

# Finding Space and Place: Using Narrative and Imagery to Support Successful Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Enabling Programs

Clair Andersen,<sup>1</sup> Ann Edwards<sup>2</sup> and Brigette Wolfe<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institute of Learning and Teaching, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Arts, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

'Riawunna' is an Aboriginal word meaning 'a place of learning' for Aboriginal people, from entry level to tertiary studies, at the University of Tasmania (UTAS) and operates on Hobart, Launceston and Burnie campuses. The Riawunna Centre was established to encourage Aboriginal people to aspire to higher levels of education, and to support them to be successful in their chosen course of study. One strategy developed to support the participation, retention and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is the Murina program. During the four year period between 2010 and 2013 every student at UTAS who graduated from the Murina program and chosen to enrol in undergraduate studies has been successful in completing their courses. One of the tools used to achieve this result is the strong use of narrative and images in our teaching. This whole-person approach to teaching resonates culturally with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but is also applicable to any student of any culture, especially those who come to university tentatively and with low expectations of what they can achieve.

■ **Keywords:** Aboriginal education, enabling, pathways, support

Poor educational success is generally one of the major factors impeding Aboriginal advancement. There are many jobs that would be available to Aboriginal people, if only they had the basic education required to do them. Higher levels of education contribute to better health and housing as well as achieving better economic outcomes and is considered one of the main strategies for addressing Indigenous disadvantage in Australia (Hunter & Schwab, 2003). Indigenous students and staff make up about 1% of the student and staffing numbers nationally, but 3% of the population as a whole, so there is underrepresentation of Indigenous Australians, in higher education and we have a way to go to achieve parity (Liddle, 2014).

The many barriers preventing Indigenous students from accessing and succeeding in higher education have been identified by Bin-Sallik (2000), Biddle, Hunter, and Schwab (2004), Andersen, Bunda, and Walter (2008). These include financial pressures, living away from home, health-related problems (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011), racism and prejudice towards Indigenous people, and low levels of academic readiness and

aspirations of Indigenous students, coupled with the high academic demands of study and insufficient academic support.

The *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report 2012* (IHER, 2012) recommended that Indigenous culture and knowledge be embedded across the entire university so greater cultural change was achieved, and that Indigenous-specific spaces on campus needed to be increased and strengthened. While the *Background Paper on Indigenous Australian Higher Education: Trends, Initiatives and Policy Implications*, also highlighted that cultural issues are important, particularly the clashes that some students experience as a result of nonIndigenous sociocultural values in teaching styles, course content and support provided. These aspects contribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students feeling isolated and

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Clair Andersen, Institute of Learning and Teaching, University of Tasmania, PO Box 133, Hobart, Tasmania 7251, Australia.  
Email: [Clair.Andersen@utas.edu.au](mailto:Clair.Andersen@utas.edu.au).

59 excluded from the academic environment within univer- 112  
60 sities (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). To redress this, 113  
61 as well as including Indigenous content within courses, 114  
62 the whole institution needs to be culturally inclusive 115  
63 (Andersen, 2014). 116

64 Generally, low socioeconomic status students perform 117  
65 as well as other students, but this does not seem to be 118  
66 the case for Indigenous and low socioeconomic status 119  
67 students from remote and regional areas (CSHE, 2008). 120  
68 It is evident that admission is only one aspect impact- 121  
69 ing on Indigenous performance in higher education and 122  
70 affirms the view that ‘access without effective support 123  
71 is not opportunity’ (Tinto, 2008). Outcomes for Indige- 124  
72 nous Australians at university fall largely into two groups 125  
73 according to Pechenkina, Kowal and Paradies (2011) those 126  
74 with high enrolment and low completions and those with 127  
75 low enrolments and high completions; on this basis the 128  
76 University of Tasmania (UTAS) is in the second group 129  
77 largely due to work of the Riawunna Centre, which has 130  
78 progressed a number of strategies to affirm Aboriginal 131  
79 culture at the university as Table 1 shows. In this 132  
80 article, we share some of the practical ways in which 133  
81 we attempted to provide students with the raw ingre- 134  
82 dients to create their own new story of themselves as 135  
83 students. 136

## 84 Method 137

85 The core of this paper is based on a series of conver- 138  
86 sations/yarns with the two main academics involved in 139  
87 program delivery and also student participant contri- 140  
88 bution by way of focus group discussion and end of 141  
89 course evaluations. As recommended by Smith (1999, p. 142  
90 39), we wanted to work in partnerships with our stu- 143  
91 dents to focus on the Murina program, using partici- 144  
92 pant observations and discussions with Murina staff and 145  
93 students. Various documents were also analysed includ- 146  
94 ing student feedback sheets, reflective journals and staff 147  
95 reports. 148

96 The three authors met monthly to reflect on issues, 149  
97 share views and plan coming events and activities. 150  
98 These meetings enabled us to probe, elaborate and clar- 151  
99 ify our thinking through reflective dialogue. A guiding 152  
100 principle for the work was the right of our students 153  
101 to participate as partners to generate knowledge relat- 154  
102 ing to their culture, identity and wellbeing (Castellano, 155  
103 2004, p. 110). In keeping with this ethos, students were 156  
104 invited to contribute or withdraw their information from 157  
105 inclusion in our presentations and reports about the 158  
106 program. 159

## 107 Rationale 160

108 There are a number of programs across Australia designed 161  
109 to assist Aboriginal people to gain access to university. 162  
110 The program under research is innovative as it drew 163  
111 on participants’ stories to foster their engagement. The 164  
165

112 small numbers of students enabled the use of a ‘con- 113  
114 versational methodology’ in contrast to more theoretical 114  
115 methodological approaches. This process reflects appro- 115  
116 priate cultural practice as argued by Smith (1999, p. 120) 116  
117 which respond to Indigenous cultural protocols. ‘The 117  
118 conversational method is of significance to Indigenous 118  
119 methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowl- 119  
120 edge based on oral story telling tradition congruent with 120  
121 an Indigenous paradigm’ (Kovach, 2010: 40). Method- 121  
122 ologically this paper is based on the work of Kovach 122  
123 (2010) where, ‘a dialogic participation that holds a deep 123  
124 purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others’ 124  
125 (Kovach, 2010: 40). This means of gathering informa- 125  
126 tion through the stories of the participants enabled stu- 126  
127 dents to work through significant personal and psycho- 127  
128 logical issues which emerged as part of their daily lives 128  
129 which were significantly based in this program. Students 129  
130 attended 4 days a week and a 5th day was used from time 130  
131 to time for field trips. A conversational methodology has 131  
132 been adopted as it aptly describes our work and also most 132  
133 practitioners tend to refrain from extensive theoretical and 133  
134 methodological discussion in their research reports (Have, 134  
135 1990). 135

136 In this project, story, listening to story, and compas- 136  
137 sion, was critical to retention and engagement. The sto- 137  
138 ries reflected shared cultural experiences of difficulties 138  
139 arising from colonisation and it enduring neo-colonial 139  
140 practices. Trauma and disadvantage characterise the lives 140  
141 of many Aboriginal people with experiences of racism 141  
142 (DOHA, 2012) have been shown to impact on health, 142  
143 wellbeing and all aspects of life including access and suc- 143  
144 cess in education. The ongoing impact of stolen gener- 144  
145 ations (RCIADIC, 1991) and intergenerational trauma 145  
146 (Atkinson, 2002) are significant factors. To disregard these 146  
147 experiences when Aboriginal students enter education is 147  
148 an assumed educational norm within classroom prac- 148  
149 tice. In the small and intimate educational context of 149  
150 this program such a response would have been cultur- 150  
151 ally insensitive and culturally inappropriate. A nonsensi- 151  
152 tive psychological response would clearly impact on stu- 152  
153 dent engagement and outcomes. Consequently, story was 153  
154 privileged and became integral as a methodology, and we 154  
155 positioned our students at the centre of the learning and 155  
156 teaching process, not at the margins as argued by Rigney 156  
157 (1999). 157

## 157 Riawunna Centre 160

158 ‘Riawunna’ is a Tasmanian Aboriginal word meaning 161  
159 ‘place of learning’ for Aboriginal people, from entry level 162  
160 to tertiary studies at the University of Tasmania and 163  
161 operates at Hobart, Launceston and Burnie campuses. 164  
162 The Riawunna Centre was established to encourage Abo- 165  
163 riginal people to aspire to higher levels of education, 166  
164 and to support them to be successful in their chosen 167  
165 course of study. Riawunna provides a welcoming space for 168

**TABLE 1**  
Strategies to Support Cultural Affirmation at UTAS

Cultural affirmation	Murina classes	Riawunna centre	UTAS
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander flags		Flown each day Special flag raising ceremonies are arranged for significant events Flags are lowered to honour deaths	
Cake days		Held monthly	
Community lunches		Held weekly	
Reflective writing	Journals — daily and weekly entries		
Special events	On country visits	National Sorry Day Mabo Day NAIDOC Reconciliation Week Indigenous Literacy Day World Indigenous Peoples Day	Guest lecture Harmony Day Diversity Week
Art gallery	Create works to exhibit Curate works Prepare catalogues Plan seasonal exhibitions	Host opening of exhibitions	
Indigenous content in teaching & learning	Inclusion of Indigenous voices and texts are core in all subject areas	Houses resources for students & teachers	Elements are included where required e.g. medicine, pharmacy, social work, education.
Indigenous role models	Indigenous course co-ordinators and tutors	Indigenous Director ceased 2013 Indigenous Higher Education Officers Elders Community members welcome Visiting artists & writers	Appointment of Indigenous Advisor in 2014 Appointment of PVC Indigenous Research & Leadership in 2015
Indigenous news		Koori Mail & Indigenous times provided for students	
Indigenous film nights		One in semester 1 & 2	
Community BBQs		One in semester 1 & 2	

166 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to get  
167 together, study and access academic and pastoral support  
168 at all three locations. It also offers tutorial support through  
169 the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS), assistance  
170 in applying for bursaries, scholarships, a resource  
171 library, computer room and a student common room for  
172 informal interaction and relaxation.

173 The need for greater involvement of Aboriginal people  
174 in the development and delivery of educational programs  
175 has been improved at UTAS by fostering stronger  
176 relationships with Aboriginal communities, through the  
177 appointment of Indigenous Higher Education Officers  
178 and Murina Pathways staff who maintain regular contact  
179 with their respective regional communities in north-  
180 western, northern and southern Tasmania. Also, the presence  
181 of Elders has been beneficial for students along with  
182 on-country experiences, both have contributed to  
183 enhanced social accountability (Boellen & Wollard, 2009).  
184 Our programs are based on the premise of 'cultural  
185 respect — recognition and respect of the inherent rights  
186 and traditions of Indigenous Australians which incorporates  
187 a holistic approach involving partnership, capacity

building and accountability' (Andersen, 2009), because  
we know cultural identity has a pivotal role in shaping  
wellbeing.

## Background

As a team the Murina staff began gathering information,  
from student feedback and the endless staff discussions  
about what we do well and what we might do better to  
form the basis of a presentation at the National Association  
of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA) conference  
in November 2013, which informs this article.

Of all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students  
enrolled at the University of Tasmania, about 30% manage  
to succeed (see Table 2). No research has been done to date  
on the reason for this low figure.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
students enrolled at UTAS has steadily increased from 259  
in 2010, to 368 in 2013. However, the number of students  
succeeding does not reflect this upward trend, as the success  
rate has remained around the 30% level, which is well below  
the national rate. Our program grew out of the need to engage  
and retain more Aboriginal and Torres

**TABLE 2**  
 UTAS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Success Rate Compared to the National Success Rate for Students

Year	Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled at UTAS <sup>1</sup>	UTAS success rate 30% (shown as approx number)	National success rate 50% (shown as approx number)
2010	259	77	129
2011	301	90	150
2012	357	107	178
2013	368	110	184

<sup>1</sup>Source: UTAS Student Evaluation, Review & Reporting Unit.

**TABLE 3**  
 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Murina Students in Undergraduate Studies

Year	Number of Murina students			Number of Murina graduates undertaking undergraduate studies and succeeding			
	Total	Distance	Face to Face	Total	Previous study mode: distance	Previous study mode: face-to-face	% of F to F still studying
2010	12	8	4	2	0	2	100%
2011	24	16	8	4	0	4	100%
2012	48	36	12	6	0	6	100%
2013	28	14	14	8	0	8	100%

209 Strait Islander students and to bring back those who had  
 210 disengaged. The attrition rates for most enabling courses  
 211 with no minimum academic entrance requirements are  
 212 more than 50% (Bennett et al., 2012). In comparison, of  
 213 all the students who enrolled in undergraduate courses  
 214 after completing the Murina Pathways Program, during  
 215 the four years 2010 to 2013, 100% are still studying suc-  
 216 cessfully (see Table 3).

217 The numbers are small, yet impressive, indicating the  
 218 success of the program particularly for the face-to-face  
 219 students. Table 3 clearly shows that these students were  
 220 more likely to continue with university studies and to be  
 221 successful as all are progressing well. In contrast it can  
 222 be suggested that the Distance Murina students missed  
 223 out on participating in the full range of cultural affirma-  
 224 tion activities and hence were less motivated to engage in  
 225 further studies at the university.

226 The success of this program supports the key find-  
 227 ings of the NCVER Research Report (Dockery, 2013) that  
 228 *stronger cultural identity appears to promote greater par-*  
 229 *ticipation and achievement in education and training.* The  
 230 causal effect flowing from cultural identity to outcomes is  
 231 strong and regardless of whether individuals live in remote  
 232 or nonremote areas, and irrespective of their extent of cul-  
 233 tural attachment, there is increased likelihood of employ-  
 234 ment and income with additional years of completed  
 235 education.

Success for our students is measured in different ways. 236  
 If a student chooses not to pursue a university degree but 237  
 decides to enrol in a TAFE diploma course instead, that 238  
 is a success. If a student discovers the joy of learning, that 239  
 too is success. If our students leave understanding more of 240  
 themselves, and the world around them, and taking that 241  
 knowledge back to their communities, that is a success. For 242  
 the purposes of this article, the particular success we are 243  
 looking at is the transition from bridging course to under- 244  
 graduate studies of students who are completely confident 245  
 that they can at the very least pass in any unit they choose 246  
 and have the resilience to complete their chosen course. 247

### Murina: Pathway 248

‘Murina’ a Tasmanian Aboriginal word meaning ‘pathway’ 249  
 is an enabling program designed for Aboriginal and Tor- 250  
 res Strait Islander people, to gain the skills to commence 251  
 university studies. The program focuses on promoting a 252  
 positive sense of identity through affirmation of Indige- 253  
 nous student’s culture. It is not enough only to develop 254  
 students’ academic study skills, as complete preparation 255  
 for university studies must also include the development 256  
 of a mindset and resilience to enable students to cope 257  
 with the longer term goal of completing their degrees. 258  
 The program has been developed on the premise that a 259  
 positive sense of identity is important for wellbeing, and 260

261 materials and activities to support this have been incor-  
 262 porated wherever possible. This involved the use of Abo-  
 263 riginal voices through text and film within the teaching  
 264 program as well as drawing and listening to music as these  
 265 stimulate the brains auditory and emotional functions and  
 266 also help motor functions (Sacks, 2008; Sennett, 2008:  
 267 274).

268 We adopted the use of narrative based on the work of  
 269 Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, and Hallett (2003) who noted  
 270 narrative strategies were employed by indigenous Cana-  
 271 dian youth in understanding their persistence though  
 272 time and suggested, that if young Indigenous Australians  
 273 adopted similar strategies, positive self-identity is likely  
 274 to be fostered through an appreciation of and respect for  
 275 kinship structures, attachment to place and knowledge of  
 276 the stories and law of their ancestors, and this may help  
 277 lay the foundation for future educational success.

278 Over the last 4 years every student at UTAS who has  
 279 graduated from the Murina program and chosen to enrol  
 280 in undergraduate studies has been successful, indicating  
 281 that the program seems to be working as highlighted  
 282 in Table 3. Many Aboriginal families have experienced  
 283 unexpected setbacks and unwelcome change in their lives  
 284 largely due to imposed neo-colonial policies (Havemann,  
 285 1999). Some are robust and resilient and able to bounce  
 286 back from change while many cope less well with their grief  
 287 and anxiety (Bringing them Home: The 'Stolen Children'  
 288 Report 1997 and World Health Organisation, 2008).

289 Our goal was to assist our students to understand these  
 290 imposed changes, the struggle to resist them (Attwood &  
 291 Markus, 1999) and help them to become more resilient,  
 292 by being productive and developing an enhanced sense  
 293 of wellbeing which in turn led to longer term positive  
 294 outcomes. Rose (1990) in *Healing Hurt Minds* proposed  
 295 setting up a new approach which involved developing a  
 296 community identity as well as an individual identity and  
 297 this is what we aimed to achieve through our program.

298 Often our students had negative views of themselves  
 299 as students due to their poor achievements during earlier  
 300 schooling years. Many also had no pride in their Aborig-  
 301 inal ancestry, were isolated from their communities and  
 302 lacked any sense of belonging. All of these facets had to  
 303 be addressed and developed, to do this required creat-  
 304 ing a healing place where students were comfortable and  
 305 welcome, with caring staff who practiced deep listening  
 306 (Atkinson, 2002) and elders who were available to yarn  
 307 (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Fredericks *et al.*, 2011; Fred-  
 308 ericks *et al.*, 2014). It was almost like providing 'therapy'  
 309 to heal past hurts, or at least starting the process so people  
 310 could be referred to other services as required, but this  
 311 would not have happened without the trusting relation-  
 312 ships developed in the classes.

313 We had to adopt decolonizing methodologies as a way  
 314 to prioritize Indigenous values and worldviews, and con-  
 315 tribute to positive change in the way they thought about  
 316 themselves and their people (Walker, Fredericks, Mills, &

Anderson, 2014). Atkinson's (2002) teachings and words  
 of wisdom on cultural healing, provided important tools  
 for us to incorporate in our program. These included the  
 following:

re-membering — seeing the past as a means to re-  
 joining and becoming members of both a particular  
 Aboriginal community and society in general (story  
 telling vs. homelessness);

re-sourcing — creating a map to find loca-  
 tions/situations/relationships where our people feel  
 culturally safe (community wealth vs. poverty);

empowering voice — helping people access places of  
 cultural safety by having an effective voice (resilience  
 and resistance vs. powerlessness);

re-creation — of cultural products through creative  
 activity such as music, film, theatre, craft and art  
 (cultural expression vs. disorientation).

As its about identity and re-finding one's place in the  
 world and re-weaving the relationships to create a sense of  
 community, Smith's (1999) Maori principles were help-  
 ful in guiding our work, this involved being respectful to  
 all students, being available to yarn with students, being  
 prepared to look and listen before speaking, sharing and  
 being generous with food and resources, being careful,  
 not to promise what cannot be delivered, and not boast-  
 ing about our knowledge or 'big noting' ourselves. Instead,  
 we focused on creating opportunities for our students to  
 achieve successes which we could celebrate together. One  
 of the tools used to achieve this was the strong use of  
 narrative and imagery in our teaching.

A narrative is defined as a spoken or written account  
 of connected events, a story, which can also be a work of  
 poetry or prose, or even song, theatre, or dance. Denning  
 (2007) introduces the concept of narrative intelligence to  
 counter the view that storytelling is a one-way relationship  
 between the teller and the listener, when really narrative  
 and storytelling takes place within a two-way, interac-  
 tive relationship. It is this two-way relationship which the  
 tutors and students focused on fostering and developing  
 through their lessons together.

The tutors also used imagery, which can be defined  
 as descriptive language in a literary work and or images  
 collectively, to engage the students. This involved them  
 creating expressive or evocative images in their art using  
 pictures created from their memory or imagination in  
 response to experiences provided by their tutors. We  
 wanted to provide opportunities to enable our students  
 to critically reflect on their life events, to understand how  
 past policies had impacted on their families in order to  
 change their beliefs or behaviours (Mezirow, 1997).

We adopted a holistic, whole person approach (Dewey,  
 1886) which meant using a mixture of resources, tech-  
 niques and skills, along with cultural wisdom and intu-  
 ition to support the student. This involved considering the



371 mind–body connection in each student, taking account of  
 372 their emotional state and exploring their sense of meaning  
 373 and belonging (Atkinson, 2002), while looking at the big-  
 374 ger picture including relationships, the community and  
 375 the physical environment to create a sense of health and  
 376 healing as well as competence as a student. For us, this  
 377 meant creating a safe healing place for the students as  
 378 well as addressing their knowledge gaps. It involved the  
 379 following:

- 380 empowering the student to value himself or herself
- 381 by listening to their concerns with attention and pro-  
 382 viding strategies to support resolution of immediate  
 383 issues, and empower the student;
- 384 considering the mind–body connection when mak-  
 385 ing ‘co-assessment’ of student’s problems that were  
 386 impacting on their participation;
- 387 enabling the student to look at the bigger picture  
 388 that included relationships, the community and the  
 389 physical environment and;
- 390 fostering health and healing as well as study skills.

391 We have developed this approach so that the student  
 392 is treated holistically, whereby all aspects of their lives are  
 393 taken into consideration including income, food, shel-  
 394 ter, of the family and community, as well as, a sense of  
 395 purpose and belonging, as affirmed by Atkinson (2002).  
 396 The English language has few words for holistic whereas,  
 397 according to Inoue (2012), Japanese has at least four  
 398 words:

- 399 ‘Kizuna’ — a lifelong bond between two people;
- 400 ‘Ba’ — a social space in which people can co-create under-  
 401 standing;
- 402 ‘Takumi’ — skills in professional practice implying deep  
 403 wisdom and insight;
- 404 ‘Omoi’ — an integrated form of thinking and being that  
 405 provides a strong sense of identity and role in society. These  
 406 are the qualities which we aspired to develop in our students  
 407 so that they have both the strength of identity and wisdom to  
 408 be advocates and future leaders as well as successful students.

409 This whole-person approach to teaching resonates cul-  
 410 turally with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,  
 411 but is also applicable to any student of any culture, espe-  
 412 cially those who come to university tentatively and with  
 413 low expectations of what they can achieve.

## 414 Teaching for Success: Building Resilience

415 One of the factors students identified for us and that we  
 416 have developed is the use of narrative and imagery to build  
 417 resilience. What do we mean by resilience? It is the ability to  
 418 adapt well in the face of adversity, such as trauma, tragedy,  
 419 threats, or even significant sources of stress, such as fam-  
 420 ily and relationship problems, serious health problems,  
 421 or workplace and financial stressors. It means ‘bounc-  
 422 ing back’ from difficult experiences, and often ‘the road  
 423 to resilience is likely to involve considerable emotional

distress.’ It also refers to the ability to cope with stress 424  
 and adversity and to do well in life despite difficulties 425  
 (Gunnestad, 2006). 426

427 For us this includes personal, family, social and cultural  
 428 resilience. It is not an individual trait but a learnt process of  
 429 interacting with environments in ways that either promote  
 430 wellbeing or protect against, or reduce the impact of, risk  
 431 factors (Zautra, Hall, & Murray, 2010). The literature also  
 432 indicates an interface of Indigenous social and cultural  
 433 resilience with individual and family resilience (Lalonde,  
 434 2006). Hence social, cultural and identity practices and  
 435 Indigenous knowledges that support positive adaptation  
 436 despite the presence of hazards are vital for developing  
 437 individual and family resilience. Without question the stu-  
 438 dents who come to us already have resilience. Most of them  
 439 have already endured more in their lifetime than we ever  
 440 hope to have to deal with. What they do not have yet is  
 441 resilience as students.

442 We know we can teach the skills they need to succeed  
 443 in the university environment: by the end of a year with us  
 444 most of them can reference their work; they know how to  
 445 deconstruct an essay topic; how to write an essay outline;  
 446 how to research and how to avoid plagiarising.

447 These are the easy things to teach: what they also need  
 448 to learn is that they can succeed as students; that they can  
 449 prosper in an institution that is heavily oriented toward  
 450 Western culture; that they can find the support that they  
 451 need; that if they fall, they can pick themselves up again;  
 452 that they can finish what they started; and, perhaps most  
 453 importantly, that they have a right to be at university and  
 454 a right to gain a degree.

455 These things cannot be taught but they can be learned  
 456 in the right environment. The American Psychological  
 457 Association (2007) indicates this ‘involves behaviours,  
 458 thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed’.  
 459 The challenge for Murina staff is to create that specific kind  
 460 of environment in which students can do this in order to  
 461 re-write their own stories. We can provide the ingredients  
 462 but we cannot write these stories for them; they must write  
 463 these themselves.

## 464 Tools for Learning

465 This section discusses the approaches taken by the Murina  
 466 coordinator, Ann and the Art coordinator, Brigitte and  
 467 includes examples of four student’s experiences.

### 468 Stories

469 As teachers, we all know that no learning takes place in a  
 470 vacuum. Before I started teaching my first class in the Murina  
 471 program, I asked our then Director if she had any advice for  
 472 me. I was already well experienced in teaching children and  
 473 adults but this would be the first all — Aboriginal class I  
 474 had ever taught. She said, ‘Stories, lots of stories.’ (Murina  
 475 Co-ordinator, Ann).

476 Ann believed in the power of stories to support us from  
 477 the cradle to the grave. She often spoke about stories with

FIGURE 1- Colour online, B/W in print



**FIGURE 1**  
(Colour online) Murina students showing their art work.



**FIGURE 2**  
(Colour online) Brigitte welcoming people at the Gallery opening.

FIGURE 2- Colour online, B/W in print

478 the students and why they were important. She shared  
 479 her childhood experiences of the power of story, how she  
 480 learnt that the possibilities of the future were limitless,  
 481 that the gentle voices, waxing and waning through bouts  
 482 of delirium, did not just soothe a sick child, they created  
 483 internal spaces and enabled her to negotiate a lonely and  
 484 damaging childhood. Stories allowed her to create safe  
 485 worlds where she could fashion roles and outcomes of her  
 486 own will. They built resilience for her. That was another  
 487 place, another time, another culture, but Ann was able to  
 488 link her experience to that of Yolngu people in Arnhem  
 489 Land singing stories to a clan member who was dying  
 490 through sharing *Why Warriors Lie Down and Die*, (Trud-  
 491 gen, 2000). Family members sing the story of the clan and  
 492 the story of place of the dying person. She asks the stu-  
 493 dents, ‘What could be kinder or better in any way than,  
 494 when you are dying, to have those you love place you with  
 495 narrative into the context in which you have lived?’ and  
 496 explores the ideas that you might be dying, but you hold  
 497 both a personal and a larger place within the community.  
 498 Your death, as your life, belongs in community. This sup-  
 499 ports Parker J. Palmers’ philosophy of teaching: ‘we teach  
 500 who we are: good teaching comes from the identity and  
 501 integrity of the teacher’ (Palmer, 1998, p.10).

502 Ann also used stories as an aid to understand concepts.

503 For example, in our Learning and Communication Skills unit,  
 504 we come to the point where students need to understand the  
 505 concept of a paradigm shift. I have never yet had a student  
 506 come to class who knows the meaning of the word ‘paradigm’.  
 507 I write it on the board. I explain it. They look as if they are  
 508 trying to process what I am saying but I know they are still  
 509 not sure. (Murina Co-ordinator, Ann).

510 Then she tells them her best illustration of a paradigm  
 511 shift from Covey’s (2004) book *The 7 Habits of Highly*  
 512 *Successful People*. The simple story of a man travelling  
 513 with his noisy children, after the death of their mother,  
 514 fixes in the student’s minds forever what a paradigm shift

is and how one extra fact can change your thinking and  
 your feeling and your attitude completely in a second.

**Journals: Narrative Becomes Image, Images  
 Become the Future**

Journal writing was another important tool for the stu-  
 dents to respond to material encountered in their classes,  
 in the news or events in their lives. These journals became  
 almost works of art with drawings as well as collected  
 objects and articles all woven together with future aspira-  
 tions. Some became important collections of family his-  
 tory, highly valued and proudly shared with other family  
 members. One student has written a book based on her  
 journal.

Carofiglio (2007), in his book *Reasonable Doubts*, sums  
 this up:

... facts and actions have no meaning in themselves. The  
 only thing that can mean anything is the narrative we make  
 out of those facts and actions.

We all of us . . . construct stories to give meaning to facts  
 which in themselves have none. To try and bring order out of  
 chaos.

When we get down to it, stories are all that we have.

Human beings are creatures of narrative and images.  
 Story is built into the fabric of our being. All our outcomes  
 in life are created through story. The earliest history we  
 have is story expressed through oral story-telling, through  
 art and through dance. These are the oldest and most  
 enduring of our expressions of ourselves as individuals  
 and as communities. Our thoughts flow backwards and  
 forwards from narrative which becomes image to images  
 which become narratives to create a portrait of a self-  
 fulfilling future. Our students often responded through  
 drawing first then went on to talking, sharing a story about  
 the work before proceeding to write about their feelings  
 and thoughts.

Mattingly (1998) indicates the need for narrative arises  
 at liminal points in people’s lives and that it is critical when

552 occupational therapists are working with clients whose  
 553 stories are deficient or cut short. This is also important  
 554 when working with Indigenous students, as many have  
 555 had very challenging life experiences.

556 **Creating Stories Through Doing: Seeing Ourselves**  
 557 **with Fresh Eyes**

558 While Ann focused on written words to share stories,  
 559 Brigitte the Art Coordinator provided opportunities for  
 560 students to create images to tell their stories.

561 It was important to get across the idea that all we accomplish  
 562 in our lives comes from the stories in our heads that we tell  
 563 ourselves about ourselves and how we, as educators, can help  
 564 (not do it for them - students have to do it themselves) stu-  
 565 dents to rewrite their own stories with successful outcomes,  
 566 instead of the stories of defeat and victimisation that they  
 567 often present themselves with when they first come to us.  
 568 (*Murina Art Co-ordinator, Brigitte*)

569 Brigitte mentored the students through all the pro-  
 570 cesses involved in arranging an exhibition to showcase  
 571 their work, through a series of workshops and site vis-  
 572 its. This included planning a launch, how to hang works,  
 573 preparing artist statements and creating catalogues. These  
 574 students then mentored other students to pass on the skills,  
 575 through the Volunteer, Mentor and Leadership Program to  
 576 assist students to participate in in-house solo exhibitions.  
 577 The rules were that they must do the work themselves  
 578 under supervision from the Art Coordinator. To have a  
 579 solo they had to commit to supporting the next student  
 580 exhibitor. In this way, the image they have of themselves  
 581 changes from receiving help to being leaders.

582 The following four student stories illustrate their expe-  
 583 riences and the impact of the program:

584 **Student A**

585 The image he had of himself at the start was that he could  
 586 do art, but he did not see himself as successful or, as  
 587 producing anything that people would admire or even  
 588 purchase. The story he saw of himself was as a person who  
 589 needed and received help from others.

590 Through the Volunteer Mentor and Leadership Pro-  
 591 gram he hung his first solo exhibition with help from  
 592 another student. The first change that happened was that  
 593 he saw people admiring his work and then when he sold  
 594 some of his work, he started to value himself, not as just a  
 595 student but as a working and potentially successful artist.

596 The second change that happened to this student was  
 597 when it was his turn to help hang the next students' work.  
 598 It was through this process that he started to see himself  
 599 as a leader rather than someone always needing help from  
 600 others.

601 I wasn't sure people would like my art work. Or if they would  
 602 even buy it but I know that I am good at art now.

603 This artist/student has continued to exhibit and sell his  
 604 work long after completing the program.

**Student B**

605 Student B came to our program extremely disengaged  
 606 and could not see herself achieving anything let alone a  
 607 university degree. Student B always had an interest in art  
 608 but no formal training. It took her quite some time to  
 609 progress through the Murina art units and to engage in  
 610 the Riawunna gallery program. Student B is now currently  
 611 enrolled and studying a Bachelor of Contemporary Arts  
 612 Degree through the University's Tasmanian College of the  
 613 Arts, receiving credits and passes.  
 614

615 Doing the Murina art program has changed my life; I didn't  
 616 know where I fitted in this world until I did the Murina art  
 617 program.

618 Student B is also exhibiting her work in the broader  
 619 community.

620 The Murina Art Coordinator promoted the art stu-  
 621 dents through her programs to give them opportunities to  
 622 receive public recognition and to build on their portfolios  
 623 and CVs.

**Student C**

624 Student C had a very poor self-image before coming into  
 625 the Murina art program and lacked confidence in every-  
 626 thing she did.  
 627

628 Her artwork was used on the front cover of one of our  
 629 promotional brochures; the change in her overall self-  
 630 image was an instant one; she went from 'feeling like  
 631 nobody to somebody who now has a lot to offer the world'.

**Student D**

632 Student D had long struggled with many barriers to her  
 633 education. Poor literacy skill was one of her most pressing  
 634 issues. Student D had a passion for photography and over  
 635 the past few years she used this passion to push through  
 636 these barriers. After completing the Murina art program  
 637 student D applied and was accepted into the Bachelor  
 638 of Contemporary Arts degree. With ITAS support this  
 639 student is overcoming the education barriers she faced  
 640 and succeeding.  
 641

642 Last semester I received two credits - I couldn't have done  
 643 this without the Murina Art program.

**Creating a New Story: The Next  
 644 Generation**

645 As well as creating art work students built their portfo-  
 646 lios, developed artist statements and produced a Murina  
 647 Art calendar with an annual plan of Gallery events and  
 648 exhibitions. In December 2013, the Riawunna Art Gallery  
 649 was launched with our annual Murina Art student exhibi-  
 650 tion, with more than 170 people attending. The number of  
 651 Aboriginal, UTAS and broader community people present  
 652 speaks volumes for the support of such a gallery in our  
 653 community and the student's art work was enjoyed and  
 654 praised by all.  
 655



656 The first exhibition for 2014 was Vicki West's kelp  
657 installation, which attracted more than 65 people to the  
658 opening and was admired by all. This was followed by  
659 emerging artist Will Stackhouse's amazing 3D wood and  
660 2D pictures which attracted sales and further commis-  
661 sioned work. This is an important aspect of the gallery as  
662 it can be a launching pad for Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
663 Islander artists to show their work, and contact with real  
664 role models for the students.

665 Through the care and nurturing of teachers like Ann  
666 and Brigitte to develop trust (Fugelli, 2001) a core group  
667 of confident students has been established who will be  
668 able to contribute to sustaining the gallery and the art  
669 program to support future Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
670 Islander artists. Students' stories are their own. We cannot  
671 write them. The challenge for us as teachers is to recognise  
672 the process and 'help shape endings' (Dickie, 1998).

673 Nor can we know which stories or which elements of  
674 stories will resonate with which students. Philip Jackson in  
675 Hunter and Egan's (1995) *Narrative in Teaching, Learning  
676 and Research*, states that 'there is intuition, thoughtfulness  
677 and reflection' on the part of teachers using narrative but  
678 never full knowledge of what works and what does not.

679 Our goal was to provide a quality learning experi-  
680 ence and appropriate support networks (Asmar, 2014)  
681 to ensure students had the best chance of success, in order  
682 to counter and redress their past poor educational experi-  
683 ences. What we have endeavoured to do is enable the  
684 students to create stories that speak to the whole person  
685 that can be life-changing, stories that can become images  
686 of what is possible, through finding space in the teach-  
687 ing program for the inclusion of Indigenous voices and  
688 providing a culturally safe place for our students.

## 689 Conclusion

690 As indicated by Nicholls, Crowley and Watt (1996) and  
691 Harris (1982) it is time to move on from theorising and get  
692 into action if we are to redress the inequity in higher edu-  
693 cation outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
694 students. This program enabled us to form a commu-  
695 nity of practice, to share our knowledge, skills, tools and  
696 resources to build our capacity to teach in this space and to  
697 form intercultural collegial relationships. Opportunity to  
698 meet and discuss matters relating to teaching in a challeng-  
699 ing context helped us to create a culturally safe place for  
700 both students and staff. Although the numbers involved  
701 are small there are strong indications that this innovative  
702 program can support and enhance the educational success  
703 of our students through creating interactive opportunities  
704 that are inclusive and culturally safe and also challenging  
705 and stimulating to prepare them for their future studies.  
706 With the appointment of a new Murina coordinator it is  
707 anticipated the program will continue to grow and expand  
708 over the next few years to prepare increasing numbers of  
709 successful students into the future.

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the Murina students for their dedication  
and commitment to creating a wonderful learning space  
and gallery within Riawunna.

## References

- Andersen, C. (2009). Indigenous footprints on health cur-  
riculum. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*,  
38, 41.
- Andersen, C. (2014, March). *Indigenising universities: Look-  
ing at the UTAS model*. Paper presented at the AIATSIS  
Conference Breaking Barriers in Indigenous Research and  
Thinking: 50 Years On, Canberra, Australia.
- Andersen, C., Bunda, T., & Walter, M. (2008). Indigenous  
higher education: The role of universities in releasing the  
potential. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*,  
37, 1–08.
- Asmar, C. (2014). *Indigenous teaching at Australian universi-  
ties: Research-based approaches to teaching Indigenous stu-  
dents and Indigenous curriculum*. Sydney, NSW: Australian  
Government Office for Learning and Teaching. Retrieved  
from <http://www.indigenousteaching.com/>.
- Atkinson, J. (2002). *Trauma trails, recreating song lines: The  
transgenerational effects of trauma in Indigenous Australia*  
(pp. 5–22). North Melbourne: Spinifex Press.
- Attwood, B., & Markus, A. (1999). *The struggle for Aboriginal  
rights*. Sydney NSW Australia: Allen and Unwin.
- Australian Human Rights Commission. (1997). *Bringing  
them home: The 'Stolen Children' Report*. Commonwealth  
of Australia. Retrieved from [http://www.humanrights.  
gov.au/publications/bringing-them-home-report-1997](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/bringing-them-home-report-1997).
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2011). *The health  
and welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander people*. Canberra: Author.
- Bennett, A., Hodges, B., Kavanagh, K., Fagan, S., Hartley, J., &  
Schofield, N. (2012). 'Hard' and 'soft' aspects of learning  
as investment. *Widening Participation & Lifelong Learning*,  
14(3), 141–156.
- Bessarab, D., & Ng'andu, B. (2010). Yarning about yarning as  
a legitimate method in Indigenous research. *International  
Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 3(1), 37–50.
- Biddle, N., Hunter, B.H., & Schwab, R.G. (2004). Mapping  
Indigenous education participation. *CAEPR Discussion  
Paper No. 276*. Canberra, ACT: Australian National Uni-  
versity.
- Bin-Sallik, M.A. (Ed). (2000). *Aboriginal women by degrees:  
Their stories of the journey towards academic achievement*.  
Brisbane: University of Queensland Press.
- Boellen, C., & Wollard, B. (2009). Social accountability and  
accreditation: A new frontier for educational institutions.  
*Medical Education*, 43, 887–894.
- Carofiglio, G. (2007). *Reasonable doubts*. (Howard Curtis,  
Trans.). London: Bitter Lemon Press.
- Castellano, M. (2004). Ethics of Aboriginal research. *Journal  
of Aboriginal Health* (January), 98–114.

- 764 Centre for the Study of Higher Education (2008). *Participation and equity. A review of the participation in higher*  
765 *education of people from low socioeconomic backgrounds*  
766 *and Indigenous people*. Melbourne: Centre for the Study  
767 of Higher Education, University of Melbourne.  
768
- 769 Chandler, M.J, Lalonde, C.E, Sokol, B.W., & Hallett, D.  
770 (2003). Personal persistence, identity development, and  
771 suicide: A study of native and non-native north American  
772 adolescents. *Monographs of the Society for Research in*  
773 *Child Development*, 68(2).
- 774 Covey, S.R. (2004). *The 7 habits of highly successful people: Restoring the character ethic*. New York: Free Press.  
775
- 776 Denning, S. (2007). *The secret language of leadership: How leaders inspire action through narrative*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.  
777  
778
- 779 Dewey, J. (1886). Soul and body. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 43, 239–  
780 263.
- 781 Dickie, V. (1998). Narratives in education and practice. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 54, 227–229.  
782
- 783 Dockery, A.M. (2013). *Cultural dimensions of Indigenous participation in vocational education and training: New perspectives*. Adelaide: NCVER.  
784  
785
- 786 DOHA. (2012). *Aboriginal and torres strait islander health performance framework 2012 Report*. Canberra: Department  
787 of Health and Ageing, Commonwealth of Australia.  
788
- 789 Fredericks, B., Adams, K., Finlay, S., Fletcher, G., Andy, S.,  
790 Briggs, L., Briggs, L., & Hall, R. 2011. Engaging the practice of yarning in action research. *ALAR Journal*, 17(2),  
791 7–19.  
792
- 793 Fredericks, B., Clapham, K., Bainbridge, R., Collard, L.,  
794 Adams, M., Bessarab, D., Andersen, C., Duthie, D., Ball, R.,  
795 Thompson, M., & Daniels, C. (2014), Ngulluck katitj wah  
796 koorl koorliny/us mob going along learning to research  
797 together: Drawing on action research to develop a literature  
798 review on Indigenous gendered health and well-being. *Action Learning Action Research Journal*, 20(2),  
799 89–113.  
800
- 801 Fugelli, P. (2001). Trust- in general practice, *British Journal of General Practice*, 51, 575–579. Retrieved from  
802 <http://folk.uio.no/pfugelli/artikler/trust.htm>.  
803
- 804 Gunnestad, A. (2006). Resilience in a cross-cultural perspective. How resilience is generated in different cultures. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, (Issue 11). Retrieved from <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr11/gunnestad.htm>.  
805  
806  
807  
808
- 809 Harris, S. (1982). The main features of Aboriginal learning processes. In J. Sherwood (Ed.), *Aboriginal education: Issues and innovation* (pp. 129–34). Perth: Creative Research.  
810  
811  
812
- 813 Have, Pt. (1990). Methodological issues in conversational analysis, *Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique*, Nr. 27  
814 (June), 23–51. Retrieved from <http://www.paultenhavenl/mica.htm>.  
815  
816
- 817 Havemann, P. (1999). *Indigenous peoples' rights in Australia, Canada & New Zealand*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.  
818  
819
- Hunter, M., & Egan, K. (Eds.) (1995). *Narrative in teaching, learning and research*. New York: Teachers College Press.  
820  
821  
822
- Hunter, B.H., & Schwab, R.G. (2003). Practical reconciliation and continuing disadvantage in Indigenous education. *The Drawing Board: An Australian Review of Public Affairs*, 4(2), 84–98.  
823  
824  
825  
826
- IHER. (2012). *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.innovation.gov.au/TertiaryEducation/HigherEducation/ReviewofIHER/Pages/default.aspx>.  
827  
828  
829  
830  
831
- Inoue, N. (2012). *Mirrors of the mind: Introduction to mindful ways of thinking education*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.  
832  
833  
834
- Kovach, M. (2010). The First Peoples child & family. *Review*, 5(1), Retrieved from <http://journals.sfu.ca/fpcffr/index.php/FPCFR/article/viewFile/172/14>.  
835  
836  
837
- Lalonde, C.E. (2006). Identity formation and cultural resilience in Aboriginal communities. In R.J. Flynn, P. Duding and J. Barber (Eds.) *Promoting resilience in child welfare* (pp. 52–67). Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.  
838  
839  
840  
841
- Liddle, C. (2014). Australian Universities don't value their Indigenous students and staff. Retrieved from [http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/jul/10/australian-universities-do-not-value-indigenous-students?CMP=twt\\_gu](http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/jul/10/australian-universities-do-not-value-indigenous-students?CMP=twt_gu).  
842  
843  
844  
845  
846
- Mattingly, C. (1998). *Healing dramas and clinical plots: The narrative structure of experience*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.  
847  
848  
849
- Mezirow, J. (1997). A critical theory of adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 32(1), 3–4.  
850  
851
- Nicholls, C., Crowley, V., & Watt, R. (1996). Theorising Aboriginal education: Surely it's time to move on? *Education Australia*, 33, 6–9.  
852  
853  
854
- Palmer, P.J. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of the teacher's life* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.  
855  
856  
857
- Pechenkina, E., & Anderson, I. (2011). *Background paper on Indigenous Australian Higher Education: Trends, Initiatives and Policy Implications*. Retrieved from [http://sydney.edu.au/documents/about/higher\\_education/2011/20110930%20IndigenousHigherEducationReview-ReseachPaper.pdf](http://sydney.edu.au/documents/about/higher_education/2011/20110930%20IndigenousHigherEducationReview-ReseachPaper.pdf).  
858  
859  
860  
861  
862  
863
- Pechenkina, E., Kowal, E., & Paradies, Y. (2011). Indigenous Australian students' participation rates in higher education: Exploring the role of universities. *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 40, 59–68.  
864  
865  
866  
867
- RCIADIC. (1991). Royal commission into aboriginal deaths in custody. 1(28). Retrieved from <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/national/vol1/>.  
868  
869  
870
- Rigney, L.-I. (1999). Internationalization of an indigenous anticolonial critique of research methodologies: A guide to Indigenist research methodology and its principles. *Wicazo sa Review*, (Emergent Ideas in Native American Studies), 14(2), 109–121.  
871  
872  
873  
874  
875

- 876 Rose, M. (1990). *Healing hurt minds the peper harow experi-*  
877 *ence*. London: Routledge. 889
- 878 Trudgen, R. (2000). *Why warriors lie down and die*. Darwin: 890  
879 Aboriginal Resource and Development Inc. Indigenous women's health: The Indigenous women's  
880 Sacks, O. (2008). *Musicophilia: Tales of music and the brain*. 891  
881 New York: Alfred A. Knopf. wellness study. *Health Care for Women International*,  
882 Sennett, R. (2008). *The craftsman*. London: Penguin. 892  
883 Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and* 893  
884 *Indigenous peoples*. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of 35(10).  
885 Otago Press. World Health Organisation. (2008). *Closing the gap in a*  
886 Tinto, V. (2008). Access without support is not 894  
887 opportunity. Retrieved from [https://www.insidehighered.](https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2008/06/09/tinto) 895  
888 [com/views/2008/06/09/tinto](https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2008/06/09/tinto). *Health equity through action on the social*  
896 *determinants of health*. Retrieved from [http://whqlibdoc.](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2008/WHO_IER_CSDH_08.1_eng.pdf) 897  
898 [who.int/hq/2008/WHO\\_IER\\_CSDH\\_08.1\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2008/WHO_IER_CSDH_08.1_eng.pdf).  
899 Zautra, A.J., Hall, J.S., & Murray, K.E. (2010). Resilience: A  
900 new definition of health for people and communities. In  
901 J.W. Reich, A.J. Zautra, & J.S. Hall (Eds.), *Handbook of Adult Resilience* (pp. 3–34). New York: Guilford.

### About the Authors

**Clair Andersen** has Yanyuwa and Gunggalida clan connections in the Gulf country of Northern Australia. She began her education in the Northern Territory before continuing her schooling in Tasmania, where she completed a Bachelor of Education at the University of Tasmania. Currently, Clair is the Aboriginal Higher Education Advisor at University of Tasmania and her research interests are in improving education and training pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the development of appropriate learning resources.

**Ann Edwards** is a graduate of the University of Wales and the former coordinator the Murina (bridging) program within Riawunna at the University of Tasmania. Ann is committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher education, and continues to provide mentoring to many students on a voluntary basis.

**Brigitte Wolfe** is a Bundjalung woman from New South Wales who has lived in Tasmania for most of her life where she has raised her three children. Brigitte graduated in 2014 with a Bachelor of Contemporary Arts and is studying Honours in 2015. In conjunction with her own studies, Brigitte taught Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students contemporary art through the Murina enabling program and also set up an art gallery within the Riawunna Centre on the Newnham campus in Launceston. Her aim was to provide a space for the Community and for Murina art students to exhibit in a culturally safe and inexpensive environment. Brigitte also developed a volunteer, mentor and leadership program which supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in diverse ways and formed an advisory committee for the gallery comprised of prominent Aboriginal Elders and art workers.

902