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What's in a name? Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy shakes up our settler-colonial academic identities

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ABSTRACT

We examine our positionalities and standpoint in relation to the gift of '*Gulbali ngurambang*', a Wiradjuri name for an Australian University research institute, collaboratively exploring how to honour the name's ethics and philosophy in our individual research practices. Through Wakka Wakka Professor Jay Phillips' Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogical Framework (ISP), we reflexively critiqued our positionality, agency and individual responsibility for anticolonial practice. We argue that gift giving and receiving provides settler-colonial universities deep challenges and opportunities to enact meaningful change against harmful power and research practices centred on Western Colonial norms. ISP supported us to deconstruct social, cultural, historical, and institutional forces aiding reproduction of colonial knowledges and values, reinforcing cultural dominance and risking tokenism and 'blakwashing' when there is an ontological rift in accepting First Nations names that hold philosophical significance. We write from a position of individual vulnerability, critical self-reflection and as a theorised case study to expose the process of '*doing the work*' of decolonisation as an imperfect, collaborative, open learning process. We hope that other academics are inspired to practice ISP.

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Introduction

In this paper we consider the ontological implications of the gift of a First Nation phrase to name a new research institute at an Australian University. The gifted phrase, *gulbali ngurambang,* which has significant philosophical and relational underpinnings, was shortened to Gulbali for the institute's name. Throughout the paper we use a capital for Gulbali when referring to the institute, and lower case when following Wiradjuri conventions for the phrase. The creation and naming of this research institute led, as detailed below, to the authors coming together to reflect on being researchers within it. We contend that receiving First Nation's gifts provides opportunities for universities to enact meaningful change that challenges Western colonial power and research norms.

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In critically examining the implications of this gift we turned the focus on ourselves through the application of Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy (ISP), developed by Wakka Wakka academic Jay Phillips (Phillips, 2019; Phillips & Luke, 2017; Shay et al., 2021). ISP disrupts the colonial logics of 'white possession' (Moreton-Robinson, 2015) and saviour-ism which maintain problematic focus on *knowing the other* rather than *knowing ourselves* (Phillips, 2011; Shay et al., 2021).

We applied ISP to deeply engage with the question of *What's in a Name?,* and to consider what moral, political and professional obligations and calls-to-action this creates for us as individuals, and as collectives, within academia. We found that ISP provides a useful, discipline-agnostic basis for academics committed to decolonisation of the academy, their discipline and themselves, and that Phillip's notion of Indige**nist** (as opposed to Indige**nous)** standpoint pedagogy encourages both ongoing reflexivity and critical self-enquiry to *interrogate the conditions that impact on their interpretations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian experiences throughout history and into the 21st century* (Phillips, 2019, p. 1). As Phillips explains, Indigenist lenses enable all people to listen to and learn from the worldviews and experiences of Indigenous peoples and consider how social, cultural, historical and institutional contexts shape experiences and understandings (2019, p. 6). ISP is a methodology that can be adopted by non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples in their teaching and learning, research and or professional development; however, Indigenous Standpoint is something only Indigenous-identifying people can embrace (Phillips, 2019; Shay et al., 2021). Through the practice of ISP, we recognised our responsibilities and capabilities for embodying the name of our research institute.

This paper documents and interrogates our joint reflection, drawing on data collected through our group practising ISP. We demonstrate how we situated our critical self-analysis and subsequent learning in the broader context of Indigenous aspirations and knowledges, and in the epistemological and ontological roots of our university research practices, before considering concepts and philosophies underpinning *Gulbali*. We conclude by exploring how ISP (Phillips, 2019; Shay et al., 2021) can be adopted and incorporated into the practice of academics committed to accepting Indigenous gifts of knowledge and wisdom, and the responsibilities this entails. We begin the paper by situating ourselves and outlining of our positionality, the details of which are woven through the entire paper, in line with ISP as a reflexive discussion.

Situating ourselves

Our organisational home, Charles Sturt University, is a regional university with campuses on the lands of the Wiradjuri, Ngunnawal, Gundungurra, Eora and Birpai nations in New South Wales, Australia. We locate our story on Wiradjuri Country because this paper involves accepting a Wiradjuri gift. Although this is a specific site and story, our insights are relevant to academics at all universities in Australia, as all are located on unceded First Nations Country.

Positionality

We reflect on our personal and professional positionalities as non-Indigenous/white researchers. We adopted this approach as a sign of respect to First Nations

(Bullen & Flavell, 2017) and because a key aspect of ISP is that we continually reflect on our own socio-cultural, historical and political positioning. Additionally, this approach supports us to examine our own political positioning and responsibilities as academics, from diverse backgrounds and lived experiences, and promotes a culture of critical self-reflection and accountability. While one author identifies as having Indigenous ancestry, due to the nature of harmful colonial policies and logics, and learning of this heritage as an adult, they do not feel it is appropriate to identify as having an 'Indigenous' standpoint at this time.

We chose not to smooth our paper into a singular academic 'voice'. Tensions among different ways of understanding are lost through homogenising, which in turn may silence non-normative ideas. Our differing voices and styles reflect our various disciplines, career stages and engagement with the topic.

Reflecting on a new research institute and the gift of a name

In 2022, Charles Sturt University established a new Agriculture, Water and Environment research institute combining disciplines encompassing agriculture and animal production, natural resource and water management, wine production, veterinary sciences, biosecurity, economics and social sciences from three predecessor research centres (Gulbali, 2024). Preceding the official launch in 2022 a series of internal co-design workshops and consultations considered potential the internal structures.

As participants in the workshops we coalesced into a small community of practice. We felt both unease and excitement for the future of social sciences in the newly created research institute: unease because we considered that historically there was a risk of re-creating siloed research groups that privileged biophysical disciplines, and excitement for an opportunity to create transdisciplinary, anticolonial-based research collaborations (Palmer, 2023). Our fears were not calmed with the co-design workshops being organised on biophysical discipline basis, seemingly sidelining or neglecting the social sciences.

A concern for sidelining the social is echoed throughout the Western tradition where preference and funding are given to 'rational and positivist' research agendas. The precarious position of social scientists and their unease with the structure of research groups within the Institute led to an additional co-design workshop (Wunderlich et al., 2022) centred on the inclusion of social science and critical Indigenous studies. The discussions around whether social sciences and scientists needed their own 'home' within the new Institute or should be dispersed across all themes progressed into a more complex discussion beyond structure to the institution's name and underlying ethos. Participating staff called for better understanding and respect for Indigenous knowledges, ontologies and epistemologies within the new institutional arrangements.

Focusing on questioning the acceptance of the gift of the name is an opportunity, and an obligation. We constantly returned to the question of 'What's in a name?', attempting to understand what it meant for our research practices to align with the philosophy of *gulbali ngurambang,* and to explore how the name's acceptance should and could transform our research practice to better align with the new name. While working together in trust, support, and openness, we learnt that ISP provides methodical guidance.

The name gift-giving was instigated by Institute leaders, who were seeking a term to describe its focus areas of Agriculture, Water and Environment. The gift of the phrase

gulbali ngurambang – or 'to understand Country' *(*Grant & Rudder, 2010*)* was formally offered to the newly formed Institute after an enquiry from the university executive to a prominent Wiradjuri Elder. The proposed phrase and provided translation were presented to the university by various Wiradjuri First Nations' groups and individuals. The Wiradjuri Council of Elders then agreed on the use of the term *gulbali ngurambang*; it was officially gifted to the Institute in 2021. As stated on the Gulbali Institute website (2024),

> we are proud to be gifted our name Gulbali ngurambang … from the Wiradjuri First Nations as the guiding principle of how we do our work to create impactful agriculture, water and environment research grounded in Charles Sturt's footprint across the Murray-Darling Basin, but with impact across Australia and globally.

The complexity of respectfully learning with First Nations people within a colonial frame becomes apparent when this superficially simple task of naming the institute is considered through the multiple lenses opened for us through ISP. Within Western, Enlightenment tradition there has been a separation of mind and body, science and religion, male and female, civilised and wild/uncivilised. This Cartesian Dualism privileges rationalism and objectivity, deeming anything outside of pragmatic understandings as inferior, including so-called 'different knowledges'. Similar disparities between First Nations and Western interpretations of institutional and building names and concepts have been reported in New Zealand (Hoskins & Jones, 2022) and Canada and USA (Rose-Redwood et al., 2024), as well as Australia (Waghorne, 2024). Where Western disciplines encourage siloed approaches, for example, considering Land, Water and Environment separately, First Nations concepts are holistic, including experiencing Country as a whole. This latter conceptualisation emphasises relationships and interconnectedness.

The superficial tension between the holistic 'to understand Country' and the Cartesian Dualist 'Land, Water and Environment' is immediately obvious, but considering positionality highlights a more profound tension. While the English-language translation of *gulbali ngurambang* is 'to understand Country', language carries meanings and cultural references that are socially embedded with ontological and epistemological roots; *gulbali ngurambang* holds more meaning and philosophical guidance than a literal translation can capture, as the phrase *gulbali* also holds a call-to-action and a guiding ontology/philosophy for researchers in the Institute (Grant & Rudder, 2010, 2014). To explain why this is a call-to-action requires understanding of the literal and more-than-literal.

In Wiradjuri language (Grant & Rudder, 2010) we should consider the phrase in two parts – *gulbali* and *ngurambang*. Gulba is a word stem associated with *understanding*, and *ngurambang* relates to Country (Grant & Rudder, 2010, 2014). The literal translation of the Wiradjuri term *gulbali* as an English translation *understanding* might appear straightforward, but as Bawaka et al. (2013) note, 'English [language] is good at ordering, classifying and describing, drawing upon and reinforcing its own ontological heritage'. *Gulbali* is less ordered, and includes using place-based and locally situated knowledges and stories; taking time to develop respectful and safe collaborative relationships with Country, which includes people; and identifying and addressing settler-colonial processes of marginalising First Nations knowledge and agency and adhering to local

protocols (Bates et al., 2024; Bawaka et al., 2013, 2016; Flakelar & O'Gorman, 2023; Poelina et al., 2023). As Poelina et al. (2023) (p. 375) explain:

> To know how to hear, understand and apply learning from place-based story is to know how to move beyond a normalised worldview of separation, alienation, individualism, infinite growth, consumption, extraction, commodification and craving. To know how to see, feel, describe and reflect upon experience, concepts and practice is to find ways to move towards radical generosity, mutuality of becoming, embodied kinship, wisdom, humility and respect.

In this way, 'understanding' might be translated as *understanding, knowing, caring and co-becoming* with Country, and with each other.

In short, First Nations Peoples in Australia teach us that 'Country' includes all that is tangible and intangible and encompasses both a territorial notion of a homeland (land, skies, waterways, seas) as well as trees, rocks, animals, weather, human and inhuman together in a mutually reciprocal, multi-directional caring relationship (Bawaka et al., 2013). Accepting and embodying the philosophical gift of *gulbali ngurambang* provides us with a 'more-than-human invocation of a connected, knowledgeable, co-becoming between people and place, people and Country. It is also a description of the physical environment, a claim of pre-existence, indeed of existence itself. In short, it is a statement of ontology' (Bawaka et al., 2013, 2016). Therefore, if we embody *gulbali ngurambang* in the manner in which we have been taught by Bawaka et al. (2016) – if we choose to interpret *gulbali ngurambang* as a statement of ontology, we are accepting it as a statement of politics and consider it a call-to-action to be guided by in our research practice. Better understanding ourselves and the gift of the name, ISP supported us in jointly attempting to de-colonise our academic practices, using the naming of the new Institute as a catalyst.

Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy: our research approach

ISP is a transformational approach that increases learners', including academics', understanding of the epistemic and colonial forces that shape their individual worldviews, identities, knowledges, and behaviours (Phillips, 2019). Phillips developed ISP as a framework and critical tool, acknowledging that higher education was founded on settler-colonial positioning of First Nations as objects and subjects of study rather than knowledge holders. Phillips' ISP framework is relational, drawing on many generations of Indigenous knowledges, theories, methodologies and decolonial approaches (Phillips, 2011). In part it is focused on 'disrupting systems of knowing' that contribute to ongoing oppression and marginalisation of First Nations and supports learners to untangle and reflect on their own institutionalised knowledges, socialised views and the structural conditions that continue to silence First Nations peoples' experiences, perspectives and knowledges (Phillips, 2019). In this way, ISP aims to provide learners with the critical reflexive tools to better understand themselves, who they are, and the ways in which their knowledge and worldview and identity has been formed; it lays bare epistemological and ontological roots of knowledge; and it shifts a colonial focus on rigid notions of 'knowing or learning about' First Nations peoples to positioning First Nations Peoples as knowers, creators and knowledge-holders who we can learn from. By adopting ISP we are positioning ourselves as the learners and open to change and transformation.

In applying ISP we committed to respectful collaboration, caring discussions and writing over what became three years. A major aspect of ISP is to ensure we are continually learning from First Nations and aligning with Indigenous aspirations, such as Indigenous rights to self-determination (UNDRIP) and truth-telling (Wedesweiler, 2020). As such, we commit to always acknowledge sources of learning. We continue to be guided by First Nations scholars such as Leonard et al. (2023) and Moggridge et al. (2022) who ask us to practice Listening, Reflection, Action, Relationality and Slowing down. We embrace a slow, reflexive approach, in defiance of current neoliberal, capitalist and logo-centrically informed preferences for 'objective', quantifiable, social research approaches (Bastalich, 2023). This preference positions any researcher as an 'expert knower' (Shay et al., 2021), and research as a tidy, logical process rather than as a messy, affective and embodied experience (Ahmed et al., 2020).

We undertook a purposeful, reflexive inquiry guided by ISP to understand who we are and how we should practice collectively, and to identify barriers to and opportunities for aligning with First Nations aspirations. One author with over 10 years' experience of working within Critical Indigenous Studies and seven years applying ISP in teaching and learning guided us through facilitated discussions from Phillips' (2019) ISP. From early 2022, we met regularly in eight 90-minute meetings over six months using Zoom videoconferencing to reflect on our past professional research practices and personal experiences across Australia and overseas, and their possible impacts in the new Institute. Each of us brought significant experiences, insights, and ways of being and doing that informed and shaped the direction of our discussions. We questioned what we now consider our out-dated ways, as we each developed our capacity to become more vulnerable and challenge our inherent and unconscious biases. The recorded sessions were summarised, analysed and mapped by the authors into key themes which were used to structure this paper. Throughout this process we co-constructed a way of working together that supports what we now identify as decolonial praxis.

The praxis of *thinking-writing* a co-authored paper across disciplinary lines and experiences could traditionally be described as *messy* – logistically and conceptually; we think of it as 'tending a shared garden bed'. The committed and collaborative discussion, and our determination to 'keep going', showed us that ISP provided us with a way to better understand why the question 'What's in a Name?' mattered so much to each of us. It encouraged us to look deeper, to develop an ongoing practice that is supportive of each one's learning and career development.

The process of writing the paper was long. It involved facilitated discussions drawing from the first steps in the process of doing ISP. This includes identifying and critically reflecting on where our knowledge comes from and why we believe it be true (Phillips, 2019). We met regularly to discuss and analyse key ideas raised each fortnight in our discussions; as we continued to work together, we were distilling the key points and identified key learnings from our ISP process. Finalising the paper, we understood, allowed us to conclude the collaborative writing process. While this was our greatest challenge, it also helped us to recognise the strengths and guiding principles of the learning process of ISP. We realised that self-reflection and critical reflexivity are very challenging, and there were moments when critique was directed towards the institution (or the other) – as though the institution was responsible for ensuring we accept the name

correctly – without our recognising that we have agency, voice, and (importantly) the ability to examine our own complicity and identify our responsibilities in accepting this gift.

This critical reflexivity required a safe space/place to exist and sit with the discomfort of critical self-reflection. A key learning moment, which took significant time to surface, was based on writing, note taking, and lots of discussion around whether by writing this paper, we were continuing a colonial approach speaking *for* Indigenous people; alternatively, we spoke of our own experiences, and about what it means for an Indigenous name to be gifted to an institute that we practice under, and our responsibilities related to accepting this gift. This reflection paper comes out of our experiences of doing ISP, critically examining our own positionality in relation to the gift of the name *Gulbali*, and what the name means to us, and recognising how this process has changed our identities as researchers. In doing so, we determined we should take responsibility for decolonising our minds and our practices – that we need to start where we stand, where we are currently situated.

Wiradjuri gifts in a Western ontology

The majority of the authors are situated within Wiradjuri Country, and the university for which we work is guided by the Wiradjuri ethos of *yindyamarra winhanganha*, meaning 'the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in', a Wiradjuri way of knowing and being. Despite the ethos of *yindyamarra winhanganha*, our disciplinary practices are strongly grounded in Western or Eurocentric ontological practices stemming from the Enlightenment (Jones et al., 2024); there remains deep ongoing challenges to the realisation of *yindyamarra winhanganha* because it is a personal transformation for non-Indigenous academics, and a disciplinary shift in how we understand and create knowledge.

The context for this is an environment of ontological hegemony and exclusion, that is not unique to our university. There are structural and cultural reasons why this occurs, but the effect is that we, as proponents of the Western scientific tradition, typically understand and refer to 'legitimate knowledge' exclusively as Western knowledge or knowledge situated within a Western ontology (Jones et al., 2024). Furthermore, our understanding of 'a world worth living in' centres our academic value systems rather than representing the pluralistic value systems in our communities. This is a 'social trustee' model of relationship between professionals and academics within institutes and the community (Dzur, 2019). A critical first step in responding to the gift of Wiradjuri ways of being to the University and Institute is to acknowledge how our value systems shape our ontological and epistemological biases. Logically, we then come to recognise that 'a world worth living in' can look very different depending on one's worldview.

Consideration of the meanings of *yindyamarra winhanganha* and *gulbali ngurambang* highlights structural barriers to their adoption within the University and Institute. For example, we are told that the words *yindyamarra* and *winhanganha* in part mean 'respect, be gentle, polite, honour, do slowly' and 'know, think, remember' respectively (Grant & Rudder, 2010). Notably, *winhanganha* has the same word stem as *winhangarra* which means to 'hear, think, listen' (Grant & Rudder, 2010). How is it possible that this way of knowing and being is honoured in an environment that sets neoliberal expectations of 'productivity'?

A challenge and tension exist in the framing of the Institute because *gulbali ngurambang* within a Wiradjuri worldview is different from 'impactful agriculture, water and environment research' within a Western worldview. For example, 'impactful' agricultural research is typically measured in terms of increased productivity, reduced productivity loss, increased crop product per area, and minimised input costs while maximising outputs. However, these are often at the cost of other aspects of Country, such as changes (or degradation) to landscapes, ecosystems, biodiversity, scenery, and tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Our current research practice and evaluation are achieved through 'projects', which are short term and reductive by definition and expectation (Allan, 2012). To follow the ethos of 'to understand Country' also means seeking to understand what *impact* means in other worldviews held within Country, and to practice research and teaching at the University accordingly.

Reflecting on what's in a name?

As part of practising ISP we each wrote a positionality/standpoint statement in response to our critically reflexive and regular discussions around our responsibilities in accepting the gift of the name *gulbali ngurambang*, using 'what's in a name?' as our prompt. Each author, in the traditional way of practising ISP, reflected on their current knowledge and where this knowledge has come from. We all come from the positionality that anyone living, working and doing research in Australia is doing so within First Nations spaces, because we are all situated within unceded Country. After becoming aware of how profound this realisation is, most of our discussions and reflections considered our individual and collective roles and where we can make improvements to our everyday practices. We all questioned where we fit, and what we are to do about ongoing settler colonialism and how to address long standing oppression. As a group of five academics it could be assumed that we are a relatively homogenous group. Through reflexive practice on our places of birth, early educational experiences, family values, disciplinary training, career stages and evolving identities as adults, we found dynamic and complex heterogeneity amongst and within ourselves. Each of our statements reflects our discussions and our questions about how we personally and adequately accept the gift of *gulbali ngurambang* in an institution founded on Eurocentric ontologies and colonial foundations.

Through our critical and relational inquiry, including our individual reflective writing through positionality and standpoint statements, we identified and co-developed key insights from the ISP process that helped us begin to answer these questions, and realise that embodying this institutional name is an ongoing and committed process. We each agree that ISP has provided a sound critical framework to continue this ongoing work. We call this 'doing the work' which includes the collaborative writing of this manuscript and others; this in itself is an inherently intentional form of reflexivity, where we co-create and maintain a respectful space for witnessing and deep listening to support fellow co-authors through our learning.

Through the ISP process we have adopted ways of being that support each of us to grow. By identifying moments of disconnection, and by critically reflecting on these, we have identified and support collaboration and connection. This has required adoption or embodiment of what we believe *gulbali ngurambang* and *yindyamarra winhanganha* mean to us. For example, deep listening is required to understand not only each other but

importantly, our individual and collective understanding what it means to accept the gift of *gulbali ngurambang* and *yindyamarra winhanganha* and what these phrases are teaching us. As researchers within an institution, we have asked 'how can an understanding of knowing related to listening be adopted or even entertained where the only measures of labour or impact are particular "outputs"?' Our experience is that loudness, rather than silence, and speaking, rather than listening, are seen as positive attributes of successful people in current academic environments.

We have realised that listening is often not seen as important and not as 'impactful' as presenting or extending information or research outcomes. This is reflected in day-to-day examples such as funding applications for conference travel or attendance. One positionality statement reflected on how for applications to be successful the applicant – research academic or student – needs to indicate they will present at the conference and not just attend to 'listen, sit in silence and seek to understand'. Further, the impact of conference attendance is measured by an applicant's intended format of presentation. Typically, in Western scientific conferences, oral presentations are valued more highly than poster presentations; if competitive funding for the conference attendance is limited, institutions often favour applicants who present as keynote speakers over those who attend to listen, learn and perhaps share their ideas informally. Those who would prefer to share their knowledge in different ways are often overlooked or excluded from presenting.

These seemingly minor reflections on challenges related to inclusion and exclusion, and processes of othering and marginalisation, provided significant insights that have helped us to recognise opportunities for nurturing relationships and connections. Another relationship in our standpoint and positionality statements was the observation of dominant institutional aversion to 'other' forms of knowledges, those beyond the positivist approach common in scientific investigations. Storytelling and the arts as methods of conference presentation and knowledge sharing, for example, are rarely enabled, yet are important for traditional knowledge sharing. This suggests that Western scientific conferences are not accessible to all forms of knowledge production and transmission, and the way funding applications to attend these are assessed makes them even more inaccessible to those who chose to use a conference as a way to listen and learn, share knowledge and ideas through meaningful informal conversations or other forms of knowledge sharing familiar to them yet unfamiliar or uncommon to typical Western/Eurocentric scientific communities.

Some statements recognised that some institutional aversions are grounded in myths and metaphors of inherently racist underpinnings, many of which have served to erase Indigenous and non-White people from history as a strategy to colonise spaces and places (Jones et al., 2024). Some statements reflected on mechanisms used to support this erasure and the awakening that occurred for some co-authors when they realised the inaccuracies of these myths. One powerful example is the realisation that for many of us we have constructed worldviews based on the myth of 'wilderness', which creates an imaginary where Indigenous people did not exist. This constructed myth of 'terra nullius' was intentional in Australian history making (Yalmambirra, 2013), and aligns with various policies of segregation, protection, and assimilation (Behrendt, 1999).

Each of us have relationship/connection and passion towards the more-than-human world and have dedicated entire careers to disciplines that aim to conserve, repair, or

protect 'natural' spaces and places. We identified and discussed our individual learnings about the constructed and problematic metaphor of wilderness, with its racist political roots, which was co-opted by the environmental movement of the twentieth century, rather ironically, given that it is homologous with the Western metaphors of colonialism and extractivism (i.e., nature and humanity are opposing forces). The powerful imagery developed out of and in support of this 'wilderness' myth has always resonated and been evocative with some of us. On reflection one co-author articulated that it was perhaps a lazy way of intellectualising an emotional response to the world. 'Doing the work' means being open to recognising how our worldviews are constructed and maintained throughout professions and challenging them so that we can do better.

Many statements also reflected on stories of Australian history as being 'white' and how policies of control shaping First Nations lives are reminiscent of colonial practices elsewhere (Jones et al., 2024). Although the intention of these constructed histories and government policies, in some situations, have the effect of silencing and erasing First Nations experiences and sovereignty some of us expressed critical awareness of these un-truths. Some co-authors reflected on witnessing first-hand policies of segregation and protectionism, for example while travelling around Australia. There was also some reflection on similar experiences of colonial and imperial racism and segregation internationally. Each of us expressed the pain felt by witnessing these atrocities which is something we can all hold space for each other to process. In an interesting similarity in our reflections, many of us discussed that from a young age we each had a sense of Indigenous presence and were drawn to learning more for various reasons. While we each feel a great sense of alienation, we all believe things can and should be done differently.

A couple of authors reflect on their professional development and intentional focus on shaping their career to be more aligned with this determination to do things differently. Some co-authors reflected on the positivist scientific way of framing the world, and their gravitation to a more post-modern understanding of it, which has the potential to open space for alternative forms of knowledge production, interpretation and analysis, and for dissemination such as art practice and storytelling. A few co-authors reflected on their frustration in the nonsensical and harmful separation of 'humans' and 'nature'. Although these co-authors do believe there are empirical facts and truths, they also believe that what and how we question impacts our understanding and use of those facts.

One co-author reflected on their privileged private schooling while all reflected on what they learnt and how Indigenous peoples of Australia were rarely represented in curriculum or the dominant understanding of the past. This, in-turn, also relates to shared insights into the formation of discipline areas such as agriculture and how extension programmes can be an ongoing form of colonialism. A few co-authors work in international development. There is a growing awareness that 'development' risks perpetuating colonial or imperial logics with the aim to assimilate. There was a significant connection between each statement, which indicated the need for more time to build meaningful and respectful relationships to help mitigate the reproduction of harmful colonial logics through notions of 'development', 'extension', and 'conservation', and how de-siloing the professions and knowledge production might begin the process. The siloing of disciplines is only a small part of addressing ongoing colonialism.

Through our practice of ISP we have learnt that asking whether First Nations' voices are heard when setting research priorities in the planning stages, as well as when it comes to evaluating milestones and successes along the way, is a vital tool for successful research partnerships and for two-way relations and communication. Some literature has shown us that research agendas are not meeting the needs and aspirations of First Nations communities (Bainbridge et al., 2015). We further questioned our own practices and career agendas. Although some researchers offer guidance, such as a 'benefit-led approach' (Bainbridge et al., 2015), Indigenous-led is our preferred approach; as Poelina et al. (2023) explain this is more likely to meet the values and worldviews of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous research partners and leads to benefit-lead research through experiential knowing, presentational forms of knowing, propositional knowing and practical knowing. In this approach, all parts of the research are completed together by all research team members. Although ISP is not all that is required for Indigenous led, it is a valid supportive framework that can guide research practice from beginning to end. However, our questions still exist: how do we as researchers accept the Wiradjuri gift of our research institute's name?

Learning from beyond Australia, the New Zealand Vet Association *Te Pae Kīrehe* (2022) provides an example of a name gift case in which ongoing structural organisational change 'is working to honour *te Tiriti o Waitangi* and strengthen its commitment to *Te Ao Māori*'. In our case, in which Gulbali has explicitly outwardly centred Wiradjuri ways of knowing by officially accepting the gift of *Gulbali ngurambang* as a name and identity, there is an implicit need to reciprocate in measures of impact relevant to Wiradjuri, to the communities in which Gulbali works, to researchers and to the Institute. This might best be achieved through open deliberative forums in which power sharing is actively developed and practiced. For example, community participation and power sharing through democratic professionalism may be better fit for purpose than a social trustee professional model (Dzur, 2019).) Our community of practice, while taking time to develop and form trusting relationships between the group, has contributed to a sense of democratic community.

In one of the most memorable ISP reflective discussions on our statements, towards the finalisation of this manuscript, we each reflected on what we have learnt through the process distilled as key principles, some of which have been discussed above. We have learnt that change takes collaborative effort. We cannot create the change required to live by the university ethos of *yindyamarra winhanganha* and to genuinely understand Country – *gulbali ngurambang* without a sense of community, safety and belonging; these require nurturing the art of listening, being present, and being open to diverse forms of knowledge production and dissemination. Through practising these principles within the guiding critical framework of ISP we were able to co-create understanding, shared vision aligned with the ethos and the name, and a culture of kindness and care. We are mindful of and take responsibility for finding our own way rather than appropriating knowledges and or ways of being and doing that are not ours. This responsibility of 'doing the work' is made possible through the mutual, accountability and guidance. We are committed to learning from First Nations peoples, Indigenous scholars and local knowledge holders. One major lesson is to slow down, listen to understand, and take the time for deeper connections and meaning.

Gift giving and reciprocity

An important contextual consideration in terms of our collective and individual ethical standpoint regarding this Wiradjuri gift is the cultural importance and centrality of reciprocity to Wiradjuri and other First Nations of the Australian continent (Moggridge et al., 2022; Yalmambirra, 2013). Reciprocity exists as a sophisticated and nuanced social practice, including in relationships with non-Indigenous peoples. Reciprocity in Wiradjuri society is a highly differentiated economic and social practice from reciprocity in Western European (and derived) societies (Macdonald, 2000). We realised throughout our discussions and reflections that we placed moral and ethical responsibility on the Institute to explore implications of these gifts for the Institute and its activities, including the research implemented by its members. However, we have realised that we hold significant power to embrace our responsibilities to decolonise our own individual minds. Our community of practice, by adopting ISP as critical Indigenous-led conceptual framework and by intentional nurturing of a safe space for each of us, has created some transformation within ourselves which in turn resonates to our relationships and connections with those around us beyond our community of practice.

Throughout this paper, we have highlighted the principles and protocols that guide our ongoing praxis as researchers within the Gulbali Institute. While our learning did not begin by us coming together, for we each have many earlier experiences and attempts at doing things differently, the coming together as a collective or community of practice is significant because together, we contribute to the institution by shaping the culture. Many insights mentioned here have been brought to our attention through the critically reflexive practice supported by ISP; this includes listening to First Nations knowledge holders – in our case, through diverse Indigenous leaders within our institution and or via scholarly publications and publicly available materials; and careful and deep listening to Country, which includes all that surrounds and sustains us, and embodying the learnings from the phrases *gulbali ngurambang* and *yindyamarra winhanganha*. We have found that 'doing the work' of dismantling our deeply ingrained colonial worldviews, to abandon the colonial desires of extraction, possession and domination, and doing this deeply personal work in a collaborative way, is what we believe we can offer in return for the gift. We are yet to learn how this new praxis will shape and guide our research within Gulbali.

Country and Gulbali – where to next?

By accepting the gift of taking responsibility to 'do the work', we more fully understand that Country is inclusive of all. We are no longer individual researchers working solo in the academy, within an institute that alone guides our moral and ethical decision making about research – we are a collective, a community of researchers, who have demonstrated our capacity to work together and make some impact. We as researchers have learned that the social cannot be separated from research in Gulbali. Through our community of practice, we have created the social and cultural change we hoped to see in the institution by embodying the Wiradjuri names and the ethos. At the beginning of our ISP practice, we thought the biggest challenge the institute faced was how to bridge the divides between the disciplines, and how to ensure Indigenous led research is a

fundamental aspect of our work. Through our community of practice, we have co-developed understanding and learned strategies to improve our approaches to research. Although the change required for universities and research to shift from siloed research outputs which benefit some and not others is enormous, we have realised it begins within the self. It is about letting go of binary 'black and white', 'right or wrong' ideas of how to do research. We recognise that ISP is an invitation to be vulnerable, which has moved us as a group towards an ability to honour the gift of *gulbali ngurambang* and align with the Wiradjuri philosophy and the university ethos *of yindyamarra winhanganha* in our lives and professions. This has helped to reshape or shake up our identities and our practice as researchers. ISP is a way of being and doing that can help anyone in ordinary academic positions foster their intellectual curiosity and allow them to become part of an anti-colonial movement within the academy. This approach to research is grounded by integrity and the genuine desire to understand and care for Country by creating a world worth living in.

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