

Cross-cultural communication for successful completion of an Indigenous focused PhD

Associate Professor Tracy Woodroffe

Dr Kushalta (Khushi) Chauhan

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A scenic landscape photograph of a river flowing through a rocky gorge. The water is calm and reflects the surrounding trees and sky. The banks are covered in sparse vegetation and large, weathered rock formations. The sky is a clear, deep blue.

Charles Darwin University
acknowledges all First Nations people
across the lands on which we live and
work, and we pay our respects to
Elders both past and present.

**Associate Professor Tracy
Woodroffe** (Indigenous Principal
Supervisor) and
Dr. Kushalta Chauhan (Non-
Indigenous Researcher)



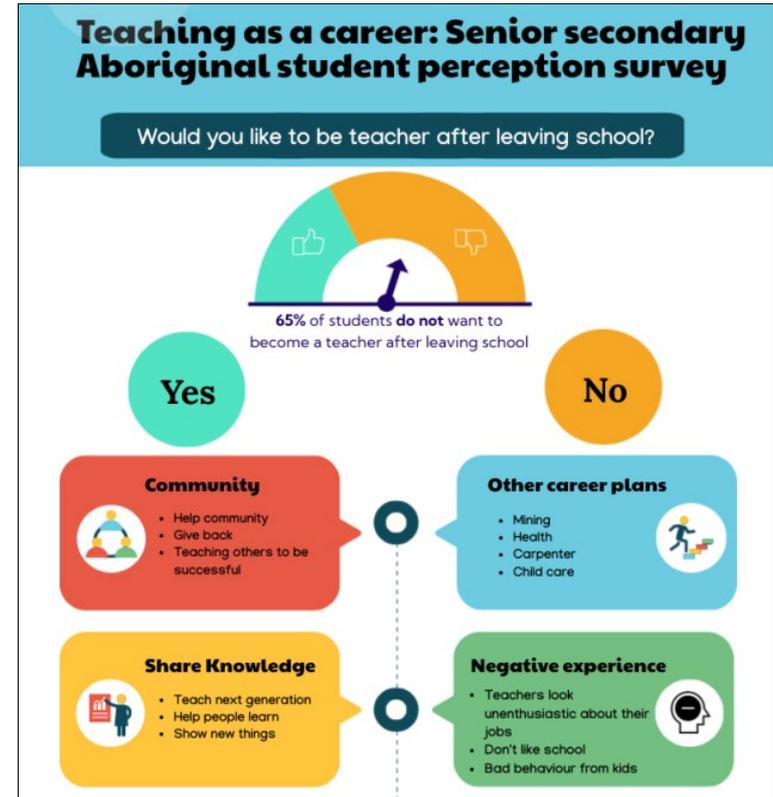
Indigenous perspective belongs to Indigenous people.



- PhD completion

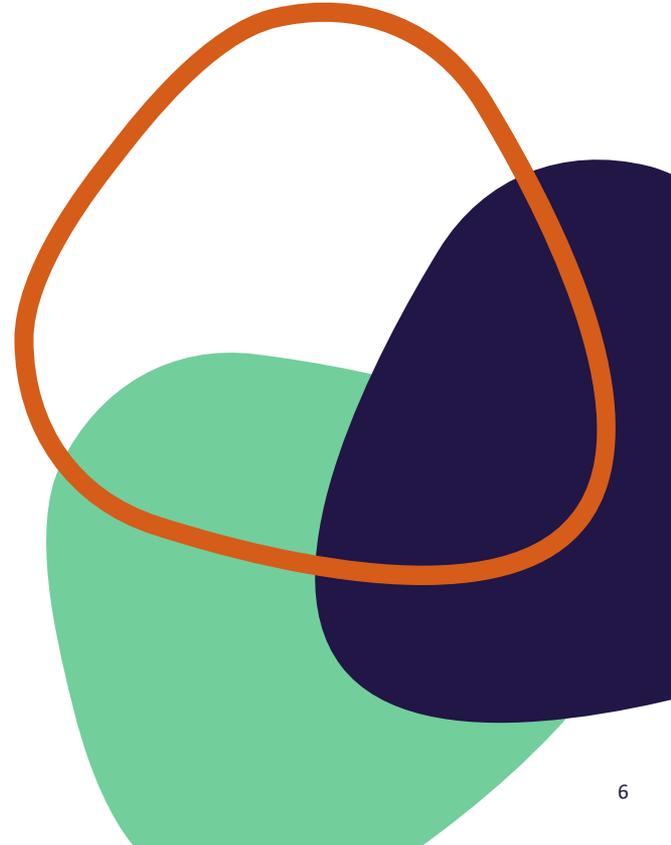
Journey after the PhD

- ASCES Fellowship Project
- Publications (Q1 Journal Article, The Conversation, Book)
- Current projects – ARC discovery project, ILA grant, Journal Articles



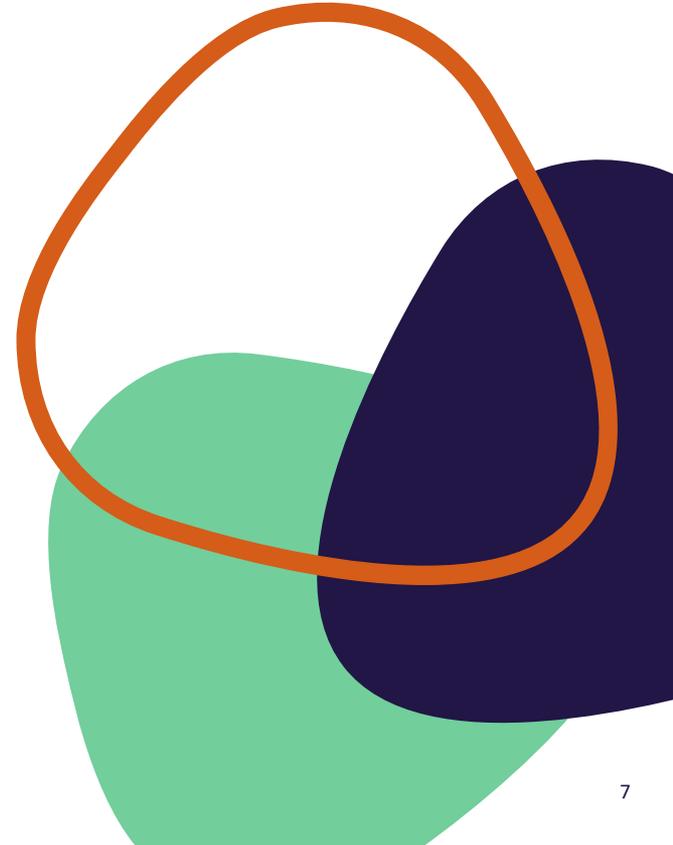
The Context: Starting of the Journey

- **The Problem:** The gap in the Northern Territory (NT) between the Aboriginal Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority and actual classroom implementation
- **The Stakes:** Education as a human right and the principle of equity.



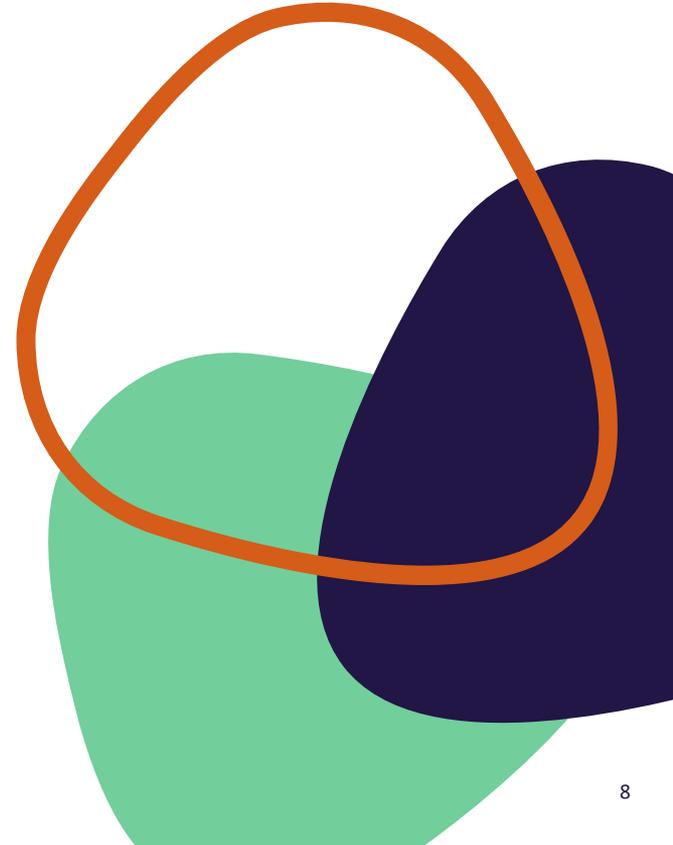
Non-Indigenous researcher (non-White) and Indigenous Principal Supervisor

- 🔍 Finding the right supervisor
- ⚓ Indigenous standpoint - **vital anchor**
- 🧠 **cultural safety** and **critical oversight**



What it looked like

- Overcoming the fear of authority
- Bridging the 'Blind-spots'
- Shared knowledge
- Mutual respect and strong professional relationships
- Managing academic heat

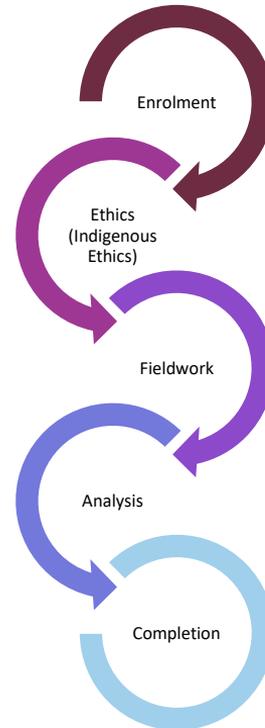


Tracking the Journey (The Timeline)

Stages of Work

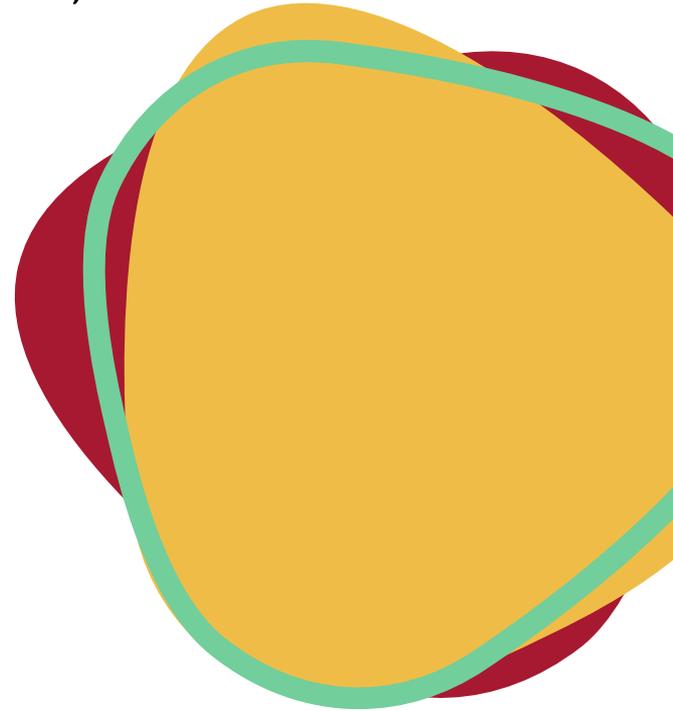


Effective Communication



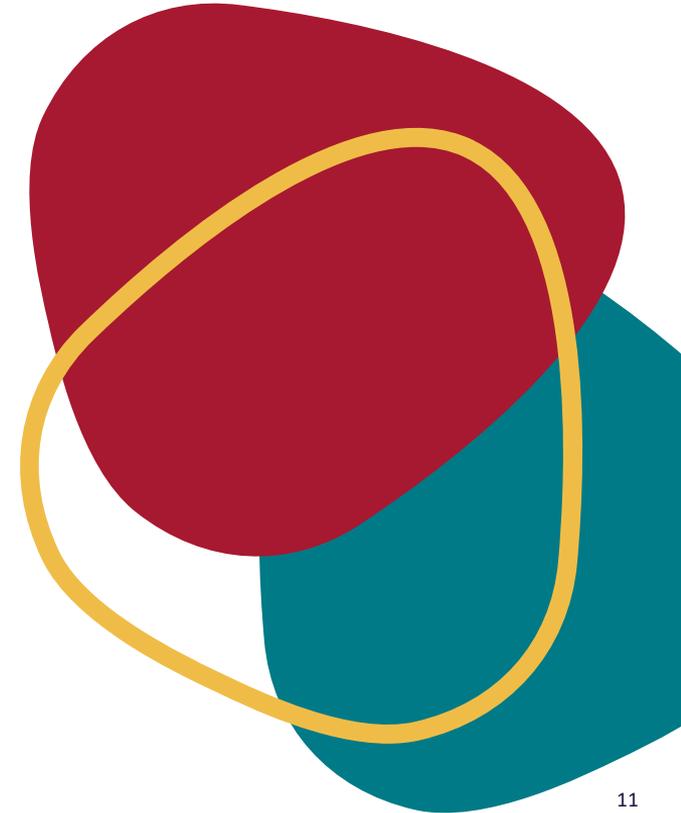
The Communication Strategy

- Regular yarning meetings to discuss...life, kids, hobbies...
- High-frequency, low-stakes communication
- Openness



Methodology

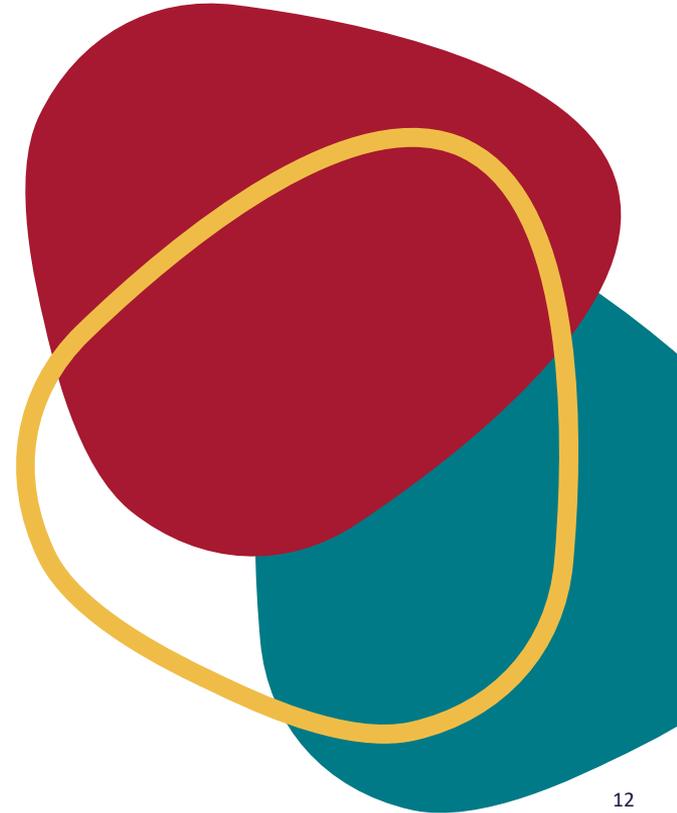
Critical Race Theory (CRT) and
Decolonizing Race Theory (DRT)



Navigating Perspective and Positioning

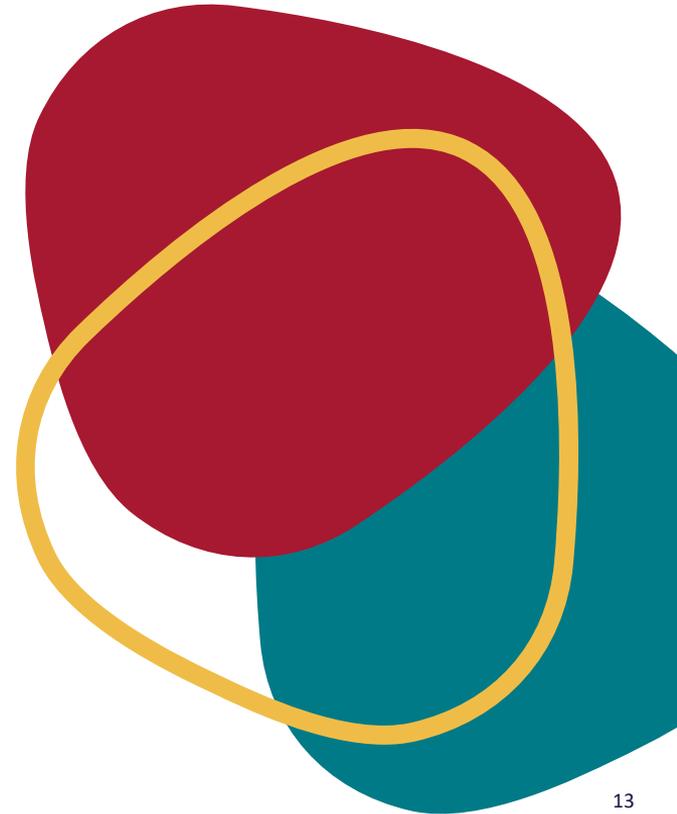
Challenge: How do we interpret data through Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Decolonising Race Theory (DRT)

Resolution: Tracy's guidance on Indigenous perspectives ensured that the research did not inadvertently perpetuate colonial narratives.



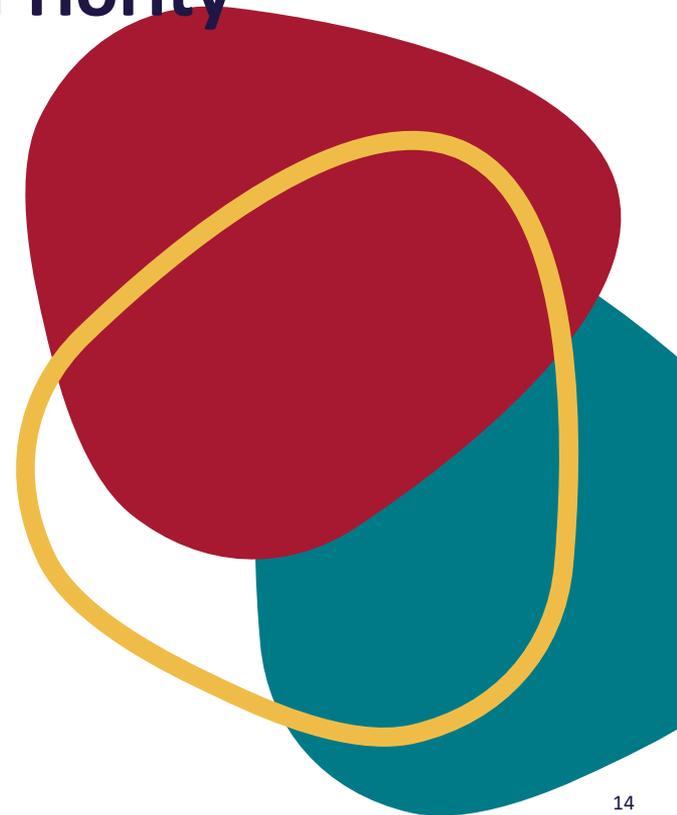
Key Findings

- The perception that Indigenous perspectives are “only for Indigenous schools.” (schools with higher proportion of Indigenous students)
- The “Deficit Perception” of Indigenous families and cultures.

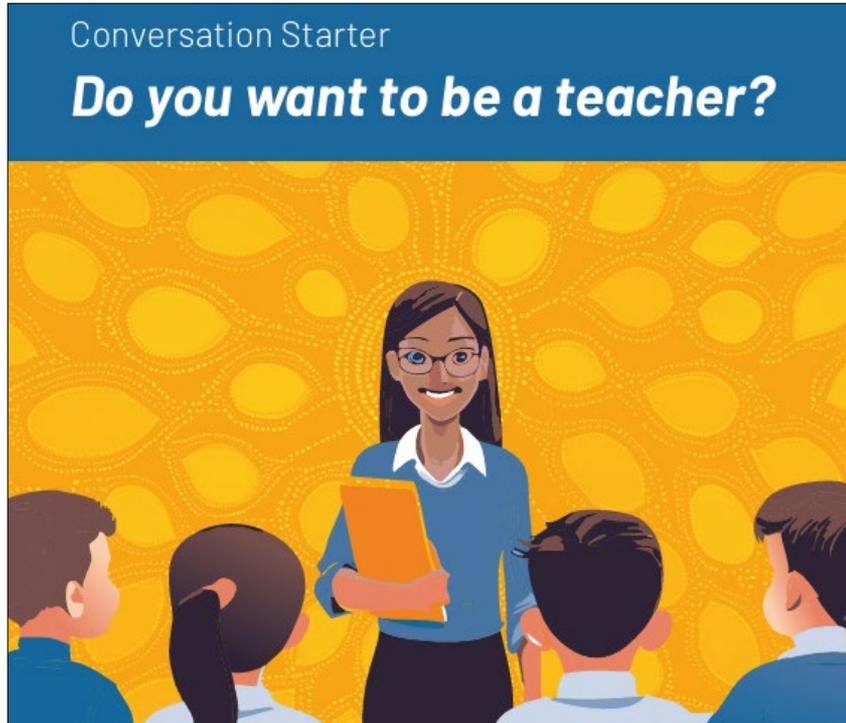


Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures : A Cross-Curriculum Priority

PhD Thesis



One of the Fellowship Outputs



Contents

Do you want to be a teacher?.....	
We need more Aboriginal teachers!.....	
Why we need Role Models	
Aboriginal Teacher Role Models.....	
What Aboriginal teachers and students think about why we need more Aboriginal teachers.....	
Importance of more Aboriginal Teachers	
Pathways to teaching.....	
Study your way.....	
When you learn to be a teacher, you will be taught many things.....	
Courses.....	
Scholarship Programs.....	
Useful Links and Contacts	

What made you decide to be a teacher

Teacher perception survey

Experience at school

“
I loved school. I was really lucky enough that I had a school and teachers that were engaging and really lovely people.”

Teacher



Aboriginal teachers emphasised the importance of role models and personal experience. They said their motivation to teach came from school, whether as a student or later working in supporting roles. Most of those reasons were positive experiences at school and having great teachers. However, negative experiences and a desire to change were also reported as a motive to teach.

Survey

WHAT DO YOU
THINK ABOUT
TEACHING?



Are you an Aboriginal Senior
Secondary Student?

We are conducting a study about how to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers in the Northern Territory. By participating in this anonymous survey, you will help CDU and governments better understand what could help more Aboriginal people become qualified teachers.

This survey is completely anonymous and confidential.



Scan the QR code to start the online survey
or find out more at: bit.ly/teacher-survey-24

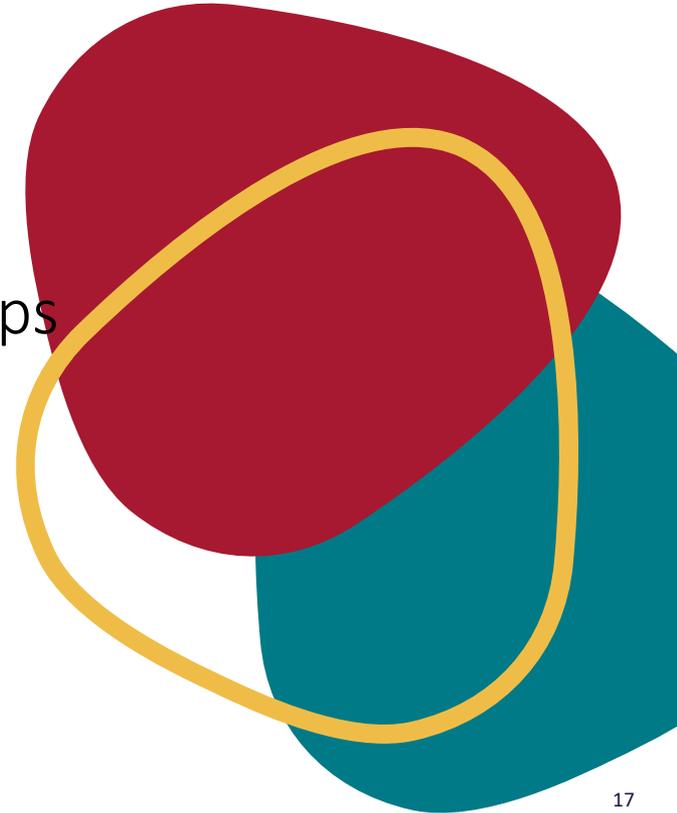


Before you take the survey, please read the Participant Information Sheet for Students, available via the link above or at firstnationsuccess.cdu.edu.au

SO what?

Implications for HDR Supervision

- Focus on cultural responsiveness and relationality
- Moving beyond hierarchy to partnerships
- Creating a 'third space' of shared knowledge



Thank you

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