

Editorial

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Welcome to the second number of *Learning Communities* for 2013.

This number following closely on the heels of April's Special Issue, *Ethnographic Disconcertments*, guest edited by Michael Christie and Helen Verran. While more varied in their range of subject matter, the articles in this issue are similarly grounded in theory as a means to better engage with and reveal the intricate give-and-take which occurs at what used to be called the 'contact zone' between cultures.

The issue opens with Michael Christie's reflections on a 'generative methodology for front line research,' in which he applies his deep understanding of Western academic and Aboriginal world views to consider the ways in which educationalists and policy researchers engage with Indigenous communities in northern Australia. Michael's concluding comment—'We are not general theorists, we are activists, and as such our work is useless if it does not address the public problems of people's life ways'—echoes through several of the following articles.

Susan Catapano and Candace Thompson present the results of a two-year action research project examining the impact of early field experiences on pre-service teachers placed in low-income schools and communities in the urban South of the United States. Drawing on the insights offered by their students as they reflect on their experiences, the authors mount a persuasive argument for, as they put it, 'linking social foundations courses to field experiences as a strategy for facilitating socio-cultural consciousness in early pre-service teachers.'

In *Doing Philosophy at the Boundaries*, Christian Clark asks 'What is the role of philosophy in researching epistemic boundaries and knowledge work in cross-cultural contexts?' His article provides both a fascinating account of work at the intersection of two apparently incommensurate cultural settings and of the way in which digital technologies and 'a logic of transdisciplinarity' might bridge the gap between Indigenous knowledge traditions and Western biomedical science.

Elaine Maypilama and Dany Adone provide a first account of Yolŋu Sign Language (YSL), a previously undocumented sign language of east Arnhem Land in the remote Northern Territory of Australia. In the process they provide important insights into the way in which YSL has evolved as a stand-alone language, independent of and yet integral to the linguistic milieu within which it evolved. Their work is an important step in the bolstering of YSL against the cultural changes wrought by the influence of Western modes of thought among Yolŋu, and Yolŋu youth in particular.

Anthea Nicholls' *Following Actors* draws on her engagement with Actor Network Theory (ANT) to scrutinize the mundane interactions and misunderstandings which occur around an Indigenous family's patient dealings with the complex necessities of internet banking in Ramingining, a community in north east Arnhem Land. In doing so, ANT is enlarged to include socio-technical objects it has never previously encountered and made to demonstrate its capacity to preserve rather than elide complexity.

In *Regulating Responsibilities* Stef Puszka, John Grotorex and Greg Williams tease out the impact of the imposition of income management under the Northern Territory Emergency Response on the community of Mäpuru, a homeland centre in north east Arnhem Land. In describing the failure of this top-down attempt to regulate responsibilities through policy in the absence of consultation, they argue that change can only come about through engaging local governance structures and consulting widely with local peoples and organisations.

I must conclude by taking the opportunity to sincerely thank those who have assisted in the production of this issue: the anonymous peer reviewers for their invaluable contribution to the long process of vetting and preparing of the articles for publication; Ruth Wallace and staff of the Northern Institute for their support; Juli Cathcart and Trevor van Weeren of Merri Creek Productions for their input into the design and typesetting of the issue; and, finally, to the contributors themselves for their patience and forbearance as we brought the issue to press. Good things do take time.