigenous culture and that timeline of where we've come from. (Elizabeth)

In the comment above Elizabeth reflects that understanding Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives involves far more than participating in craft or painting activities. She refers to a deeper level of knowledge that includes an understanding of the history of Indigenous Australia. Elizabeth argues that respectful and accurate inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS necessitates thorough knowledge and understanding of government policies and the treatment of Indigenous Australian Peoples.

In another example, Daisy noted that while educators in her EECS have attended numerous training sessions, the most useful and valuable experiences have been the ones in which an Indigenous educator or community member has come into the EECS and provided feedback and direction on the program and environment. This approach to educator training and learning was considered far more useful, relevant and engaging for

educators and for the children attending the EECS. This view was also supported by Pal.

The best learning, I think, is from people like [Aboriginal Uncle] and [Aboriginal Aunt] and anybody else who pops into the place and you know does some things with the children. (Pal)

In the examples and reflections shared it is clear that non-Indigenous educators considered interactions and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples as far more rewarding and beneficial than learning 'facts' about Indigenous cultural practices and/or peoples. This position was strongly articulated from personal experience in the following comment by Tabitha.

I don't think you can learn it from a book, I think you can learn it from a person. And I think that you learn that in Aboriginal teaching that there are stories that have been passed on and passed on. And it's not really a written language, it's all about verbal and storying and touching and like this hands-on approach. So, I think that the more exposure that you can have within the culture, the better and richer the program can be.

(Tabitha)

Clearly, non-Indigenous educators recognised that Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives are diverse and are best learned through ongoing interactions, conversations and collaboration with Indigenous people. It is also clear that, while non-Indigenous educators do not openly consider themselves as experts, there is evidence that they are unaware of some of their own biases and assumed control over which Indigenous Knowledges and/or perspectives are appropriate to the EECS. This positioning will be unpacked and analysed in more detail in Chapter 7.

5.3.2 Engaging Indigenous Peoples

Non-Indigenous educators raised a few insightful points associated with the engagement of Indigenous Peoples in EECS. The first point that was echoed throughout all research yarns was that it is important for educators to know which Indigenous Country the EECS is located on. Comments from all non-Indigenous educators also demonstrated recognition of the diversity of Indigenous Australian peoples.

The powerful influence of hearing personal stories and experiences directly from an Indigenous person was also recognised and discussed. Regina noted that interacting daily with a particular Indigenous educator enabled a richer understanding of Aboriginal culture and identity. Daisy shared a similar experience and respect toward an Indigenous woman who came into the EECS and openly shared her personal story with educators.

Just sitting and listening to someone tell their story and their experience and how they've come out the other side, it does change your perspective. And she actually spends a lot of time here, which was very, we were touched by. (Daisy)

While Daisy and Regina didn't provide any specific information about the impact of these experiences, their reflections indicated a stronger appreciation and respect toward Indigenous Peoples and a willingness to share knowledge and/or perspectives with educators in the EECS.

Rose and Tabitha specifically spoke about the value of building collaborative relationships with local Indigenous people and in particular recognising these

people as valued members of the EECS. In fact, most non-Indigenous educators specifically stated that every EECS should employ an Indigenous person. Indigenous Elders, community members and educators were all recognised by non-Indigenous educators as suitable leaders and mentors, providing they represented (or have recognised connections with) the local Indigenous community.

Regina reflected on the benefits the EECS gained when they employed an Indigenous educator and the way in which that educator maintained a connection and provided advice to the service after she left. She also communicated a concern about monopolising the time and skills of one person, particularly when expertise and guidance are not properly remunerated, a point that was raised previously in Section 5.2. Pal, Tabitha, Daisy, Rose and Lily all spoke about the expertise and specialised knowledges that Indigenous Peoples have brought into their EECS. Additionally, they recognise the value and importance of nurturing reciprocal relationships between Indigenous Peoples, educators and children. This sentiment was strongly supported by Rose in her comment that:

I think you only get that from feeling like you're doing meaningful things with some knowledge, from an actual Indigenous person. (Rose)

All non-Indigenous educators participating in the research have had some level of engagement with an Indigenous educator or person and each one advocates that this is the most culturally respectful and thorough way in which to include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in a Western-based EECS. Ideally, all

non-Indigenous educators would like to develop and strengthen further ongoing collaborative relationships with local Indigenous Peoples in order to build on the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in a manner that is relevant to all and respectful of Indigenous Peoples and families engaged with the EECS.

5.3.3 Effective Practice

Non-Indigenous educators in all four EECS agreed that the use and inclusion of Indigenous resources and/or knowledge must occur across and throughout the service's program and environment if it is to be genuine and of benefit. Rose provided an example of this in describing the use of the local Aboriginal language in the daily lives of the children attending the EECS.

Well here it's sort of embedded in the everyday practice because you've got the children learning [local Aboriginal language], songs. Yeah, counting in [local Aboriginal Language] we greet the children with [Local Aboriginal greeting]. I think you have to; it has to be an everyday thing.
(Rose)

Non-Indigenous educators provided examples of the ways in which they use their skills and knowledge as early childhood educators to include Indigenous perspectives. Rose and Lily also explained that they specifically avoid the presentation of Indigenous resources as an isolated or special activity controlled by educators. Rather they stated that Indigenous resources are made freely available to the children to investigate and use throughout the environment. Daisy reflected more broadly on the way in which the EECS attempts to visually represent Indigenous Peoples and to show that Indigenous Peoples are valued

and welcomed in the service. She also admits that while these are relatively minor actions, they are a substantial improvement on what was being done previously.

I think it's taking the first step to do something, have, you know, an Aboriginal flag in your service to say, yes, you're welcome here. Having, you know, appropriate resources, puzzles, you know, all those sorts of things that says yeah, we're acknowledging your culture, and you are welcome here. And, you know, learning, that, yes, we're in a [Aboriginal Country name] area. And this is how, you know, in [local Aboriginal] language, this how we say hello, and a few numbers. And it is basic, but it's certainly better than doing nothing at all, which is what was happening previously. (Daisy)

In regard to creating a welcoming environment, James shared an example which emphasised the value and importance of the inclusion of Indigenous culture and knowledge to Indigenous children.

We had Aboriginal Children's Day. And someone did the story of Tiddilick, and we had this one little boy who looked so happy when we read it, because he knew it. And it was, he just looked so overjoyed. (James)

This example undeniably demonstrates the sense of pride and belonging that is created for Indigenous children when aspects of their own culture and knowledge are openly shared and valued by educators in the EECS. Non-Indigenous educators in this research all considered the involvement of children in the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives to be of high importance. Pal shared a story about how relationships with an

Indigenous educator and Indigenous family members led to excursions with Indigenous guides and parents in the National Park.

Our bush walks have been daytime bush walks with just the kids, and a certain number of parents come; they've been good too. Because we go out; and you know, [Aboriginal Uncle] come with us. And one of the Dads from National Parks. He came with us at one stage so they could tell us you know, [about the plants and animals in the bush environment] we love the Band-Aide tree, just to go out and be a part of nature and use the sticks and the rocks and the things to build animal protection places and we'd go back twelve months later and they'd still be there, that kind of stuff. It was great. (Pal)

Pal reflected on the interest and responsibility to the natural world that the children and adults gained from these excursions and the valuable opportunity to meet and learn from a variety of Aboriginal people from within the local community.

Perhaps the most significant practice that all four EECS engaged in and commented on was the development and implementation of a formal Acknowledgement to Country. This practice was approached differently at each service where non-Indigenous educators reported different levels of success. Both Tabitha and Regina explained that educators in their own EECS engaged children in small group discussions about Indigenous Australian peoples and from these discussions created an Acknowledgement with the children to ensure that it was meaningful to them. Tabitha explained that she first enlisted the help and guidance of an Indigenous educator to gain a clearer understanding of the purpose and meaning of an Acknowledgement to

Country. She explained the level of importance that was placed on the acknowledgement for the service as a whole.

Yeah, so that's something that I'm really proud of, that we've worked hard on and reflect on as well, because it's kind of separated a little bit between the different groups. And then we got the two different groups together to kind of bring it together. So that we would have the one and it was our first ever Facebook post, was our Acknowledgement of Country. And that was, for me, we had to get that done before we can start our Facebook page. And that would be the start of our page. (Tabitha)

Similarly, Rose explained that all the children attending the EECS know the centre's Acknowledgement to Country by heart and that they often engage in discussions with the children about the purpose and meaning of what they are saying. Regina commented on the children's level of understanding about Indigenous Australians being the First Peoples and that everyone else came after. She was genuinely impressed with the way the children expressed understanding and gratitude that Indigenous people have been looking after the land for a very long time. James noted that even though the acknowledgement was developed with the children, questions still remain. As a result, James considers the acknowledgement to be a valuable learning tool for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.

It's a good way to introduce children to the concepts, it allows children with Indigenous background to be aware of this as well. It helps them to understand. I had one child ask why we do it the other day and that became an interesting dialogue. (James)

Whilst all four EECS participating in the research practice an Acknowledgement to Country with the children each day; two non-Indigenous

educators questioned the children's level of understanding. Daisy commented that while all the children display respect during the acknowledgement, following the actions of hands on the ground, up to the sky and then on their hearts while they say the words and acknowledge everyone around them, she questions both her own and the children's depth of understanding.

I think that's the biggest downfall is just a lack of, of knowing, and knowledge. And sometimes we do feel like, yeah, we're doing this but, why are we doing this? Are we just doing it just to go 'look at us aren't we wonderful?' But yeah, it's having that deeper understanding. (Daisy)

Likewise, Elizabeth shared an experience in her EECS in which some of the children pointed out to her that the grass they had their hands on was artificial and that God made everything. In these reflections non-Indigenous educators evidently view an Acknowledgement to Country as an appropriate way of showing respect to the Traditional Custodians, but also as a valuable learning tool for educators and children.

All eight non-Indigenous educators demonstrated an understanding that the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives is an ongoing journey and one in which they require further knowledge and support. Differing examples of Indigenous inclusion and engagement have been discussed and reflected on. However, the practice of Acknowledging Country with the children was evidenced by non-Indigenous educators across all four services. This practice is clearly viewed by non-Indigenous educators as an important starting point to genuine and respectful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in EECS.

5.3.4 Summary

Reciprocal relationships can provide non-Indigenous educators with Indigenous mentors who have insight into lived experiences of Indigenous people and families. This point was reiterated throughout all eight research yarns with non-Indigenous educators, who clearly demonstrated an understanding that Indigenous teaching and learning involves interactions, conversations and collaboration with relevant Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous families already enrolled in the EECS.

So, it's really acknowledging that these are our families, and getting to know them. We're getting to know people and the culture and going, okay, well, yes, this is why it's important, because they're actually talking about human beings here, not just, and, you know, we've had a number of families that are really involved in their community and their families and, we can learn a lot from that. (Daisy)

Elizabeth, Tabitha, James and Pal specifically stated that trusting relationships are key to building strong connections with Indigenous families and that they are fully aware that in order to build this trust Indigenous Peoples need to see that they are welcomed and valued in the EECS.

It's very welcoming, but it's far more than that. As we know, for a lot of our Aboriginal families its trust, a lot of it is trust and it's really hard. I can't really answer to know how to get their trust. I don't know. But if you're walking into a service that seems to be just all the white people's way, then they are not going to. (Elizabeth)

James explained that a smaller environment with high adult to child ratios provides educators with more time to get to know each child and to build strong relationships with every family. Obviously, this is not the case for all non-

Indigenous educators involved in the research as the number of licensed places per day differs for each service. However, all eight non-Indigenous educators shared experiences that involved positive outcomes for educators, children and families.

But I think just having somebody who has been here quite a lot. And, you know, in the ways he respects us, and we respect him. So, we've made that connection. (Pal)

So, you know, so I guess I want to be able to have somebody here to guide us of what we can and can't do. But, yeah for us to be able to talk openly. (Lily)

All non-Indigenous educators expressed a need and willingness to establish and maintain lasting relationships with Indigenous educators and families who are able to lead and collaborate on the EECS program and environment. All non-Indigenous educators identified that inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives must be an integral part of the EECS daily program and environment in order for it to be meaningful and beneficial to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presents the voices and perspectives gained in eight individual research yarns with non-Indigenous educators across four different early education and care services (EECS). Perspectives and experiences of the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives were shared by one Early Childhood Director and one Early Childhood Teacher from each of the four participating EECS. In Section 5.1 non-Indigenous educators shared their

knowledge and understanding of Indigenous concepts and perspectives of Country, family and history to identify how they can be respectfully represented in Western-based EECS. Section 5.2 presented the experiences of non-Indigenous educators with EECS management structures and policy that impact on motivation, confidence and ability to effectively include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in a Western-based EECS.

Finally, in Section 5.3 non-Indigenous educators discussed their experiences and perspectives of professional development and the engagement of Indigenous Peoples. Additionally, examples of effective inclusion and discussions about how to improve and extend on these examples was presented. In summary, non-Indigenous educators have clearly advocated that it is crucial that EECS establish respectful and collaborative relationships with Indigenous educators, community members and families in order to effectively include Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives in Western-based EECS.

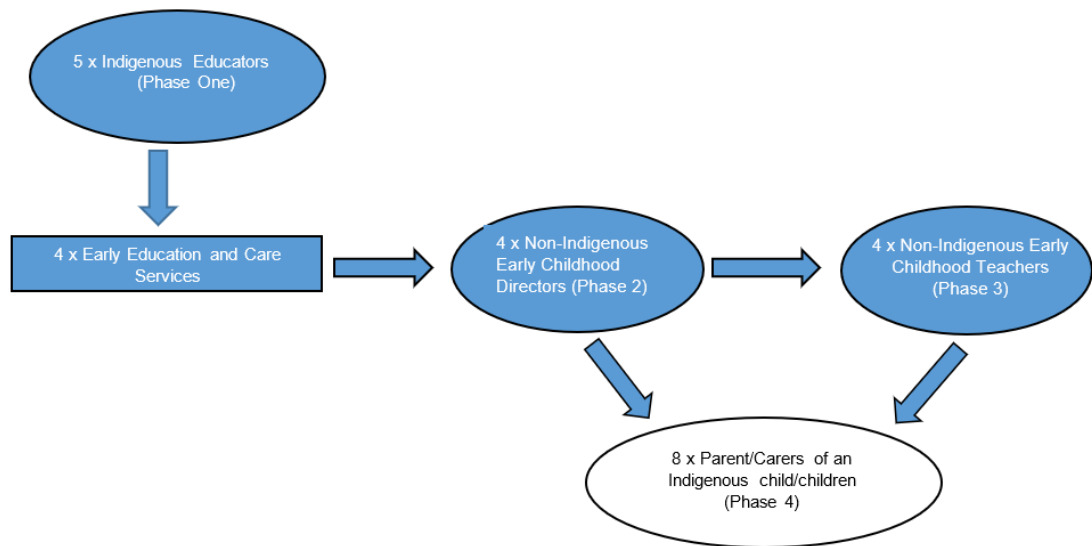
CHAPTER 6. VOICES OF PARENTS/CARERS OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present and analyse the shared knowledges and perspectives of parents/carers of Indigenous children. The aim of this phase (Phase Four) was to better understand the experiences of Indigenous children and to identify aspirations of parents/carers of Indigenous children attending an early education and care service (EECS). Six of these parents/carers identified as Aboriginal and two identified as non-Indigenous though were parents/carers of an Indigenous child or children. All Indigenous children represented in the research attended one of four EECS were nominated by an Indigenous educator (Phase One) to participate in the research.

The parents/carers involved in the research were identified and introduced to the researcher by the EECS Director (Phase Two) in consultation with the Early Childhood Educator (Phase Three). In total eight parents/carers participated in this phase of the research. Figure 6.0 illustrates the snowball type method used to recruit these parents/carers.

Figure 6.0 Parents/Carers Participants - Research Phase Four



Section 6.1 of this chapter specifically presents and analyses parents'/carers' perspectives of and engagement with Indigenous Country, family and history. Parents/carers shared personal information about their own family history and current links to Indigenous family, community and culture. In regard to history, parents/carers reflected on their own school experiences and/or shared personal stories about Stolen Generations, racism and dislocation from family and/or community. It is clear that, whilst all parents/carers participating in the research represent Indigenous children, there is much diversity in the way they engage with and experience Indigenous identity and culture.

In section 6.2 the perspectives of parents/carers provided clear reflections on day-to-day experiences with EECS educators and environments. Participants from all prior phases of the research focussed on EECS management, professional development of educators and funding in this section of the research. In contrast, the parents/carers cohort reflected on the way in which

educators created a welcoming and supportive environment for their children. Whilst all parents/carers expressed a desire for their children to learn about and engage with Indigenous Ways of Knowing, there was also a common consensus that children should also be respectful and appreciative of cultures that are different to their own.

In Section 6.3 parents/carers shared specific examples of Indigenous inclusion that they have experienced and/or witnessed in the EECS their child/children attended. In addition to their positive feedback, parents/carers also offered suggestions for further inclusion and support of Indigenous families in the EECS.

Finally, Section 6.4 summarises the feedback, experiences and perspectives of the parents/carers involved in the fourth and final phase of the research. It is clear from the perspectives and experiences of parents/carers that the main concern revolves around the child's ability to feel safe and proud in an environment that values and promotes cultural diversity. Specifically, these parents/carers value the efforts of educators in acknowledging and including Indigenous Ways of Knowing throughout the EECS program and environment.

6.1 INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES AND PERSPECTIVES - RESPECT

In Chapters Four and Five the reality and significance of the diversity of Indigenous Australian peoples was identified and reiterated. In this chapter, the experiences and perspectives shared by parents/carers of Indigenous children have served to further illustrate and advocate this important aspect of

Indigenous Australian families. Eight parents/carers shared a vast range of perspectives and experiences in relation to their children's cultural connections and understandings, under the headings of Country, family and history.

Specifically, all eight parents/carers expressed a common aspiration for their children to be proud of who they are and to feel comfortable and safe to learn and share culture within the EECS.

Parents/carers in the research represented Indigenous children who attended one of the four EECS that were nominated by an Indigenous educator (Phase One). The families to which these children belong were diverse in structure and cultural connections. Specifically, of the eight families represented, three families have two Aboriginal parents another is a single parent family in which the parent is Aboriginal, and the remaining four families comprise one Aboriginal parent and a parent from either a non-Indigenous Australian, Maori or Palestinian background. This clearly illustrates the point raised in all other phases of the research about the diversity of Indigenous families in Australia.

6.1.1 Country

Parents/carers participating in the research view Country as vital to a child's sense of identity and belonging. This was conveyed through parents'/carers' aspirations for their children to know who they are and to understand their cultural connection to Country.

I want my children to know, you know, where they come from, and, you know, really learn about it. I really push that for my kids, because I just think they should be proud of who they are, and where they come from. It is, you know, it really defines who they are. (Sally)

A significant factor that was shared regarding Country was the fact that all of the Indigenous children represented by parents/carers do not live on their Aboriginal Country. Only three of the eight parents/carers made mention of visiting their home Country with their children. Rachel indicated that their family's Country is relatively close; however, it is a trip they don't often do with four young children. Jenny also made a passing reference to 'when' they travel back home, although there was no indication of how far away or how often they are able to travel back to Country. These examples indicate that whilst parents/carers acknowledge the children's Aboriginal identity and connection to Country, visits and participation on home Country are limited at best. Charlene shared that she has not been back to her Country for a long time as her Country is not in New South Wales.

Despite not living on Country, at the time of the research Jenny, Mirii, Marie, Charlene and Alerah all specifically identified a need to understand and learn about Country, as they believe that respecting and caring for Country is the basis of Indigenous culture.

Also, like, it teaches her to respect the Country and not to, you know just take it for granted that, 'Oh it's just a piece of land.' (Jenny)

If we don't learn about the Country itself, then how can we identify where we come from? Or where our family comes from? (Rachel)

The research yarns with parents/carers have shown that this separation from Country has impacted the levels of engagement with Aboriginal culture, family and community. Marie, Sally, Charlene and Alerah all spoke about the

dislocation and division of their families that impacts on the way they engage in and experience Indigenous Identity and culture.

Sometimes when my family talk about it, like, I will listen to them and stuff, but they like didn't live there for long so they sort of all moved away like branched [out]. (Alerah)

Parents/carers talked about the ways in which they support their children's learning. Charlene, Marie, Rachel, and Sally all mentioned that they seek out local Indigenous events that are appropriate for their children. Charlene commented that she would like to attend more local Aboriginal events and activities with her children; however, access and availability of public transport greatly hinders this. Joanne spoke about the specific approaches she uses to ensure that her child is provided with opportunities to know who he is and to participate in cultural events on Country.

He goes to NAIDOC week. He did this year with his Nan and everything, went there for the day like, and we try and do that every year for him to go down. But I think when he's a little bit older, and he has more understanding of who he is. But he's got his Aboriginal book, his life story book [with stories, memorabilia and photographs]. He's got his life story books from the time he's born up until like now and continue on and that's his book for the rest of his life. (Joanne)

All parents/carers expressed strong feelings about their children's rights and opportunities to participate in cultural activities and events. Understandably, they want their children to be proud of who they are and to understand their connection to Country. This is a significant point for non-Indigenous educators to consider when planning to include Indigenous Ways of Knowing in an EECS. Whilst it has been noted in previous chapters that educators must be aware of

the Country on which the EECS is located, it is equally important that they understand that Indigenous families attending the EECS will not necessarily have connections to that location. Certainly, the parents/carers involved in the research provide excellent examples of the challenges faced by Indigenous families living away from Country.

6.1.2 Family

Parents/carers discussed the level of understanding their children have about their cultural identity. Interestingly, Marie, Alerah and Joanne reflected on the ability of their younger children to understand what it is to be Indigenous. For example, Marie specifically explained,

[Child #3] really just found out he's Aboriginal just because he's only old enough now to understand it, right? And he's like, 'Oh, okay. So, then my Poppy is'. And then he sort of goes through who is and who isn't? And then he sort of goes, 'But why isn't my dad Aboriginal?' Yeah, so we're trying to, I'm trying to educate [child #3], you know, where the connection is, and how it actually exists, therefore, not making us any different.
(Marie)

In regard to children's understanding and knowledge, five of the eight parents/cares reported that their children know they are Aboriginal and/or Indigenous. Parents/carers expressed pride in the fact that their children are fully aware of who they are and of their cultural background. Charlene proudly shared the perspectives of her young son:

They [children] love it because they're also Maori too, so both Indigenous [backgrounds]. So, they like it yeah, they think, my oldest son thinks he's special because he's Aboriginal. He says, 'My people are the first people.' (Charlene)

Similarly, Rachel spoke of the knowledge and understanding her children have about cultural protocols such as the Smoking Ceremony, dancing and the use of instruments including the didgeridoo and clap sticks. She also mentioned her involvement with the local primary school and the way that helps to strengthen her children's understanding and confidence.

I am very involved within the primary school where my children attend. So, I've been involved in activities at that school as well, and otherwise taught my children there's nothing to be embarrassed of. It's something to be proud of it. It doesn't matter what nationality you are, what colour skin you have, we all the same at the end of the day. (Rachel)

The comment above speaks of the child's developing understanding about themselves; however, it also raised an issue that arose from an expectation that one must provide proof of Aboriginality. To illustrate this point, Rachel shared an occurrence in which her eldest child was questioned by the kindergarten teacher when she identified herself as Aboriginal. The point to be noted is the assumption of the teacher that he/she had a right to question the child. Rachel explained that the teacher's confusion was apparently a result of the child's fair skin. This is a clear indication of a severe lack of understanding or respect for Indigenous Peoples on the teacher's part. Likewise, Charlene stated that her own identity has been called into question based solely on skin colour.

I've had it in the past, 'Oh why are you Aboriginal when you're not black?'
(Charlene)

This assumption that Indigenous Australians have dark skin is one example of existing stereotypical views of what it is to be an Indigenous person. Such views create an environment of tension and stress for Indigenous families. It is

important to note that these incidents did not occur in the EECS; however, they are recent events that provide evidence of the continuing level of racism and ignorance that the parents/carers are dealing with.

To further compound this situation, two parents/carers shared experiences in which their Indigenous identity was challenged by members of their extended family. Marie explained that when she first began dating her now husband, she found herself in a heated discussion about Indigenous Australian Peoples as the result of an offhanded racial comment made by one of her husband's relatives. Again, as a result of her fair skin the family were unaware at the time of Marie's Aboriginal identity. However, Marie stated that like her Mother she is not ashamed of her Aboriginal ancestry and over the years she has shared her understanding and knowledge with her husband and his family to ensure that their children are not shamed about their Aboriginal ancestry. Marie provided a specific example of the way in which she advocated for her child when he began formal schooling.

When you started kindy they went through a bit of a formal process to find out about your background and when I told him [husband] about it, at first he was like, why is that relevant, he kind of just didn't realise it would be relevant and I just said, 'Well it's because we all learn differently, and you don't know it. But at the core of all this 200 years ago, it's caused a lot of problems for a lot of people. So, if they can help [child's name] learn as best as he can, knowing what his history is like, I don't care what it takes. (Marie)

As a result of her own experiences growing up and despite the fact that they don't live on Country, Marie is determined that her children are provided with as

many opportunities to understand their Indigenous connections and participate in local, culturally appropriate events and activities. In the example below Alerah spoke of an Aunty who was adopted into her family. She noted that the Aunty looked different to other people in her family in that her skin was very dark. However, this was not something Alerah questioned as a child. She simply understood and accepted this woman as a member of her family. When Alerah had children of her own, she made a conscious effort to ensure that her children accepted the Aunt in the same way she did.

We have my Auntie, she's not like related by blood, but she was a Stolen Generation child and adopted into my family. When my kids grew up, they don't ask questions and we'll call her Aunty [name]. So, with my daughter, I bought her a dark doll and we called it Auntie [same as her Aunt's name]. So that taught her that she could play with dark dolls as well. Like there's nothing wrong with that. (Alerah)

This deliberate action on the part of Alerah was also significant in teaching her children about their Aboriginal ancestry. Again, as a result of her children having fairer skin colour, there has been some pressure from the non-Indigenous family to hide the children's identity in fear of negative treatment at school or in the community.

It's like, don't put it in [Aboriginal identity] when they go to school because then they'll, you know, be taken out of class to do special things. Then everyone will know. And so, I thought about it for a long time, like whether I should or not. (Alerah)

Alerah went on to say that she is really happy that her children are able to participate in Aboriginal events and activities at school. She recalled that she loved participating in Aboriginal dance at one of the schools she attended.

However, as her family moved around frequently her ability to participate and engage in cultural activities or events was very limited.

It is not unreasonable to fathom that challenges faced by parents/carers have a flow-on effect to their children. Parents/carers in the research have expressed that the absence of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Western-based education has greatly influenced their ability to strengthen and include Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the daily lives of their children. Rachel specifically pointed out that the education that she and her husband received through both primary and high school was devoid of any acknowledgement and least of all inclusion of cultural knowledges or perspectives of Indigenous Australian peoples. In order to overcome this challenge for their children, Rachel sought the guidance and support of an Aboriginal Elder who worked and lived in the area that the family resided in.

I would always teach them [children] that they are Aboriginal, you know, their eyes have really been open to, you know, a lot of that culture and all the rest from Aunt [name]. Aunt's [name] house is pretty much like our second home and being there with them, you know, she'll teach them, you know, a couple of Aboriginal words and, you know, brings them CDs home, and like, teaches them dances and does all of these with them and it's really opened their eyes to what their culture is, rather than just them being able to say, I'm Aboriginal, and not really knowing what that is, or what it means, you know, it's really opening their eyes to what you know, for them to be able to say, I'm Aboriginal, actually knowing what that is, and where they come from. (Sally)

It was crucial for parents/carers that their children understand and feel pride in their Indigenous identity and what that specifically entailed in their own families.

It was clear that the parents/carers were committed to including Indigenous culture and relatives in the lives of their children. Alerah, Mirii and Charlene expressed eagerness for their children to engage in experiences that they themselves missed out on as children. Parent's/carer's own school experiences is presented in more detail in Section 6.1.3 of this chapter as parents share their individual experiences as a comparison to the opportunities offered to their children in the EECS.

Overall parents/carers communicated how important it is to them that their children are provided with opportunities in the EECS to share their family stories and culture openly and confidently. Parents/carers were also eager for their children to participate in an environment that values and celebrates diversity, and above all else parents/carers wanted their children to feel proud of their identity whilst being accepting and respectful of others. Evidently the experiences and perspectives shared by parents/carers in regard to their children's sense of self and belonging exemplify a need for non-Indigenous educators to receive relevant training to better understand and value the diversity and challenges faced by Indigenous families.

6.1.3 History

From their own experiences Jenny and Marie noted that many non-Indigenous Peoples consider that past occurrences and events are best left in the past and that this attitude has resulted in a significant lack of understanding of the lives of Indigenous Peoples today. Specifically, Jenny questioned how non-Indigenous

educators are able to show respect to Traditional Custodians without first understanding history from an Indigenous perspective.

Joanne and Alerah shared specific examples of history in sharing personal stories of relatives who were taken from family and community. They reflected on the challenges this presents to them in understanding and passing on information about family, culture and Country. Likewise, Marie talked about the secrets and lies that shaped her Grandfather's life and the way in which he perceived himself.

I think it goes to show my grandfather didn't know where his father had passed. He knew nothing about his history. He never knew what his Country was. He found out his birthday was the complete, different date, completely different month. You know there's lots of things that was sort of missing or taken away from him that he never knew about. (Marie)

It was evident in all yarns with parents/carers that personal stories and experiences are not often openly shared outside of parent's/carer's homes. As a result, efforts by non-Indigenous educators to incorporate Indigenous Knowledges and/or perspectives have the potential to cause discomfort and/or offense to Indigenous families enrolled in the EECS. Sally specifically provided an insight into this factor when she commented on the value and importance of listening to individual stories from Aboriginal people and specifically from Elders. She advocated that hearing these stories enables a deeper understanding and/or level of respect for the strength, resilience and diversity of Indigenous Peoples.

And it's the little things that you don't understand, how they grew up or where they grew up or what things happened in their life. So little things that might not seem important or offensive to you can be very much so to them. I just think it's just about people having more knowledge to really understand. (Sally)

In connection to their thoughts and feelings about the EECS their children attended, all parents/carers reflected on their own school experiences. Two specific observations became apparent among the eight parents/carers participating in the research. In the first instance the general consensus among parents/carers was that most of the schools they attended did not include lessons about or recognition of Indigenous Australian Peoples. In addition to this, parents/carers reflected on the way in which they were treated in these schools by their teachers and peers. Mirii commented that Indigenous Knowledges and/or perspectives were not at the forefront of her schooling during the eighties and nineties. Likewise, Marie stated that she recalls learning about white settlement but does not remember learning anything about Indigenous Australia.

In regard to the treatment of Indigenous students, a common school experience shared by Marie, Alerah, Rachel and Charlene were being singled out to participate in activities that were specifically planned for Indigenous students only. While most parents/carers acknowledged that they enjoyed participating in some of these activities, they also shared that the downside to being singled out was that it also made them targets of bullying. Rachel explained that at one of the schools she attended it was the teachers who decided which students were

allowed to participate in the limited, special activities organised for Indigenous students.

When I went to school it's like you're Aboriginal, you're not, [gesturing with a hand to indicate that Aboriginal children were sent in one direction and non-Aboriginal sent in the opposite direction]. That's it, you might go on an excursion at the end of the year, you might do some gardening, and there wasn't much, and not much knowledge back then. (Rachel)

Rachel's comment about the level of knowledge specifically refers to the general lack of understanding that teachers had about Aboriginal peoples and/or Aboriginal culture. Marie and Charlene both attended schools that provided a small room for Indigenous students to do homework and that sometimes had an Aboriginal support worker for the students to talk to. While Charlene and Marie didn't specifically discuss why the schools thought to make this available to Indigenous students, Marie did convey an understanding that the teachers did not have high expectations of Indigenous students.

Like it did always feel like you weren't ever going to ever be good enough. Because there's just something different about you. (Marie)

Along with Marie's comment above, Rachel and Charlene reflected on personal experiences of differing levels of racism in school. Charlene said that while she wasn't bullied often, her friend who had dark skin was bullied all the time and Rachel felt that people were more openly racist when she was young; however, she also stated that in her experience there are a number of people that are very judgmental of Indigenous Peoples.

The experiences of parents/carers participating in the research provide examples of their own schooling experiences that may be viewed as current events rather than as history. However, the fact remains that these experiences and perspectives are undeniably shaped and influenced by past government practices and policies that were designed and implemented to control the lives of Indigenous Australian Peoples. There is a clear consensus among parents/carers of Indigenous children in the research that without an understanding of this history and the ongoing experiences of Indigenous Australian Peoples it is very difficult for non-Indigenous educators to effectively or respectfully include Indigenous Knowledges or perspectives in EECS.

6.1.4 Summary

Perhaps the most significant information to be understood from parents/carers of Indigenous children attending an EECS is the vast level of diversity of Indigenous families. Throughout the research three main factors have been explored as integral to the way in which Indigenous Peoples identify themselves. Parents/carers of Indigenous children, as with Indigenous educators (Phase One) shared personal experiences of identity and belonging through the aspects of Country, family and history. Through personal accounts parents/carers provided individual examples of what it is to be an Indigenous Australian. While the EECS participating in the research accept the cultural backgrounds of the children represented by parents/carers, there appears to be room for improvement on developing stronger relationships with parents/carers to gain a deeper understanding of the specific experiences, desires and challenges of each family.

6.2 EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES — RESPONSIBILITY

In section 6.1 parents/carers spoke broadly about their thoughts, feelings and experiences with education. These yarns included reflections related to their own school experiences and that of older children attending infant and/or primary school. This chapter focuses specifically on the experiences of parents/carers and their children attending one of the four nominated EECS. In previous phases of the research with Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, concepts raised included EECS management, policies and funding. However, parents/carers were focused on the individual experiences of their children in the EECS. Expectations of educators and the way in which educators interacted with the children were revealed to be of utmost importance to parents/carers. The inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing was acknowledged and welcomed by parents/carer; however, six of the eight parents/carers also acknowledged the benefits their own children gained from attending an EECS that included children and families with diverse backgrounds, interests and abilities.

6.2.1 Centre Program and Environment

In all cases parents/carers expressed confidence and trust in the educators employed in the EECS their child/children attended. Although Jenny admitted that while some relatives had recommended the EECS to her, she initially felt some apprehension about the approachability of the EECS Director. Once her child began; however, Jenny found that she was able to talk easily with the Director and that the educators were fully accepting and supportive of her child's creativity, individuality and of their cultural identity.

Yes, like I feel it's fine that she can be whoever she is, she doesn't have to try to not be her normal self, which she knows her culture. Yeah, it makes you feel like you just don't have to say it, it's welcome [Aboriginal culture]. I reckon the centre is really good for that; they don't put restrictions on the children. (Jenny)

In referring to restrictions, Jenny explained that in other EECS educators had a lot of control over the children's activities. She said that she prefers an EECS that allows her child to have more freedom and autonomy to choose what to participate in and for how long. Similar comments were made by other parents/carers about the educators; approaches and interactions in the EECS that their child/children attended. Joanne noted the high level of respect that educators showed to the children, as did Charlene who also mentioned that there were a number of early childhood options in her area but she chose this one over the others as the educators are welcoming and supportive of the children's differing interests and abilities. Marie also commented on the way that educators respect and interact with all of the children attending the EECS.

And they make every single child feel special; it's like, just watching them [the children] actually blows my mind. You see these teachers connect with each child in the moment. They walk in that door every morning, even if they're already with three or four children, they [educators] always let that child know that they know they're there [they welcome every child]. And that's just one factor of the day but that can make such a big difference. (Marie)

It was interesting that parents/carers from three of the four EECS specifically mentioned the cultural diversity within the EECS their children attended. Rachel, Jenny and Mirii all talked about the benefits that their children gained from

attending an EECS that valued and promoted diversity. In their examples, parents/carers referred to diversity in regard to cultural backgrounds, ages and/or ability. Parents/carers expressed positive feelings about the way in which educator's role-modelled and encouraged inclusive practices that created a comfortable and safe environment for all of the children attending.

It's very inclusive of Indigenous, and also kids with disabilities. And that's what I love about the centre, especially sending my daughter here because she's very, like, a bit advanced, I guess, in a lot of ways, so it's nice. I really was happy to send her here. (Mirii)

Mirii specifically reflected on the way in which her child is learning how to befriend and interact with children that have different abilities and cultural backgrounds to herself. She was particularly eager that her child be in an environment that is safe for all children to participate in their own ways. What became most apparent from parents/carers was that the EECS clearly recognised and accepted that their children were Indigenous; however, they did not single children out or make them feel different from the other children attending the EECS. This was an important factor for parents/carers who had experienced negative effects of segregation at school. It was clear from parent's/carer's comments that they were very happy with the EECS their children attended as they believed that educators genuinely valued the children as individuals and taught the children to respect this in one another.

Everyone needs to feel included. And as I said, everybody comes from a different background. So, everyone has a story so we can talk about our Country, we can talk about our land, but they might have something just as interesting to learn about as well. (Rachel)

Overall parents/carers showed that they were very happy and comfortable with the care and education their children received from the EECS. While recognition and understanding of the children's cultural background was an important factor the promotion of acceptance and respect for all children attending the EECS was also highly regarded.

6.2.2 Working with Indigenous Families

Regarding Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the EECS, parents/carers identified a need for non-Indigenous educators to seek guidance and support from Indigenous Peoples so that the information shared can be authentic and meaningful. Sally and Rachel both raised the issue of teaching specific skills to children without any knowledge or understanding about the significance of that skill to Indigenous Peoples.

I think really just networking with the Indigenous community, and, you know, getting them [children] to participate and really understand or, you know, even little things like weaving baskets, but not just getting them to do it, teaching them about why this was done, and, you know, like, how it [weaving] was done, and what was used for. (Sally)

This relates also to the point raised in Chapter 4 about ownership of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Indigenous educators (Phase One) argued that some non-Indigenous educators assume a right to teach aspects of Indigenous culture or knowledge they have learned without consideration of cultural protocols and/or intellectual property rights. Mirii stated that educators must refer to an appropriate person before including any aspects of Indigenous culture or languages in the EECS.

Marie and Sally both shared examples of the ways in which they themselves have participated in primary school programs to share their knowledge with educators and teachers. Additionally, Marie, Sally, Rachel and Jenny all mentioned that they have connections with Indigenous people and attend Indigenous events in the community with their children. Rachel talked about different events that her children have enjoyed in the community and suggested that these type of activities could be included in the EECS program.

You know, like we attended a festival on the weekend and there were some Aboriginal stories there and they had boomerang painting. My kids love that, they think that's great. But even something like that. Yeah, in school, in preschool. (Rachel)

Interestingly, the type of activity Rachel is suggesting was noted by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators as tokenistic; however, in an EECS where educators communicate and collaborate with parents/carers of Indigenous children about the program this type of activity may very well be considered appropriate. In the case, for example, where an Indigenous parent or local community member carves boomerangs and is able to share knowledge and/or stories about the boomerang with the children, this activity could become more than just painting boomerangs. In order to locate appropriate people and resources it makes sense for educators to speak first to parents/carers of Indigenous children attending the EECS.

Three parents/carers specifically indicated that there is room for improvement when it comes to collaborating with parents/carers of Indigenous children about

the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the EECS. This is not to say that educators should expect that all parents/carers of Indigenous children will always be willing and/or able to share Indigenous Knowledges or perspectives in the EECS. Yet, all parents/carers must be provided with opportunities to inform educators of their aspirations for their children and being informed of specific Indigenous experiences/events offered to children in the EECS.

Joanne's experience provided an excellent example in which the EECS worked with a local Indigenous person but neglected to inform parents/carers about this connection and the subsequent activities the children were involved in.

Specifically, Joanne stated that she was aware that a local Aboriginal man visited the EECS; however, she was not always informed of when and what information or activities he was sharing with the children. Likewise, Alerah and Rachel noted that the way in which Indigenous Knowledges and/or culture are included in the EECS program are not always communicated to them.

Yes. So on, I think it was Grandparents Day, they did a little thing where they did a prayer on the ground and thanked them [Traditional Custodians] for the land, and the food and stuff like that. And I thought that was really good. That was the first time I actually saw them do that. And I asked [child] afterwards and he said, they do that all the time.
(Alerah)

Alerah's comment above points to a lack of communication and collaboration between the parents/carers and the EECS. Similarly, Rachel, Joanne and Charlene admitted that they didn't have very much information about the specific ways in which Indigenous Knowledges and/or perspectives were included in the EECS. Charlene admitted that she is very shy so while she

really likes the EECS she rarely spends time talking with educators about her cultural background or the EECS program. Joanne noted that the EECS has a Facebook page, but she is not on Facebook herself and would prefer a newsletter or something similar that would let her know what is happening and perhaps even invite her to attend.

Everyone's on it [Facebook] but I don't. I think I've only seen once when Uncle [name] has been in there and the kids are all sitting down and he's telling the story but, yeah, like that's all I really know. (Joanne)

It is not unreasonable to consider that when communication between the EECS and parents/carers of Indigenous children is lacking it would be near impossible for educators to identify or understand the needs of Indigenous children enrolled in the EECS. Certainly, it is one thing to include Indigenous Ways of Knowing in an EECS environment, but if parents/carers of Indigenous children are not involved or at the least informed about this inclusion it is feasible to question the authenticity, appropriateness and/or relevance of practices to the Indigenous children attending the EECS.

6.2.3 Summary

EECS are held to account by The Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) to promote a better understanding of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being for all Indigenous and non-Indigenous children attending the EECS. Information from the yarning sessions with parents/carers shows positive experiences and that parents/carers value the opportunities and experiences that the diverse EECS environments afford their children, although

parents/carers, like Indigenous educators (Phase One) have also identified a need for non-Indigenous educators to reconsider communication methods and interactions with Indigenous Peoples in order to gain a deeper understanding of lived experiences and aspirations of Indigenous parents/carers for their children.

6.3 INCLUSIVE PRACTICES - RECIPROCITY

Section 6.2 demonstrated that parents/carers in the research are generally happy with the EECS their children attend. That is, parents/carers feel that the educators are caring and supportive of the children's individual needs and interests, whilst being respectful of their Indigenous identities. In this section parents/carers reflect on ways in which educators in the EECS effectively include Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Additionally, parents/carers provided insights into personal aspirations that they have for their children and suggested ways in which EECS might further meet the needs of Indigenous children.

6.3.1 Effective Practices

Parents'/carers' reflections on specific examples of inclusion ranged from a limited knowledge of programmed activities to active participation in art experiences with children and educators in the EECS. Interestingly, there was not one particular approach to inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and/or perspectives that was identified by all or even the majority of parents/carers. A variety of specific examples included practices/experiences that occur during group times, as art/craft activities or in the outdoor environment.

Alerah and Jenny, whose children attend different EECS, both reflected on the EECS practice of Acknowledging Country. Jenny specifically noted a physical display in the front office/entrance to the EECS and the fact that her child was involved in discussions and the practice of Acknowledging Country with educators and peers.

Well, just like this [pointing to Aboriginal artwork with a written Acknowledgement to Country], when you walk into the office they have the Acknowledgement, you don't see that in a lot of places, so just that basic, even if it's just a little plaque with an Acknowledgement without the paintings and stuff like that. That's really good. It makes you think, 'Oh they've taken time to actually pay their respect to who the land belongs to, the custodians of the land.' Even with my daughter, she, last year she learned, Acknowledgement to Country through just a, probably a lesson, they were teaching everybody about it (Jenny).

Previously, in section 6.2.2, Alerah shared that she only learned that the children Acknowledge Country when she attended a Grandparents Day event at the EECS. Although this is a practice that the children participated in every day, it would appear that it had not been promoted or explained to parents/carers.

This view is supported by the fact that other parents/carers with children attending the same EECS as Alerah or Jenny made no mention of an Acknowledgement to Country. It is reasonable to surmise that all parents/carers with children in EECS that regularly Acknowledge Country, would have made some comment on this, as it is a very deliberate and obvious approach to including Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the EECS.

In another example both Jenny and Marie referred to the way in which art was used to expose the children to Indigenous culture and/or perspectives. Marie shared that she has spent time in the EECS participating in art experiences with the children and educators and reflected on the value and relevance of these this with young children.

It's hard to talk and educate children verbally, using words for them to understand what Aboriginal culture is at such a young age, but artwork is to me, it's like the beginning of the seeding, and you can just kind of grow it from there. And that's what I've learned in my children, too, because I've done it with them. (Marie)

Like Marie, Jenny acknowledged that by displaying Indigenous art the EECS introduces non-Indigenous children to Indigenous culture. More importantly, Jenny also noted that displays of art produced by Aboriginal artists in the EECS helped to create a welcoming and comforting environment. Jenny noted that her child often talked about the connections she made between aspects of Aboriginal culture she experienced in the EECS with similar cultural experiences at home. This for Jenny emphasised the commitment and respect that educators have for children's cultural backgrounds and families.

The examples of inclusion identified by Joanne related to everyday practices that the children are offered and exposed to in the EECS. Firstly, Joanne briefly mentioned a bush tucker garden and then explained the way in which the children and educators greet each other in the local language.

The bush tucker, I love the bush tucker for the kids. And the language around it as well. Like, they got the Aboriginal language. They're great, so yeah, and when they say you know, [hello and goodbye in local

Aboriginal language] *and [child] knows that now, and I just like that, it's really good.* (Joanne)

In comparison to examples provided by Indigenous educators (Phase One) and non-Indigenous educators (Phases Two & Three), parent's/carer's specific examples of inclusion were somewhat limited. This small number of examples reflects the point raised in the previous section about a lack of communication and/or collaboration with parents/carers of Indigenous children about the EECS program. Despite this apparent lack of specific examples of inclusion, all parents/carers were very supportive of the efforts and actions of the educators in the EECS their children attended.

Just to be part of the really inclusive environment. And then, you know, obviously, with the Indigenous focus that they have, it's really respectful.
(Mirii)

Words such as *inclusive* and *respect* were used repeatedly by parents/carers in regard to the approach of educators to Indigenous children in the EECS environments. Examples provided by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators suggest that Indigenous Ways of Knowing are included throughout the EECS program and environment on a daily basis, but this same level of inclusion is not reflected in information shared by parents/carers. While it is clear that parents/carers genuinely feel that educators are making a conscious effort to include Indigenous Ways of Knowing, the issue of communication about this inclusion to parents/carers is again raised.

6.3.2 Parents'/Carers' Aspirations for Children Attending EECS

All parents/carers expressed a strong desire for their children to have better experiences with education than they did themselves. While they acknowledged the positive environments, educators provided for their children, parents/carers suggested additional ways in which Indigenous Ways of Knowing could be explored and included in the EECS.

Okay, I definitely think it's included. But I always think that there can be more that can be included, you know, they do try, but you know, it does become quite hard when they don't really understand, they don't have knowledge behind it. And they do definitely try, and they definitely make an effort. But I think there's so much more that can be done to teach the children about Indigenous culture. (Sally)

Throughout her research yarn Sally strongly advocated that educators in EECS need to build on Indigenous networks and relationships. Actually, Sally noted that, as a consequence of receiving an invitation to participate in the research, she approached the EECS Director to discuss connections that she has with people in the local Indigenous community that she could introduce educators to.

In regard to networking, Rachel pointed out the importance and value of developing collaborative relationships between the EECS and the local primary school. Rachel reflected on occasions in which the children in the EECS visited the local school and participated in events or performances and she questioned why this was not being explored as an option for Indigenous specific events/activities. Additionally, Rachel suggested that attendance at such events in the school could provide an opportunity to introduce Indigenous children in

the ECCS to Indigenous children attending the local school. Rachel believes that such introductions would be a positive step towards establishing a buddy system to assist in the transition process from EECS to kindergarten and to provide Indigenous children with a culturally appropriate additional support system in the larger school environment.

If we can tee the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids up. Sometimes you feel much more comfortable telling someone that's the same as you? And sometimes it helps. Like, maybe a student may not feel comfortable telling a teacher that they're being bullied or that this is happening. But they feel comfortable telling [an Indigenous peer] because they are, like we're like family. Like, you know, I'm sharing knowledge, but we are helping one another at the same time. That you look after one another, you look after your family because everyone is family. (Rachel)

As previously mentioned, it was important to all parents/carers that their children are provided with opportunities to share and learn about Indigenous culture and perspectives in a safe and respectful environment. The suggestions made by Rachel in the comment above offered a practical example of culturally appropriate and relevant opportunities for Indigenous children, which could address the aspirations voiced by all parents/carers. This view was also expressed by Marie who reflected on the confidence and strength that she gained when she was able to engage with Indigenous culture at school.

So, I think bringing culture here, it would be really nice, because I remember being in school, and all of that connection was actually really nice. I remember getting involved just, you know, quite a few times we did our own little presentations, where we did some dance and we

included the other children into song and dance. And I remember being, feeling, almost powerful. (Marie)

Another reason to include Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the EECS from parent's/carer's perspectives was expressed by Charlene in her statement that she wants her children to learn as much as possible so that Indigenous culture and knowledges are not completely lost. Likewise, Joanne and Mirii indicated their wish for their children to learn Indigenous languages. While Joanne provided an understanding of the value in learning words from the local Aboriginal Language, she also expressed a concern for her child to learn his own language and not to be confused between the two. From a different perspective Mirii reflected on the way in which Indigenous language is valued and taught in New Zealand and suggested that this should also be incorporated into the lives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in Australia.

I think it's really important, like, on a daily basis for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children to have that immersion, you know, on a daily basis. So, it should be like going out to nature, identifying the English and the Aboriginal words. Like, you look at sort of Maori culture over, you know, in New Zealand and that's ingrained into the whole culture. And everyone relates to it and connects to it. (Mirii)

In relation to the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in the outdoor environment Jenny like Joanne mentioned gardening and suggested making additions to sections of the environment that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children are already familiar with such as the sandpit.

I mean, kids love gardening and stuff like that, you know, just showing them the different little things, like every preschool has a sandpit maybe you could do something in the sand that teaches them about it

[Indigenous culture]. Maybe also dance, song, it's always good with music. (Jenny)

The use of music and dance to share Indigenous Ways of Knowing with the children was also suggested by Marie, Charlene, Sally and Rachel. Although, none of the parents/carers shared any specific songs or dances that might be shared in the EECS both Jenny and Rachel mentioned that clap sticks can be used for music, dance and/or in the sandpit.

Overall, the aspirations of parents/carers centred on the existence of safe, respectful environments in which their children can grow confidently in the knowledge of who they are and develop an understanding and appreciation for the diversity of people. From this perspective Joanne, Alerah and Marie wished for a world and future free from racism, which was summed up succinctly by Charlene who said she wants her children

Just to feel confident and always be accepted because the world can be quite nasty. (Charlene)

6.3.3 Summary

Parents/carers of Indigenous children expressed positive thoughts and feelings about the approaches to inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing they have seen in the EECS their children attend. Practices such as Acknowledging Country, exploring and displaying Indigenous art, teaching greetings in the local Indigenous language and creating garden spaces with children were all viewed as positive approaches. Interestingly, each example was identified or discussed

by no more than two parents/carers and if it was raised by two parents/carers it was never the case that the children of these parents/carers attended the same EECS. For instance, both Jenny and Alerah talked about the formal way in which educators and children Acknowledge Country; however, their children attended different EECS.

This raises concerns about the level of consultation educators engage in before implementing inclusion strategies. All but one of the parents/carers cohort identified examples of inclusion they had witnessed as opposed to describing the ways in which they were consulted or included in the development of these approaches. Certainly, all parents/carers had additional ideas and suggestions that could enhance the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the EECS for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. With this in mind it appears obvious that, to include Indigenous Ways of Knowing, the thoughts, feelings, skills and knowledges of parents/cares of Indigenous children must be understood and used to guide and shape the EECS program respectfully and effectively.

6.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Information and experiences shared by eight parents/carers of Indigenous children who attended four different EECS have provided additional support to issues and perspectives also raised by Indigenous educators (Phase One).

However, the perspectives of parents/carers offer personal perspectives as they focus specifically on their own school experiences as well as that of their children. This is in comparison to Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators

who perceive and view the EECS program and environment from a more global lens that allows inclusion practices and approaches to be considered in greater depth due to differing perspectives. The value of this chapter must not be underestimated, as the parents/carers of Indigenous children enrolled in EECS have provided insights into the diversity of Indigenous families in Australia. In section 6.1 parents/carers have openly shared their personal stories to explain the ways in which Country, family and history affect and shape their daily lives. In section 6.2 some parents/carers identified that they are not always made aware of the specific practices and approaches used by the EECS to include Indigenous Knowledges and/or perspectives, which highlights a need for educators to evaluate methods of communication and efforts to consult with the parents/carers of the Indigenous children enrolled in the EECS.

Finally, in Section 6.3 aspects of the EECS program and environment that parents/carers identified as appropriate practices are presented and discussed. In addition, parents/carers discussed the aspirations they have for their own children and offered up additional suggestions and requests that would see the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing further developed and supported for the benefit of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children enrolled in the EECS.

CHAPTER 7. MORE THAN WORDS, DOTS AND BOOMERANGS

7.0 INTRODUCTION

The voices of Indigenous educators, parents/carers of Indigenous children and non-Indigenous educators provided three differing perspectives on the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing across four different early education and care services (EECS). Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children recognised and welcomed a demonstrated commitment to the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing by non-Indigenous educators. However, a closer look at the differing priorities and perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants brought to light challenges and barriers that occur as a result of the dominant positioning of Western worldviews in these EECS.

This chapter begins by acknowledging approaches shared by non-Indigenous educators on the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in their EECS. It offers differing perspectives and priorities of inclusion between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. This chapter also recognises the privileged position that is afforded to non-Indigenous educators in Western EECS and comments on how this impacts inclusion. This is followed by a critical review of specific assumptions and judgements made by the non-Indigenous educators that greatly hinder culturally respectful and appropriate inclusion. Finally, in response to these identified challenges and barriers a relational model developed using an Indigenous epistemological approach is proposed and presented.

7.1 EXAMPLES, PERSPECTIVES AND POSITIONING OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES

Experiences and activities planned and implemented by non-Indigenous educators demonstrated a variety of approaches to the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the EECS. The examples provided across the four EECS demonstrated commonalities which can be assigned to one of three broad categories:

- (i) **Words** - greetings/songs in Indigenous languages and/or an Acknowledgement to Country
- (ii) **Dots** - Indigenous art/craft/reading activities that reproduce and/or display Indigenous symbols
- (iii) **Boomerangs** - the use and/or display of cultural artefacts, such as coolamons, dilly bags, clapping sticks.

Activities and experiences described by non-Indigenous educators were obtained from a variety of sources. All non-Indigenous educators reported that the EECS relied on interactions and guidance with at least one Indigenous educator. Information and resources were also obtained from a variety of professional development workshops and some resources were purchased from early childhood education suppliers or from other online sites. Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children acknowledged these efforts as sound examples of the ways in which the non-Indigenous educators have worked to intentionally recognise and promote the culture and practices of local custodians.

However, the main constraint in regard to the examples provided was that most parents/carers reported a lack of communication and/or consultation regarding design, development and/or implementation. Disappointingly, parents/carers revealed that they did not always receive information or notice concerning Indigenous-specific activities or events, such as a local Elder visiting the EECS. In most cases, parents/carers reported that they only learned about the use of Indigenous languages, specific activities and/or Elder visits in conversation with their own child or when they attended the EECS for a function such as Grandparents Day. This is a significant oversight if these experiences/activities are expected to represent if not support the diverse identities and complex nature of Indigenous Peoples and/or our Ways of Knowing (Martin, 2008; Rigney, 1999; SNAICC 2010; L. Smith, 2012), not to mention the Indigenous families engaged with these EECS.

This lack of collaboration also evidenced significant disparity in the perspectives and understandings of inclusion between parents/carers of Indigenous children and non-Indigenous educators. For instance, non-Indigenous educators exhibited inclusive practice as activities or events involving specific aspects of Indigenous culture (art, language, Acknowledging Country). However, parents'/carers' perspectives of inclusion concentrated broadly on the ability of children to express individuality and creativity in the EECS. Interestingly, parents'/carers' expectations of inclusion focussed more on non-Indigenous educator support and acceptance of diversity among the children (race, ability and age) in the EECS than on the provision of Indigenous-specific resources or practices. Importantly, all parents/carers stressed that they wanted their children

to be proud of who they are and to have opportunities in the EECS to experience and share their Indigenous backgrounds and culture. This is a vital consideration for all children, but especially for Indigenous children attending Western-based EECS (Martin, 2007; Martin & Walter, 2017).

In an earlier study Fasoli and Ford (2001) noted that Aboriginal early childhood practitioners advised that building relationships with Indigenous families and community is more important than adjusting EECS programs to include Indigenous content. Likewise, Semann et. al, (2012) challenged Western perceptions of learning in the following comment.

There are important aspects of learning that are often overlooked because we spend too much time (almost obsessively) focusing on 'what' the learning looks like - the products or outputs. (p. 254)

Research which seeks Indigenous perspectives highlights the critical role that relationships play in the education of young children (Grace & Trudgett, 2012; SNAICC 2010; Trudgett & Grace, 2011). Further to the need for improved collaboration with parents/carers, Indigenous educators advised that non-Indigenous educators needed to increase communication and engagement with relevant local Indigenous Peoples and organisations to establish a deeper level of understanding of the complexities and strengths of their Indigenous families and communities. This is also strongly advocated by SNAICC in a variety of documents and reports that advise on culturally competent service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families (SNAICC, 2010, 2012b, 2013).

Seek out and involve appropriate representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in program design and delivery. (SNAICC 2010, p. 87)

The EECS participating in this research operate under Western regulations and legislation which position the non-Indigenous educators employed in these services as early education and care experts. Therefore, the inclusion of Indigenous languages, art, culture and practices are interpreted and implemented by educators who work within and from a Western knowledge system that is significantly different to Indigenous worldviews. This point is akin to research conducted by N. Harrison and Greenfield (2011) in which the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in primary schools in NSW was indicative of non-Indigenous interpretations as opposed to worldviews of Indigenous Peoples.

Aboriginal perspectives are rarely Aboriginal perspectives in Australian schools, given that most of the teaching is done by non-Aboriginal people. Students are not learning Aboriginal views or perspectives, rather they are learning about their non-Aboriginal teacher's perspective on Aboriginal Australia. (p.70)

Thus, it is critical that Indigenous Peoples are the recognised experts and owners of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, which must include the right to define what it is to be an Indigenous person, a point that is addressed in the next section of this chapter (Behrendt, 1995; Carlson, 2016; Dudgeon, Wright, Paradies, Garvey, & Walker, 2010; Heiss, 2012). Overall, it is the case that respectful and effective inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Western-based EECS is not something that non-Indigenous educators can fully achieve

or imbed without the guidance and collaboration of relevant Indigenous Peoples (N. Harrison & Sellwood, 2016; Santoro et al., 2011; SNAICC, 2010; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009).

7.1.1 Challenges and Barriers to Respectful and Effective Inclusion

This research found that despite voicing intentions to respectfully include and represent Indigenous Peoples and Ways of Knowing in EECS, non-Indigenous educators also made contradictory statements that demonstrated racialised views of Indigenous Peoples. Examples of stereotypical assumptions, regarding Indigenous identity, socio-economic standing and/or truth telling about the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples, were expressed across all four participating EECS.

Firstly, non-Indigenous educators openly discussed Indigenous identity in a manner that exposed stereotypical views about what defines an Indigenous person. Specifically, regarding identity, non-Indigenous educators participating in the research openly reflected on their own understanding of how some Indigenous People could be considered 'more' Indigenous than others. In doing so, non-Indigenous educators exhibited an assumed right to make such judgements about Indigenous families. In this instance, non-Indigenous educators defined Indigenous identity using their own judgement of the level of engagement families had with Indigenous culture and/or community. This definition of Indigenous identity is a direct result of stereotypes that proliferated in research on Indigenous Peoples by and for the benefit of non-Indigenous Peoples (Moreton-Robinson, 2009; L. Smith, 2005). To this end it is a reality

that Indigenous Peoples continue to endure non-Indigenous perceptions and expectations of what it is to be Indigenous, which in itself is a form of racism (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Carlson, 2016).

A second demonstration of racialised views from non-Indigenous educators emerged in assumptions of poor socio-economic standing of Indigenous families. Connections made between the number of Indigenous children enrolled and the EECS fees prefaced a belief that all Indigenous families struggle financially. Without doubt, affordability is a concern relevant to all families wishing to enrol children in the EECS. However, it was the only factor considered and discussed by non-Indigenous educators concerning the engagement of Indigenous families. This is perhaps not surprising considering ongoing negative discourses about Indigenous families that are promoted through mainstream media, education and government policies (Battiste, 2005; Behrendt, 2016; L. Smith, 2012).

In contrast, criteria used by parents/carers in choosing an appropriate EECS for their children included physical location, recommendations from family and/or friends, the diversity of families in the EECS and the positive ways in which educators welcomed and interacted with the children. A similar set of findings was also noted in earlier research (Trudgett & Grace, 2011; Trudgett, Page, Bodkin-Andrews, Franklin, & Whittaker, 2017) found that cost was not the sole challenge to engaging Indigenous families in EECS and that the most dominant theme among mothers of Indigenous children was in fact the level of trust between Indigenous mothers and EECS educators.

A final example provides evidence of the way in which non-Indigenous educators controlled inclusion. This involved the conjecture that information about the colonisation of Australia and/or the treatment of Indigenous Peoples is either not appropriate and/or not relevant to young children. In a study investigating approaches to teaching non-Indigenous children about Indigenous Australians, MacNaughton and Davis (2001) found that, out of twenty-four educators, only two shared information about Indigenous Peoples that sought to challenge colonial stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples and cultures. In addition, MacNaughton and Davis (2001) reported that:

Overall, 10 practitioners thought it was unnecessary and/or inappropriate to discuss current issues facing Australia's Indigenous people with children in their centres. (p. 86)

Excluding aspects of history and current challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples completely undermines genuine inclusion. In this approach, the needs and comfort of non-Indigenous Peoples is used as a justification to modify and manipulate truth telling. In a paper that presents an assessment tool to enhance critical thinking in cultural safety education for Australian health workers, Sjoberg and McDermott (2016) advise:

When both the legacy and continuing processes of colonisation are unrecognised and unaddressed, they continue to set parameters for Australian society's thinking about and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their health. (p.44)

Without knowledge and recognition of the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples the intent for respect and inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS is no more than a vacuous promise. Simply put it is not enough that non-

Indigenous educators include Indigenous resources and Acknowledgements to Country in the EECS. Without an honest and thorough understanding of their own biases, non-Indigenous educators position themselves as both the knowledge holders and decision makers in the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. As these educators work in EECS grounded in Western-based values and perspectives, it is conceivable (but not acceptable) to consider that educators were unaware of the racial bias in their comments. Critical race and pedagogy theorists (DiAngelo, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matias & Allen, 2013) argue that such assumptions exist because Western beliefs and values dominate society and the education system.

The belief in objectivity, coupled with positioning white people outside of culture (and thus the norm for humanity), allows whites to view themselves as universal humans who can represent all of human experience. (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59)

Interpretations nuanced by Indigenous understanding and cultural protocols are severely diminished when they are interpreted and defined from within the confines of a Western-based system. Therefore, without critical reflection that challenges such views and assumptions, genuine inclusion cannot not be realised, as the core component of respect is actually absent (Moodie & Patrick, 2017).

7.1.2 Repositioning the Non-Indigenous Educator Roles and Assumptions

My original contribution to knowledge in this area is that culturally respectful inclusion requires Indigenous Ways of Knowing to be reflected and implemented throughout the EECS program and environment. This is

supported by Rigney's (2011b) petition for the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in Universities that, 'Indigenous Knowledges need to be *built in not bolted on* to university curriculum (p.11).

While university and early childhood education are at diverse ends of the education spectrum, this approach to the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing (Indigenous Knowledges) is both relevant and crucial to success in both arenas. With this perspective in mind, I have designed the *Yanna Jannawi Model*, which recognises Indigenous Peoples as the experts on Indigenous Ways of Knowing. This model challenges non-Indigenous educators to reconsider their role from decision makers and controllers of inclusion to collaborators. This repositioning of educators seeks to centre Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the EECS as opposed to adding them in or tacking them onto an already established Western-based system. It is not the intention that the Yanna Jannawi Model would replace frameworks and/or curriculum already legislated in EECS. Rather, it is the purpose of this model to support educators in the 'how' of inclusion, in conjunction with existing frameworks such as the National Quality Standard (NQS) (ACECQA, 2017) Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009).

7.2 INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

Rather than focusing on or prescribing specific '*Indigenous*' activities and/or resources, I offer a model that is grounded in the relational system of Indigenous Ways of Knowing which prescribes three key relational conditions of respect, responsibility and reciprocity.

The first condition is to respect relatedness by respecting the stories of relatedness. That is to respect Ways of Knowing and the stories of your relatedness to any Entity in any given context. The second condition is to be responsible in this relatedness. The third condition is to be accountable in maintaining and sustaining relatedness. (Martin, 2008, p. 77)

From Martin's (2008) work, we learn that Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing are an entwined epistemology of relationships. Significantly, her work demonstrates that Indigenous relationships are not limited to interactions among people. From an Indigenous Worldview, Martin (2008) explains that relationships exist between all entities including plants, animals, people, skies, land, waterways, and climate. In addition, she notes that among all entities there are two different types of relationship.

Relatedness exists in two ways, as amongst the same Entity as in people amongst People and between Entities such as People and Plants. people - people relatedness is experienced as Ancestral (e.g. family, clan members or Countrymen) or non-Ancestral (e.g. professional colleagues or sporting team members). People-plants relatedness is also Ancestral wherein it is a totem that gives identity; but is also spiritual when used for healing and keeping relatedness clear, or even when used as food. (p. 70)

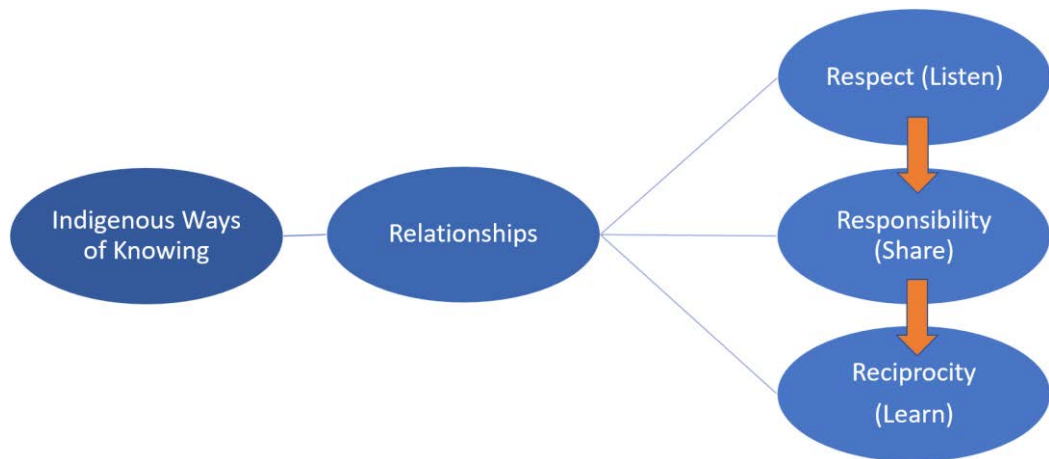
Martin (2008), in relation to Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing speaks of respecting the stories of relatedness, being responsible to relatedness, and staying accountable to maintaining and sustaining relatedness. As a result, our actions and participation in these relationships enable us (Indigenous Peoples) to realise identity, responsibility and accountability we have to all entities. Thus, I contend that the actions of respect,

responsibility and accountability are paramount in developing relationships that sustain positive experiences and outcomes for Indigenous Peoples.

From this premise, Figure 7.0 offers a revised version of the conditions of relatedness for relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. This modification is necessary, as Martin's (2008) work describes an epistemological system of identity and belonging for Aboriginal Australians to Country and Community. Thus, adoption by non-Indigenous Peoples is not appropriate or possible for the reason that non-Indigenous Peoples do not have the same ancestral connections to Country as Indigenous Australian Peoples. With this in mind, I reflected on the three conditions of relatedness (Martin, 2008) and considered them in particular reference to communication and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples and entities.

Briefly in Figure 7.0 below, the condition of respect is associated with the act of listening whilst responsibility involves sharing. Finally, as accountability to Country is an Indigenous specific condition, I have exchanged the third condition of accountability with reciprocity. It is my belief that through respectful and responsible relationships reciprocal learning can be achieved.

Figure 7.0 Three Core Conditions of Relationships Between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Peoples.



7.2.1 Respect - Listen

It is the condition of respect in relationships that enables identification and recognition of Indigenous Peoples as the owners of Indigenous Knowledges. Respect incites deep listening and an understanding that only Indigenous Peoples define and express what it is to be Indigenous. Indigenous educators participating in the research yarns specifically advocated that non-Indigenous educators make a conscientious effort to hear the voices and narratives of Indigenous Peoples.

So I think if they do some listening and deep listening and learning and sitting with our families and if they've got families there [in the EEC] they should be the ones teaching them, they should first know, whose Country they're on and those people should be consulted first before they do anything. (Blackheart)

In this way, Indigenous Peoples are recognised and valued for the unique and vital relationships we have with our Indigenous Communities and Countries. Respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples

openly demonstrate the value and relevance of Indigenous Ways of Knowing to all children and their families. Ongoing respectful relationships guided by Indigenous voices and narratives will escalate the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS.

7.2.2 Responsibility - Share

Following on from respect, but no more or less important, is the condition that relationships require responsibility. It is the responsibility of all peoples to share appropriate knowledges and perspectives. It is in such sharing that we invite and trust others to hear and understand our stories and at the same time open ourselves to theirs. Through the act of sharing, we are able to establish safe places in which to achieve joint goals and plans. Learning from an Indigenous worldview is, and always has been, about sharing life experiences and skills as opposed to teaching a specific 'fact' (Battiste & Youngblood, 2000; Fasoli & Ford, 2001; Semann et al., 2012). It is an obligation of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing to ensure that what you have or know is of benefit to the wider community rather than for personal gratification or achievement.

Perhaps the closest one can get to describing unity in Indigenous knowledge is that knowledge is the expression of the vibrant relationships between the people, their ecosystems and the other living beings and spirits that share their lands. These multilayered relationships are the basis for maintaining social, economic and diplomatic relationships - through sharing-with other peoples. (Battiste & Youngblood, 2000, p.42)

This description of Indigenous knowledge extrapolates the understanding of knowledge as participatory and that such participation builds and maintains

complex relationships. Thus, it is an expected condition that all peoples are responsible to understand and fulfil their role in the maintenance of such relationships.

7.2.3 Reciprocity - Learn

Following respect (listening) and then responsibility (sharing) the third core condition of the Yanna Jannawi Model is reciprocity (learn). Reciprocity goes deeper than sharing as it is founded on a process of meaningful engagement in which all stakeholders are regarded as equal participants who have something to contribute and something to learn (AIATSI, 2012). It is expected that with respectful and responsible relationships reciprocal learning can be achieved.

This contrasts with the Western-based view of education in which the teacher is considered more knowledgeable than their students and as a result has a significant level of control over the learning environment and outcomes. In this model reciprocal learning is identified as learning that not only benefits families engaged with the EECS but extends to the broader Indigenous and non-Indigenous entities and communities.

As People, when we serve relatedness, we are looking after our Entities and are being served by this relatedness. Therefore, relatedness is reciprocating. (Martin, 2008, p. 70)

Reciprocity is therefore a critical component of Indigenous Ways of Knowing Being and Doing. Indigenous educators participating in the research (Blackheart and Guwuru) articulated that reciprocity involves the act of *giving back* to those

that grow and support you and that this giving back relates not only to people but to all entities (Martin, 2008; Ngurra et al., 2019).

It is possible that some non-Indigenous educators may feel challenged by this approach as it recognises learners as teachers and teachers as learners.

Additionally, in relation to reciprocity children are recognised and valued as knowledge holders (Fasoli & Ford, 2001; Guilfoyle et al., 2010; Hutchins et al., 2009; Martin, 2017). This was clearly articulated by an Indigenous educator in the first phase of the research.

I know that we believe that some of our babies come here for a reason, they come here to teach us and they also come with knowledges that far outweigh some of us, you know, our clever people are not only our adults we've got children that are clever people. (Blackheart)

This approach is aligned with Indigenous research guidelines that identify reciprocity as one of six core values of ethical research practices (NHMRC, 2003). Respect and responsibility are also included as core values, along with equality, spirit and integrity, survival and protection. The aim of these core values is to ensure that Indigenous values are at the heart of Indigenous research. Therefore, it is fitting that the conditions of respect, responsibility and reciprocity are core to the Yanna Jannawi Model which aims to provide a relational approach for culturally relevant and respectful inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS.

7.3 THE YANNA JANNAWI MODEL

In Dharug Language (the language of my people), yanna jannawi means 'walk with me'. It is a fitting title for this model as it speaks to a genuinely collaborative approach to inclusion as there is not one specific person or group entrusted with the sole responsibility of holding or imparting knowledge. Certainly, Indigenous Peoples are recognised as the owners and holders of Indigenous Knowledges; however not one single Indigenous person is positioned to be the voice of all Indigenous Peoples, cultures and/or practices, which is consistent with cultural protocols and a point made by all five Indigenous educators in the research.

The Yanna Jannawi Model offers a strengths-based approach (Sarra, 2011; SNAICC, 2010) to the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. It is reflective of the way in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education centres approach children's learning.

Strengths based approaches. Help children to become confident and involved learners by focusing on their strengths, rather than what they can't do, in all activities and interactions. (SNAICC, 2012b, p. 3).

Thus, the Yanna Jannawi Model focuses on the combined strengths and wealth of knowledge of Indigenous families, Peoples and Country as opposed to the negative rhetoric of deficits and gaps. Its development in this research is the culmination of Indigenous voices, from both educators and parents/carers, who have openly shared their stories and aspirations for their children and for relevant, respectful inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS.

Relationships with educators, so that consistency of staff, who know that child. When you're handing those kids over to those educators, you're

family, you have to be family for those parents, that's how I feel about it. And that doesn't happen overnight you know, but you can have that level of confidence. I think also environments where families are just encouraged to stay and play or be there, or grandparents [are also welcomed to stay and play]. (Calypso)

So, I just think if they would bring Aboriginal education in here it would be good for the other kids but also then, for them [Indigenous children] to even be proud of where they're from. (Jenny)

You celebrate NAIDOC Day or something like that. I know that lots of preschools don't celebrate that, which would be great. If they could learn from an earlier age, so they recognise who they are from day dot, sort of thing. (Rachel)

The design and implementation of the Yanna Jannawi Model steers away from an approach that provides or promotes specialised activities and/or resources to be used by non-Indigenous educators in EECS. Rather, it draws strongly on Martin's (2007, 2008) relational model that emphasises and prioritises the crucial role that respectful and reciprocal relationships play in Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. The Yanna Jannawi Model is supported by research that identifies trusting relationships as crucial to engagement and participation of Indigenous families in mainstream education (Fasoli & Ford, 2001; Grace & Trudgett, 2012; Priest et al., 2007; Santoro et al., 2011; Trudgett & Grace, 2011).

Relationships built on trust mean that parents feel that the early childhood service is safe, non-judgmental, supportive and culturally appropriate. (SNAICC, 2012b, p. 2)

Not unlike the Reggio Emilia approach (Gandini, 1993; Katz, 1998) the Yanna Jannawi Model views ongoing, collaborative relationships between children, their families, local community, educators and the environment as equally important and valuable to education and care. Specific to the Australian experience, the Yanna Jannawi Model was developed to better support Indigenous families, with an understanding of the burden placed on non-Indigenous educators to incorporate a system of knowledge that is significantly different to Western-based education.

Therefore, with a focus on respectful, responsible and reciprocal relationships EECS are able to draw on and contribute to the expertise, experience, leadership and community connections of Indigenous families, peoples and organisations.

7.3.1 The Starting Point, the Centre

It is with the conditions of respect, responsibility and reciprocity that I centre Indigenous Ways of Knowing in my model for inclusion. In reshaping Figure 7.0, it is possible to centre Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the Yanna Jannawi Model. Figure 7.1 below contains all of the elements in Figure 7.0; however, in positioning them as concentric circles they become a more accurate representation of an Indigenous worldview. Therefore, relationships as the crucial element encircle the centre or starting point, being Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

Figure 7.1. The Starting Point, the Centre of the Yanna Jannawi Model



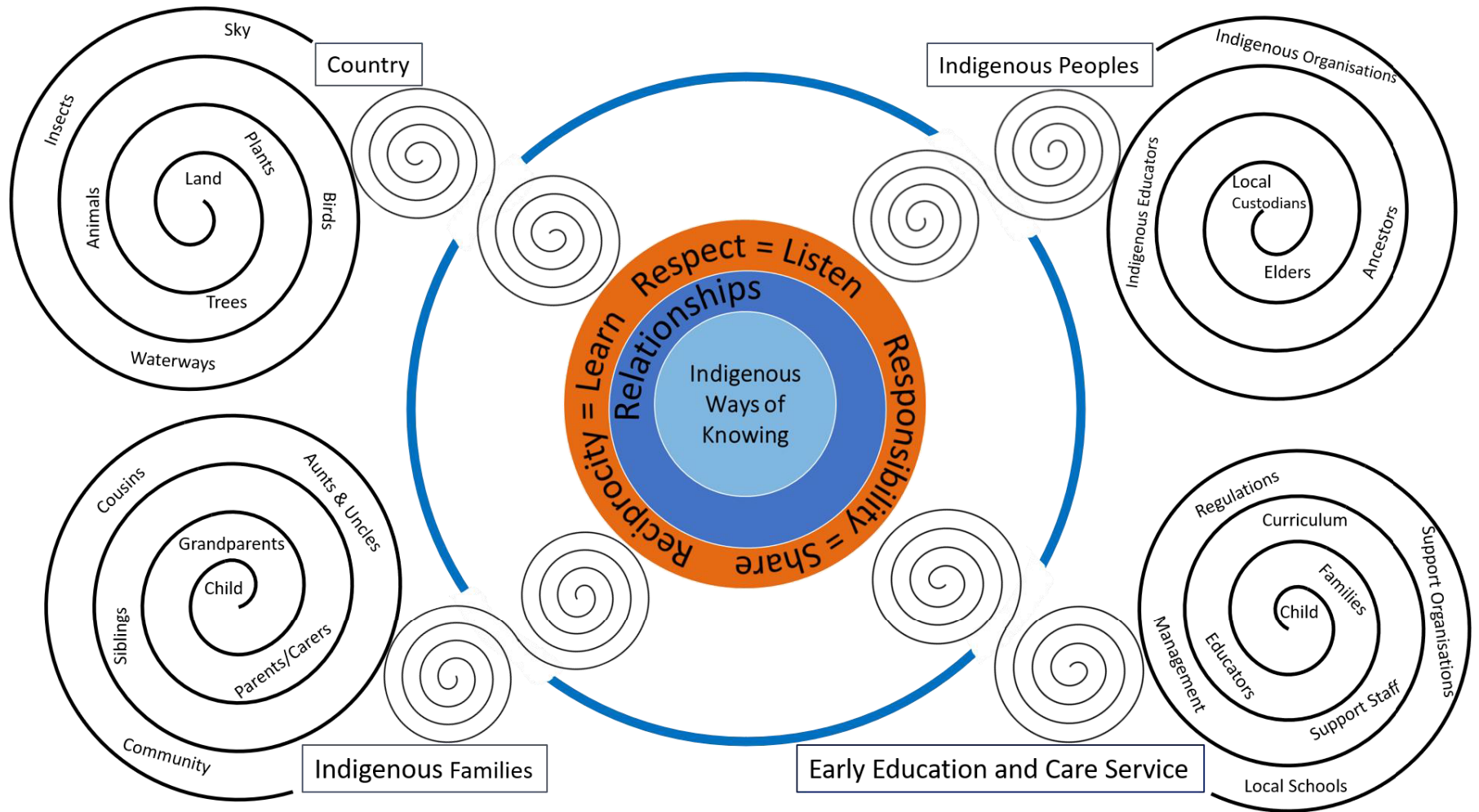
The three conditions of respect, responsibility and reciprocity, as described in Section 7.2 of this chapter, are core to the development and maintenance of relationships in the Yanna Jannawi Model. As noted previously, Indigenous Ways of Knowing are grounded in a relational epistemology, which dictates respectful, responsible and reciprocal relationships with all entities (Battiste & Youngblood, 2000; Martin, 2008). Accordingly, the Yanna Jannawi Model (Figure 7.2, below) identifies all peoples and entities that are necessary to enable the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS. The blue circle in this model signifies connection and the expectation of all participants to engage in respectful, responsible and reciprocal relationships.

Three of the four groups identified in the Yanna Jannawi Model represent Indigenous Peoples and community while the fourth group is representative of Early education and care services (EECS). The most significant aspect of the Yanna Jannawi Model is that the EECS is *a participant in the process of inclusion as opposed to the centre or leader of inclusion*. Individual spirals depict each of the four groups and identify relevant and related participants/entities. These spirals are indicative of the way in which the past,

present and future are interconnected and non-linear in an Indigenous worldview (Burrawanga et al., 2019; Wilson, 2008; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009).

In this model, the expectation is that each group will respectfully share their skills, experiences and knowledges whilst trusting participants in other groups to do the same. Thus, this model enables successful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in EECS through respectful, responsible and reciprocal relationships across all four groups.

Figure 7.2. The Yanna Jannawi Model



Non-Indigenous educators participating in the research demonstrated some engagement with some of the participants/entities identified in the model. For example, all four ECCS reported having Indigenous children enrolled in the EECS and were engaged with at least one Indigenous educator. However, one of the most significant attributes of this model is that it also includes entities that non-Indigenous educators cannot understand or access without collaborating with Indigenous Peoples, such as Ancestors and Country as perceived and experienced by Indigenous Peoples (Battiste & Youngblood, 2000; Ngurra et al., 2019; Rey, 2019; Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011). Additionally, participating in this process of inclusion addresses a need of locating and engaging with Indigenous Peoples and organisations. Both non-Indigenous and Indigenous educators participating in the research identified this as somewhat of a challenge (Warambi, Guwuru, Regina, Sally, Daisy). It is also important to note that Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children stressed the importance of engagement must not be limited to one Indigenous person or organisation to achieve genuine inclusion in EECS.

7.3.2 Indigenous Families

It is imperative that educators build trusting and reciprocal relationships with families that have Indigenous children enrolled in the EECS (SNAICC, 2010, 2012b). Obviously, educators have a duty of care and must adhere to early education and care legislative requirements, (ACECQA, 2017; DEEWR, 2009) which prescribe the conditions of relationships between educators and families. The establishment and maintenance of trusting relationships with Indigenous families can afford educators firsthand experience and knowledge of the way

individual families engage with Indigenous culture and community, as opposed to relying on stereotypical beliefs and/or inappropriate resources. This includes a clearer understanding of the structure of Indigenous families and the roles that different people fulfil, which can be very different to that of non-Indigenous families.

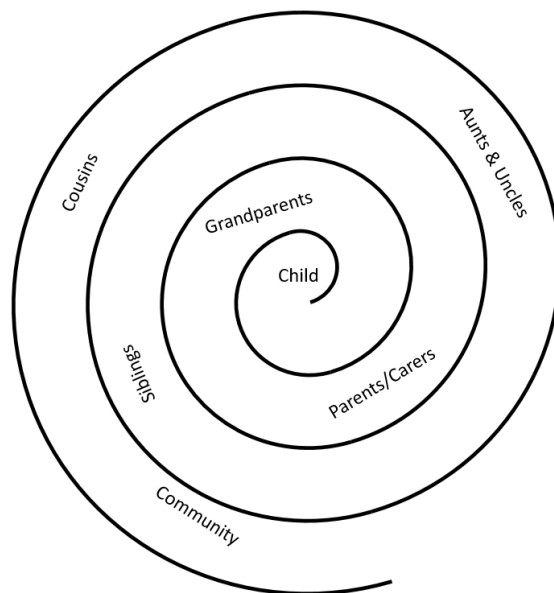


Figure 7.3 Indigenous Families

For many Indigenous Peoples, the concept of family is much broader than the Western definition which does not necessarily consider community, Country and/or spirit.

In contrast to Western boundaries of relatives and non-relatives, Indigenous Australian kinship systems are boundless and inclusive of the whole universe. (Townsend-Cross, 2004 , p.2)

Figure 7.3 illustrates that there can be many generations of people involved in the day-to-day lives of Indigenous children. Certainly, Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children (Calypso; Rachel) participating in the

research spoke of responsibilities that older children have to young siblings and cousins. Additionally, the role that Indigenous grandparents play in the lives of their grandchildren can be significantly more involved than that of non-Indigenous families (SNAICC, 2010). A specific example of this is provided below by Burrawanga et al. (2019):

Her mother's mother is her märi, she is the gutharra, grandchild, and this relationship is märi-gutharra. That is our backbone, quite literally our backbone. For us, our backbone is our mother's mother's clan. (p.6)

Yolŋu women of North East Arnhem Land shared this very personal explanation of the role of Grandmother on their Country. With this information and an understanding of the diversity of Indigenous Peoples across Australia, it is vital that non-Indigenous educators communicate and collaborate personally with each Indigenous family engaged with the EECS. Specifically, non-Indigenous educators must be mindful that they do not default to engaging with only parents/carers concerning an Indigenous child's identity, development, interests and/or needs.

Actively engaging people from different generations in the EECS demonstrates recognition of the value extended family has in the lives of Indigenous children (SNAICC, 2010). In addition, interactions with people across a range of generations could be of benefit to all children attending the service, especially those who may not have access to extended family. When non-Indigenous educators build collaborative relationships with grandparents, aunts, uncles and or cousins of Indigenous children they are able to gain a deep understanding of the structure and role of family in a child's life. Equally, interactions across

different generations of the same family provide educators with a personal narrative of the history of that family which is arguably far more valuable and reliable than history written and presented from a non-Indigenous perspective (Behrendt, 2016; Burrawanga et al., 2019; Dudgeon et al., 2017).

7.3.3 Indigenous Peoples

Figure 7.4 below identifies a diversity of Indigenous people who may be involved in the lives of Indigenous children. Narratives from the research yarns revealed that most non-Indigenous educators sought support and assistance from Indigenous organisations in their local area; however, non-Indigenous educators expressed limited knowledge and understanding of the importance and/or role that Ancestors may have in the lives of Indigenous children and families engaged with the EECS. This can be rather complex as Indigenous Peoples recognise the spirit of peoples that have passed from this world as well as ancestral beings that are present in the landscape (Ngurra et al., 2019; Phillips & Bunda, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary that local Indigenous custodians provide and authorise the use of Indigenous stories and narratives in EECS.

In Figure 7.4, Local Custodians and Elders are listed as not all Traditional Custodians have the status of Elder. It is imperative that educators ask how individual Indigenous People wish to be addressed rather than assuming that titles of Elder, Indigenous and/or Aboriginal are acceptable (SNAICC, 2016). This relates to the issue of self-identification and the rights of Indigenous Peoples to define who we are and how we wish to be addressed (Martin, 2008;

Rigney, 1999; L. Smith, 2012). In regard to working with local Indigenous Peoples it is far more appropriate and respectful to know and use the name of the Traditional Custodians of that particular area, than addressing people as a homogenous group. This is especially relevant in urban areas in which challenges to Indigenous identity are twofold. In the first instance Indigenous Peoples living and/or working in urban areas often go unnoticed as we do not meet non-Indigenous presumptions or expectations that are based on the lives of Indigenous Peoples living in remote areas (Fredericks, 2013; Rey & Harrison, 2018). Secondly, history and narratives of local custodians are often limited to non-Indigenous records of Indigenous Peoples during the time of colonisation. Rey and Harrison (2018) provide a specific example of this from the perspective of Dharug Peoples in Sydney.

These conceptions of Indigeneity as remote are further complicated by an ongoing focus of the school curriculum on famous Dharug Aboriginal males who lived in the Sydney region at the time of invasion. Most schoolchildren learn about the famous Bennelong and Pemulwuy, yet little is known of Maria Locke and her descendants or of the thousands of Dharug women who live and work on Dharug Country. (p.81)

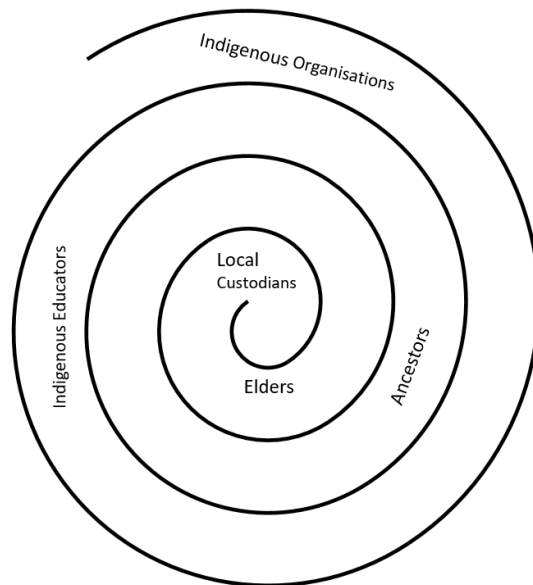


Figure 7.4 Indigenous Peoples

Travelling inside the spiral from Ancestors, we come to Indigenous educators and Indigenous organisations. In consideration of the previous point about the importance of connecting with local custodians, it is important to note that Indigenous educators and/or Indigenous organisations available to the EECS may not be representative of the Local Custodians, particularly in urban areas. In this case, all Indigenous educators in the research agreed that it is appropriate for EECS to seek support from such people/organisations providing that cultural protocols of recognition and collaboration (wherever possible) with Traditional Custodians are adhered to. In a research yarn, Guwuru (2018) noted being Indigenous does not automatically make a person an expert on Indigenous Ways of Knowing, particularly if that person is off Country. For non-Indigenous educators knowing which people and/or organisations are appropriate is not possible without guidance and support from local custodians, which is why it is imperative not only to be aware of the Country the EECS is on

but also to endeavour to build trusting relationships with peoples from this community.

7.3.4 Indigenous Country

Country, in Aboriginal English, goes beyond the physicality of land. It is the birds, the trees, the wind, the people, and the spirits; it is the concrete and brick, the roads and buildings and telephone wires: it is the 'tangible and non-tangible' all of which are intricately connected and relationally bound with one another. (Ngurra et al., 2019, p.282)

Differing Indigenous and non-Indigenous definitions and/or connections with Country do not necessarily change the fact that without Country none of us would exist. Thus, including Country (from an Indigenous Perspective) in the Yanna Jannawi Model not only supports authentic inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS but provides educators and children with a proven knowledge system of environmental sustainability (Pascoe, 2014; Ritchie, 2014).

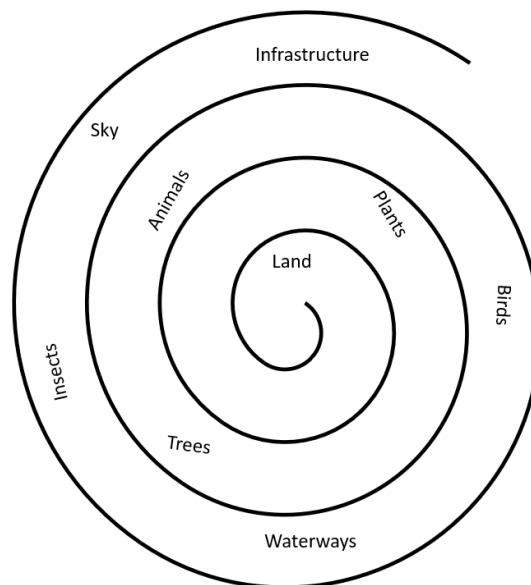


Figure 7.5 Indigenous Country

A specific example of this is the *Yanama Budyari Gumada Project*, (Dharug language meaning *walk with good spirit*) in which, ‘Dharug custodians, other Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples and non-humans are walking together in good spirit to care-as-Country.’ (Ngurra et al., 2019, p. 280)

The expression *care-as-Country* explicitly identifies that the livelihood of all entities, human and non-human, influence and affect one another as we are all interconnected. Figure 7.4 does not claim to be an exhaustive representation of elements that Indigenous Peoples might class as Country. Rather, it aims to offer non-Indigenous educators with a deeper understanding of the complexity of Country for Indigenous Peoples. It is also important to explain that infrastructure, such as buildings and roads, are contemporary elements of Country.

Fredericks (2013) maintains that despite the fact that many spaces are now urbanised, and that many Indigenous Peoples were removed from their Countries, we remain connected. Therefore, our connections with Country have grown and changed to include the ways in which we participate in dominant Western-based society. Indigenous organisations offering education, health, music, art and the like provide a visible Indigenous presence with Indigenous signage and symbols across urban areas. Certainly, public Corroborees such as Dance Rites held at the Sydney Opera House and public events, stalls and cultural activities that are made available to the public during NAIDOC Week express contemporary Indigenous engagement on and with Country. Other programs, such as the return of cultural burns (Ngurra et al., 2019) led by local custodians in collaboration with fire and land care organisations, not only enable Indigenous Peoples to participate in and lead traditional cultural cultivation methods but also to pass this knowledge and skills onto the younger generations.

7.3.5 The Early Education and Care Service

The *Close the Gap Report* (2019), with reference to the Australian Early Development Census Report of 2018, identifies attendance in quality early education as a precursor to positive transition to school as well as literacy and numeracy outcomes for children. The year 2018 marked the tenth anniversary of the *Close the Gap* campaign in which the Australian Government aims to address disparity between the rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy, health, education and employment in Australia (Australian

Government, 2019). With a view to improving educational outcomes for Indigenous children the government initially committed to the following target:

All [Indigenous] four-year olds, including in remote [I]ndigenous communities, have access to early childhood education within five years.
(Australian Government, 2019, p.24)

This particular target was not met within the initial timeframe set by the government. In December 2015, the revised target demonstrated a change from providing access to all Indigenous four-year-olds (including in remote communities) to an expectation that 95 percent of Indigenous four-year olds would be enrolled in early childhood education by 2025; specific recognition of remote communities was absent from this revision. In February 2019, it was reported that early education was one of two targets that are on track to be met from a total of seven Close the Gap targets (Australian Government, 2019). However, there is some discrepancy in regard to a further commitment made by all Australian governments in 2017 to an element of *universal education*. This element prescribes an attendance rate of at least 600 hours per child per year. Thus, while enrolment targets of 96 percent were reported to be on track only 68 percent of Indigenous children were reported to be attending for a minimum of 600 hours per year. In his introduction to the 2019 *Close the Gap Report*, Prime Minister Scott Morrison stated that:

I believe that the progress needed can only be accelerated through a deeper partnership with the states and territories and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Top-down does not work, only partnerships do. In 2019, we want to try something new, to change the way we work as governments - to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. (Australian Government, 2019, p.5)

This view about the value and importance of partnerships is not new. Lowe (2011) reports that research has shown parent involvement in school can improve students' educational outcomes. Likewise L. Harrison and Murray (2012) identify that reciprocal and meaningful partnerships between educators and families are linked to student learning and higher achievement. Certainly, research in the field of education in Australia and abroad reports increased outcomes in student learning where sound partnerships between the school, parents and local community exist (L. Harrison & Murray, 2012; Lowe, 2011; Rigney, 2011a; Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley, & Shepherd, 2012).

As the focus of this research is to centre Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Early Education and Care Services (EECS), it is absolutely necessary to locate EECS in the Yanna Jannawi Model. As previously mentioned, the Yanna Jannawi Model repositions EECS from the focal point of inclusion to being a participant in a relational model of inclusion.

Bowes and Fegan (2012) note that EECS are often able to provide families with information and support to locate and engage with appropriate professionals and to build social networks in the local and wider community that they themselves may not be capable or comfortable of doing. The very purpose of the Yanna Jannawi Model is to build and sustain respectful collaborative and reciprocal relationships between Indigenous families, Indigenous Peoples, Country and educators employed in EECS.

Despite finding in this research that non-Indigenous educators require a deeper level of understanding and engagement with Indigenous families and community, all participating non-Indigenous educators expressed and demonstrated genuine commitment to supporting Indigenous families and advocating the value of Indigenous Ways of Knowing for all children attending their services. Encouragingly all parents/carers reported sound trust in the non-Indigenous educators and valued the experiences and care provided to their children in the EECS they attended. The first concern for parents/carers involved in the research was always about their child's emotional and social wellbeing, which for Indigenous children included an ability to openly express identity and culture in the EECS. Comments that confirmed non-Indigenous educators provided a culturally safe, respectful and inclusive environment for Indigenous children were shared by all parents/carers participating in the research. For most parents/carers this was very different to their own school experiences of isolation and racism. Specifically, Marie, Alerah, Rachel and Charlene all shared examples in which they were singled out and sent to an activity or room that had been set aside only for Indigenous students. In contrast, parents/carers expressed positive thoughts and feelings about the way in which the EECS their children attended promoted respect and acceptance of children with diverse needs and backgrounds. In these comments all parents/carers expressed recognition of the benefits that exposure to such diversity afforded their own children.

Everyone needs to feel included. And as I said, everybody comes from a different background. So, everyone has a story so we can talk about our Country we can talk about our land, but they might have something just as interesting to learn about as well. (Rachel)

The fundamental focus of any EECS should be the children, and in supporting and collaborating with parents/carers early educators should be better able to provide relevant, appropriate and experiences for young children. However, it is imperative that such relationships recognise the role of Indigenous Peoples to lead and guide non-Indigenous educators in the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS (Martin, 2007). Figure 7.5 below, identifies a variety of participants and elements that make up and contribute to EECS.

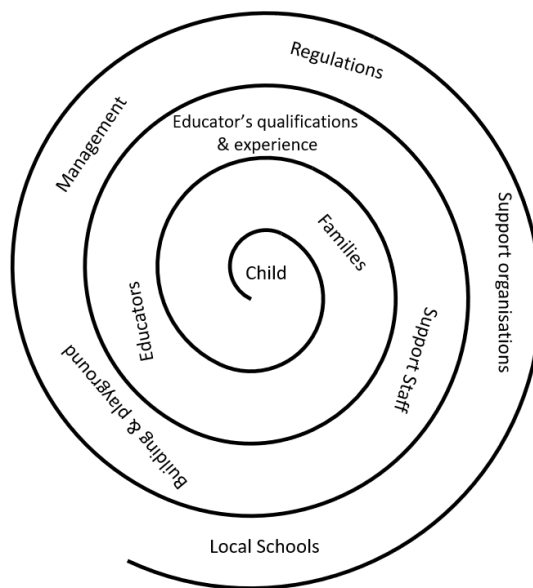


Figure 7.6 Early Education and Care Service

Legislated management structures, early childhood regulations and frameworks are devised to monitor the quality of education and care children receive and provide parents/carers a regulatory system for appeal if quality and safety standards are not met (Waniganayake et al., 2012). Degree and Diploma qualifications held by non-Indigenous educators participating in the research met licensing requirements that demand a vast array of knowledge and skills.

Such knowledge and skills should be related to all aspects of child development and health, and include collaborating with and supporting families, committing to occupational health and safety, and being fully versed in relevant legislation and regulations. In addition, educators participate in and develop programs that support children and their families with developmental and/or behavioural challenges, nutrition, routines for sleeping and eating, building social networks and transition to school, to name a few. Such skills and knowledge are necessary to support families and provide early education and care environments that are safe, enjoyable and challenging environments for young children to explore, experiment, test their boundaries, make friends, and to learn about themselves and the world they live in.

The relational conditions of respect, responsibility and reciprocity as positioned in the Yanna Jannawi Model are not at all dissimilar to the five principles of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) which include (i) Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships, (ii) Partnerships, (iii) High expectations and equity, (iv) Respect for diversity and (v) Ongoing learning and reflective practice. The main difference between these principles and the Yanna Jannawi Model is the way in which educators and children are positioned in the learning environment.

Aboriginal early childhood education programmes based on relatedness would emphasise teaching–learning engagements rather than a prescribed curriculum framework. Children are trusted to be learners and at the same time as being teachers of teachers. Teachers are trusted to be learners and at the same time to teach children well. (Martin, 2007, p. 19)

Thus, through respectful, responsible and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous families and peoples, non-Indigenous educators are able to become active and valued participants in the Yanna Jannawi Model by providing Indigenous families with Western-based knowledge, skills, resources and services that may not be easily accessible to families outside of the EECS.

7.4 SUMMARY

The Yanna Jannawi Model addresses identified gaps in knowledge and understanding exhibited by non-Indigenous educators that participated in the research. Attempts to include Indigenous Ways of Knowing have been tainted by racial and stereotypical assumptions inherent in Eurocentrism/colonial-storytelling that have gone unchallenged due to the domination of Western-based perspectives and values in these EECS. It is the position of this research that respectful and effective inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Western-based EECS is not something that non-Indigenous educators can fully achieve or imbed without guidance and respectful collaboration with relevant Indigenous Peoples. The Yanna Jannawi Model not only challenges identified inequities of power and control, it centres Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS through a relational process founded on an Indigenous Worldview. From a foundation based in Indigenous Ways of Knowing the Yanna Jannawi Model enacts respect, responsibility and reciprocity between all participants to realise positive outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

8.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a combined summary of the literature and findings of this research. It then moves to my own reflections on the research process and outcomes. From the voices of all participants, but especially Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children, I offer four basic but important recommendations. Finally, this chapter ends with my consideration of the limitations of this research and subsequent suggestions for future research.

8.1 CONCLUSION

Government reports, early childhood regulations and frameworks all prescribe that Indigenous Ways of Knowing must be included in EECS as a concerted effort towards ‘closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage’ (COAG, 2009) and towards achieving reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (ACECQA, 2017; DEEWR, 2009; MCEETYA, 2008). More importantly, from an Indigenous perspective, Indigenous scholars advocate that a sound understanding and connection to Indigenous identity can foster development of positive social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous students (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Sarra, 2011), thus providing sound justification for the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS.

Non-Indigenous educators participating in this research expressed varying levels of commitment to the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS. However, the research found that despite best intentions, efforts of inclusion

were hampered by a number of factors. Non-Indigenous educator positioning, racialised views and the deliberate omission of history and the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples impeded actual efforts to understand and include Indigenous knowledges in the participating EECS. This is reflective of a similar finding in a study analysing the Te Kotahitanga project in schools in New Zealand.

It is a fundamental understanding of this project that until teachers consider how the dominant culture maintains control over the various aspects of education, and the part they themselves might play in perpetuating this pattern of domination, albeit unwittingly, they will not understand how dominance manifests itself in the lives of Māori students (and their communities) and how they and the way they relate to and interact with Māori students may well be affecting learning in their classroom. (Bishop & Berryman, 2010, p.180)

Firstly, it was clear in this research that non-Indigenous educators were positioned as experts in the EECS and as such the responsibility to include Indigenous Ways of Knowing automatically fell to them. This led largely to the employment of Western worldviews to interpret and include Indigenous Ways of Knowing in the participating EECS. This is consistent with the literature which draws attention to colonisation and the domination of Western worldviews over Indigenous Ways of Knowing (Battiste, 2005; Martin, 2003, 2008; Rigney, 2001; L. Smith, 2012). Unchallenged belief in the superiority of Western knowledge and practices over those of Indigenous Ways of Knowing sustains stereotypical assumptions and racialised views such as those expressed by non-Indigenous educators in the research (DiAngelo, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matias & Allen, 2013).

Secondly, from this privileged position non-Indigenous educators openly expressed their views on what it is to be an Indigenous Australia person. Particular comments revealed non-Indigenous expectations that some people can be considered *less Indigenous* than others depending on their level of engagement with Indigenous culture and/or community. This clearly demonstrates an assumption that it is appropriate for non-Indigenous educators to make judgements about Indigenous identity.

Critically, judgements such as these not only articulate non-Indigenous expectations regarding Indigenous identity, but they also demonstrate a significant lack of consideration of the historical factors that impact Indigenous identity and engagement with our culture and communities. This was also evident in deliberate choices of non-Indigenous educators to avoid if not exclude aspects of history and current challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples in discussions with children. Thus, the needs and comfort of non-Indigenous People were given priority over truth telling and Indigenous narratives (DiAngelo, 2011; Matias & Allen, 2013; L. Smith, 2012).

Finally, non-Indigenous educators demonstrated a limited understanding of the factors that influence which EECS parents/carers choose for their children.

Non-Indigenous educators participating in this research referred only to the cost of EECS and the barrier that affordability creates for Indigenous families. This perspective assumes that all Indigenous Peoples struggle financially and require monetary assistance in order to cover the cost of early education and care. This opinion is indicative of the way in which the government publicly

espouses Indigenous Peoples as disadvantaged in policies such as 'Close the Gap'. Ongoing comparisons of Indigenous health, education, employment and housing against that of non-Indigenous Peoples maintains stereotypical and racist beliefs of Indigenous deficit and disadvantage in the broader Australian community (N. Harrison, 2011; Herbert, 2012). Thus, the research and the literature show that Indigenous families continue to be measured in deficit against non-Indigenous families within an education system that both underestimates and silences Indigenous Peoples and our Ways of Knowing (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Pascoe, 2011; Rigney, 2011a; L. Smith, 2012).

This research has contributed to the growing pool of literature authored by Indigenous scholars. It argues that Indigenous Ways of Knowing cannot be fully or accurately represented without ongoing leadership and collaboration with relevant Indigenous Peoples. Certainly, parents/carers of Indigenous children participating in the research voiced a need for greater communication and collaboration between non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous families. While they provided positive feedback on their children's experiences in the EECS, parents/carers also stressed the necessity for further engagement of local Indigenous Elders and community members to improve and extend on the inclusion of appropriate information, resources and activities for all of the children attending the EECS.

In response to this finding and as stated in Chapter Seven, my original contribution to knowledge in this area is that culturally respectful inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS requires a relational process established

from an Indigenous Worldview. From this premise I created the Yanna Jannawi (Walk with Me) Model for inclusion, centred on relational conditions of respect, responsibility and reciprocity, which are presented in more detail in Chapter Seven (Section 7.2).

The Yanna Jannawi Model provides a new approach to inclusion as it does not provide a specific template of activities or resources to be added onto an already established system. Rather, it is a model of engagement that enables the establishment of ongoing collaborative relationships that will allow non-Indigenous educators access to Indigenous Ways of Knowing through the narratives and lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples. Most importantly, this model moves non-Indigenous educators from a position of control into a collaborative role that is guided by Indigenous families, people and Country in order to include effectively and respectfully Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS.

8.2 REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process can be complicated and messy with unexpected challenges and outcomes despite much forward thinking and planning. For this study, recruitment of Indigenous participants and additional ethics approval created unexpected challenges. Thankfully, these challenges, whilst concerning at the time, did not undermine the overall purpose or aims of the research.

8.2.1 Ethics

Being mindful that this research involved engagement with Indigenous people and EECS I was deliberately thorough in preparing to apply for ethics approval. Meeting with an advisor on the ethics board and reading through ethics applications from a few different research projects were most beneficial and contributed to a successful application. However, in hindsight, as an early childhood educator I feel that I should have at least considered that some EECS may have their own policy and procedure in regard to research that is to be conducted on their premises. Out of four nominated EECS, one service was part of a larger organisation that required an additional ethics application (Appendix 2). While this application was approved without any complications, it did somewhat delay the timing of research yarns. This is something that I will definitely be more mindful of in future research, especially any research related to education.

8.2.2 Availability of Indigenous Participants

This inquiry began with the express intention of privileging Indigenous voices in regard to culturally respectful and relevant inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Western-based EECS. From this premise the research was designed in recognition of the experience and wealth of knowledge Indigenous educators have in leading, networking, guiding and modelling effective and culturally appropriate inclusion in Western-based EECS. During my first meeting with each Indigenous educator I explained that I was interested in their experiences and views on inclusion. I also advised that I would be requesting that they would consider nominating an EECS to participate in the research that

they believed was making a genuine effort to include Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

As presented in the Chapter Three, four of the five Indigenous educators were willing and able to nominate an appropriate EECS and made initial contact on my behalf with the director. In the initial stages of planning I intended to yarn with one Indigenous educator and one non-Indigenous educator (if available) and two Indigenous parents from each service. I was aware that not all Western-based EECS employ Indigenous educators; however, I did not foresee that across four EECS, that engage the expertise of an Indigenous educator there would be no Indigenous directors or educators employed. Thus, my aspiration to yarn with 16–18 Indigenous educators/parents and 4–6 non-Indigenous educators was somewhat hampered.

After consulting with my supervisor, I decided that yarning with the EECS Director and one other educator in each of the four EECS would provide two differing non-Indigenous perspectives in each EECS. As the aim of the research was to privilege Indigenous voices, there was minimal analysis of any differences in the responses of the director as compared with the educator employed in the same EECS. However, it was apparent that all four directors played an integral role in initiating and motivating educators in their EECS to participate in the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Importantly, all educators recognised and appreciated the guidance and support provided by their EECS Director. This is an interesting point that could be considered as a focus point/theme in future research.

8.2.3 Indigenous Parents

In my first meeting with the EECS directors I explained my intention to yarn firstly with the directors themselves and then with another educator employed in the service (preferably an Indigenous educator) and up to two Indigenous parents. It was my feeling that the director was best suited to know which educators and parents would be comfortable and willing to participate in the research. It was also at this point that I provided copies of a written letter of introduction and invitation (Appendix 3), that the director could forward onto any Indigenous parents engaged with the EECS.

With the support of these directors research yarns were organised with four non-Indigenous educators (one from each service) and eight Indigenous Parents (two from each service). On two separate occasions during the research yarn with a parent it became apparent that while their child(ren) are Aboriginal, the parents/carers who agreed to participate in the research was not. This presented me with a conundrum in regard to the aim of privileging Indigenous voices and a question of which participant cohort these parents/carers should be assigned to for the purposes of analysing the data.

After much consideration and a certain level of stress, I decided to include these parents/carers in the Indigenous cohort for the following reasons. Firstly, participants of Phase Four were engaged to gain an understanding of the experiences of Indigenous children attending an EECS and to identify the educational and cultural aspirations of parents/carers for their Indigenous child(ren). Thus, the fact that they themselves were not Indigenous did not alter

the fact that they are parents/carers of an Indigenous child or children whom they represented in the research. Secondly, contemporary Indigenous families are diverse in nature due to the effects of colonisation and ongoing government policies (SNAICC, 2010). As this fact was identified and reiterated throughout the research by Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children, it would be completely inappropriate to exclude the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous children in this research because the parents/carers representing them are not themselves Indigenous. Finally, in the research yarns these parents/carers demonstrated a fierce commitment to ensuring their children were both fully aware and proud of their connections to Indigenous Country, family and community. Both parents/carers acknowledged, that as they are not Indigenous themselves, they make a concerted effort to learn about their children's Indigenous connections and ensure that the children have regular contact with extended Indigenous family and community members.

While the issues discussed above presented some challenges during the research process ultimately, they provided excellent opportunities to further develop my research skills. Specifically, learning to manage the complexities of research is a new skill set that I will certainly use with all future work.

8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Here I offer four recommendations to support the application of the Yanna Jannawi Model. Whilst the conditions of respect, responsibility and reciprocity may appear easy enough to follow, the challenge to consider and engage in these actions from an Indigenous Worldview requires non-Indigenous educators

to step out of their comfort zone of control and view the world and their role through a different lens (Reid & Santoro, 2006; Santoro et al., 2011). In order to do this, non-Indigenous educators require opportunities to extend their knowledge and challenge long-held assumptions and biases that they may not necessarily be aware of or else are uncomfortable with exposing (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

In order to disrupt the normality of whiteness so that the ideals of antiracist education can be realized, we must consider how teachers, educational policy makers, districts, and academia can disinvest in whiteness such that the discomfort in talking about race becomes less violent. (Matias & Allen, 2013, p.303)

8.3.1 Teacher Qualifications and Training (Recommendation 1)

The National Quality Standard and EYLF need to be assessed and reviewed in consultation with Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children as these standards were developed largely from a Western worldview of education and care. From the literature review a report by SNAICC (2013) identified that, while the guiding principles of EYLF state the importance of cultural competence, they fail to provide educators with a mechanism or tool to implement this principle. Additionally, the same report notes that, the EYLF goal to *value* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is compromised by the standard under which it operates. Specifically, cultural competence training recommendations or requirements are absent from the National Quality Standard (NQS).

It is essential that Indigenous specific-requirements, resources and goals are developed and added to the NQS and the ELYF. This can only be achieved by employing the expertise and experience of Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children. Publications and research conducted by SNAICC (2010, 2012) with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education centres and Indigenous Professional Support Units provide excellent examples that can be utilised as a guide for educators in Western-based EECS.

Recently the Australian Government announced that it will be developing an 'Indigenous Early Childhood Strategy' in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (SNAICC, 2020; Wyatt, 2020). This provides some hope in regard to the further development of culturally respectful and relevant inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS. However, the success and value of this strategy will rely heavily on two specific aspects: firstly, the level of input and control Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples will actually have over the development of an Indigenous early childhood strategy, and secondly whether or not this strategy is developed from an Indigenous framework as opposed a Western-based model of education and care. Arguably, the concept of consultation is open to much interpretation, especially in light of perspective. As an Indigenous early childhood educator, I would expect to see an *Indigenous Early Childhood Strategy* born from a community-led initiative as opposed to a strategy that is written by a government department with symbolic reference or gestures towards community consultation.

This position was also reflected in the research regarding cultural training for non-Indigenous educators. Indigenous educators reported that training workshops held in classrooms mostly provided superficial information that underestimates or simply overlooks the vital role that relationships and connection to Country play in the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Guwuru specifically, noted that educators will often come away from a cultural training workshop with lots of paper but very little connection. All Indigenous educators spoke about the need and value of training experiences in which educators are taken out onto Country and are provided the opportunity to listen to and witness Indigenous perspectives of Country. At the very least, non-Indigenous educators need to sit with Indigenous Peoples and collaborate in accordance with Indigenous goals and protocols rather than attending with a Western-based agenda. The key message to come from this research is that, for non-Indigenous educators to gain an adequate level of understanding and appreciation for Indigenous knowledges and protocols, professional development in cultural training must be designed and led by local Indigenous Peoples.

8.3.2 Develop Stronger Relationships with Indigenous Families in the EECS (Recommendation 2)

Aside from the point that having a strong Indigenous curriculum is of benefit to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, one of the revelations for non-Indigenous educators participating in the research was discovering that there were Indigenous children enrolled in their EECS. This was due partly to parents/carers choosing when they felt safe to openly identify in the EECS and

also as a result of non-Indigenous educator assumptions of what it is to be Indigenous. With this in mind it is highly recommended that educators evaluate EECS communication methods and informal family participant opportunities. It is also valuable to keep in mind that as EECS are often very busy environments with an array of educators and staff, parents/carers often seek out and develop a rapport with one particular educator. This was evidenced in the research by non-Indigenous educators in reflections on casual unplanned conversations in which parents/carers shared personal information about themselves and their family. This is a very important point to consider when developing a policy of Indigenous Inclusion.

8.3.3 Policy of Indigenous Inclusion (Recommendation 3)

In actioning a 'Policy of Indigenous Inclusion' the EECS will effectively inform all families and the wider community of its motivation and intention to recognise the strength and value of Indigenous Peoples and our Ways of Knowing. In order to develop such a policy, the EECS will require leadership and guidance from Indigenous families and representatives from the local Indigenous community. Thus, this recommendation provides the EECS with a practical and relevant rationale for the implementation of the Yanna Jannawi Model.

8.3.4 Attend Local Indigenous Events (Recommendation 4)

In order for EECS Educators to participate in a relational inclusion process with Indigenous Peoples it is absolutely necessary to identify and meet relevant Indigenous Peoples in their local and broader community. The most effective way to do this is to attend local Indigenous events, exhibitions and/or meetings

(as appropriate) with a view to establish respectful, responsible and reciprocal relationships.

When attending Indigenous events, it is wise not to go with expectations of recruiting Indigenous Peoples to share knowledge and/or skills in the EECS. The initial purpose of attending an Indigenous event is for Indigenous Peoples to meet you. Local Indigenous Peoples may already be aware of the EECS you represent but have had no personal connections or contacts with that service. In this case an invitation to the service to attend a specific event or connect with other Indigenous families may be appropriate.

8.4 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this section I identify two limitations of the research and suggest three future research options in answer to these limitations.

8.4.1 Voices of Children

Working from within an Indigenist Research Methodology it was the intention of this research to seek the views and experiences of Indigenous Peoples in assessment of the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS.

Specifically, five Indigenous educators and eight parents/carers of Indigenous children attending EECS participated in sharing their views and experiences.

The literature (Guilfoyle et al., 2010; Hutchins et al., 2009) and Indigenous educators and parents/carers of Indigenous children noted that Indigenous children are often afforded a higher level of autonomy and responsibility in their

families and communities than non-Indigenous children. Thus, it seems fitting to note the lack of direct engagement with Indigenous children in the research, particularly considering that the main function of an EECS is to provide a safe learning space for children. Certainly, the views of Indigenous children would provide valuable experiential insights to inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing that adults are perhaps not privy to. This view is strongly advocated by (Walter et al., 2017) in her observation:

However, if we are to effectively understand the role of early childhood education for young Indigenous Australian children, then it is essential to begin with them as clients and benefactors. (p.96)

Ethics approval and my PhD candidature research and scholarship timeframes ultimately affected the decision to invite parents/carers of Indigenous children to participate in the research on behalf of the Indigenous children enrolled in the EECS. Research requirements did not allow enough time for multiple visits to each EECS in which trusting relationships with children could be established. Without firstly establishing sound relationships it is not reasonable to expect children to share their honest personal thoughts and/or feelings about the EECS they attend. Also, it is necessary to provide sufficient time for children to ask questions about the goal and methods of the research in order for them to give their consent (in addition to an appropriate adult) to participate in the research.

8.4.1.1 Future Research - Children's Voices

In recognition of children's rights to express their views in regard to all matters that may affect them (L. Smith, 2005; United Nations General Assembly, , 1989) there is definitely an opportunity for future research to hear the voices of

children and in particular Indigenous children. Without doubt, research investigating the programs and/or environments provided in early education and care services is of significance to the children attending those services. Moreover, the views and perspectives of children can bring to light strengths and challenges not considered by adults and in so doing foster a sense of identity and belonging.

Viewed from the standpoint of recognition, children's participation is not just about a process of listening to children, hearing their voices or accessing their views, experiences, fears, desires and uncertainties: it holds out possibilities for children to discover and negotiate the essence of who they are and their place in the world. (Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 7)

I would suggest that the most appropriate approach for this inquiry would be a case study that enables the researcher to develop an ongoing rapport and relationship with Indigenous families, children and educators in one or two specific early education and care services. Ideally, children would participate as researchers so that research questions and documentation could be positioned and presented through the eyes of the children.

8.4.2 Reconciliation Action Plans

In the literature review (Section 2.6.1) it was intended that EECS could be categorised according to the level of acknowledgement and inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in policies and practice. Three levels of inclusion included core inclusion, collaborative inclusion and superficial inclusion. In the category of collaborative inclusion, it was noted that EECS would likely have or be in the process of developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). A limitation

of this research is that only one participant made mention of a RAP and despite saying it had just been published it appeared that it was not conducted as a whole service project as the other educator from that same EECS was unable to provide specific information about it.

Since writing the literature review an online platform, *Narragunnawali*, under the auspice of Reconciliation Australia has been developed specifically for the development of RAPS in EECS and schools. Due to a significant lack of information from research participants it was not possible to comment or reflect on the significance of RAPS to the inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in EECS. It is crucial that RAPS are not viewed or accepted as the only useful or measurable tool for including Indigenous families and/or Ways of Knowing in EECS. However, the significant increase in the number of EECS developing RAPS (Reconciliation Australia, 2017) suggests that non-Indigenous educators view RAPS as an appropriate and achievable way in which to promote and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and cultures in their programs.

8.4.2.1 Future Research - RAPS

The development and implementation of RAPS in EECS is an area in which there appears to be a significant lack of research. Considering that the Narragunnawali site reports that over five thousand schools and early learning services are developing RAPS (Reconciliation Australia), it would be of benefit to obtain relevant data into whether or not RAPS are valuable tools of inclusion.

8.4.3 Future Research - Yanna Jannawi Model

My original contribution from this research is the development of a model for inclusion developed from Indigenous Ways of Knowing. One of the strengths of this model is that it advocates Indigenous Peoples as the experts and owners of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Thus, future research would involve a trial implementation of the Yanna Jannawi Model in which guidelines for implementation and evaluation in Western-based EECS could either be developed and/or adapted from relevant sources such as the Cultural Competence Continuum (SNAICC, 2010). Additionally, effective implementation and relevance of the Yanna Jannawi Model could be investigated in relation to the development of early education and care RAPS and/or policies of inclusion.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: UTS ETHICS APPROVAL

UTS HREC Approval - ETH18-2120

Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au <Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au >

Wed 28/03/2018 8:28 AM

To: Michelle Locke <Michelle.L.Finnegan@student.uts.edu.au>; Michelle Trudgett <Michelle.Trudgett@uts.edu.au>; Michelle Locke <Michelle.Finnegan@uts.edu.au>; Research Ethics <research.ethics@uts.edu.au>; Gawwain Bodkir-Andrews <Gawwain.Bodkir-Andrews@uts.edu.au>; Susan Page <Susan.Page@uts.edu.au>

Dear Applicant

The UTS Human Research Ethics Committee reviewed your application titled, "Yanna Janpawi Centering Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Early Education and Care Settings.", and agreed that the application meets the requirements of the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). I am pleased to inform you that ethics approval is ~~now granted~~.

Your approval number is UTS HREC REF NO. ETH18-2120.

Approval will be for a period of five (5) years from the date of this correspondence subject to the provision of annual reports.

Your approval number must be included in all participant material and advertisements. Any advertisements on the UTS Staff Connect without an approval number ~~will be removed~~.

Please note that the ethical conduct of research is an on-going process. The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans requires us to obtain a report about the progress of the research, and in particular about any changes to the ~~research which~~ may have ethical implications. This report form ~~must be completed~~ at least annually from the date of approval, and at the end of the project (if it takes more than a year). The Ethics Secretariat will contact you when it is time to complete your first report.

I also refer you to the AVCC guidelines relating to the storage of data, which require that data ~~be kept~~ for a minimum of 5 years after publication of research. However, in NSW, longer retention requirements are required for research on human subjects with potential long-term effects, research with long-term environmental effects, or research considered of national or international significance, importance, or controversy. If the data from this research project falls into one of these categories, contact University Records for advice on long-term retention.

You should consider this your official letter of approval. If you require a ~~hardcopy~~ please contact ~~Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au~~.

To access this ~~application~~, please follow the URLs below:

* if accessing within the UTS network: <https://rm.uts.edu.au>

* if accessing outside of UTS network: <https://vpr.uts.edu.au>, and click on "RM6 - Production" after logging in.

<https://outlook.office.com/mail/deeplink?version=2019121602.15&popcutv2=1>

23/12/2019

We value your feedback on the online ethics process. If you would like to provide feedback please go to: <http://survey.su.uts.edu.au/surveys/onlineethics/index.cfm>

If you have any queries about your ethics approval, or require any amendments to your research in the future, please do not hesitate to contact Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Associate Professor [Beata Bajorek](#)

Chairperson

UTS Human Research Ethics Committee

C/- Research & Innovation Office

University of Technology, Sydney

E: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au

I: <https://staff.uts.edu.au/topichubf/Pages/Researching/Research%20Ethics%20and%20Integrity/Human%20research%20ethics/human-research-ethics.aspx>

E13-4

APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL ETHICS APPROVAL

Page 1 of 2

Research approval

Gabby Holden <Gabby.Holden@ku.com.au>

Tue 31/07/2018 2:38 PM

To: Michelle Locke <Michelle.L.Locke@latrobe.edu.au>

Dear Michelle,

We are pleased to confirm approval for the Yanna Jannawi, [Centering Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Early Education and Care Settings](#) research project to be conducted with ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ as per the information provided in the Application to Conduct Research and in accordance with the Research in KU Services policy.

This includes:

- Completing an induction at the service and complying with all KU policies whilst at the service.
- Obtaining written consent from participants prior to research activities and informing KU immediately if there are any changes to the project.
- Providing a summary of the research findings at completion of the project, using the EEO45a Research Projects Findings form or a suitable report/paper that outlines findings and implications for practice for dissemination with KU services.
- Maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988, including secure data storage, and reporting any privacy breaches immediately to KU.
- Reporting any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants immediately to KU.

We look forward to a successful research collaboration and wish you well with your investigation.

If you have any questions, please contact me on 0434168385 or gabby.holden@ku.com.au.

Regards

Gabby Holden
Manager Policy and Research ECE
KU Children's Services
M 0434 168 395
www.ku.com.au

<https://outlook.office.com/mail/search/id/AAQkADZjZTQxNDM5LTNhY2QhNGI5OC0...> 23/12/2019

APPENDIX 3: LETTER TO PARENTS/CARERS

2nd August, 2018
Michelle Locke
PhD Candidate. UTS CAIK
Ph: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]@uts.edu.au

Hello Parents and Families,

My name is Michelle Locke, I am a Boorooberongal woman (Dharug Nation) and an early childhood teacher. I live with my family, Mum and two sons in the Blue Mountains, Sydney.

I am writing to ask for your experiences, thoughts and feelings about the way your preschool includes Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander culture, knowledges and/or language in their program.

Your personal information and any information that you choose to share will be kept private at all times.

The main goal of this research is to ask Aboriginal and Torres Strait families and educators about the best way to include our knowledges and perspectives in early childhood education. Too often we are told what is good for our children instead of being asked about what works for our families and what we want for our children.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me on the phone number or email address above. I am very happy to meet you face to face before you make any decision to participate in this research.

If you would like to share your thoughts, I can organise a time and place that best suits you for us to have a yarn. Any information that you share will be kept confidential and remains YOUR property.

I look forward to meeting you.
Didjurigur Michelle

Photo: 22nd August 2017
Dharug Women's Ceremony
Barangaroo, Sydney



APPENDIX 4: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Yanna Jannawi. Centering Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Early education and care services.

UTS HREC APPROVAL NUMBER: ETH18-2120

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

My name is Michelle Locke and I am an Indigenous PhD student at UTS.

My supervisor is Professor Michelle Trudgett.

Email contact: Michelle.Trudgett@uts.edu.au

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

This research asks Indigenous educators and parents/carers to share their views about the way non-Indigenous teachers can properly include Australian Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives into Early Childhood programs.

FUNDING

This research project is not receiving any funding. However, the Research student is on a scholarship from the Australian Government

WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are one of the following:

- An Indigenous educator
- Employed in an early education and care service in the role of Director
- Employed in an early education and care service in the role of Early Childhood Educator
- An Indigenous parents/carers with one or more children attending an early education and care service.

Your contact details were obtained by/from myself from our previous TAFE work experiences together, including the Children's Services Conference where I was fortunate enough to present, 'Not Dot painting Again, workshop with you.

IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to yarn with myself about your experiences and opinions of how Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives are and could be respectfully and effectively be included in early education and care service programs.

There are four main questions that the yarning session will aim to address, however the goal is to talk openly and comfortably about your experiences and perspectives rather than as a formal interview.

To properly respect your time and participation in this research I will ask you:

- to yarn with me for about 1 hour
- to advise me of the most convenient and comfortable time and place for you to yarn with me?

- if I can I use a voice recorder to make sure I do not miss any of the information you share?
- If I can I make a written record of the recording?

Please understand that:

- I will provide you with a copy of the recording and the written record of the recording
- If there is anything in our yarning session that you do not want to be included in the research I will not include it in the written record.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

Yes, there are some risks/inconvenience:

You may feel unsure about sharing information about your experiences. If there is anything you have said that you do not want included in your transcript you can request that this be deleted.

DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?

Participation in this study is voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?

If you decide not to participate, it will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology Sydney. If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting myself.

Michelle Locke

██████████@student.uts.edu.au

Mobile: ██████████

If you withdraw from the study, all recordings of any yarning with you will be erased; and all written records of your details and the recording will be destroyed.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- By signing the consent form you consent to the researcher collecting and using personal information about you for the research project. All this information will be treated confidentially.
- To ensure your privacy and confidentiality you will be asked to choose a pseudonym (an alternate name) so that it will not be possible for anyone to identify you or your comments in the research.
- Your information will only be used for the purpose of this research project.
- We plan to publish the results in the form of a PhD thesis and in scholarly articles such as the Australian Journal of Indigenous Education. We will also share the results at conferences.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisor can help you with, please feel free to contact us:

Michelle Locke

██████████@student.uts.edu.au

Mobile: ██████████

Supervisor

Professor Michelle Trudgett

Michelle.Trudgett@uts.edu.au

(02) 9514 3077

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

NOTE:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee [UTS HREC]. If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the conduct of this research, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on ph.: +61 2 9514 2478 or email: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au], and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any matter raised will be treated confidentially, investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

CONSENT FORM

Yanna Jannawi. Centering Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Early education and care services

UTS HREC APPROVAL NUMBER: ETH18-2120

I _____ *[participant's name]* agree to participate in the
research project;

Yanna Jannawi. Centering Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Early education and care services. UTS HREC APPROVAL NUMBER: ETH18-2120, being conducted by Michelle Locke, Building 10, Level 3, Rm: 561, Jones Street Ultimo NSW 2007. (02) 95142956, mobile: _____.

@student.uts.edu.au

I have read the Participant Information Sheet or someone has read it to me in a language that I understand.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research as described in the Participant Information Sheet.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without affecting my relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology Sydney.

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

I agree to be:

Audio recorded

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that:

Does not identify me in any way

May be used for future research purposes

I am aware that I can contact Michelle Locke if I have any concerns about the research.

Name and Signature [participant]

____/____/____

Date

Name and Signature [researcher or delegate]

____/____/____

Date

APPENDIX 5: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH YARNING

Guiding questions for Phase One: Indigenous educators

1. What do non-Indigenous educators need to know to include Indigenous Knowledges in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways?
2. Can you share some of the most culturally appropriate and successful approaches you have seen?
3. Do you feel supported in your role as an educator and as an Indigenous person?
4. Is 'Country' important in education?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Guiding Questions for Phase Two and 3: Non-Indigenous Early Childhood and Teachers

1. What do non-Indigenous educators need to know to include Indigenous Knowledges in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways?
2. Can you share some of the most culturally appropriate and successful approaches you have seen?
3. Do you feel confident to include indigenous knowledge and/or perspectives into the program?
4. What is your understanding of 'Country' to Indigenous Australians?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Guiding Questions for Phase Four: Parents/Carers of Indigenous children

1. Do you feel that your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander culture is included in this service?
2. What would you like to see in the daily program?
3. Does your child(ren) feel proud of their identity and culture in this service?
4. Is 'Country' important in education?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX 6: EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICE TYPES

The table below was sourced from (Government NSW, 2017) website which was specifically designed to assist families in understanding the different types of early education and care services that may be available to them.

This table has since been replaced by information provided on a Department of Education website

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/information-for-parents-and-carers/choosing-a-service#Types2>

HOURS	AGE GROUPS	SERVICE PROVIDED
Long Day Care		
Generally, between 7:00 am and 6:00 pm	Children aged 0-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most offer morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea, otherwise families need to provide their own food. • Nappies are often provided. • An educational program that is in line with the Early Years Learning Framework is in place for all children. • Long Day Cares can offer a preschool program where an early childhood teacher works with the children. Check with your provider to see if they offer a preschool program.
Preschool		
Typically, between 9:00am and 3:00pm. Most preschools are closed during school holidays.	Generally, for children aged 3-6 with a focus on children in their year before school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families generally provide own food. • An educational program that is in line with the Early Years Learning Framework is in place for all children. <p>An early childhood teacher works with the children who are in the year before school.</p>
Family Day Care		
Flexible hours by arrangement.	Children aged 0-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This type of care is for small numbers of children in an individual educator's home. • Home based education and care for children provided by a Family Day Care educator who is registered with a Family Day Care Service. • The Service provides administrative and other support for the educator.

- An educational program is in place for younger children in line with the Early Years Learning Framework.

Provision of meals and nappies depends on the service.

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC)

7:00 am -9:00 am and 3:00 pm -6:00 pm All day through school holidays and on pupil-free days.

Children attending school

- A program of activities is provided.
- Most offer afternoon tea.

Families usually provide lunches and snacks during vacation care periods.

Occasional Care

Flexible hours by arrangement and on a casual basis.

Children aged 0-13

- Occasional care is for parents requiring care on irregular or unexpected basis.
- Meals and nappies are sometimes provided.

The service provides a program of educational and recreational activities

Mobile Services

Days and hours may vary depending on service

Children aged 0-13

- These are 'travelling' services for children in isolated and remote areas.
- Most meals are provided by families.

The service provides a program of activities with a focus on play.

Home-based Care

Flexible hours by arrangement

Children aged 0-13

- This is like family day care, except that the carer operates alone and is not part of a scheme.
- Home based care is regulated under separate State law (the *Children (Education and Care Services) Supplementary Provisions Act*).
- Meals and nappies are as by arrangement.
- State-regulated services are not quality-rated.

APPENDIX 7: NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK (NQF)

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) is an independent national organisation that is responsible for the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF) for education and care services in Australia. The National Quality Framework includes,

- National Law and National Regulations 2012
- National Quality Standard (NQS)
 - 7 Quality areas divided into 18 standards with 58 elements
- An assessment and a quality rating process
 - 5 ratings from 'excellent' to 'significant improvement required'
- National Learning Frameworks
 - Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)
 - My Time, Our Place: Framework for school age care in Australia.