First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders (FNCEL) Pilot Project

Sonja Anderson

Billabong Camp depicts time-worn tracks that lead to a shady place of water, where clans gather under paperbark trees after a long, hot journey. The design places people at its centre – referencing students, researchers, people and community. Tracks to a place by water and paperbark trees symbolises the energising, holistic values of the learning journey.

The motifs depict people, tracks and meeting places; a story that relates to each individual, on a journey that holds limitless pathways of learning, growth and connection.

Billabong Camp

Designed for the CQUniversity Office of Indigenous Engagement (OIE)
by **Balarinji**, Sydney, Australia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a multiplex organisation with diverse ambitions, aspirations and purposes, CQUniversity provides for the collective education and research needs of staff and students and meets the demands of engagement with external industry, government and community stakeholders. Inherent to these obligations is an associated and contemporary expectation of culturally diverse inclusion in all University activities.

The CQUniversity's Strategic Plan Central Queensland University (2019) includes a commitment to increased employment and education opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Pathways to achieving this aspiration are outlined by the Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Strategy (2019-2021) and supported by Universities Australia Indigenous Strategies (2017-2022 & 2022-2025). These documents proport that to meet current cultural expectation, the organisation included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge in the University's various landscapes: governance, research, education and engagement.

Consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the purpose of obtaining strategic and culturally appropriate advice to support and guide policy, procedure and research, requires a mechanism and formal process. Commonly specialist committees guide university governance. The First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders (FNCEL) was established as a special committee under the governance structure of the University and was initially trialed as a pilot research project. This first iteration of the FNCEL was inaugurated under a Terms of Reference and functioned as a special committee made up of nine First Nations community-based members who sat for six consecutive formal monthly meetings.

To evaluate the efficacy and veracity of the chosen model, two new policies were created with input from the members of the FNCEL: The *Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander /First Nations Identity Protocol* and *Engaging and Communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/First Nation People Protocol,* over the six-month trial.

The pilot trial was conducted to explore the most beneficial paradigm of practice for the advisory group's function. It also served as a first iteration of what is intended to become an established body for advising the University on the inclusion of First Nations culture and knowledge into the governance and management of the University.

Primary data for the project was suppled and collated through interviews held with each of the nine members post-meeting. Interviews led by the researcher were based on a series of questions, conducted online and recorded, with transcripts of the resultant recordings forming evidence for analysis.

After examining, analysing and transforming data into overarching themes, and outlining the methodology and outcomes of testing the FNCEL model, the pilot project was deemed a successful foundation for a future iteration of the Council. FNCEL members felt their participation in the process and their cultural insight and contribution was valued and respected. They also expressed that their representative responsibilities on behalf of and in service to

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and stakeholder communities was fulfilled by the creation of two new policies for the University.

The new policies created by the pilot project iteration of the FNCEL have been approved by the University Management Committee and have been adopted into the suite of policies that support the governance of CQUniversity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The CQUniversity Office of Indigenous Engagement conducted this project and assembled the outcome report with the cultural guidance of Jenuarrie.

The researchers acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Country on which the pilot of the First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders (FNCEL) was held, the Gimuy-Walubara Yidinji. We also pay respect to the Country and Elders of each of the FNCEL members. And we honour Elders of the past and the present, who have made this work possible; and to those who will guide us in the future.

We thank those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people who served this project by their membership on the initial FNCEL, for their participation, generosity, patience and dedication.

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Copyright status

Billabong Camp – the entire work

ILLUSTRATIONS AND TABLES

THE OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

CONTENTS

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CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Historically and to date, CQUniversity has been without a formalised process for consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to obtain strategic culturally appropriate advice to support and guide improved education, employment and engagement opportunities for First Nations peoples. In response to this deficit, Prof Adrian Miller, Deputy Vice President Indigenous Engagement, and the members of the Office of Indigenous Engagement team designed and developed a plan to include First Nation involvement with the governance and management of the University as a key part of the *Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Strategy* (ILES) 2019-2022.

The ILES was a socially innovative, whole of university approach focused on the inclusion of Indigenous Australians in respect to education, employment, training and research, generated to grow the presence and enhance the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, faculty and staff. The ILES was designed to "inform the University's strategic vision in the commitment to inclusiveness and engagement with First Nations people, by emphasising the need for leadership in engagement, and to instill leadership engagement values across the organisation's internal and external communities"(ILES, 2020). The aims and achievements to date of this strategic plan were incorporated in the CQUniversity Innovate Reconciliation Plan (RAP) 2022-2024. Under the new CQUniversity RAP, the FNCEL continues as a mandate.

The FNCEL was initiated as an innovative mechanism for the participation and advice of First Nations community members in the governance, management and business of the University. There is an identified a need for an advisory body that functions as a formal instrument that welcomes involvement of Indigenous Australians to share cultural knowledge and the translation and absorption of that knowledge into policy reforms, and new policy and protocols. It is essential that the format provides a safe and encouraging forum for that involvement.

Its function concedes the importance of incorporating suitable and sustainable cultural knowledge and skills in the university governance and business model in relation to First Nations individuals and communities that the University serves. It provides a pathway for appropriate recognition of the societal systems that support the knowledges and the support of self-determination for First Nation peoples (Moreton-Robertson, 2011).

The FNCEL plays a beneficial role in First Nations peoples' understanding of the machinations of the University and witnesses the evidentiary outcomes of their efforts in the University's systems, management and governance.

CQUniversity has received input from First Nations peoples to its various departments, yet to date there is absence of an advisory body for First Nation cultural advice uptake in the University; any model chosen would lack

a historical precedent. It was decided that a formal advisory body structure would be used in the first instance. The FNCEL was initially established as a pilot project with a research component. As a pilot project the FNCEL could function as an advisory panel of nine participants, including a chairperson, with the ultimate goal of the project to trail the advisory board in a real situation. Over a six-month period, the council would discuss, plan and advise Prof Miller and the Office of Indigenous Engagement on matters of engaging and recognising First Nations peoples. Additionally. this trial would function as a first iteration of what was intended to become a permanent part of the University governance process.

Based on the principles of acknowledging, respecting and incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values, knowledges and traditions in the University's systems and strategies, the FNCEL interaction as a community based advisory body expands the Office of Indigenous Engagement's (OIE) capability to address the need for delivering higher education opportunities that meet the requirements and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities, at strategic and management levels. The establishment of the FNCEL fulfills the University's commitment to the principles expressed in the public support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The idea of establishing the FNCEL as an advisory body was suggested in 2018. The path to establishing the group and what it would look like, remained under discussion and design during 2019. Jenuarrie Warrie, First Nations Cultural Consultant, was engaged in 2019 to help in its formulation.

The pilot project

When initially considering a plausible framework and meeting format for the FNCEL, the inherent challenge was the design of a structure suitable for interface with the University's governance mechanisms, which simultaneously provided a culturally respectful space and hospitable system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander panel member participation. After consulting with senior officers in the governance sector of the University and Elder and First Nations independent cultural consultant Jenuarrie, the researchers agreed that the FNCEL should adopt a formal committee structure beginning with a Terms of Reference (TOR) defining its configuration, meeting format and reportative mechanisms. Given this structural formula and the purpose of the FNCEL, it was decided that the FNCEL in this form should be assessed in a six-month pilot project prior to establishing the advisory body.
A TOR was written to an existing CQUniversity template and was approved by the University's governance supervisory committees, Prof Miller, Deputy Vice President Indigenous Engagement, and Elder and independent First Nations Cultural Consultant Jenuarrie Warrie. It outlined a clear idea of the function required from this proposed advisory body and the outcomes that could be achieved by interaction with the FNCEL.
Prof Miller identified the development of two policies as the work of this initial pilot project stage of the FNCEL: a policy that would facilitate confirming First Nations identity in respect to CQUniversity and a protocol to guide

University faculty and staff engagement and communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities and stakeholders. Both policies are considered vital to the University's strategic development of a

relationship with First Nations peoples and are foundational to increasing the number of Indigenous Australians in staff and student cohorts.

The two research investigators, Prof Miller and Sonja Anderson, and consultant Jenuarrie Warrie established the criteria for FNCEL membership compiling a nominal list of candidates for participation. Jenuarrie's involvement with the development of the FNCEL structure from its genesis, ensured independent Indigenous Australian input and oversight from the initial project stages.

Candidates for the FNCEL pilot were chosen from the list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, all known to be professionally involved in cross-cultural community practice in non-government, government and First Nations corporate entities. Each candidate received a formal invitation letter, and an expression of interest form, to sign and return to the project manager. The initial number of positive responses to the invitation was 11 completed EOIs.

The theory

In his study of Australian higher education Gunstone (2013) posits that universities have failed to address First Nations aspirations through non-inclusion in leadership and governance, and a lack of provident processes and policies that support and address the place and presence of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. His study examines the use of traditional approaches for inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: committee, ethics and board member participation and senior management positions. McGregor (2021) points out that Indigenous knowledge is not an objective concept or a noun in First Peoples' perspectives; it is active and a way of life. And so, it is "inseparable from the people who hold and live this knowledge" (p.2). It (IK) cannot be extracted and packaged as a specific set of information. Thus, the perspective and attendant knowledge required by universities to engage with and serve First Nations community members, can be provided only by continuous contribution by those who hold and experience the knowledges in relation to their social systems.

The national reconciliation movement as recounted by Reconciliation Australia's *2021 State of Reconciliation Report: Moving from Safe to Brave* states that 95% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 91% of the non-Indigenous populace feel that the relationship between these two segments is important to the future of the national society (Reconciliation Australia, 2021).

These are two guiding concepts that led to the creation and the trialing of the FNCEL. The notion was fixed on a trial of a model to establish the level of comfort and ability participants could experience in an advisory role and the efficacy of using a generalized committee structure.

The FNCEL concept is aligned in principle with the research conducted by Wise, Dickinson, Katan and Gallegos (2020) focused on the premise that an Indigenous advisory council is necessary to higher education governance and serves as a fundamental element to empower Indigenous leaders in impacting higher education systems. Undeniably, power is retained at university council levels. For this reason, organisations "commonly incorporate advisory councils to address specialized purposes" (p.240), and universities that incorporate or seek to serve sizeable numbers of Indigenous students, communities and stakeholders will authorise and recognise those spheres through the mechanism of an advisory council. As such, the initiation of an advisory council [the FNCEL]

representing Indigenous Australian stakeholders presented a pathway opportunity for CQUniversity to act on its commitment to inclusivity and increased "engagement with Indigenous communities in partnership with community Elders" (Our Future is You, CQUniversity Strategic Plan, 2019-2023. p. 13) and leaders.

Research question

This research question focuses on the establishment and working of the FNCEL in a pilot project to evaluate the committee model. The FNCEL was initiated as a University committee to provide information and advice to the Deputy Vice-President (Indigenous Engagement), University Council and senior employees on matters of First nations People engagement, advocacy and leadership.

There are guiding in-principal questions that support the research inquiry.
They are:
Can the process provided by a university committee structure serve the interface between First Nations community representatives and the University?
Can this approach produce a mutually beneficial process, that leads to the successful process of advising on First Nations matters?

THE FNCEL MODEL

OBJECTIVES

The aim of the research project is to evaluate the efficacy of the FNCEL as a first iteration. The pilot project provided the opportunity for the FNCEL to function temporarily as an advisory committee performing the task of cultural input into university policy that affects First Nations staff, students and stakeholders. It also provided time to gather empirical input from participants which informed an in-depth understanding of how it worked over the six-month period, and to establish foundational criteria for its function in a future iteration as a permanent part of CQUniversity's governance systems .

 The research aim is achieved through specific objectives:1) to examine the success of the FNCEL as an advisory committee in relation to the suitability of the committee structure and meeting processes to achieve set goals   2) to note and understand if participation was an empowering experiences in the context of the nature of cultural challenges First Nations community members faced working with University systems 3) to explore whether the FNCEL model required adaption to achieve the embedding First Nations knowledge and skill into the governance and business systems of the University.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research project investigates whether the form taken by the FNCEL during a trial period serves the work of this advisory council. The FNCEL in the form of a university committee, tests whether First Nations members are comfortable to contribute cultural knowledges in policy making and governance.

The face-to-face post-meeting interviews about the perceptions and experiences of FNCEL members as active participants involved in the pilot project forms the basis for collating primary data. Therefore, the research project is confined to the study of the six-month trial and its effectiveness to facilitate the cultural knowledge of those First Nations people involved as community representatives.

LIMITATIONS

The research is based on the examination of a singular case study that depends on the participation of those people who are actors in the case. The FNCEL pilot project is a singular case study.

The research does not seek to compare this advisory council formula with those instituted or in use by other universities, corporate entities or government departments.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The pilot project serves as a test for a methodical approach to inclusion of First Nations culture in the structures of the University. It offers a foundation for the establishment of a sustainable process for effective receipt and use of counsel on matters and policies that directly affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students and stakeholder communities. Further, the model is suitable for undergoing iterational transformation as required.

This initiative is a first for CQUniversity and fulfills goals of the CQUniversity's strategic plan *Our Future is You (2019-2023)*, under the pillars of Our Communities, in a commitment to engage with First Nations peoples, and Our Research, in a commitment to delivering research solutions that positively impact communities.

For the Australian research community, as this project will be the subject of published articles, if offers a case for new perspective on the phenomenon of fulfilling "clear institutional responsibilities"((Pidgeon, 2014, p.12), to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through higher education and aid in "understanding why and how universities are responsible" (p.12).

This project serves to position CQUniversity in relation to other Australian higher education organisations in serving First Nations peoples to "build and nurture strategic partnerships for improved outcomes" and "foster relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities" (Macquarie University Indigenous Strategy, 2016).

ETHICS

Human ethics application 0000022152

Ethics approval for the FNCEL pilot project was sought though the formal application process of submission of documents to the CQUniversity Human Ethics Committee and based on the precepts of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct on Human Research.

The researcher requested the services of a First Nations Cultural Consultant when writing the application to ensure cultural appropriateness in relation to the consideration of language and tone.

Invitation to the Research Project

At the time of formal submission, the researchers requested approval to begin the process of inviting identified participants through a formal letter of invitation and expression of interest documents. Copies of the documents were submitted and approved for delivery, prior to approval of the ethics application

Ethics approval for the pilot project was granted Monday 27 April 2020. The ethics application is under an extension with the final report scheduled for February 2023.

CHAPTER 2   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of existing literature, an essential feature for this academic research, was led by the "preliminary notions" (Yin, 2015, p.71) underpinning the research question. The literature review informed the study (Yin, 2015) and in seeking out prior scholarly work gave foundation to the idea "To push the knowledge frontier"(Xiao & Watson, 2017, p.93). In following this approach, the researcher is required to discern where that frontier currently stands.

The project's purposeful design to advance comprehensions and understanding of the value and application of First Nations cultural knowledges and skills in higher education governance, policy making and management includes the methods and mechanisms by which this cultural knowledge is garnered and applied. The review also sought to give insight and perspective on the way in which FNCEL participants could participate in culturally safe and confident way.

That organisational governance, First Nation cultural awareness and the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff are foundationally intertwined and exist as current fundamental issues for Australian universities, is undeniable and widely acknowledged. Yet the challenges presented by this convergence is complex and anchored in the social fibre of Australian colonial history, through an intricate web of long held social practices. Thus, the category of the review held was prescriptive and selective, and sought to collate and examined the state of the current literature as it pertains to the query posed by the research project (Xiao and Watson, 2017). The review was conducted primarily in online searches through Google Scholar that included "*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islande*r <u>and</u> *HE*;" *First Nations Australian* <u>and</u> *University engagement*; *Indigenous Australians* <u>and</u> *governance: Indigenous people* <u>and</u> *governance* and " *Indigenous Knowledges Systems* <u>and</u> *governance.* Publications and reports concerning First Nations people and higher education, with which researchers were already familiar were added to the list of publications for review.

Methodological research was assisted by academic publications on qualitative research and research design.

FIRST NATIONS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

First Nation Australian numbers in student and staff participation at Australian universities remain at a percentage below general populace parity; and at a significant under-representation in higher education. According to Hutchings, Bainbridge et al (2019) the relative median age of First Nation Australian population at 22 years, "provides fertile ground for the expansion of young people's educational [HE] opportunities" (p.247) if there is designated infrastructure to support a drive to do so.

Despite the examination on what can be done to increase university participation and to identify "the barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders achieving their full potential in higher education (Beherndt, Larkin, Gnew & Kelly, 2012), by Australian Government-led national reviews in 2008 and 2012, and the public awareness created by the resultant reports, low enrolment, retention and graduation rates persist.

17

Socio-economic conditions, lack of educational opportunity and community remoteness are recognised environmental factors that negatively affect First Nations people in their aspirations and abilities to access university. However, organisational management and governance, espoused social and economic values and pedagogical directions taken by universities "send clear signals" ((Kennedy, 2003, p.57) about the role they ([universities] play and intend to future occupy in relation to First Nations people involvement.

It is reasonable to assume that higher education provides a platform for potential relationship building between universities and their stakeholders, and Indigenous Australian communities and individuals. This position is enhanced by culturally insightful governance, the inclusion of First Nations people in management and academic positions and the development of policies and procedures that recognise the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges. Prof Aileen Moreton-Robinson et al (2011) in commissioned extant research to determine "how efficiently Australian universities incorporate First Nations people participation in governance, and the effectiveness of programs in growing staff and student participation" (p.5),in relation to federal funding received under the Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP, formerly ISP) looked at 37 universities in a study.

The resultant report on the findings captured in the publication *On Stoney Ground: Governance and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Participation in Australian* rates individual universities "using three key criteria to produce an overall score for a two-way concept of governance" ((Moreton-Robinson, Walter et al, 2011, p.7).   The basis for the report's governance score comprises the effectiveness of including First Nations people participants in governance structures and how that involvement in turn builds cultural presence in staff and student participation.

This literature's relation to the current status of First Nations peoples' input into governance has not been officially updated in the last decade. However, the pertinent and specific recommendations made for mandatory involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the governance of universities, with measurable outcomes and reporting (Moreton-Robinson, Walter, Singh, & Kimber, 2011) continue to be relevant. Despite the findings and resultant recommendations of the *Report of HE Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (2012)* Holt and Morgan (2016) state in their study "slow progress has been made in implementing the review recommendations"(p.99).

CQUniversity Strategic Engagement

Wise, Dickinson, Katan, Gallegos (2020) posit that in higher education organisations where Indigenous student and staff numbers are substantial, First People's contribution to governance is an elemental requisite. The authors argue that worldwide it is becoming common for universities to incorporate advisory bodies to meet the disparate needs of various stakeholders in governance systems; the case for increasingly common use of Indigenous advisory bodies makes strategic sense. Further it is urgent to do so to ensure a "mechanism to empower Indigenous spheres of activity" (p.240). Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall (2012) as quoted in Wise, Dickinson et al 2020 who focused much of their studies on the blending of First Nations [Canadian] approach to traditional scientific knowledge with that of western culture, suggest that the establishment of an "Indigenous advisory body of

willing, knowledgeable stakeholders" (p.334) is essential. (Kuokkanen, 2017) theorise that the planned inclusion of First Nations students in higher education often fails for the lack of incorporation of First Nations ideologies and world perspective into organisational systems and academic structure.

Pidgeon (2014) states that the cycle of exclusion of First People from universities can be overcome by the inclusion of the "lived realities" (p.14) of Aboriginal peoples and that this process would involve "challenging current structures and processes"(p.14) that hinder those realities becoming part of university structures. McGregor (2021) agrees in that the challenge of applying Indigenous knowledges "in contexts where such knowledge is neither generated nor held" is essential to the success of students.

The CQUniversity approach to strategic involvement of First Nations people in university matters, includes attempting to engage with and build mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the locations where University campuses and study hubs are established. The establishment of the First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders (FNCEL) is listed as a considered method for increasing the University's engagement with Indigenous Australian communities "in partnership with Elders and leaders" (OIE, p.12). The creation of this advisory body program is based on involving Elders and leaders (from Country on which the local campus is located or is the catchment for its students), in guidance roles.

Sustaining the FNCEL into the future includes plans to expanded or revise current iteration to be whole-of-university advisory body (CQUniversity RAP 2022-2024, p. 22) as a governance mechanism.

GAP IN LITERATURE

Current literature

Beyond literature that clearly outlines the lack of procedure or organisational success in facilitating direct input into governance practice, there is little published in Australia on what has been done or recommended to address the absence. According to the *Nyiyannang wuunggalu* Event Report (AIATSIS, 2019) the majority of government and non-government body approaches to Indigenous Australian community is that of a service delivery, rather than a long-term participatory development program. This approach works against capacity building in a community paradigm (AIATSIS, 2019). Further the report makes comment that policymakers need to be prepared to collaborate with community challenges, listen carefully to perspectives and recognise that negotiation and compromise are essential for change. The establishment of a body that is based on community leader and Elder input into the governance structure is a step that could bring transformation to this assumptive perspective in higher education and beyond.

According to Kennedy (2003) the way higher education organisations are governed and the values they espouse, indicate the role they play and intend to take in society as a whole. As new financial scrutiny and shifting societal attitudes emerge, universities are required to "develop strategies in order to retain traditional values while

responding to positively to new priorities"(p.55). The shifting outlook in contemporary Australian society embodies a recognition, understanding and willingness to include First Nations knowledges in governance of universities in a way the benefits all stakeholders involved.

There are few publications available, including government and government commissioned reports, to suggest that universities across the nation have been innovative in their approach to the involvement of First Nations ideologies in governance and management of academic systems. Gunstone's (2013) survey of to what extent First Nations peoples engaged in strategic planning or governance systems in Australian universities demonstrated a low level of planned or exercised inclusion. Of the 12 universities surveyed, "two mentioned issues relating to the participation of Indigenous people in leadership governance in their strategic plans"(p.5). The establishment of the FNCEL seeks to push the current boundary of lack.

As part of this literature study, in an effort to understand the level of First Nations people engagement sought and utilised by higher education institutions, the websites of some Australian (24) and Canadian (10) universities with well-publicized First Nations focused programs for engagement, education and research were visited and canvased, resulting in the compilation of a table (Appendix C). Although a few of the universities canvassed did have established First Nations advisory bodies, there is a lack of published material focused on their establishment, function and effect on governance and management.

Wise et al (2020) published research on "an inclusive governance mechanism by documenting the creation of a university advisory council incorporating 11 Indigenous nationalities" (p.239) in the Amazon district of Ecuador. According to the authors, the examination of the establishment process of the council provides a viable plan for higher education organisations worldwide, that wish to include the Indigenous voice in the interface of management and governance. These authors emphatically state the urgency and necessity for such work and recognise the difficulty in establishing a working model in existing institutions. Further, they posit that collectively they "know of no published scientific studies that evaluate and describe practical steps for Indigenous council establishment" (p.240). The establishment of the FNCEL in a six month trial responds to the need outlined

The report on the outcomes of the FNCEL pilot research project and subsequent publications, will contribute to the sparse literature in this field, especially in relation to Australian higher education institutions.

METHODOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Case study

This research project is first and foremost treated with] a case study approach, as it presents circumstances "that begins with the identification of a specific case that will be described and analysed" ((Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.97). Baxter and Jack (2008) describe the case study as presenting an important methodology for qualitative research in that it provides opportunity to study "phenomenon within its context by using a variety of data sources" (p.544). The FNCEL is categorised as an intrinsic case study according to Creswell and Poth (2018) as the study is focused on a solitary case that "presents an unusual or unique situation" (p.99) that is set in circumstances of specific interest to the researcher.

This pilot project it holds particular interest for the researchers, as its establishment is one of the targets listed originally in the ILES and later in the RAP (2022-224). These essential documents ensure the University's interaction with First Nations stakeholder and communities and inclusion of First Nations culture and knowledge in university structures and systems.

The FNCEL pilot project, as a case as is constrained by specific and defined circumstantial parameters. Those limitations are contained by a paradigm that converges the demands of a university committee structure and function; the number of participants in the committee; the number of meetings of the group over six months and the specified purpose for the institution the FNCEL. The study fits a situation as is described by the Creswell (2020) definition of a case study, in that the phenomenon studied gives deep understanding to the event(s) and the process of human interaction within that occurrence(s). According to Tellis (1997) case studies are "multi-perspective analyses"(p.3), as the researcher considers the perceptions of various participants or actors and their interactions In this project the researchers make "a holistic in-depth investigation" (Tellis, 1997, par 4) into the workings of the FNCEL group in relation to its intended function as an advisory body to university governance, and the interaction of the sitting members in relation to the success of that contribution, is explored.

Van Wynsberghe and Khan (2007) present a defined insight into case study methodology, stating case study research can be transparadigmatic, and relevant regardless of the research approach. In the case of the FNCEL, a constructivist stance was applied to the case as the concepts that arise from the activities of the FNCEL while it is functioning as an advisory body over the duration of the pilot project, bring new learning about how an advisory body will work in future. And, although the FNCEL pilot project has inherent aspects of participatory action research (PAR), that will be discussed in the methodology, the primary aspects remain under the paradigm of a case study.

Participatory action research (PAR)

The FNCEL pilot project encompasses elements of participatory action research (PAR), as the researchers and participants worked in tandem to understand challenges existing in the university systems to the absorption of First

Nations cultural influence and through their combined actions and shared ideologies, intended their collaborative effort to evoke change.

According to O'Brien (1998) PAR is a situational approach that seeks to solve issues of practical concerns at the same time as offering new understandings and ways forward in the areas of the study involved. The author states that this methodological approach is "used in real life situations since its primary focus is on solving real problems" (p.9). The FNCEL pilot was set up as a specific set of circumstances that would allow an advisory body with a membership made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to have input into a policy making process, under the existing committee model used by the University, thereby acting in a situation that takes place routinely in the HE organisation.

Walter (2009) posits an aligned view; that the determinants of PAR are the creation of knowledge and purposeful action that results in change. It is these crucial elements that create the method's distinctive formulation as an approach to research. In the case of CQUniversity, OIE team members and the members of the FNCEL worked together to address issues that affected First Nations university students, staff and internal and external stakeholder groups and communities. The policies considered and created over the duration of the pilot project were designed to directly benefit and increase engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities and stakeholders, internal and external to the organisation.

Community collaboration

PAR has integral, distinct axiological and ontological positions as "PAR seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it" (Baum, MacDougall et al, 2006, p. 854). These foundational premises are grounded in respect for the value of knowledges and knowledge systems of the community in which the research is based. The process is what Walter (2009) describes as "the relocation of power from the researcher to the community of interest" (section PAR, par 3).

Currently, First Nations staff, students and local catchment community members at all campuses are of primary interest to CQUniversity and the OIE. The collaboration between researchers and FNCEL members throughout the period of function [albeit temporarily] of the trial resulted in current cultural knowledge applied to the University matters of reviewing and creating new policy and protocols. During the trial period, members of the OIE team continually informed FNCEL participants about the nature of their involvement and provided the digital structure necessary to support the meeting agendas, actions and notes. A First Nations chairperson ran meetings, with contributions offered by members only. This cooperation assured that the objective reached – that of the creation of two new University wide protocols. That the accomplishment was the result of the community of interest and the cyclic nature of PAR's fundamental process (Walter, 2009) was evident and came to fulcrum when the policies created were accepted by the University Management Committee (UMC) and University Council.

CHAPTER 3   METHODOLOGY

The qualitative methodology applied is pluralistic in that as a "strategy of action that shapes the choice and use of methods, linking them to desired outcomes" (Baum, MacDougall et al, 2006, p.854) the researchers have used a case study approach combined with elements of participatory action research (PAR).

CASE STUDY

The case for a case study

The methodological approach to the study of the FNCEL pilot project is qualitative as it is reliant on the relation of experiences, opinions and thoughts of people (O'Leary, 2017) and the socially constructed nature of reality of the participants (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012).

The paradigm established by assessing the advisory group model of the FNCEL in a pilot project offers the investigators a situation that Creswell and Poth (2018) describe as " a real life contemporary bounded system" (p.96), the paradigm of a case study. However, this project focuses on research with the purpose of facilitating change through strategically planned action; action that leads to an iterative cycle of reflection and further action (Baum et al, 2006). As a result, this qualitative research project incorporates the dynamics of combination; the blending of case study and participatory action approaches to achieve its goal of finding and illustrating answers to the posed research query.

The ontological approach to the research is anchored in constructivism focusing on the way in which people makes sense of social experiences; their interpretation of truth and reality (Baxter & Jack, 2008) and the way in which they apply that interpretation of reality and subsequent learnings to the social and environmental landscapes of the world in which they live.

The case study approach to the project is most accurately described as intrinsic, as this research is an in-depth analysis of the bounded system [structure] of the FNCEL (Creswell & Poth, 2018) as "described and defined by particular parameters" (p.97) including place, membership criteria and continuity, university committee structure and material under consideration and discussion of the phenomena by participants. Further, an intrinsic case study approach provides for a holistic and profound investigation (Tellis, 1997) of a uniquely constructed situation. The constraints of the case study parameters are the structure of a university committee with a formal term of reference (TOR), the purpose of which was to input First Nations cultural knowledge, experience and insight into governance and management of the CQUniversity. The FNCEL guidance and advice on policy and matters of First Nations peoples' interests is to be presented to university authoritative hierarchy such as the University Management Committee and Academic Board by Prof Adrian Miller, in his position as Deputy Vice President of Indigenous Engagement, BHP Chair in Indigenous Engagement and Director of the JAWAN institute [formerly CIHER].

Longitudinal aspect of the case study

The case study explored a complex phenomenon within a specific context over a specific time frame (Baxter & Jack, 2008): that of an organised, recognised and sanctioned [by CQUniversity] group of First Nation community Elders and leaders who have direct and recognised input into University policy and procedure. The FNCEL committee met monthly for six months; the period extended from the original plan of four monthly meetings. Once the trial was underway and three meeting had been held, and observations had been made about time required for participants to reach a level of comprehension about university governance and to discuss agenda items, the research team decided to extend the time of the pilot trial.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

Participation to invoke change

According to Altrichter et al (2002), PAR is a broad movement, not well described by "one neat widely accepted definition"(p.125), as it is difficult to confine its axiomatic and empirical parameters. However, the authors do theorise that the purpose of action research is to develop practical situations where people are given the opportunity to reflect upon and "improve practice and publish their findings for the benefit of others who are interested in the particular practice" (p.128). Further to this theory, Walter (2013) posits that the intention of PAR to action change is elemental to the approach and this "differentiates it from methods whose primary aim is to research or investigate"(para 1, chap 21).

The FNCEL pilot project was instituted to trial a construct to meet a specific need, based on a committee framework template currently embedded in the University's governance structure, for the inclusion of First Nations voices in the creation and review of policy, management procedures and the delivery of pedagogy. In the context of improving or creating a new paradigm that changes current organisational systems the two elements that are important to PAR: research that comprises an "action component that seeks to engender positive change" and includes in its design the "involvement of the community of interest to the research" (Walter, 2013, par 5, chap 21) were in play throughout the research pilot timespan.

The pilot project committee participants, although made fully aware of the focus of the research trial, and that the meetings they attended were part of a trial, participated as interactive contributors to the outcomes of the project by way of their attendance and contribution to meeting agenda item resolutions and their confidential after-meeting interviews. Their activity in the exploration of the question posed by the research was limited to these activities. Data collection, data analysis, discussions and outcomes were dealt with by the researchers. As such the PAR element of the research, although imminently important, cannot stand alone as a single methodological approach to the project. Combining it with a case study approach provides for a more profound understanding of how the pilot FNCEL worked and why.

Exchange with researcher in survey questioning

In answering questions posed by survey, participants had the opportunity to express ideas and thoughts that were partially formulated during meetings, and in the retrospective opportunity provided by the survey, could become fully formulated. The other condition present in the survey was that in one-on-one confidential exchange in which the participant was aware of their protect anonymity, they felt relaxed and more inclined to share ideas that may not have been shared at meetings for cultural or reprisal reasons. And the third characteristic is dynamics of exchange in meetings. Often a participant may have wanted to express a thought or contribution and did not have the opportunity before the conversation shifted in another direction.

In short participants had opportunity to recap agenda item discussions in the survey space – which was not the intention of the survey. However, the informative nature of those thoughts were recorded in the transcripts. Therefore, the survey process became an integral part of the participatory process.

THE METHOD DELIVERY

Creating protocols

As a trial for establishing a formalised university committee, the FNCEL pilot project required the establishment of a terms of agreement document (TOR), a meeting format and schedule, a list of appropriate First Nations focused agenda items for discussion and action, support by OIE staff and the means and administrative infrastructure to action outcomes.

Committee tasks were set for the committee's consideration by Prof Miller who based the initial choice for the commissions on fulfilling strategic outcomes outlined under the mandate of the ILES and more contemporarily the CQU RAP document. Chairperson, Jenuarrie had input into each agenda. The formation of two new protocols were set as goals for the pilot: a method and process for confirming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and a protocol for engaging with First Nations communities and stakeholders.

The formulation of the protocols utilised existing CQUniversity policy templates and researched literature was supplied as prescribed reading. Example policies from Federal and State government institutions and nationally recognised First Nations NGOs were an integral part of literature, both in the research literature review, and the supply of material to participants.

Impacts of the COVID-19 virus

The meeting schedule for the FNCEL pilot project, included an initial induction and four face-to-face meetings. National and local COVID restrictions were imposed in the initial stages of the meetings: as a result, the induction meeting was held online through a Zoom connection. After the first meeting in May 2020, which was also held

through Zoom, the restrictions were changed to allow people to meet in person while maintaining a safe social distance.   Despite the relaxing of restrictions, some members found travelling to the campus time consuming and chose to join meetings digitally.

Extending the timeline

After three meetings that took place in May, June and July 2020, participants were canvassed as to their feelings and thoughts about extending the pilot project from four to six meetings. All participants agreed that to accomplish the goals set out in the agendas, this was a necessary step for success.

The meetings were extended with the last meeting held 20 October 2020.

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The process of data analysis and the ultimate outcomes of that analysis strive to answer the questions posed by the research project - *did the FNCEL structure work, and how and why did it work or not work?*

Longitudinal factor

The longitudinal process of securing data is a crucial factor in understanding how the participating group functioned; the individual participant's development of understanding of the significance of their input and their willingness to contribute to the challenges placed before them. As a result, the timeline of the project had an effect on participants responses to the survey. Increased experience of the demands of participation and the ongoing interaction between participants contributed to a sense of security and willingness to contribute. Survey questions at each month's interview sessions were combined of those that were asked after each meeting and those that changed with the changing nature of the agenda items.

It is intended that the findings of the analysis and the research project outcomes, will inform the next iteration of the FNCEL and its [FNCEL] professional practice going forward. In the first instance it is intended that the outcomes will form the basis for producing a model for CQUniversity to use in the establishment of an ongoing advisory body. Further, it is intended that the publications that will eventuate from the research will be a report of findings, a conference presentation of the research case and findings, and journal articles. The merits of conducting this research will be expressed in publications that will inform other the body of knowledge pertaining to First Nations advisory bodies After a review of related literature, it appears these intended publications may be amongst the first in exampling an experimental model. This research could address a contemporary gap and lack in University structures for methods of incorporating First Nation culture and knowledge. This work could provide a model for other universities and institutions to use in reconciliation methodologies.

Any published journal articles will contribute to what is currently a meagre availability of reports on Indigenous advisory bodies to HE internationally.

Data collection and analysis

Data collated and examined in this study was sourced from monthly post-meeting interviews conducted with individual participants, observations by the researcher taken during meetings, pre-project research on how other universities seek, receive and utilise cultural input from First Nations Elders and leaders. Data included a report by Reconciliation Australia on the outcomes of the CQUniversity Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2016-2018. The outcomes are taken from a survey conducted with staff at CQUniversity to evaluate their perceived interaction with Indigenous Australians, knowledge and practices after the implementation of the Innovate RAP and was conducted in 2019 .

 Methodological triangulation was applied to the data sources, as this approach will provide stability to the interpretation of the material (Tellis, 1997). To provide a comprehensive understanding (Carter et al, 2014) and increase the validity and credibility of the research multiple theoretical perspectives have been used. Triangulation is a combination of theories to analyse data, assisting "the researcher in supporting or refuting findings" (p.545). Limiting methods may result in the exclusion of insights and inclusion of bias.

PRIMARY DATA − THE SURVEY

Survey treatment

The single source for primary data was the answers to questions asked of individual participants during post-meeting monthly interviews. The interviews took place within three days of each of the monthly meetings, over six months and were conducted face-to-face on Zoom during regular working hours (between 8:30am -5:00pm). Each Zoom meeting audio and visual versions were recorded and saved. Each month the Zoom meeting audio recordings were delivered digitally to a professional transcribing service by uploading files directly to the researcher's secure account at the transcribing company's platform.

Transcribed files were subsequently downloaded from the researcher's account and saved to a research hard drive supplied by CQUniversity's research division; an encrypted external hard drive and as was required by the data analysis process, and occasionally temporarily to the computer in use for the evaluation process.

Interview questions were designed to inquire about each member's participatory experience and opinions and thoughts on efficacy of the meeting structures, discussions and outcomes. (See Appendices A). Foundational questions remained identical month to month and each month, some questions were changed and added to reflect the agenda of the particular monthly meeting.

Foundational questions

In order to capture any changes in attitude toward the meeting process, each week a number of identical questions were asked of participants

1. Do you think the formal meeting format serves the FNCEL? How does it or does it not serve our purposes.
2. Are you comfortable with the Chairperson's leadership of the meeting and why?
3. Do you feel that the meeting format serve the members in terms of cultural respect and freedom of interaction? Is so how?
4. Do you have any suggestions for changes that we may not have captured so far?
5. This month's discussion was a continuation of ….last month. What progress in your opinion has made thus far on ……?
6. Were there adequate room for input from you and others and how do you feel about your ability to input in the current meeting process.
7. Do you think the issues under discussion will have an impact on communities and what will those impacts be?
8. How has the COVID restrictions affected the meetings?

Additional questions

Additional questions were asked about the development of protocols as they were being developed. Examples below are a representation, of those asked:

1. The mixed format of Zoom and physical attendance may have to continue in the future or given COVID may have to be the only way to meet. We have months of experience now in this. Have you any suggestions on how to improve this process going forward?
2. In your opinion was the process of creating the new policies eventually effective because of the evolution of how we asked members to be involve?
3. How have the current processes been effective in creating the new protocol documents.
4. Did you think the pilot project was a success and how was it so or not so?

Recording procedure

Interviews conducted on *Zoom* were recorded by the research interviewer. The Zoom version used is held as corporate account by the Central Queensland University with privacy assured by the organisation's encrypted security measures. This platform was used as interview times were scheduled during working hours (9am-5pm). Zoom was convenient for facilitating face-to-face interviews and recording ensured accuracy of interview questions and answers.

All participants were familiar with Zoom and invited each to each month's interview under a schedule created by the FNCEL Secretariat arm of the team. Individual Zoom invitations were sent to each member prior to the monthly meeting. Each invitation required a confirmative response for the meeting to be scheduled

Zoom provided participants with a place, time and private space in which to offer opinions and impressions of the workings of the group and each member's individual experience within the group. Some questions became core to the interviews, remaining the same each month, while others changed to accommodate the change in subject matter of each meeting. The interviews were conducted over the six-month life of the project in the two days directly following each meeting to ascertain the opinions and feelings of participants in relation to:

- the effectiveness of members contributions and interactions
- the process by which the meetings were held
- and the significance of the matters being considered for the community and for the University

All interviews were conducted one-on-one with audio only recording delivered to the transcription service. Each participant was identified only by a code assigned to each. All data is stored in accordance with data storage at CQUniversity and national human ethics regulations.

OBSERVATIONAL JOURNALS

Two members of the research team have maintained observation journals of the FNCEL meetings over the six-month trial period. These journals contain ideas and impressions jotted down extempore or immediately after the meeting that contain insights into the dynamics of the meeting from an observational point of view.

The research support team members have submitted journal entries as documents for use as an integral part of the dataset. They are useful to inform the context of the meetings and the interaction between members.

The journal entries provide alternative points of view in the context of how the model might work in future iterations. For the purposes of data analysis, the researchers were assigned numbers 1R and 2R.

SECONDARY DATA

Universities services tabled

An online study was conducted of universities across Australia and Canada, using Google search engine. Current 2021 website information was used to construct a table of 26 Australian and eight Canadian universities to ascertain whether those organisations had established bodies of First Nations people to advise on governance, management and the delivery of education. Details of First Nations advisory bodies, research institutes and staff and student services are included with corresponding live links in the body of the table.

The table was constructed based on a series of questions posed by the researcher:
Dedicated physical space and/or Senior Executive
1. Does this university have a dedicated physical centre/department/division for Indigenous education/research/engagement?

2. Does this university have a dedicated Senior Executive role? e.g., PVC/DVC/Director or alternative position; Agenda *for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Or in the case of non-Australian universities, is there an equivalent focus on Indigenous students?)*
3. Does this university provide student support to Indigenous students and inform them of the service?
4. Does the existing centre advise curriculum, pedagogy/learning, and teaching for Indigenous Australian education subjects/degrees/foci?
5. Does the dedicated centre have mechanisms to advise whole university policy regarding Indigenous students, teaching and research?
6. Does this university have Indigenous research programs/output?
7. Does the centre engage with community? Specific projects plan/strategy?

The table is structured to offer a quick reference to the seven pertinent questions in a landscape layout that creates easy understanding and allows for cross referencing.

The table is an important reference aid to this project, in that it offers insight into the state of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contribution to HE across the national landscape. The table offers a quick reference guide to methods currently in use, providing ideas on innovation for future formulations of the FNCEL and possibilities for alternatives to possible negative findings of the pilot project.

Tabling this information helped the researcher and ultimately the organisation to establish CQUniversity's position in relation to other universities across this nation, in relation to philosophical stance and practical methods for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge into its management, strategic and pedagogical structures and processes.

Canadian universities

A small review of Canadian universities was conducted as Canadian universities have similar structure to those in Australia and encourage ties and exchange with Australian universities as well as demonstrate some service to specifically designed for First Nation Canadians. A simple table was constructed to offer an international reference point to considering university services to Indigenous Australians.

Canada and Australia have political, economic, social commonalities. Both are former British colonies that are currently federal states governed by the Westminster parliamentary system under constitutional monarchies; have sparse populations in relation to landmass with large areas uninhabited; and are geographically situated on the Pacific Rim. As well their social demographics include First Nations populations whose cultures have been suppressed by colonial structures and have struggled to survive; inhabit traditional remote lands with communities under-served by provincial/state and federal governments and social systems and are currently working at a federal and provincial/state government levels to actively pursue forms of reconciliation with First Peoples.

Culturally embedded racism toward First People are a recognised social phenomenon in both countries. In contrast, Canada holds historical and current treaties with First Nations peoples.

Limitations

It is intended that data analysis presents an in-depth understanding of the case under study and a response to the research question posed. The empirical nature of the data collated as the result of the relating of participant interactive experience, is the foundation of the study.

Pannucci and Wilkins (2010) define bias as any tendencies that mitigate unprejudiced consideration of the question posed by the research and any individual opinions held about the research. O'Leary (2017) states that complete objectivity is impossible in research, "research and researchers are responsible for shaping the character of knowledge" (p.55).

Although the project was conducted to evaluate a construct designed to produce a method of facilitation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural absorption, several cultural perspectives were involuntarily involved in its execution. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians formed the research team, each of them offering inherent cultural perspectives to the project.

The researchers are members of the OIE and their philosophical assumptions that provided direction to the framework and intention of the study comprise an ontological stance based on the ideology that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge is necessary to a communally holistic and inclusive societal landscape at CQUniversity, and an epistemological position that this project will provide an innovative model for First Nations cultural influence to become an integral part of university processes and systems. These theoretical perceptions drive the paradigm of the project.

Questions that were asked of participants in the two days directly following the meetings were straightforward, open ended and designed to facilitate expression of personal views and feelings on the content and action of the meetings. The questions were written in what was perceived as a neutral tone and made no attempt to offer information or sway responses. Additional information on university processes and systems was offered only in response to direct participant questioning.

An hour was allowed for each interview to provide adequate time for participant to formulate answers. If questions were posed by interviewees to the interviewer, they were responded to with information and explanations made to best of ability of the interviewer.

Approach to data: thematic analysis

Data analysis was based on a holistic approach as a strategy for inquiry (Ellis et al, 2006). This methodology entailed considering the entire data collection with an immersive attitude prior to identifying analysis themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The approach allowed for initial "intuitive identification" (p.188) of emergent ideas as part of breaking down of the complexity of the issues presented by the project and allowed a "with-in case analysis"(p.100) of the incomparable research circumstance.

In the first instance all transcripts of interview questions and answers were read thoroughly, in an attempt to grasp a sense of the entire body of information, prior to segmenting the data. On second reading, notes were made in the margins of the transcripts to memo emergent reoccurring ideas and key concepts, in order to what Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) as quoted in Creswell and Poth (2018) describe as "synthesising them into levels of analytical meanings" (p.187).

Breaking down of the data into meaningful sections of case study themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018) effectively dealt with and proved an efficient management system for the large amount of data produced from the more than 55 interviews conducted.

Invivo coding

The data was further reviewed to prioritise segments of text (rather than line by line] and margin memos (Yin, 2015) to group the emerging repetition of concepts and ideas. These groups were defined by individual codes to track the key issues found in the data information (Crowe et al, 2011). The codes used were drawn from the wording of material recorded and as they originated and were derived from the data matrix, are *invivo* codes (Yin, 2015, p.196). This *invivo* method was chosen to reflect values and concepts arising from the entire body and language of the data itself, rather than utilizing an *a priori* coding method, which would have imposed structure and preconceived viewpoints on the data, and therefore restricted findings (Creswell, 2016).

To ascertain how the invivo codes related to broader themes and ideas (Yin, 2014) eight initial codes were identified. Due to the volume of data, a set of expanded codes were applied to further define details of the foundational codes.

Initial codes:
- Culture and gender interface/interaction
- Meeting process
- FNCEL pilot project
- University governance – creating protocols
- Cultural issues in an HE landscape
- Policy creation and advisory service
- Community commitment and representation

32

Self-reflection as an FNCEL member and future involvement

The eight codes were used as broad categories to further describe and classifying data in the analysis process; what Creswell and Poth (2018) describe as spiraling toward the eventual interpretation of the body of data. This process aided in understanding the data in relation to the formulation of perspective and the supporting literature. In a process that Creswell (2016) refers to as "direct interpretation" (p.322) code categories were expanded to 32 subcategories complete with "narrative arrays" (Yin, 2016, p.209) of supporting quotes from participant responses in a separate table for each coded theme. (Appendices A).

This iteration of the review process stimulated the recognition of connections and overlapping ideas to formulate hierarchal themes. This thematic mapping of interconnections (O'Leary, 2017) or permutation of ideas, resulted in four overarching themes or meta themes - that became central to the interpretating the data in answer to the research question posed:

- ➤ Significance of the meeting process
- ➤ Challenges to contribution
- ➤ Cultural input into policy creation and guidance for governance
- ➤ Community commitment and representation

Interpretation and developing theory

The holistic and interpretive approach to the data collected in this case study was integral to the discretionary choices in the reassembling process for interpretation (Yin, 2014). According to O'Leary (2004) the power and sway of qualitative data is in the "actual words" (p. 340) collected through the interview process. This project has capitalised on the words of the participants in the interpretation and development of theory.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018) interpretation of data "involves making sense"(p.195) of it through creative, critical and intuitive means. "The reassembling process inevitably involves an increasing number of discretionary choices" (Yin, 2015, p.210)) Carefully considered judgements about the meanings of participant expression of thoughts and the patterns emerging from those expressions that appeared salient to the research agenda (Yin,2015) generated the themes for interpretation.

After the process of recognising themes into meta thematic abstractions, these hierarchical themes were considered in relation to relevant literature examined and the initial hypothesis. This provided for some association of research findings with current knowledge and the research question.

Reflective thoughts

The congregation of evidence in support of the interpretive outcomes of this project involved perceptions and biases of the researchers, both recognised and unrecognised (Yin,2015). Researcher partialities are openly recorded in the reflective sections of this report. To mitigate the effect of the researcher's epistemological stance on the findings, negative responses and rival thinking from participants was recorded and considered throughout the study.

CHAPTER 4   DISCOVERIES

DATA FINDINGS

Primary data

In seeking to establish whether the pilot project did or did not work as a successful model for the FNCEL, questions were posed in relation to participants experience of working within the parameters of the committee structure. As such, the question-and-answer sessions held with participants produced empirical primary data, which provided information to establish an answer to the research project quest.

The strategic qualitative approach taken to analysing the primary data was inductive, applied to derive concepts and themes from the phenomenon under investigation (Azungah, 2018). The primary data was product of the answers to open ended and flexible set of questions, offering participants opportunity "to voice issues considered salient to them" (p.284). Interview material provides the language expression and tone of the information provided and pertinent ideas in how the participants envisage, interact and respond to the pilot iteration of the FNCEL.

Collating data in this way, affords the research evaluation of the circumstances pertaining to existing established committee formulation suitability, when applied to the workings of the FNCEL as an advisory body.

Data analysis method

More than 50 interview transcripts make up the body of the primary data. In order to become familiar with the evidence, the interviews were read entirely, twice by the researcher. During this process ideas and themes that surfaced were noted in the margins of the transcripts. The themes were identified by considering the vernacular meaning, despite the variation in phrasing or sentence structure, about concepts and ideas related to the research question, and those that repeatedly emerged. The volume of data and the variety of expression from participants resulted in 32 initial *invivo* codes or basic themes.

In order to find broader connected meanings, the 32 codes were identified, categorised and clustered into seven overarching or "organising themes" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p.389).
Data derived from the journals tendered by the researchers added to the seven themes, in that a number of the observations and notes supported the interview- based evidence.

Creswell (2016) describes this systemising process as categorising phrases into phenomenon of interest, as they transform into "thematic networks" (Nowell et al, 2017, p. 6) providing patterns and connections that synthesised or knit together commonality of ideas.

The seven-themed framework

The seven themes that emerged from the initial themes:

- ➢ *Challenges to contribution* was supported by subthemes: barriers to contribution, gender issues, culture respect, cultural differences, cultural safety
- ➢ *Meeting process* included: formal meeting process works/does not work, time taken/required for meetings and discussions, formal meeting process COVID restrictions, agenda items, future meeting format; how does cultural practice fit with this process
- ➢ *Pilot Project process* encompassed: reason for interest, reason for ongoing involvement, was the pilot successful
- ➢ *Self-reflection and future* self-reflect on commitment, future involvement, personal and professional contribution
- ➢ *Community commitment and representation* for the good of community, engagement on behalf of community, positive outcomes for communities
- ➢ *Policy creation process* included policy innovation, policy creation process, policy creation complexity of effects
- ➢ *University governance and environment* embraced understanding university governance and management structures, reactions to Higher Education, issues of cultural lack; does cultural practice fit

This process included creating tables of themes based on theme/code subcategories and migrating supportive quotes from the transcripts connected to each theme. This was a crucial step in deeper understanding of the interconnection of the themes and in identifying congruent evidence. This process of circling back into the data served to substantiate how the sub-categories emerged from the data.

Reassigning participant references

In the capturing of primary data in transcription form, participants were coded specifically with a series of letter combinations for easy researcher identification. In working with the data in the discovery and disclosure stages, the participants were reassigned with numbers to ensure that privacy was assured.
New codes took the form of M + numeral.

The theming process

The example below represents (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.192) how the theming process was carried out.

Theme	Code	Definition	Example by quote from survey
Meeting process	Process did work	Cultural respect	*"It is good for me because I have the calendar invites along with the agendas, which gives me time to then have a look through the agenda, to sort of have some considerations in preparation for when we do come together, because I do understand that time is very precious."* M2
		Time to consider	*"Yes, I think it worked. Given the current circumstances, obviously face to face is obviously much better and I am sure that contributed to really good discussion the other day. But yes, the format of the meeting is great."* M9
		Interaction of participants	*"Yeah, I reckon it is a good space to hear everyone equally. Obviously when everyone is able to be in the room together, the conversation would be even more personal and a bit more in depth."*M7
	Process does not work		*" I was just really upset by Tuesday's meeting. Because it got completely diverged from what the objective of the meeting was. It just stayed off base and nobody reigned it in and got us back on track to focus on what we are doing."* M4
			"After last night I did not think it did work, and one of the reasons why is that – and we found that out when we asked our members to do, like to put an action sheet, ask them for concise, purposeful comments in relation to something and to state that. I would think that most members, plus myself, like to know beforehand what we are being asked and to

			take that on board and to think about that deeply and not spontaneously have to respond." M5
	Meeting process adjustments for COVID	Online participation as a barrier to contribution	*"I think the balance now that we have of physical and Zoom interaction, that is inhibiting. Because often something is being said and you are trying to go - and there are no protocols for how to flag that you want to speak. Sometimes I feel really bad, because I feel like I start saying something and then somebody else says something. So, I feel like I am talking over them and it is really bad and rude. But since we have had the Zoom and the physical, it is quite difficult when you are actually on Zoom too."* M5 *"At least you have plenty of options for people to Zoom in or to be in person, so that is always – always good to have the meetings in person. But no, that is all good."* M3
		Combination of ways to participate	
	Meeting format for future	How the format may fail to serve – professional and personal contributions	*"When you get a group of people together, where majority people have sent in apologies, or have resigned for other work commitments, or are…feeling distracted with other things, how do we mitigate that risk to be able to participate in a way that the process and the discussions are meaningful?"* M6 *"Obviously, we are people who connect by coming together and having face-to-face yarns, so the importance of relationships is imperative. But it is the only way that we can possibly connect at the moment, because of COVID and so it is a workable solution. I would like to see that we do have opportunity to come together face to face and that is just not possible at the moment."* M2
		Cultural tradition vs online formats	

	Did the pilot project work	Insufficient timeline for project to have broader outcomes	*"Yeah, the dynamics of the group, how people work, so how are we going to do that. That is why I am disappointed. I think that there's potential to do something with Adrian and yourself, something really ground-breaking that is long overdue in Australia. I do not think that six months does justice to starting something or that you and Adrian would be able to just continue by yourselves."* M3
		Participant interaction was well placed	*"I think we have used the time very well. I think the people that you have chosen to have brought their professionalism to the group to the point where there is no dilly-dallying."* M8
Challenges to contribution	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultures working together	Inherent differences are barriers to contribution	*"Where Indigenous mob tend to sit back and think about stuff and their care is much gentler in response. I just think that we should never bunch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in as one. Our natures are quite different. Like we can be quite vocal and quite upfront. But when it comes to historically, Torres Strait Islanders are warriors, they used to be cannibals [laughs]. You know what I mean, they have the fierce fire in their belly."* M5
		Gender	*"Perhaps, women may hold back in respect to give males the opportunity to speak first, because that is a cultural thing in some places. It all depends on which region or which group - traditional owner group or custodian group or language group you come from, and how you respectfully interact in conversations or in meetings."* M2
			"I can see that if the project is - goes more widely into other regions, that there may become a problem with elders and males, because that is a

	Gender – men and women working together		*cultural thing within our communities on how you hold back or you wait respectfully for others to contribute first before you contribute yourself, participate yourself. Sometimes that actually needs encouragement from the chair to invite the ones that have held back to make comment even if they have a strong one."* M8
		Elders and male members	
	Cultural respect is present		*"We're being overly cautious about respect, which is a good thing, but t they're not being quite as spontaneous about how we respond because I think they're feeling confined by the formality."*M1

Reducing the themes

To pursue broader connections or convergences of ideas expressed in the data, and in an effort to reassemble the information (Yin, 2015), a process of mapping the seven identified themes (O'Leary, 2017) was applied. To accomplish this, the tables of seven themes and their subthemes/codes were reconsidered and remapped on a large whiteboard with the research assistant in what Creswell (2016) refers to as "intercoder agreement" (p.197), to verify that both researchers had placed the same value on the seven themes, independently.

Themes were reassessed and where possible, synthesised, which involved looking for intuitive and reasonable interconnections to deduce where meanings or interpretation of the seven themes overlapped or could be coalesced. From this process four global or meta-themes were established. This further reduction of the data to four hierarchical themes was used to aid the theoretical analysis process of what O'Leary (2017) explains as a means to go "from model building to theory building" (p.335).

The meta themes that emerged provided interpretive foundation for the formation of theories that response to the research question.

At this point a circling back to the original 32 codes and the phrases and ideas that supported those codes was conducted. In returning to the data in this way, verification of support for each meta theme by a set of subthemes linked to direct quotes was completed, supported by primary data from participant interviews.
Each meta theme is derived from the arrangement of the data themes listed below it.

MT #1 Significance of meeting process to the FNCEL function
- ➢ Time allocated to discuss issues / time in between the meetings for reflection of issues.
- ➢ Meeting processes work
- ➢ Formal meeting process – does not work
- ➢ Meeting processes around COVID.
- ➢ Meeting format for future

MT#2 Factors affecting participant and contribution
- ➢ How hierarchy affects participation in relation to cultural respect Elders/Leaders in this room everyone has to have equality does cultural tradition prevent this
- ➢ Cultural safety
- ➢ Board membership gender
- ➢ Board membership: cultural differences/backgrounds Board membership: cultural issues around familiarity of Higher Education/university governance & environment.

MT# 3 Process of cultural guidance in policy creation
- ➢ Policy creation: complexity of cultural input
  - ➢ Policy creation: process
  - ➢ Policy creation: innovation
  - ➢ Appropriateness/importance of agenda items

MT#4 Participant self-reflection, community commitment and representation.
- ➢ Privileged/honored/ demanding work to be considered a leader and to contribute through collaboration with CQUniversity
- ➢ Commitment to capacity building through acknowledgement that HE is vital to success of First Nations communities
- ➢ Knowledge of HE landscape gained by participant/community member and community
- ➢ Engagement on behalf of First Nations people to increase awareness of cultural knowledge

The identification of the meta themes is the foundation for the discussion of how these themes respond to the purpose of the research. The classification of data supporting the four over-arching ideas and the corresponding interpretive discussion of these themes allows for deep insight into the answer to the research project question.

SECONDARY DATA FINDINGS

Secondary data comprises a set of tables that collate information on the services offered to First Nations staff, student and stakeholder by more than 25 Australian universities and nine Canadian universities, and the content of two field observation journals written by a researcher and a research assistant.

The table of Australian universities' processes and structures involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture, gives insight into the current state of engagement and inclusion of First Nations people in Australian higher education. This provides a further insight into current literature on the subject, studied for this research. According to The Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy Australia (2017) (2017-2020). UA "recognises the benefits that universities and the country will accrue through increasing Indigenous involvement and attainment in higher education" (p.10), listing amongst the many benefits the importance of the "unique knowledge systems to intellectual and social capital" (p.11) and necessity for universities "to implement effective policy and practices that ensure social justice" (p.11) in the community sectors it serves.

Further, the informative table highlights several issues including the need for a strategic plan and sustainable process distinctly designed for the inclusion of cultural knowledge and skills in university governance and management systems across CQUniversity Australia's geographic footprint. The table provides CQUniversity with a notion of its national position in relation to other HE organisations in the provision of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, provides insight into possibilities for future iterations of the FNCEL, post and considers a model that creates possibilities to serve a number of disparate social and geographic circumstances.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS

LIMITATIONS

The empirical results discussed herein should be considered in the light of some limitations.

The research team comprised a person of First Nations cultural heritage, a person of European/Canadian cultural heritage and a research assistant of Singaporean/Malay cultural heritage. Although it is acknowledged that there are inherent cultural bias limitations in the approach to discussing the data, the aim was for a report approach that demonstrates awareness of how that bias may affect outcomes.

Care was taken in the data collecting methods to ensure that the First Nations people interviewed for data collation were treated with respect to cultural sensitivities and to their personal and professional privacy.

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The FNCEL was convened as a special committee with a specific advisory purpose, guiding the Deputy Vice President Indigenous Engagement in matters of advocacy, leadership, engagement and governance for First Nations people at CQUniversity Australia.

In light of that specific purpose, the interpretation of the data discoveries is foundational to the inquiry into whether the FNCEL pilot project presented a plausible framework and meeting format that would work to the committee's specified purpose and to the search for answers to why or why not did it work.

The central elements explored are based on the initial objectives of the FNCEL project and this is achieved through examining : the success of the FNCEL as an advisory committee and as an empowering experience for members over the six-month period of the pilot project and the suitability of the meeting process to achieve goals set by the agendas. Further, it notes and interprets the experiences and cultural challenges of First Nations community members working with university [specifical to CQUniversity] systems and processes and seeks a sustainable approach to the next iteration of the FNCEL.

Interpretative reasoning

From the data analysis process four meta or global themes emerged. In this project the term meta-themes refer to the rhetorical ideas which acquire their meaning through the systematic co-occurrence of two or more other themes. These broader themes form the interpretive framework for discussion of data findings and present the major points or indicators of the success of the FNCEL during the pilot project.

The data survey yielded quite lengthy responses to questions posed in monthly interview sessions. The length and complexity of replies rendered under the meta-theme and thematic headings, represent the profound consideration given by respondents when answering the questions. They are often not direct answers and often articulate the thinking taking place while delivering an extempore response.

THEME 1. SIGNIFICANCE OF MEETING PROCESS TO THE FNCEL FUNCTION

The meeting process has high significance for the FNCEL's function. It is the primary platform for discussions and interactions between staff and participants, and participant to participant. It is the framework by which governance matters from the university were and would be presented to FNCEL as agenda items, in future.

Tasks for the FNCEL under the pilot, were designated by Prof Miller and were pertinent to the needs of the First Nations communities that form the University's stakeholders and to meet the ILES key performance indicators. This dual purpose assigned to task resulted in an expectation that outcomes of the six FNCEL meetings of the pilot project would involve the creation of two new university protocols.

The consideration of FNCEL functionality over the life of the pilot project is pivotal in gauging how the council performed and how the advisory body will continue to serve in future.

Time allotted for preparation and discussion

During interviews, participants were queried monthly, post-meeting about how they managed both the reading and making sense of their own reflections in the time allotted for meetings. Responses to questions about the time required for meeting preparation and allotted for in-meeting discussion include disparate opinions, with the reactions noticeably changing over the timeline [longitudinally] of the pilot project.

The majority of participant responses about the meeting agenda discussion time allotted and the time between meetings for reading and becoming familiar with the material were positive or offered critique in a positive voice: "*It is good for me because I have the calendar invites along with the agendas, which gives me time to then have a look through the agenda, to have considerations in preparation for when we do come together. It has been a good process for me.*" M2/MT1

"*It is always noticeably clear on what are our expectations, on how we would like our members to contribute to the agenda. So, I am satisfied that we do everything that we can to be able to encourage that.*" M1/MT4
"*The process is formed to allow for a lot of open discussion, which is what the group has been having a lot of and it's been really good, robust discussion.*" M3/MT3

Negative criticism of the role's demands and the lack of clarity about time in the preliminary stages of member briefing was offered for consideration.

"When we started out in this process it was [to be] one afternoon a month for a few hours, when in actual fact I do not think that is the case. We need to think about or do our own research or draw on resources that we have and come prepared. There's preparation time to those meetings and that needs to be a bit clearer, for whoever is going to assume a role. It is not just the two hours, that you do have to dedicate so many hours to preparing so you can participate in a really structured way where you can get your point across." M6/MT6

Cultural differences

One issue raised by participants was that of cultural differences between members of the group who are of Aboriginal and those of Torres Strait Islander heritage, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. These cultural differences affect individual approaches to meetings in relation to time use, discussion and interactive processes involved.

There were straightforward statements of recognition that there are disparate approaches taken to discussions by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. These distinct dissimilarities were offered in the spirit of critique and appeared to be devoid of malice or negative criticism.

"Where we need to improve is to take into consideration the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people go about business and think. Unlike western constructs, when and how people offer feedback and comment in forums, takes whatever time it takes. The cultural way is we go away and we think about it…having a response on the spot to issues does not really work." M8/MT5

"Because you've got a combination of people from different areas and from different clans, it's very positive, because you will need advice from a person from the Torres Strait Islands." M9/MT2

Meeting format and process

The meeting followed a process as outlined under the CQUniversity standard committee procedure and is governed by a mandatory Terms of Reference (TOR). Agendas and meeting materials were delivered digitally to members a fortnight prior to the meetings, to provide what was considered sufficient time for members to read material and prepare for the following meeting's discussions as outlined in the agenda which accompanied the documents.

In response to the question as to whether the participants found the processes for pre-meeting delivery of materials and the conducting of meetings helpful to their membership work, there were different responses at various points along the timeline of the project.

In the initial meetings, M1 and M2, it became clear during the post-interview process that some members had not previously been involved with higher education organisations and were unfamiliar with university structures and systems. Despite their willingness to work with the OIE and their expressed interest in the pilot project, there was a lack of knowledge in the area of higher education sector with respect to governance, management and educational and support opportunities for First Nations students.

"Initially I just thought [in relation to my involvement] about the network and the value from that network [of other participants], and the experience of the people on it. In the process I am starting out - because I am not an academic. I have not gone through academic structures and things like that. Learning about the functioning of universities and how and the endeavours that Adrian's unit and the university as a whole are trying to do, that is very educational. The CQU information that has been sent out, I have made sure to read a lot of that, because I do not work in that environment." M3/MT2

"I wanted to see what the issues to hand were – because it is dealing with education, and the representation of Indigenous mobs through education – I wanted to know more about how that was being done [in terms of HE] and what were the pathways to achieving that. What sorts of discussions were being held, who actually were part of those discussions and how things were evolving to a conclusion – I was working in other areas that if we do not have a voice at the table, then people are speaking on our behalf. So, it is really important to have it. It is interesting that there seems to be a lot of documentation that is bringing the quality of Indigenous people's life and lives, and education, to a certain level. But are they really actually happening?" M5/MT1

However, as the participants became increasingly familiar with the University's governance and management structures and processes, over the six-month life of the project, responses indicated an increased confidence in understanding and reflection on how the work of the FNCEL may affect the University as a whole.
As understanding of the issues grew, so the recognition of the collaboration of community and the University was realised.

"For me it is a co-responsibility. We can sit on the boundaries and let CQU do that, [yet] we have a part to play in that as community [as] people that represent our wider community. There is the co-responsibility and it is absolutely wonderful that CQU has endeavoured in that co-partnership and consulted appropriately and respectfully in terms of getting an accurate outcome". M2/MT4

Over time, there was recognition that the post-meeting interviews played a part in the cognitive process of understanding and acknowledging the intention and vision of the FNCEL.

I was a bit apprehensive at the beginning because I was not sure what the purpose, or our purpose, or my purpose, was specifically. The more that I keep talking to you [and] Adrian and in our meetings, I am starting to realise that purpose. There is a focus, and I am happy to be a part of it. Now I realise I can contribute. I am right behind it

because the vision that Adrian has for the university, I am happy to be invited to be a part of his vision and to support it." M8/MT2

Participants offered various responses to questions relating to time use during meetings. They varied and included being satisfied with time use:

" I like the fact that there is quite a considerable amount of time to deliberate a particular item. I like the notion that having a small number of obviously quite sizable items. When we are having meetings for the discussion, time is limited. So, I do like the idea that there is time given for the discussions to occur." M2/MT2

Participants voiced concerns about the time used to deal with participants' unfamiliarity with what committee meetings required of those involved; the lack of clear understanding or the perception of not carrying out duties of pre-meeting duties; misunderstanding of meeting processes:

"I'm worried about how much time are we allowing given that there must be other topics that we need to discuss. So that is my concern, how long we have to spend on a topic. I am thinking it is probably too much time [on each item]. Even though there is so many of us and we are all having input, which is good and there is no problems with that, I just do not want it to be delaying what we are trying to set out to achieve." M1/MT4

"Because of the way it is [university governance] being presented, people are aware of the way they can participate and feel comfortable about that. We are dealing with sensitive subjects and it is bringing out a vulnerability in participants that we do not get to see very often. That is like a sign that all is well, and that people feel comfortable enough to not only express their feelings but add to the agenda and to grow it. It is quite interesting." M5/MT4

There was group criticism and concern discussed about the lack of preparedness of individual participants for meeting discussions:

"I was really disappointed how many people turned up that had not even bothered to read the documents. That is really upsetting." M4/MT4

Part of the meeting process comprised the chairperson position, leadership and functionality. Comments recorded on the quality of chair's leadership and inter-participant exchange included:

I would not mind it if it [FNCEL meetings] has a little bit more structure. It is really difficult to manage meetings, but you do need a strong chair. Because a couple were politicising it [agenda items], and I do not think there was any respect given to us who were genuinely trying to stick to the agenda and try and give constructive feedback." M4/MT5

In response to a runaway agenda in MT5 and in preparation for the final meeting, the FNCEL Chair circulated an email notice that the process of contribution would have changed conditions. Participants would be called upon to contribute to dialogue (if they wished to do so) in alphabetical order of their surnames

"I enjoyed the chairperson having a bit more control over the flow of the meeting. I preferred that, because it does not give room to just yarn [and to] bring it back to what the meeting is about. The process yesterday - there had to be time throughout the entire process to open up and just see what the members think: non-structured, just discussion. I saw it as allowing group membership to have a little free rein with regards to contribution and input regarding those three documents." M3/MT6

Confidence in the process of the meetings and members' contributions to the discussion content increased, and this was spoken about as a sense of being more comfortable with the process as time elapsed over the life of the project.

"I am okay to just listen in. Sometimes people could feel like they are put on the spot. But I am guessing with the level of people we have on this - they are really willing to share and express their perspective on these issues. So, looking back at it, yes, it is good. It does allow people to have their say without cutting anyone out. Just thinking about the sending through the information and the agenda and to give feedback - or have feedback at hand when we are taking part in the meeting. They have feedback at hand." M7/MT4

"The meetings are starting to develop a flow where they're happening a lot easier because everyone knows the process now and I think, I don't know how it is from your side of the fence, but from our side, from where I'm sitting, it seems to be running a lot smoother." M5/MT4

Participant reflection on the processes of receiving materials and preparation time to prepare for meetings elicited positive responses for the most part, from the very beginning of the project.

"I am really happy with the format of the meetings. We seem to run through the agenda really well. The process flows easily." M7/MT3

"It seems like two hours is a long time, but two hours just flies when you are having discussions and when you are in the depth of it. The chairperson did a really good job and allowed the opportunities. This will continue to be addressed and there's opportunity to discuss it further." M8/MT5

Negative critique was levelled at the lack of participant interaction and response in meetings in relation to completing assigned tasks in the agenda. There was a tone of dissatisfaction around this factor.

"I do not think we are getting enough responses and it has nothing to do with the time that was allowed for it. I think we have had ample time to get through what we set out to do, it is just that our members have not been responding.

My practice has always been that the chairperson does not guide the members in their thinking to allow them to be forthcoming with their own comments." M1/MT5

" When I was giving the feedback for the points, there was a feeling of a bit of frustration in the room and I found

that disrespectful. Because as I said, even if people send the documents out, I might not look at it. But I had taken the time to provide feedback and there were pertinent points to me. Had I not said it, then you would have gone off with a document that one assumed was passed by the group, was endorsed." M6/MT4

In meetings, sensitive and difficult subject matter not intended in the creation of the agenda tasks, was raised in discussions. FNCEL members expressed feeling unprepared for the discussions in the meetings or for what the discussions raised for them culturally and personally. Criticism of the preparation process (by staff] for meetings was raised.:

"I think if you [the researcher] had provided dot points for open for discussion to sort of prompt, that would have been fine, instead of sending the purpose and scope [of the discussion on a protocol]. So just five points would have opened up or stimulated those discussions: it is like they need that prompt, so that they have time to process it and think about things" M4/MT4

"When we are talking about the format of the meetings and what happens in the regular meetings and how they are run, I do not have a problem with any of that. However, what I'm saying is when you get a group of people together, where majority people have sent in apologies or have resigned for other work commitments, or are feeling distracted with other things, how do we mitigate that risk to be able to participate in a way that the process is meaningful, and the discussions are meaningful?" M8/MT5

There were a number of charged deliberations that arose pertaining to personal and cultural conflicts not necessarily directly linked with the agenda topic for discussion. It was implied, rather than implicit in the answers to interview questions, that some discussions may have proved difficult in that they raised culturally sensitive issues for participants, either consciously or unconsciously.

"I have a concern about when people like myself did not respond. I had not had a chance to look at the documents. Yesterday I was not in a frame of mind to be engaged in the process. So how do we mitigate that kind of risk. It is not clear what the strategy is when you are working with a group of people who feel that way, who have not looked at the documents. Because then that means that it may not be a fair reflection of the majority of the group. If we do not have a strategy to say, okay, people were feeling that way. I know you need a timeframe, that we cannot go on forever asking people to look over the documents. But when people are under the pump, as we are in this particular climate, we need to make allowances in that kind of setting for other pressures." M6/MT5

" I was just really upset by Tuesday's meeting. Because diverged from what the objective of the meeting was. It just stayed off base and nobody reigned it in and got us back on track to focus on what we are doing. Yes, it just really upset me." M4/MT6

Responses to questions about the usefulness of the new measures:

There was a comparison of prior meetings (MT1-MT4) in which the chair allowed for all comments.

"I rather enjoyed the chairperson having a bit more control over the flow of the meeting. I preferred that it does not give room for just yarning and bring it back to what the meeting is about. There had to be time throughout the entire process where you open up and just see what the members think, very openly, very non-structured, just discussion. I saw it as allowing the group membership to have a little bit of free rein there with regards to their contribution and input regarding those three documents" M3/MT6.

As well there was comment about what was seen as positive and fair effects of the changes to the format introduced by the chair in MT6.

"I was surprised to see the Chair's email, but I thought it was a great move on her behalf and it really set the whole the meeting up for everyone to be prepared and to have their comments ready. I was thinking, because the last meeting took a long process, how we are going to deal with this to shorten it and make sure that we are on time. That is why when I saw what [was] requested as a part of the email, I thought it was a great." M8/MT6
And there was a notation of the change without positive or negative connotation.

"When [name redacted] sent out an email beforehand and outlined what was intended in the meeting as far as asking in turn for contribution - and it not being in terms of asking Elders first. [redacted] did say [redacted] decided, after much thought, that people would just contribute in alphabetical order and that way they would be no kind of hierarchy of contribution, just everybody getting to contribute." M6/MT6

External mitigating factors

Over the duration of the project, environmental and other moderating circumstances affecting the meeting process, were beyond the control of the project managers (researchers and secretariat assistants).

COVID-19 effects

National and state-wide COVID-19 restrictions were enforced after the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the pandemic in March 2020. CQUniversity followed Queensland Health State regulations on the Cairns campus. As a result, the first meeting held on campus followed guidelines for social distancing, and hand sanitizing. Individual members chose not to attend because of the threat of COVID infection.

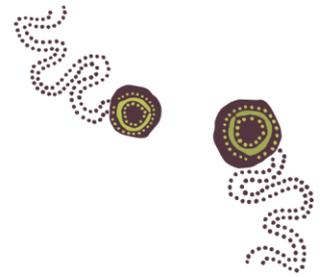*"Given the circumstances with COVID - not being able to physically come together, that [Zoom] is the next best option. Obviously, we are people who connect by coming together and having face-to-face yarns, so the importance of relationships is imperative. But it is the only way that we can connect at the moment, because of COVID and so it seems to be a workable solution. I would like to see that we do have opportunity to come together face to face and that is just not possible at the moment"* M5/MT1

"In this current climate you have to allow for anything, because the way it is at the moment, we cannot control it, so we have to do our best. That is why I am happy, especially with those that are close by can attend and then those that are out of town linking in so that everybody is a part of the process. Eventually there will come an opportunity when we are all in the room. We have to adapt and that is the beauty of it – even with culture you have to adapt, and that is what we are doing as a group, we are adapting." M8/MT5

Mixing Zoom connections and physical presence

Due to COVID restrictions members joined meetings digitally from their offices or homes, participant attendance was a mixed format of physical presence and *Zoom* connection. The access to intermittent and inconsistent internet connection for some of the participants reduced the chances of clear communication. Although the University provided a corporate form of *Zoom*, connection was often difficult and interrupted. Screen images froze and contributions often required repeating.

"Obviously, we are people who connect by coming together and having face-to-face yarns, so the importance of relationships is imperative. But it is the only way that we can connect at the moment, because of COVID and so it is a workable solution. I would like to see that we do have opportunity to come together face to face and that is just not possible at the moment." M3/MT6

As COVID restrictions allowed for a small number of people in attendance at the required social distancing space of two square metres, CQUniversity's large lecture rooms and board room were used for meetings. Most lecture spaces are designed for one person to be at a front-of-room podium, using the attending digital screens for presentation. This configuration does not support Zoom meetings, as people on screens are not seen well from necessary COVID seating placements. And those members who were in digital attendance could not see all around the room.

This was spoken of as a disadvantage to the workings of meetings, as it negatively affected extempore communication.

"My preferred option is always face-to-face. It [face-to-face] does strengthen, and work toward our ways of working in relationally responsive ways and the way that we have done business for thousands of years. I think the Zoom technology is there and we have options for that if we continue. I do know and understand that people on Zoom who are zooming in with people that are face to face, may lose track of the content being discussed because of technology, sound or audio projection through the setup." M2/MT4
"The balance we have of physical and Zoom interaction is inhibiting. Often something is being said and you are trying to [speak]and there is no protocol for how to flag that you want to speak. Sometimes I feel like I start saying something and then somebody else says something. I feel like I am talking over them and it is really bad and rude. It is quite difficult when you are actually on Zoom too." M4/MT6

Future meeting formats

In considering the future format for the FNCEL it is possible that all attendees will be using Zoom or a comparable digital platform to join meetings from disparate geographical places. Financial constraints on the university have caused budget cuts and dependence on online platforms for meetings and teaching has become an accepted and acceptable reality.

It is also intended that future FNCEL groups will be made up of participants from Rockhampton, Townsville, Bundaberg and Cairns campuses and meetings would be economically unviable should they be in person. The Zoom platform will facilitate this dispersal of participants in meeting.

During the course of the FNCEL pilot project several room configurations, were trialed to give maximum benefit to communication between participants.

"*Yesterday was a great example of having the right optics in terms of room, internet - stability in internet, in terms of a virtual - or a mixed mode. So, I think absolutely sound audio visual and- the optics were good [everyone in room is visible]."* M2/MT6

"*It can work really well, it's just that those rooms [where the meetings took place] are not set up for us.*" M3/MT5

Future of the FNCEL

Participants in the project were aware that at the time of initial involvement, that the preliminary iteration of the FNCEL was a pilot project. In the final two interviews after MT5 and MT6, members were asked their thoughts on the FNCEL going forward.

There were responses referring to the necessary grouping process and that the FNCEL followed what was considered a normal course of becoming an interactive group.

"*In the first instance where groups first start coming together, you have to go through that forming, storming, norming, to performing; that cycle of groups. I could clearly identify [these] elements - I could feel some of the tension in terms of that."* M2/MT5

"*You actually have to have the robust conversations to make good deliberations. We are not all coming to the table from the same mindset or perspective or lived experiences. I do not see that as a negative. I see that as part of the journey, that actually then has good deliberation around it."* M4/MT5

Remarks given on the membership makeup of the group and reflections upon what makes a group influential in communities were noted.

It depends on who the members of the FNCEL are. If you go back to the selection of who these people might be, you might be looking for people who already understand reciprocity and what does that really mean? So that is the

sort of conversation we need to have in any work environment in Australia so then we can start to nurture a culture of change in the mindset of all of us to create a more united Australia, where we all have the same shared vision. M8/MT6

Commentary offered by most participants were focused on the positivity of a plan for future iterations of the FNCEL and a positive future for the process and involvement, as below.

"What is encouraging is to hear that they are keen to look at extending or making it [FNCEL] a permanent setup, as an ongoing thing for the university. That is very encouraging because then the pilot never ends [laughs]. Whether it is this pilot project, whether it is something else, it is good to hear that the university wants to continue with the FNCEL." M3/MT5

THEME TWO: FACTORS AFFECTING PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTION

Cultural hierarchy

One of the issues often voiced in answers to survey questions, concerned cultural hierarchy and how that could affect participation in relation to cultural respect. In order for the FNCEL to work as intended, everyone on the council must have equal say, notwithstanding Eldership or leadership positions that may be held in a specific community.

Responses included a spectrum of reactions about the cultural circumstances surrounding hierarchy. All responses indicated the presence of respect for other members of the group: that it did exist and that it should continue to do so. For some, there was a type of reverence in being involved with esteemed community members:
"Being invited to be a member of the group was such an honour and such a privilege. I do not necessarily see myself as a leader, and certainly not in that space to be an elder yet. It was humbling and a privilege to be with a respected group of people that I had not had dialogue [with] prior as significant people in community. It was being very mindful and careful and respectful in my contributions to the group. It certainly validated and has been affirming for me to be a part of the group." M2/MT4

For others cultural morays were continually present and respected.

"As far as I could see I think it [meeting process] worked well. But me being one of the younger ones in a way I feel like I should let others talk first." M7/MT6
The leadership through the chair had been challenged by the group dynamics over certain issues and in response there was a call for stronger leadership.
"I would not mind it if it actually has a little bit more structure and we have somebody that is willing to calm things down and get things back on track. Because it is really difficult to manage meetings, it really is. You need a strong chair to structure meetings. Those protocols; remind people at the beginning of a meeting maybe." M4/MT5

Commentary comprised criticism about cultural hierarchy acting as an inhibiting factor to spontaneous contribution. Members were transparent about their concerns that hierarchy was recognised as being part of the process, yet real criticism was avoided when it came to specifying those hierarchies or those in hierarchical positions.

"Because a couple [of participants] were politicising it [discussion topic], I do not think there was any respect given to us who were genuinely trying to stick to the agenda and trying to give constructive feedback. I thought that was really bad. I felt really bad. I do not think any of them are older than me, but because they are men culturally, I thought, well, I really cannot say too much here." M4/MT5

Members refrained from open criticism on cultural grounds.

"[If] we can sense a disrespect [from a member], we all refrain from bringing it out in the open while it is happening. But we also recognise that that particular person, is having a problem and it should not be brought to the meeting… It is really hard to keep focus on what we are there to do when you have a member like that." M1/MT5

Cultural differences

Participants expressed ideas about how the differences pertaining to cultural backgrounds affected the way in which FNCEL members contributed or observed the contributions of others in meetings. There was recognition voiced about the differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in relation to the manner by which members of each cultural group contribute to meetings. The ideas expressed recognised the differences through general statements, frankly, acknowledging cultural peculiarities.

"Within the group there is a really great balance. But in general, I have found that when asked a question in a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - I am being very diplomatic here. I think that Torres Strait Islander people will be the first to respond, they will be the first to have a point of view and opinion. Indigenous mob tend to sit back and think about stuff and their care is gentler in response. I think sometimes there might be that kind of pattern happening [here]. I just think that we should never - and we do not - bunch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in as one. Our natures are quite different. Like we can be quite vocal and quite upfront. Historically, Torres Strait Islanders are warriors. You know what I mean, they have the fierce fire in their belly." M5/MT4

"It was interesting what had happened in Aboriginal Australia *as opposed to* Torres Strait Islanders. *Eddie Mabo was a hero, yes but - I do not think Torres Strait Islander people understand what Aboriginal people suffered and lost."* M6/MT3

For other participants, the specific cultural differences did not appear to be a factor of importance when contributing. An essential factor to the council's success was that the FNCEL was a community in its own right.

"I come [to this position] not necessarily with the title of leader, but just somebody who can work in a responsive way and a culturally safe way where my input and my contributions are valued as a part of that collective group. It is [FNCEL participation] further identified my place as part of this particular community and not necessarily seeing myself as a leader but more of a role to play in a community collective around pertinent things for the university." M2/MT4

"It is becoming evident that everybody is more relaxed now with speaking their mind and contributing. It is because they are beginning to get to know the other participants and we are all looking in the same direction." M4/MT6.

Cultural respect and safety

The guiding principle that meetings provide a framework in which members experienced cultural respect and safety in expressing professional opinions, cultural viewpoints and share individual experiences was queried at each post-meeting interview.

Cultural respect and safety was maintained throughout meeting procedures and discussion exchanges:

"Absolutely [it has been maintained]. I think that addressing each of the other men individually like that is culturally respectful and gives them that opportunity. Because, for example, [member name redacted], [member name redacted] and I, and to some extent [member name redacted], are familiar with government bureaucracy. Where the other guys are more on the ground and in the field kind of experience. But addressing them each gives them that respectful opportunity and being culturally respectful too." M4/MT2

"Definitely, I think everyone that is part of this has a level of respect. Yeah, I could not fault anything." M7/MT2
"At this stage, yes, I do. But you know Torres Strait Islander people who are more upfront, they are stronger in will – not will, but in presentation and putting their ideas forth more so than Aboriginal people. Aboriginals tend to sit back and listen to what is going down first. I do not see that as being an issue at the moment because everyone is allowing people some space to talk and identify." M5/MT1

Cultural safety was an issue for one member after MT5 as the individual had an issue with language used to reference non-Indigenous staff.

"In environment and the format and the roles of people, cultural safety needs to be a key part. It is important going forward, whoever is in that space needs to feel culturally safe." M6/MT5

Understanding higher education

For some members lack of familiarity with university landscape was evident in their discussions and in the answers to questions; an aspect that required some monitoring in order to sustain the function of the FNCEL.

Lack of university education was an inhibiting factor in contributing to discussions and outcomes.

"I always feel in a meeting environment - because I do not have that academic background whereas I feel everyone else does – I feel like I do not contribute enough during the meeting. It is always afterwards or in my own time when I can actually go back a. process a lot of stuff." M7/MT6

And the fact that through their FNCEL experience members grew their understanding and awareness of university structures and social landscapes.

"It is given me a better understanding of how the university works.[And] how much I missed out on not being educated myself. I have learnt a lot. M1/MT6

"I do not come from academia, so I find the input from Adrian around the university expectations highly informative and it is good to hear. Sometimes you need to take a step back because you might be bulldozing down the wrong road and that road might come to a block at the end where you cannot bulldoze your way through. So, it is about opening doors too and opening minds to what we are trying to do." M3/MT5

It was important that members understood how the university governance systems worked in order to provide essential information for the creation of new protocols.

"Everything gets pretty well explained through questioning Adrian and yourself. I do not come from academia. I find the input from Adrian around the university expectations informative. While we want this and we want that, the university has their own framework that we have to be respectful of. We have to look at how we also recognise and respect what the university is trying to do and the staff of the university and we are meeting halfway on that, giving as good as we are getting" M3/MT5

It was made noticeably clear that Eldership and leadership come from the respectful hierarchy within community and that should guide invitations for contributions.

" I'd be happy that the university is connected with the community in that way [consulting with members]. Coming from that community grass roots background, it is always another issue to be careful of, [to ensure] they are dealing with the right people in the community and not just an Elder or someone that has academic qualifications and has worked in the sector. It [education] does not make a leader or an Elder." M7/MT5

THEME THREE: POLICY CREATION AND THE PROCESS

Complexity of cultural input

The creation of policy was paramount to the function of the FNCEL, as the pilot project was intended to trial the process by which the Council will have input into governance through policy review and creation.

" I know we have based our focus [on creating policy] on process is already out there. Sometimes government approach is not always the best. You want to look at what is culturally appropriate. If there is an issue everyone comes together. But then the men sit separate; the women sit separate. So, then it allows the women to raise what

they want to and then it allows the men [to do so]. But there is always someone that is a young leader that is facilitating in the middle." M8/MT3

"*At the end of the day, we - as traditional owner groups - can argue and fight forever, and there is still going to be those students that need more support. like acknowledgement and the welcomes and traditional ownership. It is a needed focus.*" M7/MT3

"*We're all looking in the same direction. We are all thinking about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on these discussions, making sure we have all got a voice to look after the interests of our mobs. Also making sure that the audience that these documents are prepared for is actually going to be able to interpret it quite easily.*"M4/MT6

Process, appropriateness/importance of agenda items

In response to what the members thought and felt about the subject matter and content of agenda items, actioning them and creating outcomes.

"*As part of the FNCEL having a voice from a First Nations standpoint, really does connect back to what the Uluru Statement from the Heart was trying to convey in 2017. The moment that we take the voices away from authentic voices and authentic dialogue we cannot really continue to be committed in a respectful way to First Nations people. In particular in terms of policy we need to have the voice of the most respected people that is going to create that change.*" M2/MT5

"*It is covering new ground and people are coming to the party with great new concepts. If we are not concluding, then we are certainly visiting it and reviewing. In that sense, all of the questions that came up at the last meeting were relevant, they were discussed, and there is a really healthy input from everybody.*"M5/MT2

Currency of agenda items

Participant comments on the agenda items and their importance and currency:

"*We had the scaffolding around the questions, we had the documentation, we had opportunity to look at that prior to coming [to the meeting]. In terms of what we had, how we are going to work through this we had a process. That policy then gets endorsed, so it is now about sharing the awareness, raising the awareness and the understanding that there is a policy around this.* M1/MT5

 Looking at how then [the policy] gets enacted across the institution, I see that it is not the role of the First Nations unit [OIE]. It is a part of the enabling of others to enact that across the institution." M2/MT5
"*With any policy it is going to need reviewing before it is endorsed. The technicalities need reviewing, making sure*

*the wording is right and the context is there and that we are not missing anything. With a higher population of Aboriginal and Islander people working and learning in the university, this is where this thing [protocol] will become more pertinent, with more interaction."*M3/MT5

Creation of new protocols

Participants comments on how they thought the new protocols created while sitting on the committee would affect communities and individuals include:
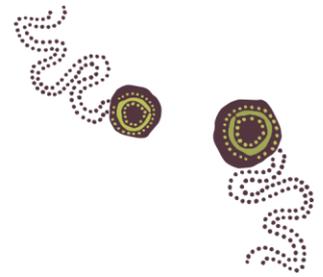
University communities:

"As [a representative of] one of the traditional owner groups, which was a really prominent issue to address, but the proof of identity of descent is probably something that is here and now that students are facing at the moment. It is [not having it] stopping them from accessing scholarships." M7/MT2

"When you realise the magnitude [of] the workings and mechanics of the university, it's a bigger thing than just what we're used to coming together for. Particularly with that identity thing, if we can get this thing right, I know that can be a universal thing, not only within educational institutions, but within other institutions broaden that." M3/MT6

External stakeholder communities:

"Then they are looking for confirmation of identity. We worked with that particular document and setting in place what the CQU will accept. That is going to be immensely helpful to the university, because CQU does not want to be making the decisions on who is Aboriginal and who is not. Really, confirmation of identity is going to be just so important in the future." M1/MT6

"For me hearing the wisdom of even Adrian talk around using the six values [NHMRC Australian Government ethical conduct guidelines] that – in terms of ethical research spirit and integrity, reciprocity, is a really good starting point in terms of shaping those protocols. Because every researcher will need to undertake and provide a response to how they're actually working towards those six values. That aligns with the undertaking of the university so it would make sense to have a look at those and then perhaps start to work around what does this mean in terms of the appropriate cultural protocols." M2/MT4

THEME FOUR : PARTICIPATION, SELF-REFLECTION, COMMUNITY COMMITMENT AND REPRESENTATION

Significance of collaboration with CQUniversity

Participants agreed to be involved with the pilot project and each month discussed how they felt about involvement. Responses varied from month to month; enthusiasm about gaining new experience and being part of a process that could evoke important and positive change was preeminent. There was expression of receiving personal gain from FNCEL involvement.

"I thought there would be a wealth of knowledge and experience that I could tap into and make long term lasting relationships for the benefit of my own role in my own organisation, and me in my own community. For years now I have been saying that is what missing in the community services sector, is a reference group of Indigenous people to advise on how service delivery and service integrity should run for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I have always been looking for a way to set up a reference group for that purpose, so different organisations in Cairns can bounce off this group for ideas in how to develop culturally appropriate work practices that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people" M3/MT1

Another was service to community through realising solidarity of the participants:

"It has been wonderful to be a part of this group. I learned from what the others in the group had to say and their insights and their considerations that [I have] a great interest in and now I am looking into those areas. They have opened my mind – my vision to policies and documents. I am a little bit in awe and respectful of being part of this because of what we are doing. I hope and I would like to think that we are all inspiring each other to move forward with this." M5/MT6

Individual involvement as a place to serve one another as community members and a chance to build networks:

"Being invited to be a member of the group was such an honour and such a privilege and I do not necessarily see myself as a leader, not in that space to be an elder yet. It was humbling and a privilege to be with such a respected group of people that I may have heard about and not necessarily had dialogue or discussion prior with significant people in community. For me it was being very mindful and careful and respectful I think on my contributions to the group. It certainly validated and has been affirming for me to be a part of the group." M2/MT4

"I just hope that the information that I did give to the group, creates further discussion down the track and follow-up discussion with members. I know there were certain things that other members of the group spoke about that I intend to follow up on, to find out more and to quiz them about certain things and to hopefully establish that network." M5/MT6

A pathway to interaction and the growth of innovative ideas in local and national community networks:

"I think it will change the whole way we, collectively, First Nations people, as well as non-First Nations people, work together and are able to collaborate on issues. It just brings a whole separate way of thinking for both sides. Not just for improving the way the university works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or just not from us understanding how the university works" M6/MT4

"I was interested because it is the very first of its kind, here in Australia, no other university is doing this except for CQ University. It is a pilot program and this is the first time a university in Australia recognises First Nations peoples to come on board for their advice, which is good." M9/MT1

I have always been interested in the gaps between when people leave school or when they are young and they are thinking about what they are going to do with their life and how to encourage them to think about higher education. Whether there's bridging courses for them to get to know more about university life and where it might lead too, Indigenous people need to know about the opportunity of university. My feelings have all been about wanting to be part of this group of people. They are all much younger than myself but I can see that they definitely are the leaders in the region; are the leaders of things." M1/MT3

Commitment to capacity building

Responses indicated that higher education is important to capacity building for First Nations people and communities. Participants listed several areas of where they thought their work with the FNCEL and the achievements of the FNCEL would affect individuals and communities in their interaction with the university One area was a consideration that the work of the FNCEL was a personal contribution and would prove to make a difference to family and community.

"My contribution i offering the little points that I feel that I can offer, that might make sense, trying to make sure that I try to make it [HE] affordable, attainable, achievable and appropriate, like four As of community development, I like to call it" M8/MT5

" I think big part of me agreeing to be on the board [FNCEL], which I think I've said to you, if I'm honest, my two nieces are intent on studying at CQU." M7/MT3

"I know it's a pilot project but whether it's this pilot project, whether it's something else, it's just good to hear that the university wants to continue with FNCEL." M3/MT6

Responses include commentary on the policies discussed and the protocols created during the pilot project provide a resource for increasing capabilities and capacity in the communities in which they work:

"When I need information and I know I need that approval I need from the government, it is there, I can say it is from MyGov. So, I am thinking it [advice] does not have to be MyGov, but a similar process where it is just for students as a part of applying. If they need help [to establish identity] it's just for them to use or access. Any time that they need that confirmation, they can just download it and shoot it off." M8/MT3

"I finished authoring my monthly report in our own organisation. I am drafting cultural documents - it may be a matter of putting our own cultural protocol document together for our organisation to help our staff and organisation. I commented in my report that the experience alone has been valuable for me to provide guidance to where we should go next as a part of the organisation." M8/MT6

I would welcome that [ongoing involvement] because I do believe that I have skill to offer and value to what is being discussed. One of the members said to me, what are you getting out of this, sort of when we left the meeting and does this apply to your work? I said absolutely yes, because these are the same challenging situations that the organisation that I work for is having discussions around every. Obviously, the confidentiality in [terms of] the pilot

for FNCEL [is honoured], they are the same items of discussion that continue to go around and have for decades. I have a role to play in that as a member of the community, of the Cairns community. My role is to contribute to the life of that community. M2/MT5

And has provided resources for an increased organisational knowledge for CQUniversity stakeholders:

"I feel privileged because of where the document's going, but also because of how uniform that is right across the country [CQU campuses and study hubs and that process, to have it uniform and to have it with all the input and discussion we had. I took for granted that process before, but now I am starting to appreciate it a bit more because we have been so scrutinising of it to ensure that people are not falling through the loopholes and safeguarding that policy so it is foolproof. I feel very privileged to be involved with that." M3/MT4

Reflections on the process and social outcomes of creating policy included the effects of these policies on Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian staff and students.

"Because the beauty in using it as a guide rather than as law so to speak, different people - including people working in universities - they each bring their own thing to the table in the job in which they are employed. People could be bringing something from themselves in that framework that we may have missed but it makes it work. It would be a shame not to recognise that. So rather than have a stringent set of rules and step by step process, just a guide." M8/MT6

When you are dealing with Aboriginal people be mindful of this. It is not like when dealing with Aboriginal people you have to . this step one, two, three. I have been mindful of this [protocols created] in your conversations, in your interactions, in developing curriculum and literature. There is a way of putting across Aboriginal histories that does not offend people and then there is a way to write it where it just turns people off." M2/MT6

Knowledge of the higher education landscape gained by FNCEL participants

Members comments encompassed reflective thoughts on what they had learned about university structures and the provisional capability in the area of administrative and pedological services.

 "I feel really respected, valued, and heard. That document, I agreed with everyone there yesterday. I thought, out of all of those conversations how you and Adrian were able to capture that respectfully… to put it into the context of how it needs to be presented to the university, I found that really great. I found the opportunity to feedback good, and to be a part of that was really important. Like it is ground-breaking." M6/MT4

There were deeply reflective responses to personal revelations about the struggles of others in reference to other participants and stakeholders that may be engaging with the University in various ways.

" I hope that I have contributed [to community] by understanding how the university works. It would be really helpful to our FNCEL members that they understand how the university works. They are often talking about extraneous things, like the relationship between FNCEL and the students. I felt as though the lack of understanding, with some of the FNCEL members, about the process of what we were doing and how people use policy. I am just hoping that my understanding of it all helped me to guide the discussions." M1/MT6

"It was good that I was able to listen and hear what other people have experienced and their knowledge around proving Indigenous connections. There was something I wanted to say at the meeting, but because I dialed in late. Because my background and with having Dad, I never had an issue trying to prove my Aboriginality, you know, proof of Aboriginality. Like I said, I do not have anything to do with it much because it has never been an issue. So, to hear what other people have to experience and what students are going through now, I am learning what the issues are and what the barriers or red tape are." M7/MT2

ENGAGEMENT ON BEHALF OF FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Participants stated that they held direct intentions about how their work with the FNCEL would increase cultural knowledge within the university landscape. These ideas were considered to be a positive outcome for the group and the individuals involved.

"The journey we are on is not a short-term journey. I am really mindful of that. For change to happen, . s not going to happen just in a pilot project. It is important to continue and to capture the reality of what we are trying to achieve. I see these six months and knowing who we all are and what the relationship is and unpacking it, and university staff looking at themselves and hearing us, working out where we all fit into the puzzle, and that's part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures." M6/MT5

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"I believe in the importance of this project and I believe in the group that has come together and they are very worthy of listening to and learning from the experience. It is really important to keep a culturally run commentary alive." M5/MT5

Participants shared profound reflections on how their work could dispel the feeling of exclusion and connect communities to higher education by affecting the University's cultural knowledge, and through this increase the organisation's standing in the community.

"Now that we're looking at the protocols around Country and acknowledgement, now that that has been discussed and updated, I reckon that is going to go a long way with CQU's standing in the community. Whereas up until now, yes, basically a lot of people felt like they were excluded." M7/MT2

"I think certainly as part of the FNCEL having a voice around First Nations matters – from a First Nations standpoint, really does connect back to what the Uluru Statement from the Heart was trying to convey in 2017. I think the moment that we take the voices away from authentic voices and authentic dialogue that we cannot really continue to be committed in a respectful way to First Nations people. In particular in terms of policy we need to have the voice of the most respected people that is going to create that change." M2/MT4

Participants expressed their opinion as to why the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members served the communities represented, in a summation of insight into the value of involvement in the project when the two protocols were finalised and presented to the University Management Committee.

"My advice, [based on] my background and reality too,[is that] what is happening in our remote communities and our urban communities. To make sure that we do not become too indoctrinated with the academic world but to let them know that the reality side of things working in community. I know how much we rely on written information, but the experience is lacking and that brings a bit of balance to the discussions. M8/MT5

That [approval of the protocols] has reaffirmed and confirmed what we have put into it. The committee has imparted knowledge and guidance with this entire process. It made us focus on exactly what the university was looking for or what the university was trying to engage with us to help create to shape that document. I found the full process [of meetings] – the format was great; the approach was really professionally done as a part of getting out of us what you required. M3/MT6

RESEARCHER EXPERIENCE

The primary data includes the journal kept by researcher as observations and experience of both the meetings and the questions asked in personalized interviews.

From those journals, the following observations were recorded.

Meeting structure

Meetings were affected by the requirement to use Zoom, as there were technical difficulties at the start of almost every meeting. As meeting rooms were lecture rooms and therefore restricted by lecture suited setups, members complained about not being able to see each other and the chairperson and complained of lack of parity in size of people in screens vs attendants.

The chairperson was effective for the majority of the meetings. However, due to the reticence of individual members to contribute voluntarily, the chair appeared to be over-worked in efforts to have parity in contribution.

Meeting dynamics

Prof Adrian Miller was the only member of the University team who claimed Aboriginal cultural heritage. There was a slightly overawed and mildly diffident attitude toward Prof Miller shown by some members. This led to a sort of dependence or deferential reference to him during meetings. On several occasions, Prof Miller explained that he was in attendance in a non-participatory position. After a number of meetings, members displayed more confidence in contribution.

Survey session discussions

The interaction between FNCEL members and the researcher conducting the monthly survey proved interesting as the exchanges provoked observations pertinent to the research that were beyond the original scope of the survey design.

The questions for each monthly interview were a mixture of standard questions and slightly altered questions that suited the nature of the material contained in the current month's agenda. As the project timeline progressed participants wanted to recap actions in the meeting and open discussions with the researcher about the meeting process itself. They often wanted to comment on other members contributions and express their opinion. There was a desire to discuss in an introspective, followed by an extrospective reflection of the meeting with the interviewer.

As these discussions often named other members, the researcher cannot supply details for the discussions. However, it was observed that a personal, trusting and collegiate relationship emerged between the researcher and participants. It often occurred that an individual member felt confident to ask questions about the role of Prof Miller in the University, indicating that they would not approach Prof Miller personally.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THE RESEARCH QUESTION ANSWERED

In the previous chapter the data findings were discussed and interpreted to formulate outcomes and ultimate conclusion to the challenge posed by the research question. The inquiry into whether the FNCEL pilot project presented a plausible framework and meeting format that did work in the pilot project trial and would work in future iterations as an advisory body to CQUniversity's governance bodies, is the focus of the deductions drawn from the data exploration.

Fundamentally the project served the ideological concept that CQUniversity governance systems should include cultural knowledges attained through a relationship with First Nations people for the mutual benefit of the organisation and the First Nations communities and stakeholders the University serves. The research inquiry focused on trialing a mechanism devised to achieve this ideal, based on utilising contemporary University procedures. It evaluated whether the system worked successfully for the benefit of the First Nations people involved,(personally and as representatives of wider communities] , and the University's governance system.

CONCLUSIONS

The First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders (FNCEL) pilot project research established that the pilot experiment of the FNCEL was successful, the Council proving to be an effectual aid to organisational governance under the current paradigm of a university committee. The FNCEL's efficacy, explored through examining the suitability of the committee paradigm in achieving goals determined by the Office of Indigenous Engagement (OIE) and outlined in the meeting agendas, was found successful. Further, the pilot project research confirmed that the FNCEL plausibility and experiential characteristics were acceptable to participating members. Based on those findings, the research identified potential requirements for the future of the FNCEL.

The FNCEL pilot proved that the "need of Indigenous advice and representation in university governance" can be met "despite the difficulty of integration into university systems" (Wise, Dickinson et al, 2020, p. 240). The fact that Indigenous students and staff remain underrepresented in universities in Australia (Berendt et al, 2012) and in another commonwealth country with parallel First Nations people challenges, Canada, (Universities Canada, 2015) is a circumstance that could be addressed by the model trialed in the FNCEL pilot.

As well, the argument posed by Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall (2012) that Indigenous advisory councils made up of enthusiastic, culturally knowledgeable and generous stakeholders gives credence to the axiom that this is an appropriate and working model for institutional response to the undeniable need for "Indigenous stakeholders to be empowered in the delivery of higher education" (Wise, Dickinson et al, 2020, p.240).

Meeting ILES and Strategic Plan goals

The FNCEL initiative realised a goal categorisd as a community-focused activity earlier in the ILES 2020-2022, and currently in the CQUniversity RAP 2022-24,   through a platform that provides opportunity for partnership with Australian First Nations people, to strengthen University relationships through collaboration and engagement. To this end the first, provisional FNCEL, as a pilot project, established an Indigenous Australian voice in the governance of the organisation, instilling cultural knowledge, skill and guidance in the University's approaches to services provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities. It also provided guidance to those working within the University structure on effective ways to interact with First Nations people. In the RAP section 11.6, the FNCEL is to be increased to include representation from all campus catchments across the nation.

The concept of establishing a specialised pathway for First Nations cultural contribution and custodianship to the governance of universities in Australia, with intended outcomes of Indigenising pedagogy and increasing participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students, is an ideology that has been in-train and subsequently under review, over the past decade. Prof Aileen Moreton-Robinson et al (2011), in examining the efficiency and effectiveness of efforts of Australian universities to include First Nations people in governance mechanisms made recommendations of methods to so.

Kuokkanen (2007) argues that success continues to elude universities in their efforts to include Indigenous epistemes in programs of any kind, due to organisational adherence to the practice of founding programs on the principle of bridging mainstream and First Nations cultures. The failure to truly serve First Nations people under this social practice and axiomatic approach, is founded in the principle that it is incumbent upon First Nations students and staff to adapt to the mainstream, rather than incorporating "ontological and epistemological differences" (Wise, Dickinson et al, 2020, p. 240) in forming a rhetorical view that allows for Indigeneity. In fact, evidence in primary data of the FNCEL trial demonstrated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have their own way of considering and engaging and feel their contribution is most effective when the processes and systems utilised allow for this cultural praxis.

The FNCEL concept is aligned in principle with the research conducted by Wise et al (2020) focused on the premise that an Indigenous advisory council is necessary to higher education governance, as a fundamental element to empower Indigenous leaders in impacting higher education. Undeniably, power is retained at university council levels. For this reason, organisations "commonly incorporate advisory councils to address specialized

purposes" (p.240), and universities that incorporate or seek to serve sizeable numbers of Indigenous students, communities and stakeholders will authorise and recognise those spheres through the mechanism of an advisory council. As such, the initiation of an advisory council [the FNCEL] representing Indigenous Australian stakeholders presented a pathway opportunity for CQUniversity to act on its commitment to inclusivity and increased "engagement with Indigenous communities in partnership with community Elders" (Our Future is You, CQUniversity Strategic Plan, 2019-2023. p. 13) and leaders.

Despite the fact that Wise et al (2020), based their advisory case study in Ecuadorian Amazonia, the inclusion of representatives from 11 different Indigenous stakeholder nationalities offered a plausible alignment for the plan for on which this pilot trial was focused. As Wise et al's research was a United Nations listed advisory council paradigm [one of only four in the world] their study credibly claims, "it serves as a roadmap for the planning and establishment of university Indigenous advisory councils" (p.241). Conceptually this proved to be the case for the FNCEL, as participants in the trial were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural backgrounds, each individual connected to one or more geographically recognised First Nations traditional lands in Queensland. In the future, in the formalised version of the FNCEL, Council membership could include representatives of any number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and communities living on traditional lands within the University's catchment regions.

The attainment of the ILES goal of establishing the FNCEL satisfies the *CQUniversity Strategic Plan 2019-2023 Our Future is You*. The commitments under this plan are outlined in a series of goals under the pillars: Our Students, Our Research, Our People, Our Communities, Our Reputation, Our Sustainability. Under each pillar goals and success evaluation methods are defined. The FNCEL resonates with several of the goals under the pillar of Our Community; in particular with goal of "collaboration with Australian First Nations people to strengthen our relationships with the custodians of lands hosting the communities we serve" (CQUniversity Strategic Plan 2019-2023, p. 12-13). Its establishment also aligns with Universities Australia (UA) Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025 in 'acknowledging the continuing role of stewardship of knowledge and culture that rests with Indigenous peoples" and the "need to do more to engage and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people" (p.4) to facilitate student, graduates, academics and professional staff outcomes across the nation. Further the creation of the FNCEL fulfills the UA Strategy (2022-2025) to advance First Nations peoples and cultures, with universities taking the lead to facilitate this philosophy.

Contribution of structure and process

In composing the initial concept for the FNCEL, the lack of a pathway or mechanism for consulting with First Nations people on matters specifically related to cultural custodianship of knowledge that contributes to University governance and management matters, it was intended to meet organisational aspirations of inclusiveness and diversity in staffing and student commitments, was acknowledged as a profound dilemma inherent to traditional university structures. According to Moreton-Robinson et al (2011) in most cases universities that included some form of Indigenous Australian guidance relied upon singular source of a senior executive of Aboriginal or Torres

process to accommodate cross cultural complexities raised due to the strictures of committee structure. These complications occur in the instance of interactions between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in expressing the cultural differences of their separate societal praxis, as well as under the paradigm of Indigenous to non-Indigenous Australian exchanges.

Yarning as a way forward

The FNCEL meeting process elicited reactive discussions both in meeting and in interviews about the place of cultural expression and practice in the advisory committee process. Age, traditional seniority, gender, cultural difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the level of individual cultural heritage were issues flagged. These issues have inherent and recognised veracities that proved a challenge to contribution in the meetings' participatory exchanges, affecting the democratic ethic of voluntary participation. Creating an interim meeting for between formal meetings, or immediately after, for informal discussion or 'yarning' should be trialed. This would prove an innovative way to assuage feelings of inequality between members and allow for ideas to be accepted, while reticence to contribute during formal meetings should be overcome in this way.
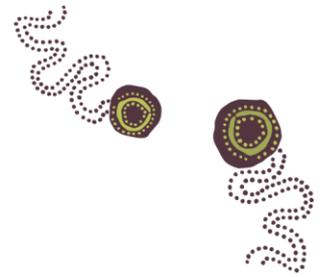
Two distinct cultures

The effort to adapt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practice and social norms to committee structure is noted as an experiential actuality expressed by all participants, suggesting that exploration of innovations on the current committee structure could be a subject for discussion and action, when considering future iterations of the FNCEL. The incumbency of attaining proficiency for action in two distinctly different cultural approaches to decision making and advisory processes became evident in interview discussions by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.

It is important to recognise this important aptitude on the part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants by both the advisory group members themselves, and the staff and management of the University.

An empowering experience

That the FNCEL membership gained valuable knowledge about university systems and structures and aided in the demystification of governance and pedological characteristics of higher education, proved an important outcome. Interacting in a format that provided cultural safety while supporting the acquisition and comprehension of such knowledge, proved a positive experience. Participants articulated with enthusiasm and in several cases, elation, the successful creation of two new dynamic protocols; the process of designing those protocols and the recognition of what the protocols could mean in the future to First Nations peoples and communities. The members conveyed the recognition that being a part of the process was empowering and fulfilling .

FNCEL members were enlightened and enthusiastic with respect to the powerful role universities hold for First Nations people in offering education and employment possibilities to individuals and communities.

As well members proved that the ability to work together as a team despite cultural disparities, in a respectful collaborative process; empowering and enjoyable. The pilot project created new professional alliances, and a gratifying collaborative encounter with like-minded individuals. It also provided individuals with fresh perceptions on working cross-culturally and organisationally.

COVID restrictions

The presence of pandemic concerns during the period of the project resulted in unexpected and unconsidered effects in the planning stages yet are now contemporary factors to be contemplated when considering the sustainability of the FNCEL in future iterations.
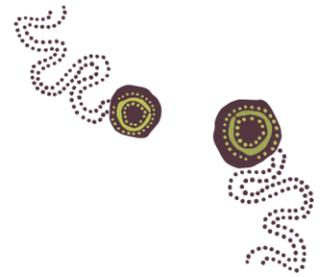
Conditions required meetings plans include acceptable social distancing and the mandating of mask wearing. These measures seriously inhibited in-person meetings, as a large room was required to allow for a two-meter square for each attending member, as well as sign-in and hand sanitation procedures.

Eventually meetings were made up of one or two members present on campus and the remainder on individual Zoom connections. This situation presented the challenge of constant reliable internet service for those who were in dial-in circumstances and the provision of a room with digital screen positioning that allowed for equal viewing of all members by all members. The inequality in visibility and the impediment to process for contribution, was inhibiting for the entire membership at different times.

These circumstances proved challenging for FNCEL associates and OIE staff. Little could be done to remedy the frustration of the online environment. CQU rooms are not specifically designed for Zoom conferencing and some members felt uncomfortable sharing in a room where people appeared unequal in presence. However, the outcome of the challenges of using the Zoom platform, were that members accepted that in future all meetings would be online. This move would cut costs of travel; ensure that everyone had proximity of equal visual access and accommodate new members who will be joining from other parts of Queensland. This may lead to reconfiguration of rooms dedicated especially to the Zoom or Microsoft Team platforms.

Survey session discussions − offered insight going forward.

The interaction between FNCEL members and the researcher conducting the monthly survey provided noteworthy insights into the dynamics of discussions; relationships between FNCEL individuals; perceived value of FNCEL achievements and the value of the one-on-one confidentiality provided by the interview sessions. The interview exchanges provoked research observations pertinent to the research paradigm, yet beyond the original scope of the survey.

Post-meeting research sessions provided FNCEL members with a time and culturally safe place to speak about their reflective thoughts on what others, and they themselves, had contributed to meeting discussions. The interviewees found recapping, reconsidering and extrapolation of points of meeting discussions to be necessary for the purpose of understanding their personal views in relation to others' contributions. For example, a survey question was posed from the prepared list and the answer provided included opinions, reflective or futuristic thoughts about the subject under discussion and possibly [not always] the answer to what was asked. Interviewees unconsciously or consciously used this time to reconsider and reorganise their thoughts in order to better understand the process of the meetings and relational interactions of members.
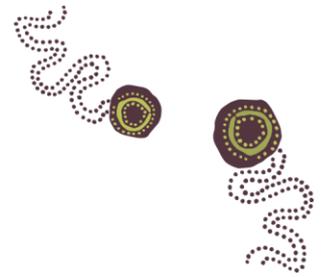
The post meeting interviews provided a time and safe place to inquire of the interviewer information about the university procedures and systems; the Deputy Vice President position and duties; the position of the OIE in the university structure; the outcomes of the pilot project; the plans for the FNCEL in future iterations; and the process and progress of the research project under way.

Future considerations

The structure and processes used by a future iteration of the FNCEL received attention and notation in particular in the final stages of the pilot project. Members discussed their ideas in post-meeting survey sessions demonstrating support for the continuation of the council and care about its successful survival and sustainability.

It was with certainty that the participants spoke of continuation for the Council, as a necessity for the respectful and honorific inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world views in the University's governance and practical structures.

In the effort to reflect on what processes worked during the pilot and what may be changed to ensure sustainability of the FNCEL, suggestions appeared during interview discussions. However, a common indicative theme was that of exploring a way to discuss agenda matters in an informal way prior to or outside scheduled committee meetings. The cultural practice of gathering and 'yarning' would offer a time to become familiar with individual reflections and the thoughts and opinions of collegial participants. It would offer a space where cross-cultural inhibitions [non-Indigenous and Indigenous or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander] may be more easily accepted as an inherent process and approached with more informal attitude. Informal discussions of this nature could ready members for ta more formal meeting. This methodology would allow for a more relaxed approach to expressions of First Nations worldviews and cultural praxis in the more formal meetings. Further, the incorporation of this practice into the committee structure should ensure a great degree of cultural safety and give younger members confidence in bringing ideas to the fore.

Further to the consideration of cultural practice, the process of contribution during the meeting discussion of agenda items was of concern for individual participants with regard to seniority, Eldership status, individual claim to cultural heritage and gender issues. The responsibility of the Chairperson to take a lead role in a procedure to overcome these issues was identified as a way to surmount concerns connected to cultural inhibitions.

The rotation of members was suggested as a two-year membership period with a rotation of half the membership at the initial two-year period and the other half at a three-year period.

LIMITATIONS

This research project findings are outlined in light of the limitations of the study: trialing a particular model for obtaining advice and guidance on First Nations cultural knowledge from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. The structure of the trial was constrained by the university committee structure and the length of the pilot [six months]. The committee process limited outcomes as it placed restrictions on participant interaction with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional cultural praxis.

Budgetary constraints resulted in a limited reach of included individual members who sat on the council. Residents of the Townsville and Cairns regional areas were approached initially with the idea that travelling to either regional city from either regional city for alternative meetings would be affordable both timewise and financially. Inclusion of members from further away was not possible under the preliminary budget. The lack of inclusion of participants from across Queensland restricted input from First Nations people from rural and remote communities and these voices would have added cultural dimension to those found in the project.

However, the unexpected environmental restrictions that emerged with the recognition of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequential mandates: social distancing; working from home; wearing of masks; the constant sanitary diligence, the limit on travel, had major influences on all aspects of the pilot trial. People were unable or unwilling to meet face-to-face, were anxious about contracting COVID, were working under travel restrictions and were working with limited digital services and support. The anxiety-producing circumstances certainly affected the ability of participants to fully participate at times. Post-meeting interview sessions were restricted by COVID mandates and all interviews were conducted on Zoom. In the pilot stages of planning this pilot, the research interviewer had planned to meet each participant in person for one of their interviews.

The outcomes of this pilot project were affected by the methodological approach of using committee meetings and post-meeting interview sessions. Despite the one and a half hours set as a time for each post-meeting, often participants wanted to talk for quite some time about subjects that were not covered by questions posed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The FNCEL research pilot project was instigated to achieve understandings about whether the chosen model for the advisory council worked and why it was successful or unsuccessful. Implicit in the test paradigm of the pilot was the inquiry of what the research discovered about improvement for the council's workings and experience for participants, for future iterations.

AGENDA ITEMS

➢ An innovative approach to discussions of agenda items can be instigated to ease cultural tensions between participants and participants and university staff. It should include a process for discussion of agenda items outside the scheduled meeting times, which could be held just prior to meetings or in between meetings. The less formal than meeting discussions should be chaired by the FNCEL Chairperson and held in the style of a yarning circle. The outcomes of those discussions could be introduced to meeting discussions by the Chairperson or a nominated member.

➢ A procedure for in-meeting discussions should be instigated. This process should include non-seniority contribution in which the Chairperson uses a method of calling upon members at random, or by another non-culturally based order to contribute to the conversation. This procedure should include mention of the respect and recognition held for cultural seniority and an explanation of why cultural seniority is not conducive to unfettered contribution in the case of discussions.

DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR MEETINGS

➢ In order to include members from across the state of Queensland, and to maintain a minimal budget nominated for meetings, a Zoom platform should be used for all FNCEL meetings. This would allow for contributions from those who cannot travel due to budgetary or other reasons.

➢ In the case of Zoom connections, a secretary or staff support person should be in attendance to offer technical and social assistance to everyone involved, should it be required.

RAP RESPONSIBILTY

➢ As the CQUniversity RAP (2022-2024) will become the overarching document that guides leadership and engagement with First Nations people and the establishment and sustainabilty of the FNCEL from 2022 and onwards, advisory council members are compelled to understand and utilise the plan in direct relation to their work.

➢ Each member requires a full copy of the document and is required to understand and be familiar with its strategies and mechanisms.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- ➢ A set of documents compiled to form induction and instruction manual specifically designed for FNCEL members is required. The FNCEL Manual should include informaton on the Unversity structure; position of committees and in particular this committee; services available to First Nations students; a list of policies and procedures important to committee members and those that involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islsnder Islander students and stakeholders; and a hierarchy map of the Univeristy's management structure.

ESTABLISH A PROCESS FOR CONSULTATION

- ➢ A formal process for requesting cultural advice from the FNCEL from CQUniveristy departments, and units will be estabished and ensured. Should management wish to approach the FNCEL on any matters pertaining to the governance, business, education or social aspects of CQUniversity, the person will be required to approach initally in writing.
- ➢ The process and protocols will include reciprocal methods for requesting advice and delivery of that advice. This consultative process will have input from the FNCEL as an agenda item of the first order.

FNCEL MANUAL

A manual or guidebook is to be developed as part of the induction of participants to the FNCEL.

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APPENDIXES

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES TABLE OF INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

Notes

Universities included in this table were chosen on the basis of:

- ➢ membership to Regional Universities Network (RUN) a national association to which CQUniversity is a member
- ➢ geographical locations/university structures (multi -campus parallel)
- ➢ national leadership
- ➢ research innovation
- ➢ institutional alliances

University of the Sunshine Coast and Monash University currently support committee mechanisms similar to CQUniversity's FNCEL.

Criteria

Dedicated physical space and/or Senior Executive

8. Does this university have a **dedicated physical centre**/department/division for Indigenous education/research/engagement?
9. Does this university have a **dedicated Senior Executive role**? e.g., PVC/DVC/Director or similar position.

Agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Or in the case of non-Australian universities, is there an equivalent focus on Indigenous students)

10. Does this university provide/inform **student support** to Indigenous students?
11. Does centre **advise curriculum & pedagogy/learning & teaching** for Indigenous education subjects/degrees/foci?
12. Does the dedicated centre have mechanisms to **advise whole university policy** in regard to Indigenous students, teaching and research?
13. Does this university have **Indigenous research programs**/output?
14. Does centre **engage with community**? Projects planned/strategy?

University (AU)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Notes
Australian National University	–							https://www.anu.edu.au
Charles Darwin University [1]	– Indigenous Leadership and Regional Outreach – Australian Indigenous Languages Institute (short courses)	PVC, ILRO	✓	✓		✓	✓	https://www.cdu.edu.au/indigenous-leadership https://aili.cdu.edu.au/
Charles Sturt University [4]	– Office of First Nations Engagement – School of Indigenous Australian Studies	PVC, First Nations Engagement	✓	✓		✓	✓	+ Vice Chancellor's Chair of Australian-Indigenous Belonging https://www.csu.edu.au/division/deputyvc/rdi/indigenous-engagement/home
CQUniversity [4,5]	– Centre for Indigenous Health Equity Research – Office of Indigenous Engagement	Deputy Vice President, Indigenous Engagement & BHP Chair of Indigenous Engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	https://www.cqu.edu.au/
Curtin University	– Centre for Aboriginal Studies (CAS) – Curtin University Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee – Curtin Indigenous Policy Committee – Indigenous Leadership Group	CAS Director reports to DVC, Academic	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	+ Elder in Residence https://karda.curtin.edu.au/
Deakin University	– VC's Indigenous Advisory Council (est Jul '21) – National Indigenous Knowledges Education Research Innovation (NIKERI) Institute.	PVC of Indigenous Strategy and Innovation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	https://www.deakin.edu.au/study/ways-to-study/nikeri https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/deakinlife/2021/07/08/naidoc-week-deakin-announces-the-establishment-of-the-vice-chancellors-indigenous-advisory-council/
Edith Cowan University [5]	– Kurongkurl Katitjin, ECU's Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research	PVC, Equity and Indigenous	✓	✓		✓	✓	https://www.ecu.edu.au/centres/kurongkurl-katitjin/overview
Federation University Australia [4]	– Aboriginal Education Centre (AEC) – Federation University Australia Indigenous Governance Committee (IGC)	AEC is in the Office of the VC's portfolio, and reports to Head of Campus, Ballarat who in turn reports to the DVC (Global and Engagement).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	+ Collaboration with the Victorian Indigenous Art Awards (VIAA) https://federation.edu.au/about-us/our-university/indigenous-matters/aboriginal-education-centre/governance
Griffith University [1]	– Indigenous Advisory Council (Art) – Indigenous Research Unit – GUMURRI Student Success Unit – ARC Indigenous Project	PVC (Indigenous)	✓	✓		✓	✓	https://www.griffith.edu.au/gumurrii
James Cook University [1]	– Indigenous Education & Research Centre	PVC, Indigenous Education and Strategy	✓	✓		✓	✓	https://www.jcu.edu.au/ierc
Monash University [3]	– Indigenous Advisory Council – William Cooper Institute	PVC (Indigenous) & Head, William Cooper Institute	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	+ Elder in Residence

University (AU)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Notes
								https://www.monash.edu/indigenous-australians
Murdoch University [1]	– Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre		✓	?	?	✓	✓	https://www.murdoch.edu.au/life-at-murdoch/perth-campus/facilities-services/kulbardi-aboriginal-centre
Queensland University of Technology ▲	– Carumba Institute (Research only)	Institute Executive Director PVC (Indigenous Strategy)	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	https://www.qut.edu.au/about/indigenous
RMIT University [2]	– Ngarara Willim Centre		✓	?	?	?	✓	https://www.rmit.edu.au/students/support-and-facilities/student-support/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-students
University of Adelaide [3]	– Wirltu Yarlu – Tarrkarri Tirrka (Future Learning) strategy	PVC (Indigenous Engagement) (Vacant in Sep '21)	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	https://www.adelaide.edu.au/wirltu-yarlu/
University of Canberra [5]	– Ngunnawal Centre on the Bruce campus – Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership and Strategy – Collaborative Indigenous Research Initiative (UC CIRI) –	PVC (Indigenous)	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	+ Elder in Residence https://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/office-of-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-leadership-and-strategy/deans-welcome
University of Melbourne [3]	– Indigenous Knowledge Institute – Indigenous Law and Justice Hub – Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health – Murrup Barak Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development – Research Unit for Indigenous Arts and Cultures (RUIAC) – Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development	Director, Australian Indigenous Studies	✓	?	?	✓	✓	https://www.unimelb.edu.au/
University of New England[4]	– Oorala Aboriginal Centre		✓	✓		✓	✓	https://www.une.edu.au/info-for/indigenous-matters/oorala
University of Queensland[3]	– Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit – UQ Poche Centre for Indigenous Health	PVC (Indigenous Engagement)	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	https://atsis.uq.edu.au/
University of Southern Queensland [4, 5]	– College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research		✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	https://www.usq.edu.au/ciser
University of Technology Sydney (UTS)	– Five (5) Indigenous Committees under Governance.	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	Committees cover Advisory, Strategies, Research, Teaching & Learning, Employment https://gsu.uts.edu.au/indigenous/index.html
University of the Sunshine Coast [4, 5]	– Indigenous Services (each campus) – VC and President's Indigenous Advisory Committee	✗	✓	?	✓	?	✓	https://www.usc.edu.au/about/structure/university-committees

University (AU)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Notes
	– School of Education Indigenous sub committee							
University of Western Australia [3]	– School of Indigenous Studies under Indigenous Portfolio	PVC Indigenous Education	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	https://www.indigenous.uwa.edu.au/
UNSW Sydney [3]	– Indigenous Strategy, Education & Research – Nura Gili: Centre for Indigenous Programs	PVC Indigenous	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	https://www.indigenous.unsw.edu.au/
Victoria University [5]	– Moondani Balluk – Indigenous Academic Unit – ARC Discovery Indigenous Program	Associate Provost Indigenous & Director of Moondani Balluk	✓	✓		✓	✓	https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/university-profile/moondani-balluk
Western Sydney University [1,5]	– Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education – Office of the PVC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, Strategy	DVC Indigenous Leadership	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/badanami https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander

[*] Off-network/other universities
[1] Innovative Research Universities grouping
[2] Australian Technology Network universities
[3] Group of Eight universities
[4] Regional Universities Network grouping
[5] New Generation Universities grouping

ARC – Australian Research Council
DVC – Deputy Vice-Chancellor
PVC – Pro Vice-Chancellor
VC – Vice-Chancellor

✗ - no evidence found / No
✓ - yes
? – cannot determine

.

CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES TABLE OF INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

Notes:

The Canadian universities profiled below do not all have dedicated facilities or departments/units that oversee Indigenous education/research/engagement; rather these appear to be embedded within the services/curriculum/pedagogy as a whole-of-university approach.

Dedicated physical space and/or Senior Executive

1. Does this university have a **dedicated physical centre**/department/division for Indigenous education/research/engagement?
2. Does this university have a **dedicated Senior Executive role**? e.g., PVC/DVC/Director or similar position.

Agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Or in the case of non-Australian universities, is there an equivalent focus on Indigenous students)

3. Does this university provide/inform **student support** to Indigenous students?
4. Does this university have mechanisms to **advise curriculum & pedagogy/learning & teaching** for Indigenous education subjects/degrees/foci?
5. Does this university have mechanisms to **advise whole university policy** in regard to Indigenous students, teaching and research?
6. Does this university have **Indigenous research programs**/output?
7. Does centre **engage with community**? Projects planned/strategy?

University (CA)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Notes
First Nations University of Canada **Campus/es: Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon (within University of Regina, Saskatchewan)**	t dedicated but embedded in all university activities.	Elders Council All staff support First Nations' activities.	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	• https://www.fnuniv.ca/about-us/policies/research/
Lakehead University **Campus/es: Thunder Bay (main campus), Orillia (Ontario)**	– Ogimaawin Indigenous Education Council (OIEC)	Vice-Provost, Aboriginal Initiatives	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	• https://www.lakeheadu.ca/about/sg/ogimaawin-indigenous-education-council-oiec-
McMaster University **Campus/es: Hamilton (Ontario)**	– McMaster University Indigenous Education Council – McMaster Indigenous Research Institute (MIRI)	– Director, of MIRI – Paul R. MacPherson Chair in Indigenous Studies	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	• https://www.mcmaster.ca/
Simon Fraser University **Campus/es: Burnaby (main), Surrey, Vancouver (British Columbia)**	– Office for Aboriginal Peoples – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council	Director (acting in Sept '21)	✔*	✔	✔	✔	✔	• First Peoples' Gathering House under construction. • https://www.sfu.ca/aboriginalpeoples.html
University of British Columbia **Campus/es: Vancouver, Kelowna (British Columbia)**	– Indigenous Centre – Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Health – Indigenous Strategic Plan Implementation Committee	– ?	✔*	✔	?	✔	✔	• https://indigenous.ubc.ca/ • Australian Leadership Program (UBC Okanagan and St. Catherine's Residential University College, Perth)
University of Saskatchewan **Campus/es: Saskatoon (Saskatchewan)**	– Department of Indigenous Studies – Office of Indigenous Engagement	Vice Provost, Indigenous Engagement	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	• https://www.usask.ca/
University of Waterloo **Campus/es: Waterloo (Ontario)**	– Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre – Indigenous Advisory Circle	– ?	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	• https://uwaterloo.ca/ • https://uwaterloo.ca/stpauls/waterloo-indigenous-student-centre/indigenous-advisory-circle • https://uwaterloo.ca/indigenous-workways/indigenous-education-centres
University of Winnipeg **Campus/es: Winnipeg (Manitoba)**	– Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre – Indigenous Advisory Circle	– Indigenous Academic Lead – Associate Vice President of Indigenous Engagement	✔	✔	✔	?	✔	• https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/index.html • https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/advisory-circle/index.html

University (CA)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Notes

ARC – Australian Research Council
DVC – Deputy Vice-Chancellor
PVC – Pro Vice-Chancellor
VC – Vice-Chancellor

✓ - yes
? – cannot determine

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