# Working towards cultural responsiveness and inclusion in Australia: The re-Indigenization of social work education

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## Abstract

The scope of Australian social work education, training and practice models retain many of the Western components from which they were initially derived. Indigenization is concerned with the use of appropriate First Nation theories and practice methods that can transform the entrenched and sometimes enforced Westernised values, norms, and philosophies. This paper argues that social work education should prepare social workers to work with ethnic and culturally diverse populations and more safely with Indigenous peoples. The issues and challenges concerned with re-Indigenization and how social work education and practice should adapt are explored.

## Key words

Indigenization; Indigenous Australians; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; ethnic and cultural diversity; cultural responsiveness

## Acknowledgement

This writing project has taken place on the land of the Jinabara people in Queensland. The first author writes this piece as an Aboriginal Gamilaraay (northern NSW) cisgender woman teaching social work in Australia who wants to act in solidarity with First Nations peoples to resist re-colonization, racism and oppression. The second author writes this piece as a non-Aboriginal, cisgender gay man committed to intersectional allyship in ethnic and culturally diverse communities. We humbly acknowledge the wisdom and generosity of Indigenous peoples who are already contributing to teaching, research, and practice. We pay our respects, and express our gratitude, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elder's past, present and emerging. This piece should be considered not as a defining commentary but as a beginning conversation that reflects the need and willingness to address the complexities of Indigenizing social work.

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# Background

## Colonization of Indigenous people in Australia

The impact of English colonial acts of terrorism, genocide, misguided interventions, and ongoing colonization efforts continues to have a lasting, disruptive, and sometimes devastating effect on Indigenous peoples. Those who first colonized Australia attacked Indigenous identity, responsibilities, relationships, and spirituality (Powell et al., 2014). It could also be argued that the colonizers intentionally or indirectly disrupted the roles, responsibilities and well-being of our Indigenous men resulting in the breakup of many families (Bennett & Green, 2005). Prevailing colonizing practices ensure that Indigenous peoples remain the most significantly disadvantaged population in Australia (Markham et al., 2018).

Indigenous people continue to be exposed to cruel and violent state and federal policies in Australia and actions that negatively affect their health and well-being (Johnston et al., 2013). Risks for poor health and well-being for Indigenous people mirror some of the health disparities for Indigenous communities in North America (McKinley et al., 2020). Historically, governmental policies with devastatingly negative impacts on Indigenous people have included dispossession of land and property, attempted genocide and, more recently, The Stolen Generation, the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act, the Northern Territory Intervention, and the cashless welfare card (Bennett & Green, 2005; Grant, 2017; Hunt, 2017). These policies have been widely condemned for failing to consult with Indigenous peoples and respond to their concerns (Grant, 2017; Heaney, 2019).

These, perhaps well-intentioned but misguided policies, have contributed to increased death rates in custody, suicides, compounded already complex mental health issues, increased poverty, racism and incarceration rates, and forced child removal. Comparing these issues with those of all other recorded populations within Australia is shocking (Markham et al., 2018). Terra Nullius (the concept of empty land) was initially used to steal and control Indigenous peoples' land. There is an ongoing and distressing struggle around sovereignty and to create treaties that recognize and recover land rights (Bennett, 2019; Havemann, 2005). The continued structural colonization has created deep intergenerational trauma lines within the Indigenous community (Bennett, 2019; Sherwood et al., 2015). Trauma is also compounded by Australia's overt and covert racist mentalities and prejudiced systems, which date from colonization. Attempts to end these discriminations are not proving as successful and achievable as

anticipated and desired. This creates an environment where individuals, families, and communities are often not given the necessary time and support to heal (Sherwood et al., 2015; Sweeney et al., 2018).

## Trauma, grief, and loss

The general lack of understanding and thus community compassion regarding the continued associated trauma and loss and grief experienced by many individuals, families, and communities' fuels micro-aggressive conversations and questions such as the frequently heard: *"why can't you people move on and just get over it?"* The cycle of trauma, and all the associated individual, family and community destructive behaviors associated with trauma and mental ill-health, are why cumulative emotional and psychological wounding persists (Sweeney et al., 2018). This is exacerbated by many Australians accepting and thereby normalizing the hate speech spewed from far-right political protagonists whose openly xenophobic rhetoric is readily and non-critically aired on mass media. These incidents are often protected by the sanctity of 'free speech' (Latimore, 2018). The continuing impacts of colonization have become multidimensional and reverberate throughout the lives of Indigenous peoples.

Some of the so-called 'helping' social welfare policies and approaches thoughtlessly inflicted upon Indigenous people have placed stress and further trauma on already vulnerable families. These enforced social improvement measures continue to occur with no community consultation or warning and may utilize coercive measures; for example, the Northern Territory Intervention (2007) had to suspend the Human Rights Declaration (United Nations, 2007) in order to proceed. These ill-advised and ill-considered initiatives penalize people who are already marginalized and, if enacted, are another form of abuse and violence perpetrated on Indigenous peoples.

## Policy and professional responses to trauma

Policies that are touted by the Australian government include the 'Closing the Gap' initiative Closing the Gap aims to reduce Indigenous disadvantage by targeting health, housing, early childhood, economic participation, and employment outcomes (Coalition of Australian Governments [COAG], 2019). From the perspective of tertiary education, factors relevant to Closing the Gap include Indigenous participation, retention of children in schools and educational outcomes. Closing the Gap also targets life expectancy, employment, literacy, and

numeracy. Of these laudable goals, five are not on 'track' to be met (Markham et al., 2018), yet inquiry into why these targets persistently and conclusively fail has been limited. Political observers identify a range of criticisms, a lack of meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities, incongruency with stated but changing government policy goals and policy actions, bureaucratic confusion in Indigenous affairs management, abandoned funding commitments and, lastly, an unhealthy dependency on implementing inappropriate and culturally insensitive Westernized interventions and solutions (Fitzpatrick, 2018; Wahlquist, 2018).

Australia's current Prime Minister, Scott Morrison is now the fifth prime minister to deliver a refreshed 'Closing the Gap' report to parliament. It is difficult to have confidence in his statements as all his predecessors failed to meet established and promised policy targets and prescribed objectives. Indigenous Australians are left questioning the credibility of the commitments and the determination to recompense and promote the status of First Nation people while Federal funding continues to be cut from programs which represents organizations working in Indigenous communities (Markham et al., 2018). Much of the 'getting on track' discourse, which underpins the Closing the Gap policy, uses deficit language, evoking strong imagery of Indigenous people being passively directed and led by their 'white helping saviours' to safety.

Recently the current government minister for Indigenous Australians, Ken Wyatt, called for a reworking of the government's position and approach to Indigenous policies (Holland, 2019). He announced a national co-design group with a process for creating an Indigenous 'voice to government' with a senior advisory group with federal, local and regional inputs. He rejected the previous 'one size fits all approach'. Many supporters of change, including some of the Indigenous community, perceive this announcement as a genuine change in government rhetoric and welcomed the opportunity for Indigenous voices to be clearly heard. Others are more skeptical, questioning whether this announcement signals rapid and systemic change or a further period of endless debate. Some expressed a feeling of *déjà vu*, given the government's long and repeated failure to ignore Indigenous people's needs and requests (Synot, 2019).

A recent cause of this cynicism was outcome of the Uluru Statement of the Heart (National Constitutional Convention, 2017), which was rejected by the government as unlikely to win the support of many Australians in a referendum. The government will often maintain the bureaucratic *status quo* and redirect focus away from the more profound, more critical

symbolic constitutional recognition, sovereignty, and treaty questions. The government announced that the Uluru Statement from the Heart was unlikely to receive a positive response from the majority of non-Indigenous Australians. They have little understanding of and almost no interest in Indigenous rights or issues (Latimore, 2018). It is hard to imagine how the government plans to resolve this in Australia. Hoping for fair representation and a voice for Aboriginal Peoples at a government level centres around one of the key representatives on this newly formed panel, one of whom is a male social worker whose professional lens can help provide a broader and more holistic view on the current situation.

Since the Apology by Prime Minister Rudd in 2008 political reactions to the future directions of Indigenous affairs are of increasing concern to many Indigenous community members who are unconvinced that decolonization and structural change can occur whilst colonialist mentalities prevail. Today, some twelve years after the Apology, national discussions regarding Indigenous sovereignty and constitutional representation have all but stagnated, with many pondering the current Morrison government's real intent. A significant concern is that the government is creating a climate of in-fighting and dissent by dividing the community, pitting Indigenous persons against each other, and failing to deliver policy promises. An example of this was the recent land council action in Newcastle which made a formal complaint with the Independent Commission Against Corruption over the number of staff and students at the University of Sydney who self-identify as Indigenous claiming that the university is failing to ensure those who are receiving benefits for Aboriginal peoples are in fact Indigenous. This leads to several arguments - one about limited resources provided thus the need to fight over them and one about legitimate identity that has not been accounted for properly (Overington, 2021). To some, it is apparent that the government is telling Indigenous people to expect and accept less; in other words, to be more pragmatic about what they hope to achieve and accept ‘watered down’ versions of their requests. To many observers, it appears that the current government is saying to the Indigenous people: wait, be patient, we will offer further consultation but need to give priority to the needs of the dominant white Australians (Grant, 2017; Holland, 2019).

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) acknowledges with regret the role that social workers have played in practices and policies that fragmented and eroded Indigenous families, cultures and identities. The AASW (2010) has formally stated that there is a need for social workers to be culturally responsive and commit to facilitating healing relationships with

Indigenous peoples. In the last ten years, social workers have established fundamental values and principles of social justice and human dignity intending to be inclusive and responsive to Indigenous peoples (AASW, 2015). In response to the AASW ethical changes, Australian universities that teach social work and human service courses have been proactively creating core curriculum changes that incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being, in efforts to prepare culturally responsive and inclusive social workers (Green & Bennett, 2018). Although the AASW endeavors to try to address cultural responsiveness, ultimately it is up to the individual social worker to be responsible and accountable for themselves.

## The challenge to re-Indigenizing social work

The most fundamental challenge in Indigenising social work is the legacy of colonization and all its adverse outcomes. Colonization permeates every part of North America, Australian, and other commonwealth societies, including social work education and practice (Ambtman et al., 2010). All organizations, including the media, perpetuate stereotypes that continuously problematize Indigenous people and communities. This deflects the attention from the actual issues associated with colonization and the many fundamental flaws and structural imbalances that have been created.

Colonization had a lasting impact on social work education and practice. For too long, social work has tried to save, rescue, or help Indigenous people with methods based on historical, charitable roots instead of empowering Indigenous people to gain sovereignty, governance, and recognition. Social workers have been criticized as '*jargonistic white witch doctors*,' (Mendes, 2005, p. 125) adopting a deficit discourse when discussing Indigenous peoples and the perceived challenges surrounding them; this approach may be unintentionally driven by naive and sometimes racist beliefs. Social work narratives continue to project a dominant modern, white construction of the world with Indigenous voices and perspectives relegated to its margins. As Green and Bennett (2018, p. 262) stated: "*Aboriginal people are neither the problem nor the cause of the problem. It is not Aboriginal people, their culture or communities that need to be 'fixed'. Social work itself needs to be freed of its colonial thinking, behavior, languages, practices, and actions. It needs to change at its core, its practices, and hopefully the individual hearts and minds of its members."*

Fundamental to the decolonizing process is the exposure and re-education of those social workers that are still practicing outdated values and norms of Western social work education and practice. Older courses may have not considered intersectional diversities nor included a critique of the impact of racism, including the need to advocate for Indigenous rights and sovereignty (Weinberg & Fine, 2020). Irrespective of the Indigenous content currently being included in social work courses, the colonial legacy continues. Added to this are resource constraints, a shortage of Indigenous social workers, and workload issues that highly burden social work faculty and constrict their ability to have the energy to advocate or change the system.

Attempts to reverse the Eurocentric bias in social work training are currently not measured, evaluated or even well-documented. This means there is a danger that the curriculum and other instruction components in social work units will remain largely conservative and underdeveloped in terms of Indigenous content. In Australia, there are no frameworks, policies or processes related to what must be included to Indigenize social work content. There are no relevant support websites or published modules that academics can access and no means of accessing other people's unpublished work and experiences without establishing formal or informal relationships. Worse still, there are no boards of governance to report inadequate social work programs if they do not Indigenize their content or are being culturally inappropriate. If an academic requires further support in this field, there are no courses or professional development programs to address their concerns and desires to develop skills and appropriate behaviours. This is alarming because the AASW declared in their 2010 Code of Ethics that all social workers must be culturally responsive. This bold and decisive statement lacks substantial follow-up and affirmative action. The critical questions are: why are there no professional formalities, modules, or practice frameworks? Is cultural responsiveness a tokenistic conversation? To effectively Indigenize social work, there must be essential requirements, audits, and measurement tools and have a comprehensive professional evaluation of our work. These metrics should be collaboratively developed with Indigenous social workers and communities.

## Working towards re-Indigenization

There is no one way to define re-indigenization in Australia as we have a diverse set of cultures and peoples as our Frist Nations. However, what we do know is that we must begin by making sure Indigenous knowledges, traditions and voices are prioritised and are placed on a par with

other knowledges, not tokenistically othered or briefly alluded to. Social workers in particular must deliberately do this as educators making sure that social justice is at our core ethics in this space.

Whilst acknowledging the challenges, social workers must be invested in the principles of social justice and equity, strive to achieve a social work higher education degree and practice framework that are culturally responsive, inclusive and take into account the many historical and current impacts of inequality. The development of a relevant curriculum and appropriate to each of the differing Countries and Indigenous communities across Australia is both necessary and attainable. The first step to achieving the objective of a more inclusive, relevant social work model is to refute and reject current attitudes. The historical and entrenched conservative ideas frame Indigenous peoples in a deficit narrative and position them as 'others' that are separate from the community at large. These ideas must be vehemently and unanimously challenged. This archaic and discriminatory model must be replaced by an optimistic, resilient tone that respects and celebrates the relentless determination and strength of Indigenous peoples and their cultures.

A culturally inclusive and responsive social work curriculum necessitates that educators create reflective, engaging content that stimulates and broadens student knowledge and skill base for working with people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Bender et al., 2010). It should instill an appreciation of the cultural and linguistic diversities of Indigenous peoples. The curriculum should also develop fundamental critical reflexiveness for working with ethnic and culturally diverse communities and across vulnerable peoples, including refugees, people who have experienced trauma, mental health consumers, and those involved in the child welfare system.

Educators must proactively source, discuss, analyze, and evaluate content from a broad range of resources, ensuring adequate representations of age, gender, Countries, education, and opinions. This will involve sourcing material from various mediums such as readings, podcasts, Elders, videos, and guest lecturers from the community. Course assignments need to contain a local component to facilitate an analysis of cultural constructions of knowledge and some discussion of cross-cultural practices, such as traditional herbs and medicines.

One pressing issue that requires urgent redress is the significant under-representation of Aboriginal identified positions in social work. In Australia, identified positions mean positions that can be advertised to only Aboriginal people, recognizing both the historical disadvantage Aboriginal people have experienced in employment and the unique skillset and cultural expertise that that they would bring to a particular position (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020).

Few faculty are available to teach Indigenous course content. There are thirty-two schools of social work within Australia but only a handful have an Indigenous staff member who could be available to teach this content. This leaves a large gap in governance, cultural knowledge, and guidance for the adequate Indigenisation of content within social work. Non-Indigenous people who are currently teaching Indigenous content must recognize the inadequacy of this situation and should be advocating for at a minimum, joint teaching and governance with their Indigenous counterparts. To many members of the Indigenous community silence and inaction from these individuals signifies defensiveness akin to 'White Fragility' and a subconscious desire to uphold White hegemonic dominance (Green & Bennett, 2018, p. 262). Models of practice in this area are needed, but Indigenous peoples' intimate knowledge about the needs and desires of their own people is critical for hiring appropriate faculty. Non-Indigenous academics regularly contact us to appropriate our cultural knowledge, often without reciprocation. Non-Indigenous academics should be critically self-reflecting on why they accept these teaching positions and established curricula, appearing to position themselves as white Indigenous 'experts' but ignorant of, or ignoring true Indigenous voices and governance.

Colonization is a key feature of modernity (Havemann, 2005) and is fully accepted in some cases. For example, colonization has enabled the creation and use of flushing toilets. Colonization and its resulting structures associated with health, education, finance, and law are entrenched in our society and taken for granted. The livelihood of much of the population depends on these structures. Many of those in power will not consider radically different systems. Capitalism is defined by economic growth, individual and state wealth, and national and international competition (Fiedler, 2018). This means that decolonization is not a concept or a process that people and governments can readily incorporate into their practice. Western knowledge systems and the systems of governance arising from colonization are, by definition, racist. The result of this is a worldview of the superiority of western knowledge systems. What follows from this is view of Indigenous communities and knowledge as inferior, highly

problematic and requiring intervention and 'solutions' that are physically or emotionally violent, destructive and disempowering and a mistaken belief that to maintain progress Indigenous peoples should be assimilated into modern (i.e. Western) civilization (Sheehan, 2012). Given that we are not going to defeat colonization as a system, we call for re-Indigenization (Beckett, 2012; Schulte, 1997).

Re-Indigenization requires the individual to recognize their own positioning. Social work students must be taught to critically assess their attitudes, assumptions, and how they are placed in society and the economy in comparison to Indigenous peoples. For example, are you white, are you white and privileged, are you white but poor? Given Indigenous people in Australia are among the most marginalized peoples in the world, students should be taught to examine their own positionalities. Other questions to students should be taught to explore include: what is your culture; what are your worldviews; what are your biases (especially regarding Indigenous people); what stereotypes might you hold and why or when; and what advances and privileges do you have that are either not afforded to Indigenous people or are at the expense of Indigenous people? Once they have acknowledged their positionality regarding Indigenous people, they must ask themselves what they are prepared to do to bring about respect and equality personally.

## Re-Indigenization Framework: Recommendations for education and practice

It is important to note that re-Indigenisation does not mean changing something Western into something Indigenous. The goal is not to replace Western knowledge with Indigenous knowledge nor to merge the two cultures. Instead, re-Indigenization involves weaving together two different knowledge systems in a way that learners can come to understand and appreciate both. Therefore, merely adding Indigenous content to a course or introducing Indigenous names, words, and terms is superficial. A total restructuring that brings together the two ways of knowing as equal components is needed.

Mi'kmaq educator Marie Battiste (2002) emphasized that we should view Indigenous and Western knowledge systems not as oppositional binaries but as concepts that complement each other. This means that Indigenous knowledge is a rich source that should be used to fill the gaps and displace the errors within Eurocentric models of teaching, learning, research, and education processes. Similarly, Elder Albert Marshall from the Eskasoni Mi'kmaq First Nation

(Bartlett et al., 2012) describes *Etuaptmumk*, the approach of two-eyed seeing, to learn to appreciate both Indigenous and Western knowledge and ways of knowing. He said that using these two perspectives will be beneficial to all involved. Dudgeon and Fielder (2006) wrote about using the third space based on the work by Homi Bhabha and Michel de Certeau (Bhabha, 1993; de Certeau, 1984). This is where the dispossessed have no choice other than to make some 'space' in a 'place' now owned and controlled by the colonizers. These various concepts don't quite describe re-Indigenisation, which is about creating a space and re-creating, re-essencing and decolonizing on all levels. Perhaps it is like finding Narnia at the back of the closet: full of wonders and potential but still at risk from violence, greed, and those who wish to maintain control.

Re-Indigenization requires that social workers move beyond outdated notions of cultural 'competency' when engaging ethnic and culturally diverse communities. Once a mainstay of social work education, cultural competency aims to provide students with the knowledge, values, and skills for becoming competent and effective social workers (Napoli & Bonifas, 2013). More recent efforts, however, encourage the development of cultural humility and cultural responsiveness. Cultural humility and responsiveness are ongoing processes that teach students and social workers to develop critical awareness of their role in power, oppression, and privilege and to actively dismantle these inequities at a personal and societal level (Bennett & Gates, 2019; Gottlieb, 2020). We provide six best practices for re-Indigenization of the social work curriculum below:

### *1. Critique your past and current lived experiences*

Social workers must understand the full impact of colonization and its continued legacy. Some of the content that needs to be part of the curriculum includes what colonization involved in Australia. For example, many social workers are unaware of the heroic warriors who fought back against the colonizers such as Pemulwuy of the Eora Nation, born around 1750 in Botany Bay in New South Wales. In 1790, Pemulwuy began a twelve-year guerrilla war against the British, which continued until his assassination in 1802 (Message Stick, 2010). Knowledge of the various government policies that were implemented to create the current inequities for Indigenous peoples should be part of the curriculum (Bennett, 2019).

### *2. Develop culturally responsive communication skills*

Few social workers are aware of Indigenous protocols for engagement, including acknowledging Country and introducing oneself to Indigenous people for the first time. Acknowledging Country is a verbal recognition of the original name and traditional landowners prior to colonization (Gibson, et al., 2020). For instance, before holding class, social work educators should verbally acknowledge the Indigenous people and land on which the University meets, calling attention to the past atrocities and dispossession of Indigenous people that occurred on the land.

Additionally, social workers must be taught about the need for reciprocal, respectful relationships with transparency in Indigenous communities. They need to be taught to communicate who they are personally and what they do, which can be in competition with non-Indigenous social work rhetoric of 'boundaries' and 'professionalism.' The absolute need for an organization and a person to create a culturally safe and welcoming space is not often discussed. A welcoming space begins with a warm greeting as one arrives, introducing oneself by name and saying hello with a smile. Having Indigenous artwork or symbols in the entrance or waiting areas can indicate solidarity or at least potential allyship. Meeting people outside of a sometimes-formal clinical setting and in places where they are safe and comfortable also helps.

Social workers are taught many communication skills that are useful when interacting with an Indigenous person. However, there is a myth that Indigenous people cannot make or do not like eye contact. Of course, there are times when social workers need to be aware of their eye contact and possible impact. Age, gender, levels of respect, and politeness will all impact eye contact. However, Indigenous people are all perfectly capable of looking at a social worker in the eye and engaging as equals. Indigenous people are very good at talking, being silent, being respectful, waiting our turn, being present and mindful in the conversation, and holding the emotional space. The most important thing to acknowledge is that treating any human with dignity and respect is a great way to start the engagement and build trust.

### *3. Develop cultural self-awareness*

Social workers need to commit to understanding the history and the people of the Country that they are in. Working with Indigenous people requires open-mindedness, respect for diversity and flexibility. Social workers need to be aware of our own values and biases and always be

thoughtful and mindful of how they may impact others that encounter us. A frequent topic of conversation is the concept of time. Non-Indigenous services are often on a time schedule and decisions and implementation are rushed. Being able to meet in a safe space with an abundance of time and to bring healthy and tasty food shows respect and understanding and may often enhance a deeper connection.

It is important when developing cultural awareness is better understanding our own cultural background and identity. This helps the social worker better understand their assumptions, biases and preconceived ideas and distort their ideas and behavior. It is important to develop reflexivity as a social worker, to identify and objectively assess our own values, attitudes and expectations and realize how these might differ from Indigenous peoples. This self-awareness is both a challenge and a strength when working with people of different ethnic and cultural diversities.

What is asked of a truly critical thinker is the ability to be vulnerable. Social workers often fail or make and mistake, but this is not a weakness. Social work educators should help students normalize learning from mistakes as an essential part of becoming a skilled social worker. Mistakes should drive a social worker's efforts towards continuous improvement and a commitment to life-long learning. This not only means reading Indigenous literature and watching Indigenous-themed television but also about being self-motivated and directed in improving learning for oneself and learning from each encounter. Part of this process is to evaluate and measure challenges and successes to be honest about our skills and knowledge. It is vital to be self-aware because our practice as a successful social worker relies on our ability to assess our own assumptions, generalizations, and stereotypes critically. Developing close and trusting partnerships with Indigenous peoples can be a valuable part of meeting this goal.

### *4. Seek Indigenous guidance*

The Indigenous people's character is that they often need to develop a personal relationship to develop trust. Social workers who lack this relationship may not be very useful. Building a reciprocal and respectful relationship requires a non-Indigenous person to be proactive and make the first move. This means that the Indigenous community wishes to engage with trustworthy, honest, and active listeners.

An example of developing a good and productive relationship with an Indigenous person concerns a working relationship between the first author and a friend and colleague P. P first contacted her via email. P did not introduce themselves or indicate their location in terms of thoughts, ideologies or even Country. P requested without making it clear how we would be establishing an ongoing, equal relationship. The first author declined. P emailed the first author again and introduced themselves, and briefly described their own ethnicity, identity, values and worldviews. They explained their insights from working with Indigenous people and it was clear that they were interested in an inclusive engagement. P was approachable and open to the first author's responses and ideas and apologized for their insensitive first contact and accepted accountability and responsibility. P convinced the first author in the second response email that they could learn from feedback. She later accepted his offer and continued to work towards deepening their professional relationship. Considering that Indigenous faculty may get numerous cold emails, requests to be on committees, and calls for other engagement, it is important to those who wish to interact in some way that they be open and approachable like P to receive a positive response. Aboriginal peoples who are already overstretched with requests for advice and collaboration will be more likely to respond to offers to collaboration when it is clear that the relationship will be ongoing and equal.

Indigenous peoples must be consulted in all aspects of social work and particularly when it involves Indigenous issues, peoples and communities. Consulting Elders, community members, and Indigenous social work colleagues on curriculum development is instrumental for being effective mentoring and consultation. Indigenous Australians often say: "Nothing about us without us and if we are not at the table, we are on the menu." However, these requests for engagement should come with an offer of payment or similar compensation. Respected non-Indigenous social work colleagues are rarely asked to work for free. Elders, community members, and Indigenous social work colleagues should be extended the same courtesy.

### *5. Maintain accountability and commitment to advocacy*

Social workers need to expand their professional knowledge through continuing education on working appropriately, respectfully, and responsively with Indigenous peoples. As well as attending professional training, social workers must be self- reflective and critically objective about their practice and conduct individual research and learning. They must know what Country they are living and working in, follow protocols, and be prepared for reciprocal and respectful relationships.

Being accountable may sometimes get the social worker in trouble with an Indigenous person, especially in situations where he/she/they are advocating for social justice, equity, and improved health, well-being, and prosperity. Nonetheless, social workers can be highly influential as they have personal and organizational influence and privilege. Although it can be hard to radically change an organization from the inside, Reconciliation Action Plans and strategic plans are necessary to present a compelling vision of the future of the practice with Indigenous peoples (Mackinlay & Barney, 2014). Finding programs that have been successful in other practices and showing leadership to change and influence attitudes and actions in our own workplace are essential.

### *6. Advocate for culturally responsive university curriculum*

There is an urgent need for an Australia-wide meeting at which Indigenous stakeholders decide what the re-Indigenization of social work education could look like. This should be organized by the Heads of School in Social Work and the AASW. Elders, community members, and Indigenous faculty should be compensated at a fair wage in order to be able to attend. One of the meeting's principal objectives should be a protocol development that ensures that Indigenous experts voices are prioritized in the teaching of these courses. Universities must invest funding to pay for Elders and stakeholders to be present on a day-to-day basis at universities and be involved, not just as guest lecturers, but in curriculum development, governance groups, quality assessment, and marking and evaluation. There should be pressure placed on the accreditation bodies to withhold accreditation to any program that does not have these collaborative measures in place so that universities are obliged to fund, support and participate in re-Indigenization in social work.

In addition to re-Indigenization of the curriculum, ethnic and culturally responsive social work education and practice should promote allyship and inclusion with a full range of diversities that reflect the human experience. Intersecting identities, including identifying as a woman; belonging to a non-traditional family; experiencing displacement because of national origin or migration status; identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/gender diverse/brotherboy/sistergirl, intersex, and queer+ person; or having a mental health or other disability, are all identities represented in Indigenous communities. Social workers should

value the richness that each of these identities bring to society. To be all about change and equality for all we must challenge all privilege, including colonization.

## Conclusion

Re-Indigenization is not an 'Indigenous issue,' and it is not undertaken solely to benefit Indigenous peoples. Instead, Indigenization helps everyone; we all gain a richer understanding of the world and our responsibilities through awareness of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. Indigenization also contributes to a more just world, creating a shared understanding that opens the way toward better and more productive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and may broadly impact on humans to be less selfish in their behavior. It also counters the impacts of colonization by upending a system of thinking that has discounted Indigenous knowledge and history for centuries.

Social workers must be committed to valuing and respecting diverse ways of knowing and being in the world within systems and structures where knowledge production, legitimization, and dissemination tend to devalue Indigenous way of knowing. Through this transformational learning process, social work educators can help students to better understand, acknowledge, and appreciate Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous ways of being in the world.

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