

# Mutual Transformation Through Arts-Based Service Learning With Australian Aboriginal Communities: An Australian Case Study

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reports from a national arts-based service-learning project in Australia. Working with pre-service teachers, the paper employs the theoretical framework of *sentipensante* (sensing/thinking), which has been successfully used in disciplines such as policy, leadership, and communication. Participant stories reveal a network of relations that create understanding of shared existence, and these learning experiences emerge as variously threshold, transformative, and/or troublesome. Findings lend support to the value of flexible, critical service learning approaches, particularly in diverse cultural contexts.

At the heart of service learning in post-secondary education are partnerships between higher education institutions and communities, as co-generators of knowledge. Programs in the arts are well suited to service-learning projects, engaging what Rendon (2009) calls *sentipensante* pedagogy (from *sentir* - sensing or feeling, and *pensar* - intellect or thinking) in which critical examinations of worldviews and relational contemplative practices sit alongside one another. The *sentipensante* framework is an established approach for research in education policy and practice, with a special emphasis on socially and culturally diverse settings (Kanagala & Rendon, 2013). Adoption of the framework has, for example, been shown to increase retention among African American and Latino university students (Case, 2011). Prior to this, an early version of the approach was successfully adopted with students in leadership classes, intergroup relations classes, and

learning communities in the discipline of engineering (Burgis & Rendon, 2006).

*Sentipensante* pedagogy has important goals. The first is to disrupt entrenched belief systems that divide knowing, thinking and feeling, and act against wholeness. This can expose experiences that are threshold, transformative, and/or troublesome. Another goal is “to instill in learners a commitment to sustain life, maintain the rights of all people, and preserve nature and the harmony of our world” (Rendon, 2009, p. 135-6). To achieve these aims, Rendon advocates a method through which learners approach what is being learned on a deeper level through the use of reflective practices such as community service work, so that what is generated is not just knowledge, but wisdom.

The research reported here drew inspiration from the *sentipensante* pedagogical framework and used its associated concepts to

examine an arts-based service learning case study in the remote townships of Tennant Creek and Elliott, in Australia's Northern Territory. This case study focuses on a network of relations that create understanding of shared existence, bringing together not only on *what* was done but also on *how* and with *whom*. In particular, it highlights the core values of relationship building as well as the reflection and reciprocity that are central in this kind of pedagogical approach (Butin, 2003). The paper also sets out to highlight the benefits that a case study in one site can provide for further research in arts-based service learning with First Peoples. For pre-service teachers, it draws attention to issues of critical engagement and self-confidence alongside preparation for the experience through cultural immersion; for communities, it highlights the importance of community voice in the planning and execution of projects.

## METHOD

### APPROACH AND CONTEXT

The context of this study was the program called Professional Experience 3 (PE3 in the Master of Teaching Secondary Course), at the University of Western Sydney (UWS). This program requires pre-service teachers to complete 60 hours of work in a service-learning context that directly addresses social disadvantage. Partners include state government departments, non-government organizations, and an array of educational and community sites, collaborating with pre-service teachers in co-constructing knowledge (James, Clayton, & Jaeger, 2010). Each year up to 500 students complete a PE3 placement before beginning work as teachers, and the PE3 program is distinctive in that it is embedded in a graduate entry program as a mandatory unit of study, requiring students to reflect on their learning experiences in a real context.

In community service-learning projects, participants can come to understand the benefits of giving back to their communities while becoming critical thinking individuals (Molnar,

2010). Through written reflection, pre-service teachers learn to engage in critical self-monitoring as they attend to their learning experiences. They write their experiences and shape their professional identities as they develop and refine their teaching philosophy. Engagement with service learning has positive effects on pre-service teachers' sense of social responsibility, enabling them to work on motivational project-based learning (Munns et al., 2006) and achieve positive results with disengaged learners (Kahne, Westheimer, & Rogers, 2000).

The six pre-service teachers reported here had successfully applied to participate in the PE3 program known as Community Action Support (CAS), which is located in Tennant Creek. Approximately 10 students per year are selected from a rigorous application and interview process that considers attributes such as teaching competency, maturity, and self-awareness. These attributes are important, because in this inter-cultural setting it matters not only what is done but also how and with whom (Sandmann, Moore, & Quinn, 2012). If selected, the pre-service teachers complete a four-week professional experience in schools and a simultaneous service-learning project in the community.

In the case study location, First Nations students form 80% of the high school population. The majority of students come from the Warumungu people, the traditional custodians of the land, along with Warlpiri and Kalkadoon peoples and non-First Nations students. The UWS partner in Tennant Creek is the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ALNF). Since 2009, ALNF has supported pre-service teachers in placements at the high school and primary school and, most recently, a school at Elliott, within the local community. The service-learning experience (developed in partnership with ALNF and the Papulu Aparr-Kari First Nations Language Centre) focuses attention on First Nations educational outcomes in remote Australia.

During the preparation week in June, pre-service teachers engage in cultural training with the Aunties at the Papulu Aparr-Kari Language Centre (in Aboriginal culture, Aunties are wise women who are guardians of respect and rules

of behavior) (Robertson, Demosthenous, & Demosthenous, 2005). This is the time when there is consultation with the community about the projects to be undertaken during the October placement. This consultation is undertaken with the high school executive, the Elders at the Language Centre and the staff at the nearby Winanjjikari Music Centre. At the Language Centre, pre-service teachers learn about skin relationships and receive a skin name. In so doing, they come to understand how skin names relate to the organization of First Nations society, from marriage to all the circumstances of daily life, including their responsibilities to each other. Such responsibilities remain a way of managing life and ensure that there are common understandings about ceremonial business and obligations to the land. During the Tennant Creek placement weeks, the Papulu Aparr-Kari Centre provides other connections for students: for example, translating song lyrics and providing insights into First Nations community life.

This case study forms part of a nationwide study into arts-based service learning with First Nations communities in Australia, involving four universities (Bartleet et al., in press). By focusing on this one case study within the broader project, we have been able to flesh out in more detail the issues relating to this specific social and cultural context, and to give voice to the experiences of six pre-service teachers (four in music, one in language, and one in visual arts). In particular it is hoped that the paper will be of benefit to researchers, community members, and policy makers interested in the application of this pedagogical approach (Stake, 2000).

A case study approach was adopted for this aspect of the research because of its versatility and scope. Case studies allow for a deep investigation of a person, group, issue, or phenomenon within the unique boundary of their context. Moreover, they enable exploration of the research problem within the context of those involved. In this way, the intention of scrutinizing a specific example becomes the formulation of a “more general principle” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 181). Each of the three projects in this nationwide study worked with different student participants

including undergraduate musicians, undergraduate journalists and writers, and post-graduate pre-service teachers. Again, case studies were ideal for investigating the experiences of the pre-service teachers because they enabled us to focus on the developmental progress of acquiring a teacher identity while engaged in service learning. The multiple opinions and descriptions in what was discovered and retold by the participants provided a richness of perspective that offered us new insights into the nature of service learning.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) also suggest that the case study provides an authentic glimpse into a reality, albeit a contextual and possibly subjective reality. The significance of this is recognizing that context will always have an effect on its subjects, and that the individual or phenomenon within that context subsequently determines reality. Our research recognized the inherent subjectivity of each case and consequently sought to describe and interpret without the preoccupation of generalizability. We acknowledge, however, the potential worth and applicability of findings to other settings and cases.

### **Ethical Conduct of the Case Study**

Ethical approval was granted for all elements of data collection and reporting at each of the universities in the consortium. Pre-service teachers, their supervisors at the schools, and First Nations community members at the Language Centre and the Music Centre, all completed consent forms. Only those participants who freely gave consent had their responses to the research interview protocols recorded. Interview questions are shown in Appendix A. Respondent questions are identified according to cohort as pre-service teacher questions (PS1 and PS2), high school teacher questions (HS1), Winanjjikari musicians and recording staff (WM1), and Barkly Arts personnel (BA1). Barkly Arts interviews happened as they are the regional institution in which the Winanjjikari Music Centre is located.

Thematic discourse analysis was selected to provide a detailed and nuanced account of themes where broader assumptions and

meanings were seen to underpin what was articulated in the data. By interviewing pre-service teachers, it was possible to assess whether the service learning prepared them to organize, manage, and prepare their classrooms in ways that improved outcomes for Aboriginal students. Furthermore, these interviews prompted pre-service teachers in their reflective learning and the critical re-examination of their worldviews, in line with the *sentipensante* pedagogy. The researcher in the field used semi-structured interviews of one hour's duration to gather data and document the experiences of the pre-service teachers. These interviews were recorded and transcribed and analyzed for key themes via NVivo, giving the participants the opportunity to communicate their experience of the CAS program and offer their first-hand perspectives.

The pre-service teachers were first interviewed in focus groups in the preparation week before the beginning of the professional experience block. This discussion provided benchmark information about the expectations of pre-service teachers' experiences including expectations about Aboriginal students, the pre-service teachers' level of confidence, their ideas of working respectfully in this intercultural setting, and their anticipated learning. In interviews held at the end of the professional experience, participants focused on their learning, their awareness of their school students' learning, and the importance of cultural interaction and both ways learning. Later questions formed the basis of digital stories exploring what they had learned from each other collegially and their commitment to enhancing Aboriginal arts and culture in the future. During the analysis of this data, three key themes emerged as significant: building relationships, reciprocity, and reflection. Other related issues included the importance of cultural competency, confidence in intercultural relationships, and community voice in planning projects. These themes and related issues resonate strongly with those found across the broader project (Bartleet et al., in press).

## RESULTS

### Building Relationships

Relationships are central to the sustainability of service learning projects in First Nations communities. These relationships are built on shared experiences that may involve the development of skills and engagement with learning. Other kinds of First Peoples' ways of knowing, through music for example, can enhance the passing on of First Peoples language from one generation to the next (House of Representatives, 2012). During a preparation visit in June 2011, two pre-service music teachers, Paul and Genesa, were given an opportunity to directly respond to this need in the Tennant Creek community. This involved a recording project for adolescent musicians with mentoring from adult musicians at the Winanjikari Music Centre. During this preparation visit, Paul and Genesa were approached by one of the musicians at the Music Centre in the town to become part of an initiative to create a recording with young Australian Aboriginal musicians. At their disposal were the resources of the high school along with the keen interest of the adult musicians of the Music Centre.

This consultation with community in the planning process of service learning projects took place in the preparation week in June, before pre-service teachers returned for a four-week professional experience in schools that also encompassed their community project. For pre-service teachers in English, this took the form of mentoring in a cross-generational project, where Year 11 students (approximately 17 years old) helped Year 2 Students (approximately 8 years old) in associating words in Warumungu with English. The planning and execution of the cross-generational project directly responds to community needs for language renewal. For a visual arts pre-service teacher, her project involved consulting with the community and local artists for ways in which to relevantly connect school students' art-making with future education and employment. Such a project responds to community aspirations for a better future for Australian Aboriginal youth.

When Paul and Genesa returned for their professional experience block in October 2011, they worked to establish relationships with students. In lessons with Year 11 students, they worked on a songwriting project about their musical tastes. Five Year 11 students had elected music and they constituted a band among themselves. While they were quite experienced in performing they had not yet ventured into song writing, but they knew that this was the way in which to frame a distinctive sound of their own. The result of their relationship building was that teachers and students worked together to capture a song about punk rock within a slightly ironic lens.

The pre-service teachers also worked with a Year 10 class in which a number of students had skills on several instruments, and they worked with these students to build confidence in performing. The first songwriting lesson with Year 10 students began by compiling memories about family. Genesa reflected that the students were hesitant at first, but that they then came up with many ideas and finally completed three verses and a chorus, which was quite an achievement for the first lesson. By the end of the placement, two song tracks had been recorded at the local Winanjikari Music Centre with the assistance of the musician who first approached the students. Pre-service teacher Paul reflected, "The studio was run by Australian Aboriginal people, keen musicians and the nicest bunch of people."

Not only did the school students develop confidence in performing and songwriting but the pre-service teachers developed in confidence as teachers, growing the teacher identities that they would continue to shape throughout their careers. In the words of Aboriginal interpreter and artist Nancy Turner (2010, p. 198), teaching is a sacred thing ... sacred things about our existence: to grow up how to be, how to continue growing and learning in the right way throughout our lives, how to live the life stretching out before us, to continue living the life we were born to live.

There is substantial evidence that an effective music teacher establishes a special relationship with students, both in their musical and personal development. While it is not possible to measure the importance for students

of "inspiring teachers who love teaching, show interest in students ... are firm when necessary, and present detailed criticism constructively" (Mills, 2003, p. 79), these attributes were certainly visible in the pre-service teachers' interactions with their students during the songwriting process. Likewise, a teacher must also be able to give students the courage to persevere (Cohler & Galatzer-Levy, 1992). Blake was one of the four music pre-service teachers who went to Tennant Creek, and with his colleague Nick he initiated Open Mic nights in which the community musicians could participate. Inspiring students with the courage to take the first steps in performing is evident in Blake's reflections about encouraging students:

Year 10 almost didn't get up to play at the musical evening. Brandon was really nervous and he came to me and said, 'I'm just going to go home, I can't play it.' I encouraged him, saying that he'd feel amazing afterwards. At the end he didn't say much but he was smiling. You could tell. As he and a friend were walking off, Nick and I ran down the path to give them another high five at the end.

Corinne, a pre-service art teacher, experienced teaching at Elliott, a smaller community some 252 kilometers north of Tennant Creek. She reflected after teaching an art lesson that students need to see how teachers have become who they are:

The kids don't want to see you as an expert. They want to know that it's OK to have learned to know what you know, that you arrived at the place where you are. They want to see that trajectory. Even today, I said, 'I had to learn a new way when I write on the board.' That is important. Each person in that class is having that sort of change experience. There are kids in that class who are being teased. It is impacting on their learning. All those things are ways of building relationships.

Corinne also spoke about building relationships with teachers and local artists:

I'm definitely learning stuff about having relationships to teachers. It's a whole other country, working out how to balance and nurture those relationships, to share information and to make every program richer. And for the community artists, I don't see this as my only trip out here. The beginning of a relationship is

really important. You have to honour what's here and get to know people, become familiar, become known in some way, build a trust, build a relationship.

Underlying the experiences of Corinne, Blake, Paul, and Genesa is the centrality of relationships. By taking the time to build these connections and a sense of trust with their students, the pre-service teachers laid important foundations for experimentation, creativity and learning to occur.

When thinking more broadly about the importance of relationships for community engagement initiatives in higher education, our work has shown the importance of building and sustaining these relationships over time, and in a way that shares power and ownership with communities. As Porter and Monard (2000) have suggested, relationships in the context of First Peoples service learning must be habitually tended to maintain their integrity. This is why UWS and the other universities involved in this work have striven to maintain their relationships with their communities in the longer term. Moreover, we have also approached the building of these relationships through a critical service-learning lens, whereby the focus on this relationship building has also happened alongside agendas of social change and power redistribution. As Mitchell (2008, p. 65) explains, in this way we've been able to develop and analyze initiatives with "greater attention to equality and shared power between all participants in the service experience and [opportunities for students] to analyze the interplay of power, privilege, and oppression at the service placement and in their experience in that placement."

### **Reciprocity**

The importance of building trust and relationships leads to the associated concepts of reciprocal learning and shared benefits. This is shown in Nick's reflections about one of the Year 10 boys, a highly talented guitarist:

I met him while he was playing and I sat down and played with him. He didn't talk a whole bunch that first week, even though we played quite a bit together. In the second week, he did. He really opened up to me about things,

what his life's been like. He also taught me about some bush tucker on our way to the Open Mic night. He told me he goes out bush at the weekend, what he does when he goes there, where he gets water from, what they hunt, how they kill it, why they go bush.

This relationship produced a trusting cultural interchange. Each of the participants spoke about the benefits of such reciprocal or 'both ways' learning and how much they valued the collaborative aspects of their time together. They valued musically supporting each other, as well as intellectually collaborating in problem solving. Their learning was enhanced in the 'togetherness' of the activity. Whether this was expressed as developing autonomy, enjoying learning together, or becoming a genuine ensemble, the essence underlying each of these different learning contexts was reciprocity. For Nick, it was formative to his teaching style and to the ways he interacted with students in a class group, because he had a deeper awareness of the ability and life of each individual.

In a different way, Lisa, a pre-service English teacher, was taken by surprise when conversing with two other pre-service teachers who were Aboriginal. She reflected on what their conversation meant for her:

Having had a prac [practicum] in Western Sydney, Aboriginal kids in the classroom were, to me, working class kids. Having been here changes that. Mel and Sharni [two other pre-service teachers] one night chatted about the hairy man<sup>1</sup> and cultural experiences they'd shared that I hadn't seen in cities. I went to school with Aboriginal kids and that part of their culture didn't make any showing in the classroom. My talk with Mel and Sharni has made me reassess. Including Aboriginal kids doesn't just mean making sure they're meeting academic goals but really including them. I realise I went to school with kids like Mel and Sharni who were living part of their cultural experience completely outside of the classroom.

For Lisa, the Tennant Creek experience was seen through this lens. She had been looking in one way and was placed in a position where she had to re-think her assumptions. Rendon (2009) would have called this a *sentipensante* moment, where deep reflection on the past has implications for the future.

For community engagement in higher education more broadly, this concept of two-way learning, where there are mutual benefits for community and university students, is significant. This then positions reciprocity as something active (Dostilio et al., 2012, p. 18), as distinct from passively receiving a service offered by others (cf. Dorado & Giles, 2004; Puma, Bennett, Cutforth, Tombari, & Stein 2009). In other words, there is:

- Exchange, from which both parties benefit;
- Influence, within which both parties impact the work. Here, reciprocity is expressed as a relational connection that is informed by personal, social, and environmental contexts; and
- Generativity, also called *thick* reciprocity (Jameson, Clayton, & Jaeger 2011). In this orientation the parties produce systemic change, create new value, and/or undergo transformation in their way of being. (Dostilio et al., 2012, p. 21).

Given that the term reciprocity refers to both processes and outcomes, it can be interpreted at individual or collective levels and has a potential role as a tool to realize different ways of learning and engaging. When thinking about this exchange of ideas and mutual learning that can take place, Kovach (2009, p. 57) has noted that, within First Peoples' epistemologies, exchange is the minimum form of reciprocity "within a relational web ... all aspects ... must be understood from that vantage point." Harris and Wasilewski (2004, p. 492) have similarly brought to the fore First Peoples' Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being, drawing as an example on the process "by which North American tribes identified four core values which cross generation, geography and tribe ... [namely] relationship, responsibility, reciprocity and redistribution." Of particular relevance here is the concept of generative reciprocity, which refers to the interrelatedness of people, the world around them, and the potential synergies that emerge from these relationships (Dostilio et al. 2012).

## Reflection

Beginner teachers are known not to develop critical or higher levels of reflective thinking without the scaffolding of reflection prompts (Bean & Stevens, 2002). Consequently, this research incorporated a series of questions for pre-service teachers to consider, along with journal writing and the creation of digital stories. The pre-service teachers' reflexivity was shown in what Denzin (1997, p. 224) calls "messy texts." Denzin's idea was that such texts are "sensitive to how reality is socially constructed, and reflective writing is a way of 'framing' reality." Lather (1993, p. 675) states that such framing "is not a matter of looking harder or more closely, but of seeing what frames our seeing." In this research, the pre-service teachers used the scaffolds to reflect deeply on their experiences. Corinne said:

You need to have a sense of preparedness to engage with things in an experimental and exploratory way. I think that's what art can offer. The greatest high value commodity is creativity. It is out of that exploration that all sorts of things are envisioned. I think creativity is your friend on the journey into other possibilities, allowing you to experience your own true value. I think not being able to experience your own true value can create a limitation in a sense of possibility for the future.

Corinne's reflection here is on a vision of skill and ability freely shared. She had the benefit of cultural training from the ladies at PAK and the cultural immersion of the school and the community. Here we can see the combination of critique of worldview and relational contemplative reflection that is central to *sentipensante* (Rendon, 2009). For Corinne, the Northern Territory service-learning experience made a powerful impact. After her professional experience, she felt the call to spend more time making connections with community painters, fabric artists, and school-aged developing artists, and she took the opportunity of working with Barkly Regional Arts by fronting its Community Outreach in the Visual Arts.

In terms of the implications of this for community engagement in higher education more broadly, the embodied experience of

participating in this sort of experience can certainly prompt students to engage in deeply reflective examinations of their selves and subjectivities, as well as their perceptions of the world around them. A key element in guiding this process has been the use of guided critical reflection (through field diaries, focus group interviews, informal group de-briefs, and so on). These aspects of critical reflection are crucial not only for the learning experiences of the students, but also provide valuable insights about the depth of the learning experiences, as the quotes shared here illustrate. As Swords and Kiely (2010, p. 151) contend, “the most powerful transformative learning experiences stem from intentionally structuring service-learning program activities before, during, and after the program to engage students in critically reflective learning and contextual, emotional, visceral, and connected forms of learning.”

## DISCUSSION

### Value for Future Arts-based Learning

This case study has alluded to a range of avenues for further research, not only relating to the three key themes outlined above, but also to the long-term impact that these programs have on pre-service teachers, school students, and the broader community. The CAS program has now been running for five years and has already had a notable influence on pre-service teachers' career aspirations and approaches to learning and teaching. For instance, one drama pre-service teacher from 2009 returned and taught for three years at the Tennant Creek High School. Genesa (whose Tennant Creek experience was in 2011) is now teaching in an urban Sydney high school with a high proportion of Aboriginal students. She has reported that the teaching approaches she developed at Tennant Creek help her to make connections with her students. Music teacher Paul (a pre-service teacher in 2011) is now teaching at a learning support center where he works with students from a range of cultural backgrounds to enhance their musical skills. And Corinne, from our case study in 2012, has returned to take up a position working for local arts organization Barkly Regional Arts. This is

certainly an avenue for further research as the project's longevity grows.

As the reflections in this paper have shown, projects such as this have the potential to build valuable intercultural competencies among pre-service teachers. International studies have shown that intercultural service-learning projects enable students to engage in a dialogue with a world outside themselves (Emmanuel, 2005), exposing a critical engagement with racial politics and a shift in their views of cultural diversity. In the case of the pre-service teachers discussed here, these insights have led to reassessments of their goals as professionals, the development of a deeper awareness of their past experiences, and a greater sensitivity toward forms of social and cultural oppression. By structuring specific reflective learning experiences before, during, and after the pre-service teachers' visits to Tennant Creek, students were invited and supported to engage in a critically reflective process about these issues. In turn, this reflexive process has encouraged “contextual, emotional, visceral, and connected forms of learning” to occur (Swords & Kiely, 2010, p. 151). Critical engagement with the issues faced by Aboriginal communities has deepened. The pre-service teachers' reflections demonstrate growing self-confidence with cultural interactions. This resonates strongly with Rendon's (2009) *sentipensante* pedagogy, which combines critical examinations of worldviews and relational contemplative practices.

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A central concept that has reverberated throughout all aspects of this case study has been the importance of relationship building. Chupp and Joseph (2010) concur that service-learning projects such as this one hinge on the development of mutually beneficial relationships between pre-service teachers, their students, and local community members. As the pre-service teachers in this case study came to realize, by taking the time to nurture a sense of trust and connection with their school students, they were able to feel a stronger connectedness to the community and, in turn, make a "safe space" for creative experimentation, cultural exchange, and personal growth. While the duration of these relationships was limited to four weeks, these experiences still provided a powerful catalyst for the pre-service teachers to reflect on their own teaching practice.

As the earlier examples have shown, through their relationships with the students the pre-service teachers came to appreciate the importance of giving encouragement, critiquing the cultural politics of their own educational experiences, showing vulnerability in the classroom, and connecting with other teachers and artists outside the school gate.

Closely aligned to this concept of relationship building is that of reciprocity. As this case study has intimated, service learning requires true reciprocity in all aspects of the design and implementation. The shared learning experiences documented earlier show how this mutual learning can be of benefit to school students, community members, and participating pre-service teachers, offering

genuine prospects for the furthering of knowledge and creativity. Indeed, the school students' growing confidence seemed to parallel an emerging sense of self-assuredness in the pre-service teachers as they came to a greater understanding of themselves, their past experiences and perceptions, and their future roles as educators.

Over the past five years in Tennant Creek, the university academics and ALNF partners have built an enduring relationship with the community. Each year, the placements are renegotiated with school and community leaders. As researchers we have remarked that each time we return with a new group of pre-service teachers, it is like entering another world. This is a world in which we all learn and all teach; the remoteness of the setting encourages a reappraisal of cultural biases and assumptions. In an earlier paper (Bartleet et al., in press) we have written of the importance of relationship building and the need for personal connections to be in place prior to any creative or cultural work. We have found that strong and enduring relationships develop between pre-service teachers, members of the local communities, and the university academics.

In the project as a whole, reflection on thinking and feeling (*sentipensante*) has been an important component. Both undergraduate and post-graduate pre-service teachers created digital stories and kept diary reflections to convey the transformative nature of their learning experiences to their peers, their Indigenous collaborators, and the broader community. From an organizing perspective, relationships have determined our community activities, influenced whether or not we return, and underscored our interactions in the community. We have tried to match students' skill sets with the needs expressed by each Indigenous community.

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Our aim has been to encourage students to develop cultural competence and rethink possible ethnocentric assumptions. This is the aspect that moves beyond teacher education and touches all aspects of higher education. From the perspective of contesting power relations that shape interactions with others, service learning and the *sentipensante* approach emerges as a pedagogical strategy that can instigate personal and broader societal change

#### ENDNOTE

The hairy man or "Yowie" (also known as "Doolagahl") is the Australian Aboriginal name for a tremendously strong hairy man-beast. This is similar to the Himalayan understanding of the Yeti and the Chinese understanding of the Chang Mi (Wild man). Australian Aboriginal communities respected Yowies as sacred creatures from the Dreaming. For more information, see [http://www.yowiehunters.com.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1521:aboriginal-legends-frank-povah-1990&catid=95&Itemid=148](http://www.yowiehunters.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1521:aboriginal-legends-frank-povah-1990&catid=95&Itemid=148)

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## Appendix A: Outline of Interview Questions for Each Participant Cohort

### *PS1 – Pre-service teacher questions* (after Focus Week)

1. What are my expectations about this experience?
2. What does working respectfully with First Nations communities really mean?
3. What am I learning here? And what am I teaching?
4. Are there noticeable phases that I have gone through in developing relationships with community?
5. How might I share the experiences I am having here with others at my university?
6. How has this experience shaped how I think about myself and my future?

### *PS2* (after the 4-week block)

1. What has this professional experience meant to you, working alongside First Nations community members?
2. What do you think you have learned?
3. What kinds of effective learning have there been for the students in the high school?
4. What have you noticed about cultural interaction and both ways learning?

### *HS1 – High School Teacher questions*

1. What has it meant to the school community to have music, dance, visual arts pre-service teachers?
2. What do you think they have learned?
3. What kinds of effective learning have there been for the students in the high school?
4. Has technology awareness and usage increased as a result of these experiences?
5. What have you noticed about cultural interaction and both ways learning?

### *WMI/BAI – Winanjjikari Music Centre recording team and Barkly Arts staff*

1. What are the benefits for school-aged First Nations musicians and artists working with UWS?
2. How has this affected the self-esteem of the musicians and artists at the School?
3. What have you noticed about cultural interaction and both ways learning?

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