AT THE HEART OF LEARNING

(SERIES: PAPER 1 OF 4)

Putuna kulini: The trouble with "hearing"

Sam Osborne[*]

Abstract

Remote Indigenous school principals find themselves caught in the middle of system priorities and demands, the demands of running complex and busy local schools, and the expectations and needs of the local community. Remote communities often complain that they are not being listened to or "heard", but the process of listening, hearing and understanding in the complex cultural context of remote Aboriginal communities is far more complex than a visit or a single conversation can achieve. This paper examines the clash between values, perspectives and worldviews that is played out on a daily basis as schools go about their business of educating whilst also attempting to take account of what is important for the communities they work in. This work highlights the need for remote principals and educators to reposition themselves in the dialogue with communities in order to allow room for a new conversation that gets to the "heart of learning".

Keywords

Anangu education, remote education, resistance, values, cross-cultural, leadership

* Senior Research Fellow, University of South Australia, Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia. PhD candidate, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia. Email: Sam.Osborne@nintione.com.au

Introducing the "At the Heart of Learning" series

This paper is the introduction to a series titled "At the Heart of Learning", based on a conference theme at the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Teach-meet in August 2012. The APY Lands region, which occupies the far north-west corner of South Australia, is considered to be "very remote" and is situated more than 1,000 km from the nearest capital city (Adelaide). Services such as hospitals and shopping are often accessed from the nearer town of Alice Springs, which is situated in the remote Central Australian region of the Northern Territory some 500 km or more from APY communities. The people in this region are referred to as Anangu (Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara). Anangu communities consist predominantly of first language Pitjantjatjara or Yankunytjatjara speakers with non-Anangu required to obtain a permit to enter the communities for work or service provision.

There are currently eight schools operating in the APY Lands and these are run by the South Australian Department of Education and Child Development. Teachers are frequently non-Anangu and come from cities around Australia, although there is a strong presence of Anangu Education Workers and a small minority of qualified Anangu teachers are working in Anangu schools. Despite the involvement of Anangu at a range of levels, including the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee as an overarching governance body, the core elements of a Western education, such as English language literacy, numeracy and instruction in English across all areas (although supported by Anangu Education Workers to interpret and share the teaching process) are the dominant focus in schools. The broader state-wide system objectives, measures and structures are generally applied across the region, drawing the focus of curriculum, professional development, and the celebration of success towards mainstream education priorities. Consequently, the authors in this series felt it was important to voice the deeper aspects of Anangu knowledge, values and perspectives within the context of Anangu communities and schools.

In the following three papers, Anangu educators join the author to speak to remote educators about key ideas in education from their own standpoints. The APY Teach-meet was organized to bring all of the teachers, Anangu Education Workers and school principals together for professional learning, with a key focus on using the new national curriculum known as the "Australian Curriculum". There were nine schools represented from the APY Lands (Watarru Anangu School has since closed) and around 125 educators attended the Teach-meet. Curriculum leaders from the South Australian Department of Education and Child Development worked with teachers, and Anangu Education Workers undertook training in a range of topics, coming together towards the end of the Teach-meet to plan together using the Australian Curriculum. A second meeting was planned as a single day of training at Amata (a community in the western region of the APY Lands) early the following term to revisit the learning and provide feedback on progress made.

I was invited to give a closing keynote address to the group. In the planning for the Teach-meet, I noticed that the attendees were not programmed to hear from Anangu educators throughout the scheduled time, so I invited three senior Anangu educators to present with me. Throughout the course of my research work on the Remote Education Systems project as well as my PhD research, I had been developing conversations with Anangu educators with particular focus on some of the pertinent literatures and this process had been continuing for the previous 12–18 months. We used the theme of the Teach-meet, "The Heart of Learning", but I encouraged each of the Anangu educators to present their key areas of reflection and what the essence of "the heart of learning" means for them. After the presentation, I began to receive

numerous phone calls and emails from Piranpa (non-Anangu) educators whose professional curiosity had been awakened and they wanted to discuss "what the Anangu presenters were talking about". Some of them had never had a significant conversation with Anangu about the deeper philosophical and theoretical issues regarding Anangu education and had a range of important questions brewing.

We decided to develop the presentation into writing to allow a wider audience of remote educators to engage with the thinking of the Anangu educators. Some of the contributions from the Anangu educators were written in Pitjantjatjara language and the rest of their work was recorded as an oral presentation in Pitjantjatjara language. From there, I transcribed and translated their work and they shaped their drafts from these documents. As we further developed the conversations and the writing, numerous phone calls and visits to expand on and develop the papers were made. Initially, we had attempted a single paper as a writing team, but as each author developed their own thinking and writing, the work soon grew into a series of discrete but connected pieces of work. Since the writing of these papers, the conversation continues to develop and we hope to continue the process of reflection and writing together. It is important to highlight the use of story and metaphor as an important aspect of Indigenous research methods. As Wilson (2008) highlights:

> Stories and metaphor are often used in Indigenous societies (not just in Canada and Australia but with other Indigenous peoples around the world) as a teaching tool. Stories allow listeners to draw their own conclusions and gain life lessons from a more personal perspective. By getting away from abstractions and rules, stories allow us to see others' life in a way that is difficult for abstract discussions to achieve. (p. 17)

Indigenous scholars such as Smith (2012) and Rigney (1999) have argued the need to resist dominant culture research methods and perspectives in describing Indigenous people as "the Other", and as Wilson (2008) describes:

> New Indigenous scholars have introduced Indigenous beliefs, values and customs into the research process, and this in turn has helped research to become much more culturally sensitive to Indigenous peoples (Martin, 2003; Rigney, 1999; Steinhauer, 2002; Wilson & Pence, 2006). (p. 15)

With this in mind, we have attempted to allow Anangu educators to speak on their own terms and allow this to speak to the reader from their own perspectives. In the context of academic writing in teams of Anangu and Piranpa authors working together with an intended audience of remote educators, this is a complex balancing act. Within this complexity, we have attempted to privilege Anangu voices speaking on their own terms.

The challenge of "hearing"…

In an environment where pressure is increasing in remote schools to see improvements in attendance and attainment of literacy and numeracy benchmarks, a myriad of policy introductions and shifts (such as Australian Curriculum, Remote Service Delivery, Regional Partnership Agreements, Stronger Futures) have made it increasingly more difficult for educators to "really hear" the voices and standpoints (Nakata, 2007a) that exist in the communities where they work. A standpoint dialogue goes beyond simply having a discussion or hearing about people's experiences. Nakata (2007b) explains that "standpoint accounts … depend on reflexivity and the distinction between experience and standpoint" (p. 11). He also highlights that multiple Indigenous standpoints exist. It is important for remote educators to understand that standpoints are shaped by personal experiences and histories,

social and cultural positioning, and the various political constructs that exist. "Hearing" multiple Indigenous standpoints is an important preparation for engaging in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community contexts.

Additionally, the increase in the level of externally determined decision-making and policy-making shifts the locus of power and voice from the community to externally situated bureaucracies. In order to survive the intense level of demands on schools and teachers, principals triage the volume of voices and demands of the systems they work in. This process finds remote principals caught in the middle of system demands, the demands of the school, and the demands of the community. Inevitably, the demands of the community are often left last, or even left out.

The purpose of this series is to afford an opportunity for remote educators to kulintjaku (to hear, think and understand) Anangu standpoints about the things that constitute "the heart of learning" from their perspective.

We have titled the next three papers in the series "At the Heart of Learning":

- "Witulya Mulapa Ngananna Mantjintjaku: From Cultural Devastation to Cultural Re-invention" (Minutjukur & Osborne, 2014)
- "Kurunta Kanyintja: Holding Knowledge in Our Spirit" (Tjitayi & Osborne, 2014)
- "Kuranyu-kutu Nyakula Nyaan Nyanganyi? Imagining the Future" (Burton & Osborne, 2014)

In this introductory paper, I will highlight some of the issues that face non-Indigenous educators in remote schooling as they are faced with coming to terms with educating in a cultural and philosophical context that differs significantly to their own experiences and understanding of the world. Makinti Minutjukur then addresses the key concepts of power and education with a view to approaching the future. Western education offers the acquisition of power, but as Makinti highlights, Anangu have (and have always had) their own sense of identity, power and belonging that they don't wish to abandon. This issue is made more complex within the current cultural and historical context where long-held understandings of the world and the very sense of "being Anangu" have been devastated to the point that a complex process of re-imagining Anangu identity and power is required.

Katrina Tjitayi then presents some key understandings about learning from Anangu perspectives. The role of family being as "close voices" is critical in building confidence and "opening the spirit" to learning and new knowledge. As she describes, the Anangu sense of meaningful learning "feels different" and knowledge that "sticks" is held in the spirit. Rueben Burton concludes the series by describing the challenge of encouraging and building aspiration in young Anangu. He highlights how important the "imagined future" (Nakata, 2007a) is for young people but points out that Piranpa teachers need to understand the limitations they have in this regard. He describes family as the focal point of aspiration and describes how he has sought to encourage and instil both confidence and aspiration in his own children.

The authors in this series have sought to describe key challenges and highlight important considerations for remote educators by drawing on personal experiences, relevant literatures and theoretical positions and, through a collaborative process of planning, sharing and ongoing group discussion, outline key issues that we believe lie "at the heart of learning" in Anangu education.

No time for "hearing"

In 2010, I was fortunate enough to meet Jeffrey L. Bleich, United States Ambassador to Australia, on a trip to Canberra. He was explaining the life of a senior White House

staffer and said, "It's not about being the smartest or the best, it's about being able to make good decisions most of the time on very little sleep" (J. Bleich, personal communication, 2010). I felt this description wasn't too far removed from the reality of the remote principalship. In reality, it is very hard to find time simply to listen in such a pressured context, let alone to move beyond simply listening to a point of "hearing", even understanding where, epistemologically and ontologically speaking, there is a great divide between that of an educated professional "here to work" and the lived context of the community (see for example Arbon, 2008; Ford, 2010; Nakata, 2007b). The nature of these points of philosophical, cultural and ontological difference is further described throughout this paper. Serious challenges also exist for Anangu to "hear" and to understand Piranpa educators, where mutual trust and understanding is built slowly and needs time, a commodity that always seems lacking in the professional context of remote schooling.

In earlier times, schools had far fewer resources and staff, and must have wondered at times whether people in the urban centres were even aware of their existence. The Harry Scrawls comics (Bucknall & Myers, 1995) that flourished in the 1970s were based on the scenario of a single teacher stuck in a Central Australian community with their silver bullet caravan as a classroom. Teetering on the brink of insanity, he tries every trick imaginable to get students to come to school and also for "someone" to notice that he's out there "in the middle of nowhere". Of course, this comic is somewhat tongue-in-cheek, but it highlights the fact that in a historical environment of fewer broader systemic demands, remote teachers had more time to "hear" and allow this understanding to inform their practice. It also reflects the feeling that during the reconstruction of Darwin after the destruction of Cyclone Tracy in 1974, remote teachers experienced a low accountability environment to the point that they really did feel "alone in the world" as all efforts turned to the city's reconstruction. The days of Harry Scrawls, on all accounts, are but a distant memory, and whilst Harry may have struggled with his personal and professional circumstances, the high levels of autonomy afforded remote educators during that era allowed them more time to "hear" from community voices and priorities and to respond to these positions in their professional practice. Many remote educators sought to position the education programmes they offered to incorporate local languages and social and cultural norms and values, and to use flexible approaches to incorporate community events such as cultural celebrations, sporting carnivals and mobility patterns of students and their families into the formal schooling experience.

In the current context of remote education, seeming inaction in addressing "poor outcomes" or "failure" has risks attached, not least the risk of adverse media attention (see for example "Fear APY School Attendance Rates Falling", *ABC News*, 2011; "Education Fails Indigenous Kids", Hughes & Hughes, 2010; "Parents 'Part of' Truancy Problem", Martin, 2012a; and "Language Skills Poor in 40% of APY Children", Martin, 2012b). It is clear to see that our "activity" in remote schooling is far more frenetic than the days of the silver bullet caravans, but one often wonders whether we're simply swinging a blunt axe with twice the speed, as nationally collected and compared data continue to point to low achievement levels, or ultimately, "failure" (Ford, 2012). Perhaps we should heed the words of Abraham Lincoln: "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe" (n.d., para. 3). Or perhaps more bluntly, "I never learned anything while I was talking" (Larry King, n.d., para. 2).

In the sense of the Pitjantjatjara term kulini (listening), a deepening spiral exists as to the extent we can "hear". The Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara dictionary (Goddard, 1996) states the English meanings as: listening, hearing, thinking, deciding, knowing, understanding,

feeling, premonition (sixth sense). In the sense of kulini, a dilemma exists for Piranpa educators in Anangu communities where significant epistemological and ontological points of difference exist (see for example Arbon, 2008; Bain, 2006; Ford, 2010; Nakata, 2007b) and time pressures loom imminently on a constant basis, raising the inevitable question, "How can we really hear?"

This paper aims to highlight the need for remote principals (and other educators) to recognize the existence of other values, knowledges and ways of being in the communities they work in. Simply initiating conversations with community members may not be an accurate guide to community perceptions on education, values and the future of young people, unless a deeper sense of learning "how" to hear, "when" to hear and "why hearing matters" is given time and room to explore.

The cultural interface

Nakata (2007b) and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics (see for example Arbon 2008, Ford 2010) explain that Indigenous epistemologies, cosmologies, ontologies and axiologies are almost diametrically opposed in their essence to the values and neoliberal assumptions that underpin Western education and society more broadly. Whilst this point may well be obvious to Anangu, for example, this point is not necessarily well understood by non-Indigenous educators, particularly in the early stages of teaching in remote communities. Of course there are immediately obvious cultural differences, but the relationship (or non-relationship) between Western and Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing take time for Piranpa to observe, reflect on and make sense of in their own way. It takes time, self-awareness and critical reflection to begin to "hear".

Nakata (2007b) describes the "cultural interface" as the point at which Western (or scientific) and Indigenous knowledge intersects. The Western education process in Anangu communities touches on both ends of the knowledge continuum and moves across all points in between in complex ways. Frameworks such as Nakata's (2007b) concept of the "cultural interface" and Yunupingu's (1999) concept of "both ways" are useful in that they explain the differences in knowledges, histories and philosophies that exist, and encourage educators to consider how they might take account of the contrasting knowledge systems and scaffold students back and across the interface to build confidence and improve engagement with and understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of the "Other".

We're all complicit in the game

Although Anangu hold strong values that differ greatly from the dominant Western neoliberal values that are assumed in education systems (see Guenther & Bat, 2012; Nakata, 2007b), it is common for conversations between Piranpa and Anangu to give the impression that Anangu are in complete agreement with everything being said. This is often the case in the Anangu context where it is polite to agree with what is being said, even if what is being said is not understood or not actually agreed with (see Bain, 2006; Hargrave, 1991). Piranpa can be left feeling validated and that their assertions are "clearly right", given the supportive conversations that take place. On occasion, we have the opportunity to realize that we can all retreat to a comfortable, unchallenged space, complicit in a game that no one really believes in, but we play it anyway.

Munns and McFadden (2000) explore aspects of resistance amongst Aboriginal students in education in Sydney. Critically, Koori educators, whilst fighting to educate, support and improve things for the Koori students on the one hand, hold a sense of empathy and resignation for the position that students take in

giving way to various pressures and, ultimately, failing. A Koori teacher shares an empathetic position with that of his students:

> *G. Munns*: Do you think a lot of Aboriginal people are sending their kids to school but thinking deep down they're not going to make it?
>
> *Teacher*: Definitely, that's an underlying attitude. I know as a parent that I want my children to succeed and I'm pushing my children to succeed, but yet you still have that element of doubt of saying, "You know it's going to be bloody tough out there when they get out there in the real world." And you think to yourself, "What is the point of making them go to school if they're not going to get anywhere." (Munns & McFadden, 2000, p. 65)

A Koori community worker openly shares:

> The parents take the attitude of well, "Me kid can't read, he can't add up, so it's the teacher's fault, so I'm not going to send him to school. Let him run around The Centre if he wants to. Let him be king pin out there all on his own in the streets." There's not as much shame in that, different from a Whitefella not turning up at school. (Munns & McFadden, 2000, p. 67)

These Aboriginal staff are the champions and role models of education and achievement, and yet, deep down, there's a strong empathy for the feelings of the child and a level of permission, acceptance, or perhaps resignation to the resistance position taken by the students. These sentiments and experiences stand in contrast to the position of Chris Sarra (2011), for example, where he argues strongly that Indigenous people have agency and must take control of their own emancipation and resist the "othered" position afforded them by mainstream Australia, rather than resisting the education system as such. Sarra (2011) draws on the work of McConaghy (2000) and MacLennan and Mitropoulos (2000) in describing the "Same–Other" binary. "In post-colonial and post-structuralist thought", he argues, "… it is a mark of criticism to say to someone that you are treating, for example, Aborigines as Other" (Sarra, 2011, p. 27).

Sarra goes on to argue that educational underachievement should not be rationalized away in reinforcing negative stereotypes of the "Other", but that "we" (educators of Indigenous students) should refuse to "accept a negative Aboriginal identity" (p. 169), and further:

> Schools that are led by individuals who have a positive and accurate understanding of Aboriginal perceptions of being Aboriginal, to the extent that they value and ensure they are guided by Aboriginal leadership, will challenge, nurture and embrace Aboriginal students who will undoubtedly become stronger and smarter. (p. 169)

Rhetoric vs. reality

In Anangu communities, community rhetoric tends to support (or mirror) the Piranpa-led conversation about the need for school and a Western education for Anangu children. This can be baffling for Piranpa educators when children are then seemingly afforded the option of arriving at school hours late, or even not at all. The reality of relatively poor levels of school engagement seems completely at odds with the rhetoric of overwhelming support for the need for schooling and Western education as being critically important for the children's futures.

In 2011, I worked with a group of Yapa (Warlpiri) community researchers in developing an approach to undertake some action research around the problem of poor attendance at school. After a few days of working through the process of learning about research

ethics, methods and interview techniques, I decided to model a typical interview in the typically power-laden, predictable manner that often bears the title "research", but is so often a staged process, both sides faithfully fulfilling the roles in the asking of obvious questions, followed by the giving of obvious answers.

I suggested that I interview one of the community researchers to model an interview and then deconstruct the interview. I pointed out the fact that I am a Kardiya (white) researcher coming into the community to find out about what the community thinks about education to help the school make positive changes to improve education in the community. We took the interview very seriously. The following transcript is a record of an important moment of exploring the rhetoric/reality gap that exists at the "cultural interface" (Nakata, 2007b):

> *SO*: Do you think education is important for children in Yuendumu?
>
> *Participant*: Yes, very important.
>
> *SO*: Why do you think education is important for children in Yuendumu?
>
> *Participant*: So they can learn to read and write and be strong in two cultures and get a job.
>
> *SO*: And do you think children should go to school every day?
>
> *Participant*: Yes.
>
> *SO*: Whose responsibility is it for making sure children are at school every day?
>
> *Participant*: The parents. … I think it's the parents.
>
> *SO*: What do you think should happen if children aren't attending school?
>
> *Participant*: I think maybe the police should go and see the parents or maybe the parents should lose their Centrelink [welfare] payments. (Osborne, 2011)

At this point, I stopped the questions so that we could reflect on the interview I had modelled in relation to power-laden research, the nature of research using "obvious" and closed questions, and to reflect on whether the participant had contributed the things they actually believe, or whether they had been complicit in the "conspiracy".

At this exact moment, a young lad around 14 years old wandered into our workshop room looking very relaxed and comfortable. He was walking from the door and slowly making his way around the table to where I had set up some drinks, fruit and some nuts. I recognized this boy from my time working in remote South Australia, some 800 km to the south by road. Amazed, I asked, "Shane, what are you doing here?" He motioned towards the woman I had just been interviewing about education and schooling and, with some hesitation, continued to make his way around the table to the other side of the room to survey the offerings of snacks and drinks, without really making significant eye contact with anyone in the room. I focused my attention on the woman, waiting for her to fill me in, but she did not make eye contact with me or with the boy, apparently oblivious to the exchange that had just taken place. I felt I should "make the links" and explain why I was making a bit of a fuss over this boy. I explained, "I was working in the APY Lands earlier in the year and was teaching some choir in the school and that's how I know Shane. What on earth is he doing here in Yuendumu?"

At this point, the woman turned towards me and said, "Sam, this is my son Shane. I gave him away as a baby to be raised in South Australia, but now he's come back to get to know the family and I'm looking after him."

This, of course, raised some serious opportunities to interrogate the entire interview process

that had just taken place, which it must be said, was undertaken very seriously by Shane's mother.

This was all happening on a school day at around 12:30 in the afternoon and the lad had not yet been to school, which was open and was not more than 25 metres away, directly across the road. I explained (in over-excited role play fashion), "But you just told me that education was really important and that parents should get a visit from the police and lose their welfare because it's their responsibility to make sure that their children are at school every day!"

"Yeah, but, it's ok," said the woman (in other words, just calm down, you obviously don't understand how this works).

"But," I persisted, "I did some serious research and evaluation and the Yuendumu community told me that if parents aren't worried about their kids being at school every day, they should get a visit from the police and maybe lose their welfare payments!"

"Yeah, but it's not like that," she replied.

"But for me, if my child wandered in to my work in the middle of the school day looking for snacks, I would be angry, hurt, ashamed and I would march my child back to the school and tell the principal that it's terrible that they even allowed a child out the front gate, and then I would be telling my child that this should never happen again. And yet none of you guys even stirred when he walked in the room. I didn't even know you two had met!" I contested in mock alarm.

"Yes, Panji [brother-in-law]," interjected one of the senior men on the research team, "but you see, Yapa aren't like that," he explained.

Again, to bring the obvious "problem" of the situation to light, I restated, "But we just conducted credible and respectful research that 'proves' that Yapa *are exactly* like that…"

We had hit the intersection point between the rhetoric/reality conflict that remains ever-present in the cross-cultural interface of power-laden dialogue between "outsiders" (in the cultural sense) and Central Australian Aboriginal Australians. On both sides of the exchange, we played the well-rehearsed roles of outside researcher and supportive (complicit) community member.

Over the next 2 hours, we discussed the deeper issues of child rearing and Yapa values, how values are reproduced or rejected and how traditional Warlpiri values inform the nature of engagement with school and education, despite the rhetoric espousing the critical role of education in the community. This conversation took time and a commitment to "hearing" beyond the typical opportunities afforded professional educators in the current contexts of remote schooling.

And so too, remote educators can be lulled into the false sense that the values they hold, shaped by their own axioms and experiences, are fully shared with the community they work in, unless they learn to "hear" beyond the rhetoric. A regional professional development focus would be a worthwhile innovation to allow remote educators to better understand the context of conflicting values and assumptions that exist in the remote schooling context and more effectively position themselves and their efforts as teachers within this domain (see Osborne & Guenther, 2013). This is where a model such as Nakata's (2007b) cultural interface is an important consideration for remote educators to begin to interrogate their own position, assumptions and values in the intercultural remote education space. Without engaging in a process of critical self-reflection, taking account of Anangu epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies, and beginning an intentional process of seeking to "hear" these standpoints, remote educators are at risk of faithfully perpetuating an environment that necessitates the rhetoric/reality conflict. This can result in teachers feeling (sadly) justified in their sense of having done all they can to educate their students, so the "problem" of students not fully buying in to the entire package of neoliberal logic and values obviously lies with "them".

Sarra (2011) urges educators of Indigenous students and the systems they work in to resist blaming communities for "failing to engage with schools for the purposes of education" (p. 161) and encourages the kind of critical self-reflection described above:

> The professional challenge for classroom teachers and their support infrastructure is to reflect inwards and evaluate the effectiveness of their own teaching practice and ask what it is that they are doing or not doing as a teacher that contributes to Indigenous student failure. (p. 161)

Interrupting the game

This series of papers is intended to help, in some way, to begin the process of kulini. By privileging Anangu educators in the conversation, we hope to change the platform from one that supports a conversation "about us" to one that promotes engagement in dialogue "with us"; a dialogue that moves beyond rhetoric and resistance. In a sense, we hope to allow remote educators to "peer in" to the reality of Anangu values, culture, ways of knowing and ways of being and, in doing so, be informed from beyond the rhetoric that exists in the power-laden conversations in communities about education. Harry Scrawls (Bucknall & Myers, 1995) and his silver bullet caravan school contemporaries may have had the luxury of time to learn to "hear", but in recognizing the complex and time-poor nature of remote education in the current context (some 40 years later), we hope to inspire and accelerate deeper thinking and dialogue about "what really matters" and "what can really make a difference" in the remote education context.

This is a different proposition to simply fitting Aboriginal knowledge into the "already crowded" curriculum. As Nakata (2007b) points out, "In their differences, Indigenous knowledge systems and Western scientific ones are considered so disparate as to be 'incommensurable' (Verran, 2005) or 'irreconcilable' (Russel, 2005)" (p. 8).

And further, Nakata (2007b) describes the complex issues in "hearing" and "knowing":

> In the intellectual discourse, translation has already occurred. Indigenous knowledge is re-presented and re-configured as part of the corpus "about" us and is already discursively bounded, ordered and organised by others and their sets of interests. (p. 9)

It seems there is a seduction for educators to introduce "Indigenous knowledge" disembodied from the "knowers", "dislocated … from its locale" and "separated from the social institutions that uphold and reinforce its efficacy" (Nakata, 2007b p. 9). The requirement to populate the curriculum with "Aboriginal Perspectives" (The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011; Michie, Anlezark, & Uibo, 1998; Western Australia Department of Education, 2012), for example, re-presents the conflict of being caught in the middle of competing demands and value systems. In the remote context of Anangu education, the knowledge, the knowers and the location exist just beyond the school fence. Working from an activity and knowledge base that Anangu value would be a sensible starting point for both engaging students and providing opportunities for Piranpa teachers to observe what intergenerational learning looks and feels like in an Anangu context. As Yunupingu (1999) suggests, this can be an important starting point from which to build the knowledge links across to relevant Western knowledges where appropriate.

In order to move beyond efforts to simply "include" or "consult" the community, remote principals must lead a process of pursuing meaningful relationships with community members through a commitment to "really hearing". This can be a challenging and complex goal, but is critical if a remote education

is to penetrate beyond the locked spaces of rhetoric and resistance. Alternatively, through this process, we hope to inspire a "coming to voice" at the educational leadership level from the Anangu perspective. This series is not intended to provide a list of the answers, but hopes to provide a grinding stone as a tool for sharpening the axe.

Acknowledgements

The work reported in this publication was supported by funding from the Australian Government Cooperative Research Centres Program through the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP). The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the CRC-REP or its participants.

Glossary

Anangu	an Aboriginal person (this is the term Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people of Central Australia use to refer to themselves)
Kardiya	a Warlpiri language term meaning non-Indigenous person
kulini	hearing, thinking, knowing about, feeling and understanding
kulintjaku	in order to hear, think, know about, feel and understand
Panji	a Warlpiri language term meaning brother-in-law
Piranpa	a non-Indigenous person
Putuna kulini	"I can't hear/understand"
Yapa	a Warlpiri language term (from the Tanami Desert region) used to refer to themselves

References

ABC News. (2011). Fear APY school attendance rates falling. Retrieved from http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-01-27/fears-apy-school-attendance-rates-falling/1920180

Arbon, V. (2008). *Arlathirnda ngurkarnda ityirnda: Being-knowing-doing, de-colonising indigenous tertiary education*. Teneriffe, Australia: Post Press.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2011). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures*. Retrieved from http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/CrossCurriculumPriorities/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-histories-and-cultures

Bain, M. S. (2006). *White men are liars: Another look at Aboriginal–Western interactions*. Alice Springs, Australia: AuSIL.

Bucknall, R., & Myers, M. (1995). *Harry Scrawls BA DipEd: Condensed and revisited*. Darwin, Australia: Northern Territory Department of Education for the Northern Territory Council for Educational Administration.

Burton, R., & Osborne, S. (2014). At the heart of learning (series: paper 4 of 4): Kuranyu-kutu nyakula nyaan nyanganyi? Imagining the future. *AlterNative*, *10*(1), 33–44.

Ford, M. (2012). Achievement gaps in Australia: What NAPLAN reveals about education inequality in Australia. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, *16*(1), 1–23.

Ford, P. L. (2010). *Aboriginal knowledge narratives and country: Marri kunkimba putj putj marrideyan*. Brisbane, Australia: Post Pressed.

Goddard, C. (1996). *Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara to English dictionary* (Rev. 2nd ed.). Alice Springs, Australia: IAD Press.

Guenther, J., & Bat, M. (2012, September). *Towards a good education in very remote Australia: Is it just a case of moving the desks around?* The International Rural Network Forum 2012, Whyalla and Upper Spencer Gulf.

Hargrave, S. (1991). *Whitefella culture* (Rev. 2nd ed.). Darwin, Australia: Summer Institute of Linguistics.

Hughes, H., & Hughes, M. (2010). Education fails indigenous kids. *The Australian*. Retrieved from http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/education-fails-indigenous-kids/story-e6frg6zo-1225859601205

King, L. (n.d.). *Goodreads*. Retrieved from http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/19874.Larry_King

Lincoln, A. (n.d.). *Quotation Reference*. Retrieved from http://www.quotationreference.com/quotefinder.php?strt=1&subj=Abraham+Lincoln&byax=1

MacLennan, G., & Mitropoulos, M. (2000). *Bothering about othering* (Unpublished paper).

Martin, K. (2003). *Aboriginal people, Aboriginal lands and indigenist research: A discussion of re-search pasts and neo-colonial research futures* (Unpublished master's thesis). James Cook University, Townsville, Australia.

Martin, S. (2012a). Parents "part of" truancy problem. *The Australian*. Retrieved from http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/indigenous/parents-part-of-truancy-problem/story-fn9hm1pm-1226304568009

Martin, S. (2012b). Language skills poor in 40% of APY children. *The Australian*. Retrieved from http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/indigenous/language-skills-poor-in-40pc-of-apy-children/story-fn9hm1pm-1226427556032

McConaghy, C. (2000). *Rethinking indigenous education: Culturalism, colonialism and the politics of knowing*. Brisbane, Australia: Post Pressed.

Michie, M., Anlezark, J., & Uibo, D. (1998). *Beyond bush tucker: Implementing indigenous perspectives through the science curriculum*. Australian Science Teachers Conference Proceedings, Darwin, Australia.

Minutjukur, M., & Osborne, S. (2014). At the heart of learning (series: paper 2 of 4): Witulya mulapa nganana mantjintjaku: From cultural devastation to cultural re-invention. *AlterNative*, *10*(1), 15–22.

Munns, G., & McFadden, M. (2000). First chance, second chance or last chance? Resistance and response to education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *21*(1), 59–75.

Nakata, M. (2007a). *Disciplining the savages: Savaging the disciplines*. Canberra, Australia: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Nakata, M. (2007b). The cultural interface. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, *36* (Supplement), 7–14.

Osborne, S. (2011). *Yuendumu vignette* (Unpublished transcript).

Osborne, S., & Guenther, J. (2013). Red dirt thinking on power, pedagogy and paradigms: Reframing the dialogue in remote education. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, *42*(2), 111–122. doi: 10.1017/jie.2013.19

Rigney, L. (1999). Internationalization of an Indigenous anticolonial critique of research methodologies: A guide to Indigenist research methodology and its principles. *Wicazo Sa Review*, *14*(2), 109–121.

Russel, L. (2005). Indigenous knowledge and the archives: Accessing hidden history and understandings. In M. Nakata & M. Langton (Eds.), *Australian indigenous knowledge and libraries* (pp. 169–180). Canberra, Australia: Australian Academic & Research Libraries, Australian Library and Information Association.

Sarra, C. (2011). *Strong and smart—Towards a pedagogy for emancipation: Education for First Peoples*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Smith, L. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). London, England: Zed Books.

Steinhauer, E. (2002). Thoughts on an indigenous research methodology. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, *26*(2), 69–81.

Tjitayi, K., & Osborne, S. (2014). At the heart of learning (series: paper 3 of 4): Kurunta kanyintja: Holding knowledge in our spirit. *AlterNative*, *10*(1), 23–32.

Verran, H. (2005). *Knowledge traditions of Aboriginal Australians: Questions and answers arising in a databasing project*. Retrieved from http://www.cdu.edu.au/centres/ik/pdf/knowledgeanddatabasing.pdf

Western Australia Department of Education. (2012). *Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum*. Retrieved from http://www.det.wa.edu.au/aboriginaleducation/apac/detcms/portal/

Wilson, A., & Pence, E. (2006). U.S. legal interventions in the lives of battered women: An indigenous assessment. In D. E. Smith (Ed.), *Institutional ethnography as practice*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Winnipeg, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

Yunupingu, M. (1999). Double power. In P. Wignell (Ed.), *Double power: English literacy and indigenous education* (pp. 1–4). Melbourne, Australia: Language Australia.