Becoming, belonging and being in the profession: A pilot mentoring program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers

Final Report 2015

Lead institution: The University of Queensland

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List of acronyms used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
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<tr>
<td>MATSITI</td>
<td>More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCEECDYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAIDOC</td>
<td>National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee</td>
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<td>UQ</td>
<td>The University of Queensland</td>
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Executive summary

In 2013 this seed project set out to develop and evaluate a mentoring program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initial teacher educators at The University of Queensland. Currently, the enrolment and program completion of Indigenous initial teacher education students across all education programs at UQ, and indeed across Australia, is well below the national average. This program aimed to assist in building and sustaining Indigenous education students’ participation in tertiary education programs and help prepare them to be teachers. The program involved student-mentees and teacher-mentors from two schools (Pullenvale Primary School and Indooroopilly State High School) participating in a training Professional Development (PD) Day. The students then visited the school for half a day a week for eight weeks to work with their designated teacher-mentor. Indigenous student numbers across all education programs at UQ are small (there were 20 Indigenous students enrolled in March 2014 according to official UQ data). Two primary and two secondary students have participated so far (at the time of writing, a third secondary student has begun the program). However, for the small number of students who participated, early indicators suggest that the program provided a positive experience of being in a school context and confirmed for them that they belong in the teaching profession.

Outcomes and deliverables:

- Development of a tailored mentoring program for Indigenous initial teacher education students at UQ.
- Contribution to understanding the ways mentoring is experienced by Indigenous initial teacher education students to develop their professional identities, self-efficacy and readiness to teach.
- Dissemination at conferences and More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) funding secured to provide project longevity in 2015.
- Guidance on how the mentoring program could be further implemented across a number of university sites.

Findings for other universities:

- Mentoring programs for Indigenous initial teacher educators need to be closely coordinated with student initial teacher education course requirements.
- Mentoring programs need to be undertaken with ongoing input from a community of Indigenous teachers.
- Mentoring programs need a program manager to coordinate the activities. This program manager could be situated in either an Indigenous studies unit or within an Education School/Unit; in either case, dialogue between the two units is crucial.
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Introduction

Variously described as professional friendship, an intense work relationship and a process of growth and change, mentoring takes place in a supportive learning environment. It is characterised by the exchange of professional beliefs, knowledge, experience and wisdom between a mentor and mentee so as to assist and promote the career development of the mentee. While there is a growing body of scholarly work on “mentoring in black and white” (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004), many of these studies have focussed on Indigenous mentoring programs across a range of professional areas (Everard, 2012; Susskind, 2012), have been based outside of Australia (Hewett, Fraser, Burgess & Ohia, 2007; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004), have focussed on mentoring programs for non-Indigenous pre-service teachers to improve Indigenous educational outcomes (Dole, McCluskey, O’Brien & Mackinlay, 2012), have turned attention to mentoring experiences to improve the educational pathways of Indigenous secondary students (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience Corporation, 2013; Koerner & Harris, 2007; MacCallum, Beltman & Palmer, 2005), and/or have explored Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tertiary students’ experiences of mentoring outside of the field of education (Thomas, Milroy & Bartlett, 2010).

This document reports on the 2013-2014 Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) seed project “Becoming, belonging and being in the profession: A pilot mentoring program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers” at The University of Queensland (UQ). The aims of this seed project were to develop and evaluate the use and effectiveness of a mentoring program as a positive intervention for building and sustaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initial teacher education students’ participation in tertiary education programs, their self-efficacy as teachers, their professional identity as teachers and their readiness to teach. The project builds upon existing work in the field by exploring the experience and effectiveness of cross-cultural mentoring programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initial teacher education students. Recognising that “mentoring across cultural boundaries is an especially delicate dance” (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004, p. 7) that takes place on the boundaries between race, gender, class, learning and power, this seed project adopted a critically reflective (Harrison, Lawson & Wortley, 2005) and strength-based (He, 2009) approach to enable understanding of the socially, culturally and politically complex conditions in which the learning and acquisition of professional knowledge about teaching takes place. Further, the project paid attention to the development of self-efficacy and resilience for Indigenous initial teacher education students. Underlying this final report, then, is a critical pedagogy and transformative learning agenda which seeks to put in place educational processes which encourage the Freirean concept of praxis, that is, the ongoing interaction of reflection, dialogue and action in order to “illuminate” human activity and “provide a better understanding of the world as we find it and as it might be” (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009, p. 13).
National context and background

The recruitment, retention and graduation of more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers is a key focus of the national and federally funded More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI, 2012). The MATSITI project is aligned with the COAG National Indigenous Reform Agreement and the associated Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage: The Challenge for Australia (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2009) reforms. The graduation of more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and the increased placement of Indigenous teachers in Australian classrooms are seen as integral factors for improving the educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across early childhood, primary and secondary schooling contexts (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; MCEECDYA, n.d.). To support this, the School of Education at UQ, in collaboration with the Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor Indigenous Education, has entered into a partnership with MATSITI to put in place positive strategies to improve the preparedness and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to undertake study and employment in teaching. The mentoring pilot program “Becoming, belonging and being in the profession” represents the first step towards fulfilling that agreement.

Currently, the enrolment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initial teacher education students across all education programs (primary, secondary and middle-years) at UQ is approximately 1.2%, which is well below the national average of 1.99%. The seed project aimed to make a positive and practical contribution to the central goals of MATSITI regarding retention and graduation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initial teacher education students by increasing the research base that draws attention to effective strategies that higher education settings can implement. Importantly, the seed project responded to the following recommendations from the Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew & Kelly, 2012):

- Recommendation 10: That universities adopt a whole-of-university approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success so that faculties … have primary responsibility for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (p. xix)

- Recommendation 11: That universities … ensure quality student outcomes [for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students] with a focus on … improvements in retention and completion rates (p. xx).

This project is aligned with UQ’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Plan, 2012-2015 and the emphasis on improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students (University of Queensland, 2012, p. 3). In addition, the project takes up MATSITI’s recommendations to target improvements in the ways that cultural understanding and safety is fostered during the professional practice experiences of initial teacher educators (Patton, Lee Hong, Lampert, Burnett & Anderson, 2012, p. 36).
Approach and methodology

The project was a one-year pilot study that took place in the School of Education at UQ. Our project team comprised Elizabeth Mackinlay as Project Leader, Katelyn Barney as Project Manager and Sue Creagh as Project Manager for initial stages. Our team was assisted by a Reference Group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. Detail about the team members’ backgrounds and roles, as well as details about the reference group membership and support for the project is at Appendix A.

Working closely with the Reference Group, we entered into research partnerships with two local schools in the southwest region of Brisbane which fall within UQ’s recruitment cluster: Pullenvale Primary School and Indooroopilly State High School. Both schools have strong and ongoing practical and research relationships with the School of Education at UQ and demonstrate a strong commitment to current Indigenous education agendas in their classrooms, curricula and school communities.

Students were invited via e-mail and phone to participate in the program. A message was also circulated to all education students via UQ’s eLearning site inviting Indigenous students to participate in the program. As mentioned, Indigenous student numbers across all education programs at UQ are small (there were 20 enrolled across all education programs in March 2014 according to official data). The numbers involved in the mentoring program were also limited: two primary and two secondary students have participated so far (at the time of writing, a third secondary student has begun the program). Students chose not to participate for diverse reasons, including overcrowded timetables, work and family commitments, and issues of identification. These are complex issues relating to the life of students who are balancing university study and paid work. Also, at present UQ does not offer students any course credit for participating in the program.

The participation of teachers in the program has been instigated and managed by the Principal and Deputy Principal in each school. They identified teachers considered to be at the “top of the game”, who were excellent educators interested in working in the field of Indigenous and diversity education, and invited them to take part. In conversation with the Reference Group, we then worked to “match” potential mentor teachers with Indigenous student mentees based on program orientation and academic interests, as well as other factors such as age and gender.
Development of the mentoring program

The project’s mentoring program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers was developed through a relational approach, whereby teachers’ and Indigenous students’ involvement began by participating in a mentoring Professional Development (PD) Day. The aim of the PD Day was to provide a space for “relationship” to transpire across a number of areas: for teachers-as-mentors and Indigenous students-as-mentees to meet, talk and get to know one another; to listen to the voices of Indigenous educators describing the experience of becoming, belonging and being in the teaching profession; to share previous experiences and understandings of mentoring; to engage in cultural awareness training with a specific focus on education, teaching and learning; and to work together to develop and map out the mentoring program. Once teacher-mentors and student-mentees completed the training at the PD Day, they were then ready to start their mentoring work in schools together. The mentoring took place during term time over an eight-week period. Indigenous students visited their mentor teachers once a week at school, during or outside class-time, and worked through the focus questions, issues and concerns identified through the PD Day as central to becoming and being a teacher.
Description of the mentoring program developed

The following table outlines the project’s mentoring program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers developed and undertaken over the one-year duration of the seed project from August 2013 to August 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Progress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference Group Meeting (August 2013)</td>
<td>In August 2013 Reference Group members met to ensure that the goals, approaches and outcomes of the project were firmly established, understood and agreed upon by all members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants recruited (August 2013)</td>
<td>The Project Manager contacted and finalised participants for the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-on-one interviews with teachers and students (August 2013)</td>
<td>One-on-one interviews with teachers and students were undertaken to explore the life history, background, experiences and aspirations of participants before commencing the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Day (September 2013)</td>
<td>This was undertaken in September 2013 and involved training the students and mentor teachers for participation in the mentoring program. Indigenous guest speakers spoke about their experiences as teachers and the process of mentoring and workshops on mentoring were held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly visits to schools (September 2013–November 2013)</td>
<td>Students and teachers participated in weekly mentoring sessions over eight weeks. The Project Manager took primary responsibility for the mentoring program, coordinating the mentoring visits to each school and managing the ongoing data collection and transcription work associated with this stage of the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Group Meeting (November 2013)</td>
<td>In November 2013 Reference Group members discussed the progress of the program, data collection methods, outcomes and moving forward.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual interviews/post-evaluations (December 2013)</td>
<td>Individual interviews were undertaken to contribute to understanding the mentoring experience for students and teachers, as well as to inform the future development of the program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reference Group Meeting (March 2014)</td>
<td>In March 2014 Reference Group members discussed the content of the program, data collection methods, outcomes and moving forward.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Further participants recruited (April 2014)</td>
<td>The Project Manager contacted and finalised further participants for the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-on-one interviews with teachers and students (May 2014)</td>
<td>One-on-one interviews with teachers and students were undertaken to explore the life history, background, experiences and aspirations of participants before commencing the program.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Program</strong></td>
<td><strong>Progress</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development Day (May 2014)</td>
<td>This was undertaken in May 2014 and involved preparing the students and mentor teachers for participation in the mentoring program. Indigenous guest speakers spoke about their experiences as teachers and the process of mentoring along and workshops on mentoring were held (see Appendix B for the program).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly visits to schools (May 2014–August 2014)</td>
<td>Students and teachers participated in weekly mentoring sessions over eight weeks. The Project Manager took primary responsibility for coordinating the mentoring visits to each school and the mentoring program, and managed the ongoing data collection and transcription work associated with this stage of the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews/post-evaluations (August 2014)</td>
<td>Individual interviews were undertaken to contribute to understanding the mentoring experience for students and teachers, as well as to inform the future development of the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collation, analysis and writing up data (August 2014)</td>
<td>Project Manager collated and analysed the data collected from the two sets of individual interviews conducted with the teacher mentors and initial teacher education students, the reflective audio diary entries and the post-evaluations. The Project Leader and the Project Manager prepared a report on the research findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Group Meeting (August 2014)</td>
<td>In August 2014 Reference Group members met to evaluate the project results to ascertain if the objectives and outcomes had been achieved and to discuss plans for continuation of the program in 2014 and possible expansion of the mentoring program into other university sites.</td>
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Themes in data

Our research is qualitative, phenomenological and narrative based in that it is framed around mentoring as an experience and the telling of that experience through personal and collective storying. Data was collected from:

- evaluation of the PD Day
- pre-interviews with students and mentor teachers
- weekly student and mentor teacher reflective audio diaries completed during the eight-week mentoring program
- mentor teachers’ post-reflection questionnaires.

The data from pre-interviews with students and mentor teachers, weekly student and mentor teacher reflective audio diaries completed during the eight-week mentoring program, and teachers’ post-reflection questionnaires were analysed using NVivo software. Selected themes are discussed further below.
Student backgrounds

The students who participated discussed their identities, their hopes for becoming teachers and possible challenges as Indigenous teachers in the following ways:

My grandmother was a teacher and my mother’s a teacher. Now that I’ve started my degree and am almost halfway through, I’ve found that it’s very rewarding in terms of seeing students learn and progress. So that’s now the main reason I want to be a teacher (pre-interview, Angus).

I’m from Casino in New South Wales, which is a part of the Bundjalung country ... I’ve done a lot of tutoring and babysitting, nannying. I’ve always been told I’m actually really good at teaching kids, which is why I thought it’s probably worth a shot. I’ve also found I quite enjoy the challenges of teaching the kids, like coming up with all these nifty little ways I can actually approach teaching, because every kid is different. So I’ve always found I’m quite intrigued in doing that, finding different teaching approaches to teach the kids (pre-interview Katrina).

I’m from New South Wales. I’m Indigenous on my mum’s side. My mum’s part of the stolen generations. [At school] the history teacher came down and said you don’t need to sit here anymore, come with me and I’ll teach you history. That’s where my love of learning outside of mathematics came from. There’s not many Indigenous teachers out there, not that that would be a challenge to teaching. I suppose for me, because I don’t look obviously Aboriginal, it’s explaining to either students or my teaching colleagues about my background, my Indigenous background (pre-interview Tony).

I’m from Cairns. I graduated in 2012. It’ll probably be a little difficult because I’m not white. For me, I don’t really think it’ll be that much of an issue. I mean, I’m just as good as any other teacher (pre-interview Tania).

Students’ reasons for participating

Students’ reasons for participating included gaining experience, insight into classroom practices, school contacts, being a role model for Indigenous students and ensuring that teaching is the right career path for them:

To gain as much experience as possible. I really enjoy being in the schools — and to get as much of that, like, practical experience done as possible would just help me greatly in becoming a teacher (pre-interview, Angus).

1 Pseudonyms Angus, Tania, Katrina and Tony are used for students.
Getting the insight into what school is actually like, exposure to different ways of approaching teaching that I could think about actually using for myself as well. I think that would be quite interesting, to be shown these different ways of doing it. [Being] able to become more comfortable in a school environment as well, if it’s a very welcoming school that’s helping out and the mentor’s very kind and things like that (pre-interview, Katrina).

If I could get involved in these communities and it’s also a safe environment ... it’s being promoted as that. It’s a safe environment for Indigenous students and teachers, so it would probably be a good way for me to go to have a good first experience of teaching; not be one of the fall-outs because of the first bad prac. It makes it a lot easier — I know that’s not going to be an issue that I am Indigenous; because you do come across some people where that will be an issue, so that takes a lot of pressure off me that that’s not going to happen here (pre-interview Katrina).

I think the experience of seeing a teacher who’s been teaching for quite some time — their style and how they teach — and possibly taking a little bit of that and inculcating it into my teaching practice (pre-interview, Tony).

I guess experience and insight into how being a teacher works, what the classroom looks like. I guess it will give me an advantage over some of my peers, seeing as we only do prac in fourth year. I think it’ll give me a lot of confidence, so, when it does roll around to prac, I’ll go in easy, no problems. Gaining experience. I listened to the voicemail that I got from you. I was just immediately interested and I was really honoured, I guess, to be chosen for this program — just even offered a place. I really want to do this because I really want to be an Indigenous role model. Yeah, and, I guess, will confirm whether I really want to be a teacher or not. Rather than getting to my final year and freaking out and going “no, this is not what I want to do” (pre-interview, Tania).

Teacher backgrounds

The five teachers\(^2\) who participated discussed their teaching backgrounds in the following ways:

I’ve been teaching for 32 years. I’ve done the majority of my teaching in Victoria with the Victorian Education Department. During those times in Victoria I was a classroom teacher. I managed an outdoor education facility. I was a principal of small schools and also an assistant principal at some very large schools. About five years ago I moved up to Queensland where I’ve been teaching at Pullenvale ever since. I have Grade 7 this year but I have taught all grade levels throughout my teaching career ... I have worked with Indigenous children in a number of

\(^2\) Pseudonyms Patricia, Neil, Tina, Glen and Maree are used for mentor teachers.
locations throughout my teaching but never mentored an Aboriginal teacher or worked with Aboriginal teachers (pre-interview, Glen).

I graduated from Kelvin Grove Teachers' College in 1986. I went straight to what was known as the Peninsula region, which included Cairns. I went to Smithfield State High, so I did a number of years there ... so I consider I spent quite a number of those formative years as a teacher in a more remote community ... I’ve been here for about 14 years too, so that would explain why I’ve taught such a breadth of subjects. Predominantly I focus on home economics, which is a twofold course studying textiles and foods and nutrition (pre-interview, Maree).

I studied art when I was straight out of high school. That was my passion. That’s what I wanted to do. I was very naive, I think ... I finished up working in hospitality for many, many years just trying to support myself so I could paint. Then I travelled a little bit. At one point I found myself living in Sweden and I had a job where I was teaching art — oil painting, it was, oil painting techniques — for an adult education class. I had never really ever anticipated that I’d be a teacher, but I enjoyed it, I really did. I enjoyed it a lot. So when I returned to Australia I did my Bachelor of Education. At 46 I started ... I’ve been here coming up to six years (pre-interview, Neil).

I’m currently Head of the Arts at Indooroopilly State High School and it’s in an acting capacity at the moment. This is my second year at Indooroopilly. Prior to that, for about a year, I was working at the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, working on projects associated with professional learning for teachers. Prior to that I was at Queensland Academy for Creative Industries. My teaching areas are film, television and new media, media studies, visual art ... It took a number of years but, last year, I completed my Masters of Education in research (pre-interview, Patricia).

I started working in outside school-hours care when I was going through university ... I went over and did some teaching in London for a year ... I’m part of the Kids Matter Committee [Australian Primary Schools Mental Health Initiative], which I really like. That's really important to me. I do believe it’s all about mental health and wellbeing of the kids. I’m quite involved with the art committee (pre-interview, Tina).

They discussed what they perceived as the challenges of being teachers including managing student behaviour and large workloads:

I see that the classroom management would be a big challenge for teachers today ... New upcoming teachers would be managing those and also managing the behaviour management of the class. That's always going to be an issue for any new teacher regardless, I think. So that's where I think we need to give as much assistance to new and upcoming teachers as we can ... Also relationship building — you need to sort of build a rapport and good relations with your children (pre-interview, Glen).
Oh well, my biggest problem was with behaviour management. I think I was far too casual. I'm not a loud person. I'm very quiet. I think that my biggest problem was that a lot of the younger kids just walked all over me. I believed their excuses and so on. I'm getting wiser (pre-interview, Neil).

Getting used to how to manage your workload, too, and how to reduce the complexity that could occur, because things can get pretty crazy (pre-interview, Maree).

I think the volume of work, the many things that they have to cover. Even in the time that I've been teaching, the increase in technology has had significant impact on teachers ... But it's the volume of so many different things all at once, I think (pre-interview Patricia).

I think the biggest challenge is that, really, you learn everything once you start ... Not that I'm bashing my uni in any way, because they do what they can to support you — but, really, your prac subjects were the only ones [where you get classroom experience] (pre-interview, Tina).

**Teachers’ reasons for participating**

Reasons teachers chose to participate in the program included the opportunity to pass on knowledge to beginning teachers, the opportunity to learn more about Indigenous peoples and issues, and to include Indigenous people in school settings:

I have a belief that we, as experienced teachers, have a role to play in mentoring new teachers into our system. I saw this as a good opportunity to help young teachers in their role as becoming new teachers within our system ... So it’s good that you can give something back, I suppose, to the job, to the upcoming teachers. I think I would like to pass on my experience in managing a classroom, managing the workload that's related with it. Because I see it as a real work/home balance that some people can get caught up and [devote] way too much time on the job and not enough on home life or personal balance, and I think that's an issue for young teachers in particular. That's why I think a lot of them might leave the profession, because it's quite a demanding job. I don’t think a lot of people see that. I think they see the job as it's like a 9 to 3 job, then I can go home (pre-interview, Glen).

I’m Australian. I lived overseas for a long time, but I really haven’t had that much contact in my life with Indigenous people. I still feel burdened with guilt because I know their history. Even the fact that I did grow up in a situation, in Brisbane of all places, and never really knew anyone. It wasn’t part of my world. I mean, that is wrong (pre-interview, Neil).
I think it’s really important for our school on a number of levels, so it’s important that we have more of an ongoing relationship with The University of Queensland. But, I think it is important for our Indigenous students here to have more Indigenous adults in our environment (pre-interview, Patricia).

Perhaps it’ll give me a better outlook on, or understanding of, Indigenous perspectives. I just thought it would be good for me (pre-interview Tina).

Students’ experiences in the program

Students noted the sense of school community they felt part of while undertaking the program:

I feel as though I’ve got a bigger sense of the community at the school. It feels good to be a part of it. I really enjoy it. I can’t really fault it in any way (Reflection day 2, Angus).

Everyone, again, was very genuine and welcoming, students and the staff alike, which makes it such a pleasant experience to be involved in this program. It’s making for a positive introduction to teaching and its possibilities as a career choice for me (Reflection day 2, Katrina).

It’s a really nice atmosphere and it’s just a really great school overall and I really want to teach there (Reflection day 6, Tania).

They were just a very warm, accepting family, really — the teachers and the students. The students were quite lovely to get along with, which, from my own experience in high school, it’s not always the case. So yeah, it was brilliant, actually; and I’d love to do it again (Reflection day 8, Katrina).

Katrina also discussed her positive experience participating in organising Indigenous-related events at the school:

At lunchtime I was involved in a project at the school to do with Reconciliation Day. So what they did was they had the idea about a sea of hands and they had all these hands that they’d cut out in the colours of the Aboriginal flag as well as the Torres Strait Islander flag. It was really cool to see that a lot of the kids were quite involved. They’d come up and they’d take one of the hands and they’d just write a little message, or their ideas about what had happened in the past, or the history of Australia to do with Indigenous people. It was quite a surreal experience to see the kids were so involved in that sort of thing. I remember from my high school days that it wasn't necessarily the case. These kids are so involved in all aspects of their schooling, and it’s quite lovely to see really (Reflection day 5, Katrina).
So yeah, it was quite interesting to be involved in making those sorts of decisions and being sure that the NAIDOC Day will actually go well. I've also actually been given a formal invitation to attend that on 16 July, which will be awesome. I absolutely love it. Also, it was pretty cool to receive the invitation that I'd actually created for a lot of people (Reflection day 8, Katrina).

Students also noted the confidence they were building through participating in the program:

It was really good just to have this conversation and, I don't know, build my confidence in the fact that teaching is a career choice that is for me (Reflection day 2, Katrina).

I'm gaining a lot of confidence and it's really good. I think it's just really, I guess, confirming that I want to be a teacher (Reflection day 2, Tania).

This whole thing has given me a lot of confidence, which is good, and I know I won't freak out the first time I have to go into a classroom and teach because, even though I haven't been teaching per se, I know what to do; I have confidence in myself (Reflection day 7, Tania).

The students also gained valuable experience in a school setting:

So I really value the experience that I'm having and I really — yeah, no, it's great. I'm really excited about more things that I can learn. Tara also showed me her marking rubric and her marking and it was good to see from a teacher's perspective because they don't show us that kind of stuff at uni; so, in terms of the hands-on stuff, it's great. It's just given me a whole lot of perspective and experience and help, especially with uni and all my assignments. Especially the hands-on and prac assignments — you know, the “write a lesson plan” kind of thing. (Reflection day 1, Angus).

I was able to be involved with also helping a girl with a large assignment that she had to do; it was a 4000 word essay. I was able to have a conversation with her and guide her through her decision on her thesis for the assignment ... I absolutely love this, being able to contribute to a student's learning and aiding in their understanding of the task as well. Which was all very good experience for my first time of being at Indooroopilly in this program (Reflection day 1, Katrina).

It was great to be more involved in the aspects of the classroom and student learning. I really enjoyed that I was actually able to contribute to their work, what they're doing. I was able to help out, lend a helping hand sort of thing, which was all really good (Reflection day 2, Katrina).

We also spoke about the possibility of me getting a bit more involved in the teaching role and actually giving the students a bit of a lesson ... a five or 10 minute lesson. I think this is a great idea and I'm really excited about that. I'm stoked; I think it will be great (Reflection day 2, Katrina).
I’m having quite a good time and Neil is teaching me a lot and, yeah, just showing me how he marks things and [he] just tells me to interact with the kids ... Yeah, he’s really encouraging and it’s great (Reflection day 2, Tania).

So far I’ve learned quite a lot, especially just even art techniques, which I never thought I would really learn (Reflection day 8, Tania).

Participation in classroom activities was another positive for students:

This week I was able to be a bit more involved in the classes, as I was a bit more aware of what was needed for the set tasks to be completed by the students (Reflection day 2, Katrina).

Today was also brilliant because I got to help out with ... NAIDOC Week celebrations — the formal celebrations. I actually got to be directly involved with creating the invitations for the general public as well as Indigenous family members and things like that, which was pretty cool. I actually wrote out the invite myself and decorated it and highlighted the theme. It was interesting to see that there’s this whole other side to teaching if you get involved in extra-curricular activities and things like that ... It felt great to be involved in this celebration at the school for NAIDOC Week (Reflection day 6, Katrina).

Today I also went and helped out with some of the PE teachers who were running a dodge ball class at the school. Which was quite entertaining, but it was more so good because I got to network with other teachers in other faculties at the school, which was quite awesome actually. They were all very welcoming and quite kind, which was lovely (Reflection day 8, Katrina).

I also got to look at a drama exam, which was very interesting. It was just performances on *Hedda Gabler* and it really gave me an insight into what being a drama teacher involves. The teachers who took the class often asked for my opinion ... and it got me really involved and just reinforces the fact that I want to be a drama teacher. As they were coming up with marks they were asking me what I thought the mark should be for that, which, yeah, it was really interesting (Reflection day 5, Tania).

The students are really getting to know me and I think it’s good. They all seem to like me, which means I’m relatable (Reflection day 6, Tania).

Students were also able to observe the teachers in action and witness the day-to-day running of teacher schedules:

I was also able to witness how busy a teacher’s schedule actually is. Seeing that it’s actually a full-time job where you’ve got to constantly ensure that students get the best possible learning experience (Reflection day 1, Katrina).
I was also able to witness how the morning roll call procedures work at the school. Like how they supply announcements to the students and all that sort of stuff, which was actually quite interesting (Reflection day 3, Katrina).

It was interesting to see how report work goes in terms for the teacher. How it occupies a lot of their time and there’s this big rush at the end of semester to finish last-minute assignments and things like that so that the teachers have the two weeks to mark all this stuff. So it’s quite intriguing (Reflection day 6, Katrina).

So I was observing Year 10s and 11s, which was a lot different from the 8s and 9s because everyone was doing their own individual work, and Neil was just telling me about the tasks that they had. It was really interesting to see it (Reflection day 3, Tania).

I just spoke to students and it was, as Neil said, just really being in the atmosphere and, I guess, picking up things, the way he teaches, just by sitting there and watching and doing my own thing and talking to students and just interacting within the classroom and just talking to Neil about how he does things and what’s expected [now] and what’s expected for the next semester (Reflection day 6, Tania).

One student, Katrina, noted ways that she was able to form relationships with other members of the school community through her participation:

I also met with the Principal and was able to see how welcoming the school is. Other staff members would always make sure they’d introduce themselves to me if I walked past them and let me feel comfortable with being at this school (Reflection day 1, Katrina).

So there was a lot of people that were very keen to show me their classes and how it works and have me check it out ... It’s great that the school is like this, very welcoming (Reflection day 3, Katrina).

Maree’s been really great with organising me to become well acquainted with some of the other teachers in the school. There was a staff meeting today but it’s a bit more of a fun thing that they did. They apparently do it once a month and I got invited to go this — it’s a bit of a morning tea sort of thing — and just mingle with the staff. Which was quite cool to actually talk to a lot of them about certain aspects of teaching and what it all involves (Reflection day 5, Katrina).

I also got to meet a guy called Zack today, I think he’s a Science teacher at the school. He was very kind and welcoming as well and gave me a bit of advice for in the future to do with approaching my pracs and things like that (Reflection day 6, Katrina).
Teachers’ experiences in program

Teachers who participated noted that the program allowed them to develop strong professional relationships with the students and prompted them to reflect on their own teaching practice:

I think it makes you reflect on your own practice. So if you’re discussing practice all the time, it makes you think about your own practice more and that’s really important (pre-interview, Patricia).

Even after today’s session, I’m much more switched on to reflecting what goes on (pre-interview, Maree).

It was a success because my mentee was overwhelmingly positive throughout the eight sessions, having become a part of things from day one. She developed rapport with both staff and students and was actively engaged in dialogue in the classroom. Tania took an active interest in classroom exercises and was available for advice to students when approached by them. The conversations I had with her afterwards were very positive and led to her telling me the reasons behind her wanting to teach in the first place (post-evaluation, Neil).

I have formed a great professional relationship with the student and feel I have been able to support and encourage him. I think our personalities were well suited to work together. The student has recently contacted me and we are continuing our roles into this year. The Principal is fine with the student to continue visits to the school when he wishes (post-evaluation, Tina).

[It] helped me to have more confidence in my methods of teaching. It inspired in me the belief that a simple one-on-one conversational approach based upon anecdotal references to classroom experiences is an appropriate way of conveying my thoughts and ideas about teaching and my concerns about behavioural issues in the classroom (post-evaluation, Neil).

Two teachers also discussed how they were learning more about Indigenous topics through their mentees:

An insight into the Indigenous culture and some of the hurdles encountered by Indigenous students — for example, adapting to uni life, distance from home/family in order to study (post-evaluation, Glen).

I have also learnt from the student regarding teaching Indigenous topics. It has been a pleasure to work with him (post-evaluation, Tina).
Dissemination and linkages

In December 2013 further funding was received from MATSITI to continue the project’s mentoring program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers. This ensures longevity of the mentoring program into 2015 and provides evidence of engaged dissemination.

Mackinlay also presented at a conference which allowed for project results to be disseminated and feedback to be gained:

Mackinlay, E., Barney, K., & Creagh, S. (2014, July). *Becoming, belonging and being in the profession: Evaluating a mentoring program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers*. Australian Teacher Education Association Conference, Sydney, Australia.

Further results will be disseminated at the Engagement and Success Forum held by MATSITI and the Australian Council of Deans in Education Inc. in November 2014 where one of the mentees will present on his experiences in the program and the Australian Association of Research in Education Conference in December 2014. It was noted in the original proposal that project results would be further disseminated at one of the strategic national conferences convened by MATSITI, however MATSITI have not held a national conference at this stage. We are also currently exploring links to other MATSITI programs involving mentoring.
Evaluation

Formative and summative evaluation processes were undertaken throughout the seed project through four evaluative processes that included the Reference Group, scholarly input, and student and mentor teacher input. Reference Group members were asked for feedback, direction and input throughout the project. The feedback was then incorporated into the subsequent Reference Group meetings. Participants in the PD Days were also asked for feedback on the organisation, content and speakers; this was then incorporated into the next PD Day.

Mackinlay also presented findings from the project at a conference and Mackinlay and Barney are in the process of submitting articles in peer-reviewed publications. The scholarly input from colleagues contributed to shaping the direction and the theoretical and methodological framework used in the project. During the data collection phase, students and mentor teachers undertook pre- and post-questionnaires and interviews to gain information about their experiences in the mentoring program. This data was then qualitatively analysed using NVivo software to examine the themes conveyed by participants.
Findings for how to implement the mentoring program at other universities

Committed staff in schools and tertiary education programs are needed to implement this mentoring program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers. A program manager is needed to coordinate the activities and this program manager could be situated in either an Indigenous studies unit or within an Education School/Unit. In either case, dialogue between the two units is crucial. Mentoring programs for Indigenous initial teacher educators need to be closely coordinated with student initial teacher education course requirements. Ideally, some form of course credit should be offered to students for their participation in the program. Mentoring programs need to be undertaken with ongoing input from a community of Indigenous teachers.
Moving forward

The higher education sector is being urged to close the gap in Indigenous education by actively putting in place strategies that will increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching graduates and their preparedness to enter and stay in the teaching profession.

Student motivations for becoming a teacher tell us that the reasons why Indigenous students might want to enter the teaching profession are varied and complex. Family histories; prior negative and positive experiences in education; and a desire to participate in the exciting, challenging, and rewarding process of teaching and learning with children are all factors which have lead them to this point. They all have a sense that their identity as Indigenous students matters in relation to becoming, belonging and being in the teaching profession — for themselves and for the teacher, student and educational community of which they will become a part. For now, they are not quite sure what their Indigeneity might mean in terms of the real-life experience of being a real teacher in a real school. Their hope to become good teachers, and good Indigenous teachers, is what drives them and participating in the mentoring program is one step on this journey.

The students have now completed their first eight-week mentoring program and the small amount of data we have suggests that their experiences in the pilot program were positive overall and confirmed for them that they belong in the profession:

It’s just helping me as a pre-service teacher so much and I really couldn’t thank anyone enough ... It’s really helpful and it’s evident in myself that I’m doing better than what I would have been if I wasn't doing this program. So really, yeah, I’m just over the moon right now (Reflection day 4, Angus).

It was quite liberating really (Reflection day 1, Katrina).

I’m actually quite sad to be ending the program. I absolutely enjoyed the school experience. It was amazing. I'd definitely be interested in getting involved in that school in particular again, if I’m able to. They were just a very warm, accepting family really, the teachers and the students (Reflection day 8, Katrina).

I’m gaining a lot of confidence and it's really good. I think it's just really, I guess, confirming that I want to be a teacher. It's making it just easier, and I know when it comes around me to me doing my prac this experience is phenomenal (Reflection day 2, Tania).

It’s doing wonders for helping me just confirm that this is what I want to do and it's great (Reflection day 3, Tania).

Our hope for this mentoring program is that it can continue to contribute in a number of ways to teacher education research; to our theoretical understanding of mentoring through, around and across the boundaries of race; to the experiences of mentors and mentees in a
cross-cultural mentoring relationship; and to the ways that mentoring is experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initial teacher education students to develop their professional identities, self-efficacy and readiness to teach. We have now applied for UQ strategic funding to continue the program at UQ and hope to develop the mentoring program into a larger study across multiple university sites.
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Appendix A: The project team and the reference group

Elizabeth Mackinlay, Project Leader
Project Leader Elizabeth Mackinlay is a non-Indigenous woman who grew up on Watharung country in Western Victoria. She began her academic career in ethnomusicology in 1994, working with Yanyuwa, Garwra, Mara and Kudanji people in the remote town of Burrulula in the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria in the Northern Territory of Australia, and found herself in the position of teaching in the field of Indigenous Australian Studies soon after. Liz is married to a Yanyuwa man and is mother to their two children. Her PhD in ethnomusicology combined with higher education teaching experience led her to embark on a second PhD, this time in education where she explored the performativity of power, race and relationship in Indigenous Australian Studies. Liz has subsequently trained as a primary teacher and spends time working in lower primary classrooms to embed Indigenous Australian perspectives. She also teaches Indigenous Knowledges and Education to primary, secondary and middle-years initial teacher educators at UQ. Over time, her research and teaching focus has become orientated to her positioning as a non-Indigenous woman both in relation to and in relation with Indigenous peoples, knowledges and cultures. Liz’s work has increasingly focussed on issues of social justice and education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Mackinlay, 2008, 2011) and, in recent years, she has become passionate about the power and privilege that non-Indigenous educators have to enact a “pedagogy of the heart” (Mackinlay, 2011), which is ultimately about empowerment and self-determination for Indigenous Australians. She now describes much of her work as “applied” in the sense that it is undertaken in collaboration with Indigenous communities and driven by their needs and agendas (Mackinlay, 2010). Liz’s role in this project was to provide overarching leadership and to write and prepare the final report with Project Manager Katelyn Barney.

Katelyn Barney, Project Manager
Like Liz, Katelyn Barney’s background is in music and Indigenous studies, and she completed a PhD working with Indigenous women performing contemporary music in 2006. Since then, her research has shifted to a collaborative framework, and she has undertaken a number of research partnerships with Indigenous researchers and colleagues (see Barney, 2012). One such project was with Lexine Solomon, a Torres Strait Islander performer and researcher, surveying how Torres Strait Islander women express their identities through contemporary music (Barney & Solomon, 2010); another was with Monique Proud, an Aboriginal researcher, exploring the contemporary music making in her own community of Cherbourg in Queensland, Australia (Barney & Proud, 2010). Kate has also worked on number of teaching and learning projects in her role as Research Fellow in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit at UQ. From Kate’s perspective, collaborative research between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people holds the potential to help bridge the gulf, to allow non-Indigenous and Indigenous people to work equally together, to learn from each other and to resist oppression of Indigenous people through inclusion as co-researchers. Kate worked on the seed project from March to August 2014. Her role was to work closely with the students and teachers involved in the project, undertake overarching analysis of all data collected, organise two Reference Group meetings and a Professional Development Day, and write and prepare the final report with Liz.
Sue Creagh, Project Manager
Sue Creagh worked as Project Manager from August to November 2013. Before completing a PhD in education, Sue worked for many years as a teacher in the field of English as a Second Language. She left the seed project to take up a research position at the Institute of Social Science Research at UQ.

Project Reference Group
The Reference Group consisted of: Head of the School of Education Merrilyn Goos (current) and Peter Renshaw (past) at UQ; Director of Academic Programs in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit/Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Indigenous Education) at UQ Jon Willis; Aboriginal early childhood educator Denise Proud; Principal at Pullenvale State Primary School Evan Willis; Head of the Department Student Services at Indooroopilly State High School Troy Gorman; Deputy Principal at Indooroopilly State High School Derek Weeks; the Project Leader; and the Project Manager. The Reference Group met three times during this project to ensure that the rationale, aims, approach and outcomes were sustained and achieved.
Appendix B: Professional development day program

Program from Professional Development Day, May 2014

Professional Development Day for Indigenous Pre-Service Teachers and Teachers
Thursday 1 May 2014
Location: The Women’s College, Council Room (in the main administration block),
The University of Queensland

Background
This program is aimed at providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers at The University of Queensland with the opportunity to enter into a mentoring relationship with experienced teachers working in two Brisbane schools. The program operates at the schools for one half-day each week over a period of eight weeks. During this time, the teacher and pre-service teacher will share time together, as the teacher introduces the pre-service teacher to the profession of teaching. It is hoped that this program will support the Indigenous pre-service teachers to begin to develop their professional identity as teachers and their readiness to teach. The Professional Development Day activities are intended to focus on cultural awareness for teachers and “school culture awareness” for the Indigenous pre-service teachers. Teachers and Indigenous pre-service teachers will also work with an experienced facilitator, Robyn Henderson, to map out a definition and guiding parameters for the mentor/mentee relationship to be developed over the course of the program. The mentoring program will also be the focus of a research project, which aims to identify the use and effectiveness of mentoring as a strategy for building and sustaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers’ success in tertiary education programs. Participants are also invited to participate in the research component of the program, which involves individual and group interviews and the use of audio diaries completed by participants during the mentoring program.

Program for the Day

9.15 am  Registration
9.30 am  Welcome and introductions
10.30 am  Navigating the world of teaching as an Indigenous teacher with Will Davis
11.00 am  Morning tea
11.15 am  Cultural awareness with Denise Proud and Monique Proud
12.15 pm  Lunch
1.00 pm  Student experiences of mentoring
1.30 pm  Defining the mentoring relationship and mapping out the mentoring program with Robyn Henderson
3.00 pm  Afternoon tea
3.15–4.00 pm  Final organisation, review and evaluation of day with Robyn Henderson

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