

SANA: Hello, everyone, and welcome to this keynote by Dr Nikki Moodie in the ISRC Critical Public Conversations seminar series for semester 2, 2020. This is a webinar and we thank the audience for their patience while we arrange some of the back-end technology which remains a learning curve for many of us that I hope you can appreciate. We have had a little bit of difficulty with our closed captioning set-up today. If the closed captions button is unavailable or not producing live captioning for you in this webinar, we sincerely apologise and we would also like to assure you that we'll be working on providing a written transcript following the seminar to ensure that you have access to the ideas and materials that are presented today.

Before going any further it's my great pleasure and honour to welcome Aunty Di Kerr an elder of the Wurundjeri people on whose land the University of Melbourne and the Indigenous Settler Relations Collaboration sits, and I would like to welcome her.

[Welcome from Aunty Di]

SANA: Thank you very much, Aunty Di. I'm always struck by the warmth and generosity with which you and other elders of Wurundjeri are willing to welcome us, and I would like to recognise that our responsibilities to you and to this place as those who have not been invited here and who remain here are deep and that at the University of Melbourne we still have a long way to go, so thank you.

DIANE: Thank you. Thank you.

SANA: It's now my pleasure to welcome Dr Nikki Moodie, a Gomeri sociologist born in Gunnedah, New South Wales, and raised in Toowoomba, a city, town that I know very well. She is recently now the co-director of the Indigenous Settler Relations Collaboration coming on board to help initiate some new work around our graduate and doctoral programs, and she holds the position of senior lecturer in Indigenous Studies and Sociology at the School of Social and Political Sciences at the Faculty of Arts. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Queensland, a PhD in sociology from the Australian National University, and teaches in the areas of social policy and Indigenous studies with key research interests in indigeneity and governance, focusing particularly on social networks, public policy and data production. She's widely recognised in the sociology of education and has received the 2017 Betty Watts Indigenous researcher award from the Australian Association for Research in Education, and in 2018 was awarded the best paper in the Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education for the article *Settler Grammars and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* with Rachel Patrick. Most recently Nikki Moodie has been awarded a four year discovery project with colleagues from the University of Melbourne and the University of Queensland focused on Indigenous governance and state relations.

For audience members today you will see that the chat is disabled, but our Q&A capacity is available, and we would ask you to leave questions that you have for Dr Moodie there,

and at the end of her presentation we will get through as many as we can. Without any further ado, welcome to Dr Moodie.

NIKKI: Good afternoon everyone. Thank you Aunty Di for the warm welcome, and thank you Sana for the introduction. I am very lucky to live and work on Wurundjeri Country and recognise that this land can never truly be ceded - it always was and always will be Aboriginal land, and its songs and stories will always continue to grow here.

Thank you for joining me today. Welcome to all First Nations people who might be listening in, and welcome to everyone.

For those who don't know me, I want to position myself in the context of my remarks today. I am a Gamilaroi woman, I was born in Gunnedah, and I am descended from Elizabeth Talbott and Charles Moodie. Despite my very fair skin and the privilege that comes with that, I was lucky to grow up connected to my family, knowing who I am, and am very lucky to be part of a small family that has always been very deeply committed to social justice.

I am very honoured to open the second Critical Public Conversations series for the Indigenous Settler Relations Collaboration, and hope you will be able to join us for the series, which includes some people you might have heard of before.

I am particularly proud to offer a provocation for this series, which I explored in a recent piece that aimed to trouble what we mean when we say Indigenous success.

Because I come to higher education - on paper - as a failed student. I dropped out of university twice before I finally finished my first degree, so I find myself often reflecting on what it means to succeed in these spaces. As an academic, I'm surrounded by incredibly high performing people, expectations are high - sometimes unreasonably so - and I'm sure we have quite distorted views of what it means to be successful. I tend to be of the opinion that I have enjoyed some measures of success after finally finishing a PhD because of a particular absence of melanin and the presence of a particular type of affect. My achievements, such as they are, will always be bound up in the racialized terrain of higher education, as indeed they are for all of us.

But when I first agreed to deliver this keynote, I was under the impression that I'd be talking to maybe 20 people about some of the problems with limiting our estimation of Indigenous success to university completion rates.

As I sit here talking with considerably more of you today, I find myself responding to more recent developments.

The first of which are the Tehan changes to university funding, which necessarily

shapes my discussion of Indigenous values, rights and leadership in higher education.

Tehan reforms

So I ran some numbers on the back of an envelope about the proposed changes to university funding, in comparison to the fields that Indigenous students are enrolled in. These are 2018 enrolment numbers and the publicly available data I can find on the changes to the cost of units.

- There are six fields that account for 91% of Indigenous student enrolments - just over 18,000 people.
 - Of the 20,000 Indigenous students enrolled at university, nearly all are enrolled in these fields.
- Of these students, more than half will face more expensive course fees, and just shy of 8000 are likely to face some kind of fee reduction. But by far the most impacted will be Indigenous students in social sciences and humanities. It seems that Indigenous students will be financially punished for enrolling in Indigenous Studies subjects and critically engaging with the settler state, as will all those who wish to engage with the precious few race critical subjects available in Australian universities.

In the context of the most recent Universities Australia Indigenous strategy, this has significant implications. Although there are some measures in the Tehan reforms that aim to support Indigenous enrolments, these increases apply to students from regional and remote areas and obviously don't apply to fields of study.

How individual universities respond to this remains to be seen, but I am deeply concerned about the nature of social engineering happening here - more broadly than the attack on the social sciences and humanities. It is, I think, another instance of the discourse of parity crowding out Indigenous aspirations.

But this approach is nearly impossible to get away from. The UA targets aim for

- Doubling of Indigenous enrolments and
- Parity in retention and completion rates

As I discussed in my chapter, we often measure particular things because it is easy to do so. We measure Indigenous enrolment, retention and completion rates because we collect those data for all students, it's easy enough to add a column for Indigenous students. Of course increasing enrolment and retention rates are important, but using parity as the only - or primary measure - does a couple of things.

1. Firstly, parity ignores the ways in which Indigenous aspirations are often qualitatively different, or both include and are more expansive than the

aspirations held by many other people. For a long time now, research on Indigenous higher education has documented what's called the 'altruistic motivations' that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have for going to uni. This is the idea of giving back to your community, to stop racist practices in a particular field, to improve things for our people. Now it has in the past been suggested to me that it is quite unfair to expect Indigenous students to have such altruistic motivations, and that we should be free to pursue whatever we are interested in without the burden of changing the world. Fine, but if we don't change it, who will? And who says that pursuing your own passions and interests, and supporting your family and community are mutually exclusive? Regardless, we can do better than adopting a crude metric of parity, when there are often qualitatively different motivations for enrolment in the first place.

2. Secondly, we have the benefit of a young and growing population. When AO Neville raised the spectre of "1 million blacks" in 1937, it was used to justify the genocidal policies of child removal and assimilation. Well, Mr Neville, guess what? In 10 years, by 2031, we will absolutely be 1 million strong across this continent. Of those 1 million fine blak people across Australia, a full third will be between the ages of 15 and 34. Now, amongst the broader population, about 30% of people have a bachelor degree or above, amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this is about 6% ([ABS, Table 21.3](#)). Whilst it's possible that the growth in our numbers will make it easier to meet parity targets, to some degree there is a picking and choosing about what parity targets to meet. More young people at uni is a good thing, and that is certainly the market that my university is oriented to. But decades of research indicates that Indigenous peoples' decisions to come to university are often made later in life - for a whole range of reasons. Increasing enrolment is fine, but choosing enrolment, and not - for example - broader prevalence of tertiary qualifications in the community - demonstrates the often arbitrary nature of these parity targets.
3. Third, moving from students to staff, when we consider parity in employment targets we run into major problems. Many universities, including the one I work for, are loath to commit to targets in our enterprise bargaining agreements. Those who do usually talk about the 3% national parity target. Now if the University of Melbourne, for example, was to adopt a 3% national parity target, we would have to be net importer of Indigenous staff to this state - particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics. For a whole range of reasons this is challenging, institutional politics, people want to be close to their families and communities and have spent a long time developing relationships in universities that have treated them well, or at least better than others. But more important than the logistics, or incentives or lack thereof, are the excuses. How many times have we heard
 - There aren't that many senior Indigenous academics? Or

- It's important to promote non-Indigenous people who have worked in the field for so long?

Whilst the first may be true - there aren't that many of us around, and as Amy Thunig has recently written about, surviving in these places is often a challenge. But what I am particularly concerned about is the difficulty of bringing a rights agenda to the issue of Indigenous success in higher education, particularly as it pertains to both students and staff.

So where do we go to think about Indigenous rights to education, in universities, and the nature of Indigenous values in these places. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples offers one guide, the Uluru Statement, to be obvious, offers another.

UNDRIP

Now I'm not going to sit here and pretend that UNDRIP is a radically progressive document. However, because it *isn't* particularly radical in a global context it does demonstrate how regressive this country is in its resistance to it. Because it *isn't* particularly radical, it does demonstrate how far the goalposts have shifted - our expectations at all levels of education I think can therefore shift too.

There are two articles in UNDRIP that specifically address education - 14 and 15.

- Article 14 - covers the right of Indigenous control of education systems and institutions, reflecting language and culture, and including equitable access.
- Article 15 - recognises that Indigenous cultures and histories will be included in education and public information, and suggests that governments should adopt essentially anti-racist messaging for the broader population.

The overarching principle of UNDRIP, as I'm sure you all know, is self-determination. Whether it goes far enough, whether it can work, are all of course open for debate, but ...

If it is now an internationally established right that Indigenous people are responsible for Indigenous affairs...

If it is an internationally established right of Indigenous people to be in control of Indigenous education ...

If it is an internationally recognised responsibility for the state to ensure equitable access ...

... and the evidence is clear that Indigenous staffing, Indigenous curriculum, institutional support and consultation remain the four consistent recommendations from every single review of Indigenous higher education for the past 30 years.

Then it is not inconceivable that universities can consider standards like UNDRIP as the minimum benchmark for assessing their success and ours.

Now I doubt that the bankers that manage university portfolios have costed compensation owed to the Wurundjeri people for stolen land, but such a thing is not unimaginable. It is not unimaginable that universities pay rent. It is therefore not unimaginable that universities could consider themselves in a position to adopt UNDRIP as guiding policy shaping relations with the traditional owners of the land they occupy and Indigenous students who study at them.

Likewise, the Uluru Statement offers a new benchmark for considering relations between Indigenous people and institutions. Although about half of all Australian universities now have senior Indigenous academic leadership at around the Pro Vice Chancellor level, we can't assume that this is the equivalent to an institutional engagement with the idea of an Indigenous Voice on matters that affect us. Whilst some universities are beginning to engage with the legacy of eugenicist research and other egregious human rights violations, this is not the same as a process of institutional truth-telling. Sunlight is always the best disinfectant, and given the harm that universities have done - and indeed continue to do - there is I think an urgent need to heal these legacies, lest "research" forever remain a dirty word. And of course, both UNDRIP and the Uluru Statement call for agreement making, which shifts the relationship with Indigenous people from one of individual achievement to considering the complexity of collective Indigenous aspirations.

What counts as success

Whilst embedding UNDRIP or the Uluru Statement as benchmarks for Indigenous engagement may be a little unimaginative, options like this allows us to shift our thinking away from neoliberal definitions of success towards more critical and Indigenous understandings.

The vision from the settler colonial state, its agents and apparatus, is that academic success enables participation in the economy as a future employee (Apple, 2006). Alongside this runs the vision of Indigenous students, families and communities, which is not opposed to jobs and money and equitable participation, but often rather emphasises how success is synonymous with participation in society as Indigenous citizens with extant Indigenous rights—that is, as agents of cultures that have survived and agentic regardless of age or achievement, as someone who is already a citizen of Indigenous nations, a member of Indigenous communities, with an immanent set of rights and responsibilities. So, the role of education systems in enabling people to ground their relationships and responsibilities with people and Country, takes absolute precedence over the emphasis on jobs and economic mobility. Universities are integral to growing globally engaged scholars and informed citizens, but this responsibility must

be extended in the context of Indigenous-specific rights - perhaps the citizen-plus model that Ian Anderson talks about. This is about supporting active and accepted members of communities, ensuring culturally specific rights regarding land and stewardship, values regarding the knowledge held and role played by Indigenous academics - established and emerging.

In reflecting on the matter of curriculum, White researcher Neil Harrison talks about how:

... Aboriginal and western curricula are largely irreconcilable because of the ways in which concepts such as success are defined and applied in Aboriginal and western contexts. The ways in which ontological concepts are generated and applied in these teaching contexts mean that students come to think, see and feel in very different ways. (Harrison et al., 2019, p. 242)

Academic success depends in large part on student and family perceptions of what education is for (Harrison et al., 2019, p. 243). At universities, we are often limited in thinking that success is either successful completion and entry into the job market, or a pathway into an academic career. Both are perfectly reasonable - less likely than ever before - but both perfectly reasonably and suitably aspirational. However, I am deeply sceptical that the expectations my family has of me are limited to my employment outcomes, or indeed that the expectations that Gomerioi people or the broader Indigenous research community are limited to my production of papers or winning grants. So there is a broader idea of Indigenous citizenship that universities are beholden to foster, and a set of Indigenous values that we must move towards articulating in higher education.

Yet, as I mentioned, weighed against Indigenous values of students-as-already-citizens and success-as-inclusion, is this role of education systems in perpetuating the illusion of meritocracy and preparation for the job market. The memory of full-time employment still holds potency for many policymakers, and education systems bear responsibility for preparing citizens who work, not citizens who belong or indeed already belong to something else. The incommensurability of Indigenous aspirations and settler colonial imaginings of success therefore become rendered as a range of problems - behavioural management in the earlier stages of schooling, but at university this incommensurability manifests in a range of ways:

- the impossibility that Indigenous PhD students or early career academics could be supported sufficiently to lead programs or research centres,
- the impossibility of a Wurundjeri Research Centre, or a Gomerioi Nation Institute,
- the difficulty in reconciling the nature of an individual academic career and research interests with the possibility that our work should serve a greater authority than our own.

Refining Indigenous education

What might this idea of rights mean to specificities of teaching, learning and research? I am a very procedural thinker, so I want to share definitions I find useful - recognising that these are not really widely accepted across the field of Indigenous education at any level. Nonetheless, I find these useful because I want to make clear some of the assumptions that I work with.

If I think about how universities - particularly my own - fare across each of these fields, I think I get a much more complete picture of where the absences and strengths are. How do we ensure that every Indigenous student has access to their own languages and knowledges - and are Indigenous people in charge of that? Do we have good systems in place for working with Indigenous learners - and are Indigenous people in charge of that? Indigenous Studies I think is obviously a much more complicated place, but I tend to think there is much more scope for work *within disciplines* that charts the history of Indigenous engagement, knowledge theft, and so on rather than extractive and often fairly traumatic engagement with Indigenous knowledges we often see now. Centring the collective aspirations of Indigenous peoples is of course much easier in Indigenous research, but again, adopting a rights-based approach to this centres self-determination and Indigenous leadership - within and outside the university.

When we consider Indigenous success, as qualitatively Indigenous, we must ask what project universities are in service of? I am not sure what the collective noun is for a group of Vice Chancellors, but I was recently heartened to hear several reminding us that students are not markets, they're people. Which is nice to hear, but that bird, I must say, has well and truly flown the coop, been hunted down, shot, and hung above the fireplace of the kleptocrats who have gutted public goods for their own wealth. At the same time, I am urged to become a 'digital content creator'. My promotion very much depends on how much money I make for the university. My publications are paywalled. To say that universities are not deeply imbricated with the neoliberal project of a very particular idea of success, is a little disingenuous.

So we can create communities inside universities, we can show younger academics how it's done, we can keep publishing and recruiting and spending all those hours it takes to get it done the way we know it should be done. We can blackwash it, put a flag on it, write a RAP about it, get research funding, and this is the work we're paid - or just expected - to do. But despite their problems, frameworks like the Uluru Statement and UNDRIP centre self-determination and Country, which will always be a better way of understanding Indigenous success. Our measures of success will always be defined by the Country we stand on, the places we come from, and the future we want to live in.

SANA: Thank you, Nikki, so much for that compelling and incisive presentation and a striking and illuminating and provoking opening to this critical public conversation series this semester. If any audience members have questions that they would like to

put to Nikki, please use the Q&A function to be able to do that. I have been frantically making notes and I've got lots of questions of my own, but I will put the first question from an audience member to Nikki first and then maybe we can sort of look at some of the other questions that I think Dr Hogarth's point raises.

The question really, I think, points to the kinds of key tensions that you started to - that you were able to generate at the end of that presentation which is about the kind of relationship that universities have to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge production on their own terms, that there is something in the history and the making and the location of universities themselves that speak to very foundational difficulties about the idea that you can generate truly self-determining work from within the institution.

Dr Hogarth asks can we shift this? Is it time for the Indigenous university? We know that there are examples in other parts of the world of Indigenous generated and Indigenous-led universities and I wonder, Nikki, whether you have thoughts on those as alternative sites.

NIKKI: Do I, Sana? Look, I remember when - was it the - was it UTS relatively recently opened an Indigenous college which I think from memory may be the first one that had been opened in Australia and I remember the backlash that happened as a result of that and I think it is again another demonstration of how normal things are in other places that are not very normal here. It is perfectly reasonable in any of the countries that we would usually seek to compare ourselves to, right, Canada, the US and New Zealand, it is very normal to have tribally controlled institutes of higher education, let alone just dormitories for Black or Indigenous students. So, yes, of course. But you know I'm a relatively early career academic and so I'm conscious that these conversations have been happening in universities for a really, really long time. Of course. I don't think there's anyone who want to see an Indigenous university created in Australia, but I think, you know, Dr Hogarth is right, I think there are conversations that are happening in other parts of the world that we find extraordinarily difficult to have here and they proceed, I think, from a different recognition of Indigenous rights and as I said, there are problems with frameworks like UNDRIP, there are things to be ironed out with the Uluru Statement. These are not perfect imaginings by any stretch of the imagination, but I use them to hopefully just prompt a different conversation about what it means to have a rights-based approach to Indigenous education in Australia.

SANA: That leads in really nicely to another question that we have which references the way in which the university of British Columbia has used UNDRIP and our colleagues, Sarah Maddison, make the observation it took five goes of that strategic plan to get it through the university council. What does that process, the fact that even using that rights-based framework, which is a relatively, as you pointed out, a relatively conservative mechanism in articulation of Indigenous education rights, what does it say about how transformative and how challenging an Indigenous rights framework is or might be to the university?

NIKKI: As we all know, you know, it goes straight back to those key issues of land and recognition of history which I think are always integral, but for the University of Melbourne in particular I guess all universities that currently exist in the state of Victoria will find themselves in a position where they sit on treaty land. Any second now there will be treaties and they will cover the land on which universities sit, so this isn't an abstract imagination about what it means to run institutions which have extracted so much wealth and so much knowledge from Indigenous peoples and resources, and it is absolutely very normal to consider what compensation and rent and restitution would look like in that context.

SANA: Yes, and yet such difficult conversations to shift and transformations to make, but I think you're right, these conversations are coming down the line one way or the other and there is work within the institution to be done about whether or not everyone is prepared to do the work to get ready for those conversations. We've got lots of questions coming through.

NIKKI: Great.

SANA: I'll just keep throwing them at you. I'm just being mindful anyone who doesn't want to be named as the author of a question, do use the anonymous function, but otherwise I am going to let Nikki know who is asking because I think that helps sometimes with the conversational tone of these seminars. Craig Hunter Torrens makes the observation that they would feel more comfortable with the kinds of altruistic outcomes of their study and research and training that they do if they were able to be on Bundjalung and Wehabul country. It makes a difference to be able to, I guess, stay connected to those altruistic motivations that some of us hold, and he asks would you favour this? Would you favour Indigenous students or researchers being able to be based on Country or is a physical presence on campus something that's also of benefit?

NIKKI: I think the current conditions that we're all living through absolutely demonstrate that a physical presence on campus is certainly not the be all and the end all. There are things that come from being physically located on a university campus, there is infrastructure, there are these kind of things which make particular kinds of work easy, but if we are orienting to a rights-based framework, a nation-building framework, a resurgence and survivance framework, however you choose to imagine it, then yeah, those outcomes are applied, I guess, in the very literal sense of the word and I don't see any reason why we can't think more creatively about how to do that. Yeah, I think you're right, Craig.

SANA: Okay. I've got a few questions here that are a little bit related so I hope participants won't mind my effort to roll a few questions in here together, but there are a few questions that are coming through that are - I think we've got questions that are

very much around how do we realise greater forms of Indigenous self-determination agendas, what kind of work should universities be doing to further promote Indigenous knowledge production on their own terms, and then there's a group of questions that are also about whether - what work needs to happen within the institution for staff to better understand the kinds of agendas that the Indigenous students and staff around them are working towards.

Let's take the first set of questions and I guess try and tease out a little bit more about what role if any should universities be having in the teaching of Indigenous knowledges, languages, cultures, in the transmission of that to students of all kinds to translating that into different parts of the academy in the kind of interface between Indigenous and western knowledge system, and at what point or in what ways might - is there a line at which that becomes inappropriate?

NIKKI: I think for me universities have an extraordinarily valuable place for a whole range of reasons. For me, as I've said on many occasions before, I think that universities are one of the last remaining places in which complexity can be considered, in which informed discussion and debate can take place, and one of the last places where evidence actually kind of matters. So I think that there are a range of things that a university represents which are particularly important. What goes along with that is a range of skills that people in universities possess because of the historical exclusion of Indigenous people from universities there is a very great need to amplify that skill transfer. So I think that universities have an incredibly valuable role in working for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and I think that this is the direction of the relationship which has historically done so much harm where we have these ideas of individual pursuit of knowledge and careers built on particular kind of extractive research practices. This is where we compound those institutional harms. So for me I think this is very closely connected with the process of working on the kinds of research that communities want us to do. Now, how we understand, support communities, what that relationship is, I think as those who know me are very much an institutionalist so I think there is something to be said for the support and the growth and development of a whole range of different types of Indigenous institutions, but for me that's really where the crux of it sits. What is the directionality of the relationship that exists between communities and universities.

SANA: That's great. I'm going to lead that question into the other questions around the kinds of - I mean you and I know - we both find these sorts of questions frustrating, but the kinds of practical or things that we can do within our institutions to foster those more critical conversations about direction, about responsibility, about whose benefit it is for, and one of the questions is around whether or not mechanisms like truth telling processes within universities themselves, what those could look like and whether or not those might be a kind of mechanism for having internal conversations within the university about rights-based approach to Indigenous education or reconceiving our relationships to land and communities.

NIKKI: I think that there are so many possibilities here. There is so much work that needs to be done and articulating that into a program of work is a really overwhelming thing, and I mean that's what most of us try and do, right? We try and take out this tiny little piece of it and do a little bit of work in one place and hope it translates to something else, and this is where the value of Indigenous leadership is just so crucial to be able to oversee these institutional agendas and make it all cohere in one direction. I think that it's really well known that universities like Melbourne have had extraordinarily traumatic histories in their relationships with Indigenous peoples and that the way that the university comes to terms with that is something that really remains to be seen. There are such complicated processes. It's an emotional process and how we make space for that, I think, is not something that's beyond our capacities to be able to do. We literally have experts on this exact topic. But I think that there is for me a more urgent - not more urgent, but a very clear role for non-Indigenous colleagues in this project and I tend to imagine that as very disciplinary in nature. So my first rule of thumb is never ask a blackfella something that you can Google. You know what I mean? So there's all these homilies that we all kind of walk around with, but I think that one thing that is really deeply missing is the orientation to disciplinary histories and engagement with Indigenous peoples and knowledges. So what tends to happen now is that people want to engage with Indigenous knowledges or traditional ecological knowledges, or authentic Indigenous knowledges or however they are represented, and that's a reflection of the way in which Indigenous knowledges is structured and where it's located and that's fine, but I think what that does is it miss the system of disciplinary accountability which I think we urgently need. I think that there is a very significant need for individual disciplines in sociology where a number of noted Melbourne University eugenicists were first employed. There is a process. For example if I take sociology, where we must examine our other disciplinary engagement with Indigenous knowledges. How has the discipline of sociology in Australia extracted Indigenous knowledges? How has it engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and fields? Because there are a large number of disciplines who would not be where they are today if it wasn't for the process of extracting knowledge from Indigenous people and communities, and I'm not sure those stories have been told. In many cases, yeah, they know about knowledge theft, we know what the pharmacists have done, but that's not what students are taught.

SANA: I couldn't agree more about the need for those disciplinary level conversations about - and I think it's a really nice way of thinking through what truth telling might mean or could look like in a university where is that there's a lot of intro specifics disciplines can do to ask themselves about what is the truth of my discipline, and I can speak for political science just as you can speak for sociology in that, and then I think that also opens up the next set of really important conversations that often come out of truth telling contexts which is what are you going to do with the truth, because there are - it's very easy then to become defensive, it's very easy to say I know that now, but

we're different today, and so I think all mechanisms and any kinds of approach we require in the universities really immediately need to become multi-layered and in some ways intergenerational because this work takes years and it takes years to transmit information to students who then become a new generation of researchers who then engage in new practices.

There's another question here which I think goes back to the earlier question about being able to be a student or a researcher on Country and I just - there's an example not just of Indigenous-led universities, but of the emergence of community organisations and potentially nations to hire their own researches, to develop their own research agendas, and I know this is something that you've been paying attention to in your emerging work, and the question is can we imagine a situation where we as Gomerioi, Islander, you know, other Indigenous academics in the country walk away from this sector as it exists and be able to find different ways, more ethical ways of doing our work.

NIKKI: Absolutely. I remember being in a seminar once and the distinct pleasure of both Linda and Graham Smith and they were talking about what happened when they first started the my doctoral program and they had this crazy idea, they said we're going to have 300 Maori and Indigenous candidates in years and Linda laughs and says oh, we failed, oh, my God, we did it in three. And what then happened is because there actually just aren't that many jobs for people who are doctorally qualified, as we know, people went back and they started research officers in tribal councils, so such a future is not already imaginable, but has already happened in other places.

SANA: I'm going to use that note to ask one final question with acknowledgment to all the audience members whose questions I haven't been able to get through, but this question is about the role and responsibility, I guess, that you and I as Indigenous academics have about what more can we be doing to be assisting with those who are fighting for rights from community organisations. Do we have examples of how we can be more directly providing opportunities to community or bringing in those voices and agendas into our institutions?

NIKKI: Yes, I think often universities have been literally cloistered places and so opening up those conversations is really important, but I want to go back to what I said earlier about recognising that people inside universities have particular skills and I think for a really long time people inside of universities, because we imagine ourselves as filling gaps or charting new territories or making discoveries, we often tend to think ourselves as leaders, right, and the simple fact is we're not. We're, perhaps, you know, overpaid governesses really at the end of the day. I think this goes back to the earlier point I made about who are we working for and what do we put our skills in service of, and so I think that increasingly we must view ourselves as working for community, bringing our skills to bear on problems that communities need answers to.

SANA: Thank you so much. I think that last point brings together some of the clear tensions that require attention in Indigenous higher education, and it really strikes me through these questions and your responses and the presentation that a lot of the difficulty is about the fact that there are two sides to this work, that there is the genuine work of community, of our altruistic agendas that we come to the university to skill ourselves in and credential ourselves for contributing to and once you're in the institution it becomes apparent that there is all of this internal work that needs to take place in order to support the other, and I don't think that there are - if there were simple, easy answers to those tensions we probably would have figured it out by now, but I thank you for so powerfully raising them and provoking them and making those kinds of challenges to us all as a pathway forward, and as a really helpful way for thinking about how we focus our purpose and of who we believe it is that we are working in service for.

Ladies and gentlemen and all people who have tuned in from around Australia, thank you for attending this first webinar in the Indigenous Settler Relations Collaboration critical public conversation series on Indigenous higher education, and a large virtual round of applause for Dr Nikki Moodie.

NIKKI: Thank you so much, Sana. It's such a privileged platform to hold. I'm very grateful for so many people joining us today and I'm looking forward to the rest of the series.

SANA: Thank you very much. Thanks, everyone.

**end of webinar