

Final Project Report

The Australian Learning and Teaching Council
Leadership for Excellence in Learning and Teaching Program

Tiddas Showin' Up, Talkin' Up and Puttin' Up: Indigenous Women and Educational Leadership

Conducted by
Flinders University
And
Australian Catholic University

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Information for this project may be accessed at :

<http://www.flinders.edu.au/yunggorendi/tiddas/HomePage.html>

2009

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THE TIDDAS

'There's something special about when black women get together'



*'I want to be around other
strong Indigenous women
and to learn'*

*Tiddaship: This type of scholarship is
priceless. Sharing information and
supporting each other is positive for
many reasons.'*



'A positive aspect of the workshops was being around strong women who have a vast wealth of knowledge and experience.'



'I thoroughly enjoy meeting/gathering with our Tiddas on the journey of higher education in the academy'

It is important to sit down with intelligent, humorous, wonderful women and have the chance to discuss issues in a safe space. To hear the voices of women in leadership roles and to learn from their experiences'



Executive Summary

The naming of the project as Tiddas Showin' Up, Talkin' Up and Puttin' Up draws from two Indigenous sources – the first reinscribes the white way of knowing the familial relationship of 'Sister' in the Indigenous generic language term of 'Tidda'. Secondly, Showin' Up, 'Talkin' Up' (Moreton-Robinson, 2000) and Puttin' Up calls into agentic being the constructions of our leadership as Indigenous women, grounded in our communities for particular reference to our leadership in the University.

The project was led by Flinders University in partnership with the Australian Catholic University through the Indigenous Higher Education Centres located in Adelaide (Yunggoorendi First Nations Centre) and Brisbane (Weemala Indigenous Unit), respectively. Indigenous Higher Education networks were utilised to recruit Indigenous women located in universities throughout the nation. At the commencement of the project 2 levels of governance were established. The first, a Circle of Senior Indigenous Women, was comprised of experts in the fields of learning and teaching, scholarship, administration and management and community engagement and were drawn primarily from the higher education sector. The second level of governance was a Steering Committee comprised of Senior Executive Women of the partner universities. The two levels of governance provided advice to the project leaders for the conduct of the project.

The approach to the project comprised four workshops conducted at the end of each semester in 2007 and 2008. Each workshop addressed a specific theme. These were:

1. Learning and Teaching,
2. Scholarship,
3. University Administration and Management and
4. Community Engagement.

Approximately twenty Indigenous women attended each workshop with a core group of women attending the majority. The project originally proposed a shared cost arrangement between the project and the women's institutions. The approach also included the development of a website profiling the women engaged in the project. Independent evaluations were conducted for Workshops 2 and 4 respectively.

This project remained consistent with the ALTC objectives of fostering the development of leadership capacity by allowing the sharing of Indigenous women's knowledge, learning and networking experiences to support professional development. Specifically, it promoted and supported strategic change in higher education by strengthening the participation and leadership capacity of Indigenous women academics. This project was innovative and forward thinking in that it has begun to effect long-term systemic change and by a rippling effect, strengthened and contributed to leadership capacity of Indigenous women within Indigenous Communities, and also to the broader Australian society.

The project embraced rich, open and multiple interpretations of leadership that enhanced institutional understandings and practices of educational leadership. The workshops, the development of key concepts of Indigenous women's leadership and the establishment of an Indigenous women's leadership network and website are evidence of the project being able to "develop effective mechanisms for the identification, development, dissemination and embedding of good individual and institutional practice in learning and teaching in Australian higher education". The total project was congruent with ALTC principles.

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Community Elders

Aunty Joan Hendriks (Community Elder, Brisbane)
Sue Thompson (Community Elder, Sunshine Coast)
Aunty Dianne Kerr (Community Elder, Melbourne)
Aunty Mona Tur (Community Elder, Adelaide)

International Indigenous Women Presenters

Associate Professor Kehalani Kehauni, Wesleyan University USA
Assistant Professor Jackie Ottman, University of Calgary Canada

Non- Indigenous Women Presenters

Dr Carolyn Allport, National Tertiary Education Industry Union
Dr Jennifer Strauss, Australian Federation of University Women

Circle of Senior Indigenous Women

Professor Wendy Brady, Charles Darwin University
Dr Bronwyn Fredericks, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Community Health
Dr Jackie Huggins, University of Queensland (2008)
Ms Angela Leitch, Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts
Professor Aileen Moreton – Robinson, Queensland University of Technology (2007)

Steering Committee

Professor Gabrielle McMullen, Australian Catholic University
Professor Marie Emmit, Australian Catholic University
Professor Faith Trent, Flinders University
Dr Jane Robbins, Flinders University

Workshop Facilitator

Simone Tur, Flinders University (Workshop 2, 2008)

Project Administrative Support

Marilyn Wilson, Flinders University
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Courtney Thompson, Flinders University
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Indigenous Women Participants

Roz Angelese, Charles Darwin University
Noela Baigrie, Griffith University
Ali Baker, Flinders University
Dr Jennifer Baker, University of South Australia
Georgina Barai, University of Queensland
Sian Bennett, Murdoch University
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Kath Wallace, Australian Catholic University
Frances Wylde, University of South Australia

Independent Evaluators

Dr Maggie Walter, University of Tasmania (2007)
Tamara White (2008)

1. Name of Project and Project Number

Name: Tiddas Showin' Up, Talkin' Up and Puttin' Up: Indigenous Women and Educational Leadership

Number: LE617

2. Project Outcomes

Indigenous women continue to face the double obstruction of being Indigenous and being woman in their efforts to negotiate a respected place within Australian universities. This has limited Indigenous women to junior positions of leadership and created significant stress. This project sought to build the capacity of Indigenous women academics in order to support and encourage their agency addressing this imbalance.

Women gained practical knowledge about negotiating the day to day challenges of academic life. The participants learnt to be strategic about planning their careers. They developed awareness of the need to be selective and discerning regarding participation in committees, strategic alliances and mentoring relationships. Participants were informed about university structures and processes and how these can be utilised more fully.

The project provided a model for the leadership training and capacity building of Indigenous women that could be drawn upon nationally by the higher education sector.

The project supported the establishment of an Indigenous women's academic network which is a vehicle for Indigenous women's leadership in Australian universities. The network ensures on-going and valuable support for Indigenous women beyond the life of the project.

The project enabled the participants, including those at the early career stage, to engage in the development of the publication of papers and presentations at appropriate conferences. It is proposed that the consolidation of this project will include a reconvening of participants to support the development of an edited collection of essays around Indigenous Australian women and leadership in the university. This publication has the capacity to be a foundational text, about Indigenous Australian women and academic leadership, written from the unique perspective of Indigenous women and thus contribute to transformed understandings of leadership.

Evaluation throughout the project provides a source of rich data that could be used to inform other projects.

The framing perspective of the Circle of Senior Indigenous Women and the Executive Women's Steering Committee provided valuable guidance to the project. The dual approach to governance demonstrates an emerging model of respectful collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in university leadership.

Through the project women were encouraged to further their post-graduate study as they engaged with other Indigenous women who had successfully completed post-graduate study and research. Women had access to advice regarding study choices, potential supervisors and mentors and thesis examiners.

3. Project Approach and Methodology

The approach to the project was inclusive of consultation with Senior Indigenous women for project affirmation; the establishment of a Steering Committee comprised of Senior Executive women of the two partner universities; a series of four workshops conducted over a period of two years that involved Indigenous academic women employed in universities throughout the nation; a project team experienced in Indigenous education; and project outcomes that contribute to cutting edge development in the leadership field.

The team leaders established the two levels governance – Circle of Senior Indigenous Women and the Steering Committee in 2006 prior to the commencement of the Workshops in 2007. Membership of the Circle of Senior Indigenous Women was determined by high level experience in education, research and knowledge of the University sector. The Steering Committee consisted of two Senior Academic women from each university. There was an active participation in each of the Workshops by the majority of the members of the Circle of Senior Indigenous Women as there was with the Steering Committee of Executive Women. This including telling their stories and giving particular attention to the challenges facing a woman's career within the university, sharing knowledge of strategies for advancing for assisting in and promoting their careers and the need to balance life and work.

The advice and direction given by both levels of governance was essential in shaping the workshops with respect to content, guest speakers and cultural activities.

A series of four workshops for the project focussed on the core priorities of University work and were conducted in various locations that connected to the local Indigenous Communities:

- Workshop 1. Teaching and Learning – 25-27 June, 2007 Brisbane
- Workshop 2. Scholarship – 3-5 December 2007 Adelaide
- Workshop 3. University Administration and Management – 23 – 25 June 2008 Sunshine Coast
- Workshop 4. Community Engagement – 3-5 December 2008 Melbourne

The workshops hosted approximately 20 Indigenous women, with different women at each workshop though a core group could be identified. The aspiration of recruiting two Indigenous women from each attending University was not realised for reasons covered later in this paper.

The project workshops created safe spaces for the Indigenous women participants to discuss, frame and effect Indigenous women's ethical practice of leadership.

Two international Indigenous women, Associate Professor Kehalani Kehauni, Wesleyan University (USA) and Assistant Professor Jackie Ottman, University of Calgary (Canada) provided presentations to Workshops 1 and 4 respectively. The presenters' knowledge and experience facilitated deeper understandings of the international Indigenous woman's experience and fostered the broadening of scholarly networks for the Indigenous Australian women participants. Assistant Professor Ottman also participated in the project's presentation to the World Indigenous People's Conference (WIPCE) in 2008.

A website was established for the project. This website profiled the project team, the Senior Executive, the Circle of Senior Indigenous Women and the Indigenous women

participants. The website identified the women participants by either university location or cultural group. The profiles provided information with regards to current position, previous work experience, research projects, and publications.

The effectiveness of this website during the conduct of the project was impeded by a lack of a continued presence of IT expertise within the project team and the installation of a new system at the home location of the website. This work commenced in 2008 and continues at the completion of this project. The consolidation of the project will see the website reinvigorated through outsourced expertise. The website address: (<http://www.flinders.edu.au/yunggorendi/tiddas/HomePage.html>).

4. Use and Advancement of Knowledge

This project was informed by the growing body of knowledge about Indigenous Australian women's leadership. It also contributed to the advancement of Indigenous leadership and specifically Indigenous women's leadership within the academy through sharing of good models of leadership practice; dialogue between participants, and with presenters; sharing of research articles and writings by Indigenous scholars including workshop presenters, Senior Circle of women and participants; and the encouragement of women to pursue postgraduate studies, seek promotion and write about their experiences. The university sector will be greatly enriched by the growth of the individual women's knowledge as participants and the Tiddas as a group, and their capacity to be able to contribute to the restoration of Indigenous leadership within Australian society.

Indigenous women's leadership has undergone a dramatic transformation during 220 years of colonisation. Prior to European occupation Indigenous women were economically independent and played important roles within traditional Aboriginal society. They were acknowledged as the main food providers and primary care-givers and teachers of the children; they practiced healing and contributed to the spiritual lives of their communities (Bin-Salik, 2000, Brock, 1989, Gale, 1978). However, the destructive forces of colonisation (dispossession of lands, incarceration, genocide, removal of children, inhumane treatment and the pressures of assimilation, racism and sexism) have consequently robbed Indigenous women of their rightful place as leaders in Australian society.

Despite the many obstacles which continue to persist in contemporary society, Indigenous women have sought to better their position in their communities by investing in education as the way to move forward from welfare dependency. Many Indigenous women are returning to study to increase their job opportunities, to obtain recognised qualifications and to increase their confidence and skills (Daylight & Johnstone, 1986). From a relatively low numbers in the early 1970s, Indigenous higher education students now number close to 10,000 with two-thirds of those being women (2007 DEST Higher Ed Stats record 3,170 Indigenous Males; 6,200 Indigenous Females with a total of 9,370 Indigenous students).

The numbers of Indigenous academic and general staff have also increased in recent years, but the figures are still unsatisfactory. In total, Indigenous staff comprise less than one percent of the staff of universities and in 2006, there were fewer than 300 Indigenous academics across the whole sector. Of that group, only 37 Indigenous academics were at levels D and E, holding appointments above Senior Lecturer, and only one in eight Indigenous academics possessed a doctorate compared with half of all academic staff (IHEAC, 2007).

Little has been done to understand and support Indigenous staff a great number of whom are located within Indigenous Support Units which are often isolated and marginalised within the university. Many of these Indigenous staff are women attempting to undertake critical roles in supporting Indigenous students, teaching in cultural areas to inform non-Indigenous students whilst up-grading their qualifications to Masters and Doctoral level. With such competing demands, Indigenous academics are subject to stress, health issues, and burn-out, common issues shared within the workshops.

The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (2007) identified two key strategies that are pertinent to the project:

1. A National Indigenous Workforce Strategy to increase the number of Indigenous staff in universities and to raise the number of Indigenous staff in leadership roles.
2. Indigenous participation in sector governance to allow Indigenous staff, academics and community Elders to have significant contribution at all levels.

This project uses existing understandings and knowledge about Indigenous female academics and their need to receive collegial support from other Indigenous women, the Senior Circle of Indigenous women, and from non-Indigenous women who have successfully negotiated the hierarchical structures and patriarchal cultures of the university environment. The project workshops were strongly focused on building the confidence of individual women in order for them to effectively undertake leadership roles. In addition, is argued that opportunities “to gather and network are a renewal of traditional women’s business still practiced in some communities, but not so often in cities. Such women’s networks embrace those traditional aspects of culture that Indigenous women need, to maintain their identity in contemporary life” (White, 2007). The role for universities as agents of post-colonial education is to bring Indigenous research and knowledge into the academy “raising Indigenous voices, narratives and visions as foundational to change” (Battiste 2004, p.9). Through providing a culturally safe space for Indigenous women academics to talk about their place within the academy and the challenges they face, the project has allowed the women to consider how they will individually and collectively contribute to Indigenous women’s leadership and knowledge within the university. It is determined that the proposed collection of writings generated from this project will greatly increase our knowledge and understanding of Indigenous women’s academic leadership.

5. Factors Critical to and Impeding Project Success

Success factors

The successful elements of the project were demonstrated by:

- Cross-institutional/co-leadership of a national project enacting a strong mutual respect and a sharing of Indigenous cultural understandings that modelled leadership for Indigenous women participants.
- Establishment of the two levels of governance for the project enabled easily accessible advice for the Project Team.
- The workshop series that created culturally safe sites for a critical analysis of the university and discourse shaping of the meaning of Indigenous women's leadership in the university. Knowledge of Indigenous women's leadership came to be understood as operating simultaneously within both Indigenous and non-Indigenous paradigms.
- Establishment of a network of Indigenous academic women that could be called upon for support, advice, mentoring, critical friends and for supervision of post – graduate studies. This important activity constitutes the scaffolding for 'puttin' up' Indigenous higher education generally and may not necessarily be achieved through other Indigenous higher education networks. Existing networks work to broader issues of Indigenous higher education and do not necessarily focus on the building of leadership capacity.
- The core group of Indigenous women participants and those who could be named as senior enabled the project through modelling leadership and being inclusive of new participants and those participants who could be named as the younger generation of our communities. The performance of leadership in this way during the conduct of the workshops and into non-working hours demonstrated the importance of a collective and culturally appropriate agency.
- Strengthening the cultural foundations for Indigenous women's leadership in the university through:
 - ❖ Affirmation and confirmation of Indigenous identities. The university can negate, exoticise and neutralise Indigenous identities. The workshops celebrated the diversity of cultural identification.
 - ❖ Selection and utilisation of Indigenous cultural practices in the workplace. For example, the dialogue of the workshops demonstrated oppositional practice when the women meet resistance to Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.
 - ❖ Connection to Indigenous Community as fundamental to engaging with the University. The power of the university to assimilate is ever present and the conduct of Indigenous women's leadership is integral and ethical to the development of our communities.
 - ❖ Tiddaship for strategic intervention in the support of students and staff. Here the role of leader has synchronicity with carer, healer and teacher.

- ❖ Indigenous women's intellectual and cultural practice as a foundation for scholarship. Indigenous knowledge is a developing field and the women participants commencing post – graduate studies were encouraged to add their knowledge to this field.
- ❖ The use of Indigenous humour to strengthen relationships. Humour relieves stress and anxiety and the unique nature of Indigenous humour is essential mechanism for coping with our roles within the university.

Project Impediments

The project sought to recruit Indigenous women from the universities with a goal of shared financial support. In some situations the project carried the total costs of participation, and in other situations the costs were shared or born totally by the university from professional development funding allocations.

The project team was formed out of the staff of both centres of the partner institutions. Staff turnover through relocation, leave and resignation did not allow for continuity of the team. The project leaders, in already demanding positions as heads of the centres, carried the responsibility for project management and workshop facilitation following the resignation of the appointed project manager and the absence of the contracted workshop facilitator. This impacted significantly on the organisation and delivery of workshops 3 and 4.

The scheduling of the workshops at the end of each semester may have impacted on the rates of attendance given the university responsibilities at these times for examination, marking and submission of results. Some of the women who attended the workshops were only able to do so by virtue of their commitment to complete marking in the evening after formal workshop sessions had finished.

The development and maintenance of the Tiddas website was impeded due the loss of a project team member most skilled in the use of the technology. Added to this situation was the major work being undertaken by Flinders University to implement a new program. Consolidation of this project requires a reinvigoration of the website which is currently not operating.

Critical Factors

A project manager with proven experience needs to be established from the beginning of the Project. This position is pivotal and allows project team members to focus on their areas of expertise.

Clarification of roles and responsibilities is a necessity to ensure that deadlines and work processes are suitably efficient and effective. The capacity for all team members to communicate clearly and regularly is foundational to the smooth running of the project. It would be valuable for ALTC to provide on going reflection on team practice embedded in individual project schedules.

Workshop facilitation is a role of the project that calls for high level organisational skills and energy. Within an Indigenous context the facilitator would also be required to have a proven understanding of Indigenous cultural practices. Engaging a facilitator at the commencement of the project is important for the rhythm of the project.

Website development and maintenance requires a particular type of expertise. The project would have benefited from engaging this expertise from the outset and it is recommended that this be outsourced.

Dissemination of information is integral to the development of the discourse for Indigenous leadership. The conference presentation at the World Indigenous Peoples Conference: Education, Melbourne, December 2008 drew an audience of Indigenous women operating at other levels of the education sector these women saw the value in the project and called for the Project Leaders to implement the Indigenous women leadership project at the school level. This indicates that there is a hunger for Indigenous women in education to have opportunities to develop their leadership capacity and to be connected to one another.

6. Transferability of Approach

This innovative project aimed to articulate a common and culturally responsive understanding of leadership for Indigenous women employed in the university sector that also took account of Indigenous women's capacity for leadership in their own Indigenous communities. The project was grounded in Indigenous women's epistemological positions to develop further existing leadership capacity. It ensured sustainability by providing mentoring relationships between the Indigenous women (the Tiddas) and through the formation of key concepts in Indigenous women's leadership.

The project purposefully advanced Indigenous women's leadership in education and, by explicit association, impacted favourably on leadership capacity building within Indigenous Communities.

The transferability of the approach of this project for other Indigenous educators is provided through:

- promotion of the project by the Indigenous women participants in their own university, other sectors of education and their communities to other Indigenous women and men.
- encouraging Indigenous men to adopt and adapt the project approach to complete the Indigenous model of leadership and capacity building in universities, other education communities and the wider Indigenous community.
- engaging universities to consider the value of professional development programs in Indigenous leadership capacity building.

Each of the above strategies would be assisted by the publication of Indigenous women's knowledge of leadership. To this extent further funding opportunities will be investigated to consolidate the project for the development of a proposed text that draws on the contributions of the women participants.

The lessons learned from this project would also be of value to new academics generally and especially women.

7. Dissemination of Outcomes Across Higher Education Sector

The Project utilised established Indigenous Higher Education Networks for the recruitment of Indigenous academic women participants for the Project Workshop series such as the National Indigenous Higher Education Network, the National Indigenous Higher Education Council and the National Tertiary Education and Industry Union. These networks gain informal knowledge of the project through the membership of the Indigenous women participants.

In addition, the project leaders presented papers that addressed Indigenous women's roles in the universities, Indigenous women's scholarship and leadership/capacity building for Indigenous women at national and international conferences.

- In 2006, the project was announced to the Indigenous Higher Education Community at the Indigenous Studies: Indigenous Knowledges Conference, Gold Coast regarding the project.
- Prior to the commencement of the workshop series in 2007, the project leaders, workshop facilitator, together with another Indigenous woman academic (and ultimate participant of the project) presented at the AARE, Adelaide. This paper provided the groundwork for the conceptual themes for Workshop 2 with a focus on leadership in scholarship for Indigenous Women.
- Dr Nereda White presented at an international conference with the support of the Australian Federation of University Women, with the President of this organization (Dr Jenny Strauss) presenting to the Project at Workshop 4 in Melbourne.
- Following Workshop 4, an interactive presentation of the project was provided to the World Indigenous Education Community at the World Indigenous People's Education Conference (WIPCE) where it was enthusiastically supported by the audience members who urged the project leaders to implement the project at other levels of education for Indigenous women seeking Leadership capacity building.
- Further conferences will be targeted for 2009, eg. Indigenous Studies: Indigenous Knowledges, AARE and the National Indigenous Higher Education conference to inform the Indigenous higher education community of the outcomes of the project.
- The project has informed the writing of a chapter submitted for publication by one of the project leaders. This chapter contributes to a text of Indigenous Women's Traditions and Writings to be edited by Senior Indigenous Women academics of Western Australia and the Northern Territory.
- The consolidation of the project will occur through development of a collective contribution of the Indigenous women participants to a text with a proposed title, 'Standing in the University: Indigenous Women and Leadership'.
- A future planned presentation by one of the project leaders to speak at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) seminar series on Indigenous Women's Leadership and will include information from this project.

8. Links Between Other ALTC Projects and the ALTC Strategic Priority Areas

Links with other ALTC projects which developed during the project and the anticipated benefits to the discipline

The Tiddas project is aligned with the ALTC project: An institutional leadership paradigm: transforming practices, structures and conditions in Indigenous higher education.

Both projects focus on transforming institutional leadership to support Indigenous learners and staff. Synergy between the projects was created by participation on both projects by a number of project team members, participants and international visitors. Both projects had administrative support from Australian Catholic University, who were joint project leaders, as well administrative support from Flinders and Batchelor Institute. Batchelor Institute.

Name	Project LE62:ILP	ProjectLE617:Tiddas
Tracey Bunda	Institute Representative	Project Leader
Nereda White	Project team member	Project Leader
Robyn Ober	Project team member	Participant
Jill Miller	Institute Representative	Participant
Stephanie Jacob	Project Admin Support	Project Admin Support
Natalie Lindner	Project Admin Support	Project Admin Support
Jackie Ottman	Institute Representative	International Guest Speaker

This created inter-project co-operation for the timing of workshops to suit personnel involved in both. The project management skills and expertise developed through each project was transferred to each other. Resources were shared between projects.

Both projects have contributed to the body of knowledge about Indigenous leadership and the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges within the academy. Partnerships across both the projects have developed in the areas of teaching, post graduate supervision, further research plans and writing.

Examples:

Project leader, Dr Nereda White has taught a Masters of Intercultural Leadership class with Assistant Professor Jackie Ottman to a group of First Nations students at University of Calgary via video conference.

Dr Jack Frawley from the ILP project co-authored with Dr White and Ms Robyn Ober, a chapter on Intercultural Leadership. In-press.

A/Prof Tracey Bunda with Phil Falk (participant of ALTC Project LE62) presented at the 2007 Indigenous Studies: Indigenous Knowledges Conference, Sydney. Paper Title – *Indigenous Student Support: Critical Issues for Effective Practice*

Dr White will supervise Ms Ober's doctoral study commencing in 2009. Dr Frawley will be the Associate Supervisor.

Associate Professor Lyn Fasoli and Dr White will be submitting a proposal to the 16th International Learning Conference in Barcelona 1-4 July. Their presentation intends to focus on Indigenous leadership in Australian universities and show-case both projects.

Dr White, A/Prof Bunda, Dr Ottman, Jill Miller and Robyn Ober will be contributing to a Special Edition of the Batchelor Institute journal *Ngoonjook*. This is an outcome of ALTC project LE62.

Dr White and Dr Bronwyn Fredericks (Senior Circle member) have also been invited to be members of the ALTC project: Indigenous Research Methodologies with project leaders Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Senior Circle member) and Dr Maggie Walters.

These linkages between projects will have important benefits for the area of Indigenous leadership and strengthening the professional partnerships between the common members of the two projects.

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