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# Editorial

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We are very proud to present this timely and significant Special Issue of *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, guest edited by Katelyn Barney (The University of Queensland), Cindy Shannon (The University of Queensland) and Martin Nakata (The University of New South Wales). This collection of articles focuses on the activities of the Australian Indigenous Studies Learning and Teaching Network, an initiative funded by the Office for Teaching and Learning. The Australian Indigenous Studies Learning and Teaching Network was formed to bring leaders and early career academics in the field together to build relationships, debate and discuss central issues, and explore and share teaching and learning strategies in the discipline at tertiary level. These discussions at once untangle and re-entangle the processes, pedagogies and politics at play when Indigenous Studies becomes defined as a discipline.

Several themes have emerged from this dialogue, including: the ways in which Indigenous Studies is theorised, framed and sequenced as a course of study; the positioning of students and lecturers in teaching and learning the discipline; and, what kinds of graduate attributes define an Indigenous Studies student. The Special Issue begins with a framing article by Katelyn Barney, Cindy Shannon and Martin Nakata that provides the scope and background to the Australian Indigenous Studies Learning and Teaching Network. Here, the partners on the Network are introduced and the rationale behind the Network is explained. The suite of articles that follow address first, issues of pedagogy; and second, the complex task of mapping and defining the discipline of Indigenous Studies. Martin Nakata, Vicky Nakata, Sarah Keech and Reuben Bolt suggest that if Indigenous Studies is to grow and achieve its intended outcomes, the ways in which Indigenous Studies majors are structured needs to radically shift. Engagement with concepts of decolonisation and the cultural interface are crucial for rethinking business as usual in the structure of majors. The next article by Susan Page touches upon a noticeable gap in existing research in Indigenous Studies; that is, *how* students learn in and of this discipline. Her work highlights the importance of providing ‘zones of proximal development’ in learning Indigenous Studies and suggests ways in which these can be fostered in Indigenous Studies classrooms. Elizabeth Mackinlay and Katelyn Barney continue the pedagogical

conversation by exploring the transformative potential of a teaching and learning approach called PEARL (Political, Embodied, Active and Reflective Learning) in the context of Indigenous Studies. Their work draws upon research in an introductory Indigenous Studies course and a teacher education course on Indigenous education, to highlight a pedagogical method that can effectively work towards achieving the transformative goals of much Indigenous Studies curricula.

The Special Issue then turns to the complex and difficult task of mapping and defining Indigenous Studies in Australian universities. Heidi Norman’s work provides a lens on the ways in which one university is attempting to embed Indigenous Studies and Indigenous content across the curriculum. Her discussion highlights the urgent need for consistency and depth of thought in terms of understanding the purpose of including Indigenous Studies in higher education. Katelyn Barney and Sandy O’Sullivan then provide us with a discussion on the key issues for Indigenous Studies in tertiary education. Their conversation ‘steps back’ and looks at the bigger picture, in order to better close in on what is actually happening in Indigenous Studies in Australian universities and why. The final article in this issue by Bronwyn Carlson, Jeff Berglund, Michelle Harris and Evan Te Ahu Poata-Smith takes our discussion to an international level and debates the politics of naming Indigenous Studies in higher education contexts in Australian and America. Their article confronts the difficulties associated with defining a discipline and the dangers inherent in this process, as well as the potential gains to be made.

Each and every article in this Special Issue of *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* brings a sense of creativity, commitment and collectivity in relation to what it means to teach and learn in the complex field of Australian Indigenous Studies in higher education. The conversation is necessarily ongoing — as educational philosopher Maxine Greene reminds us, the search must be never-ending, for there are always roads not travelled and we are forever on the way. We look forward to continuing the journey and dialogue on this topic in future publications of *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

**Elizabeth Mackinlay and Martin Nakata**  
Editors