Indigenous Knowledges in Latin America and Australia:
Locating Epistemologies, Difference and Dissent Conference
December 8-10, 2011

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Abstract: "*Indigenous On-Line Cultural Teaching & Sharing*"

This paper will look at a project being implemented through the Koori Centre, via an Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Grants 2011, "*Indigenous On-Line Cultural Teaching & Sharing*". The project aims to turn an already existing workshop, the 'Kinship' presentation which is the intellectual property of Lynette Riley, into an interactive on-line experience for all students and staff of the University of Sydney; as well as developing a sharing portal for other Indigenous people to incorporate their stories and experiences: cultural, historical and educational. We will be using the voices of Indigenous Australian students and elders to express the knowledge of their culture in a comparative and affirmative context. An interface for uploading audio and video has been generated to combine example stories from different perspectives. These will be used in an online interactive game embedding Indigenous knowledges and values within different professional learning contexts such as law, health, and education. In discussing this project the paper will also deliberate the following questions: Why is Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge relevant in the university sector? How can Australian Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge be imparted to a larger student body?

Paper: *"Indigenous On-Line Cultural Teaching & Sharing"*
Presented by: Dr Janet Mooney, Ms Lynette Riley and Dr Cat Kutay

In commencing this project we needed to explore three key questions:
1. What is the purpose of a university?
2. Why is Indigenous Cultural Knowledge relevant in the university sector?
3. How can Australian Indigenous Cultural Knowledge be imparted to a larger student body?

Introduction

In asking ourselves what is the purpose of a University, if our response at its most basic level is to state it is a centre for the transmission of knowledge and research of cultural and social systems, both within its established location and of other nations; we should ask where the visual presence of Indigenous knowledges and their epistemologies reside. If we do not see a wide reflection of the diverse cultural foundations of that Nation then one could contend that the educational and research transmissions are mono-cultural.

The Australian Higher Education Support Act (2003) states that:
> The Australian higher education system is seen to make a fundamental contribution to the future of Australia and plays a vital role in Australia's intellectual, economic, cultural and social development. The higher education sector educates our future professional workforce, creates future leaders, provides jobs for Australians, drives much of our economic and regional success, and facilitates cultural and trade links with other countries. The sector plays a key role in the growing knowledge and innovation based economic health of Australia. It enriches our social and environmental landscape and promotes the tolerance debate that underpins Australian society.

The AHESA (2003) further states:
> the current legislative basis for Australian Government funding of higher education, are:
> a) to support a higher education system that:
> (i) is characterised by quality, diversity and equity of access; and
> (ii) contributes to the development of cultural and intellectual life in Australia;   and
> (iii) is appropriate to meet Australia's social and economic needs for a highly educated and skilled population; and
>
> b) to support the distinctive purposes of universities, which are:
> (i) the education of persons, enabling them to take a leadership role in the intellectual, cultural, economic and social development of their communities; and
> (ii)   the   creation   and   advancement   of   knowledge;   and

(iii) the application of knowledge and discoveries to the betterment of communities in Australia and internationally;

(iv) recognising that universities are established under laws of the Commonwealth, the States and the Territories that empower them to achieve their objectives as autonomous institutions through governing bodies that are responsible for both the university's overall performance and its ongoing independence; and

c) to strengthen Australia's knowledge base, and enhance the contribution of Australia's research capabilities to national economic development, international competitiveness and the attainment of social goals; and

d) to support students undertaking higher education."

In appraisal of these roles it is clear that universities are expected to reflect the whole community and not simply one social or cultural sector. Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge is relevant to the whole of University, not just the Indigenous students. The project described in this paper was developed in line with the government objectives of "promoting and supporting strategic change in higher education institutions for the enhancement of learning and teaching" (ALTC) through developing a framework for cultural awareness training with high community involvement; and providing e-learning tools to enable other projects to link their stories in this format, and embed the learning in mainstream courses.

When viewed in conjunction with the 'The National Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Education Policy' (Australian Government), which has four major goals with 21 aims, it is imperative that Indigenous communities and their cultures are embedded in university teachings. The project discussed in this paper, is best reflected under, Major Goal 4 - Equitable and Appropriate Educational Outcomes, within aim 8: "To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity" and aim 9 "To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures"

Additionally a key process within Australian education is one of decolonisation which involves hearing, recognising and accepting the experience of Indigenous people (Green et al, 2008), this must also be incorporated into tertiary learning.

> It also would appear that there is a need for greater understanding of the cultural values and identity of contemporary Aboriginal societies, even amongst teachers who are active supporters of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Studies education.
> (Craven et al, 2005a p.61)

The project is to impart this Cultural Knowledge to the broader student body, many of who will work with Aboriginal employees or clients during their professional life. The project will develop an online version of an interactive workshop introducing Aboriginal Kinship, roles and reciprocal responsibilities,

using narratives for learning, through an interactive role-play game developed by Lynette Riley in 1987. Also role-play games will be used to teach about traditional Kinship and explore relationships through language and traditional affiliations. It shows how these elements form individual identity and relationships with others, enabling students to understand the complexity and sophistication of Aboriginal Kinship ties and to understand how different cultural priories often lead to conflict.

Kinship Presentation

The presentation is an introduction to Aboriginal Kinship, roles and reciprocal responsibilities and is of 1.5 hours duration. Participants are taken through a Kinship system replicating the components of moiety, totem, Skin Names, language and traditional affiliations, and individual identity, pre-contact.

Through this presentation participants come to:
- Understand the complexity and sophistication of Aboriginal Kinship.
- Identify differing levels of relationship.
- Understand how the reciprocal-bonds of relationship work.

Aboriginal people traditionally lived across Australia, traded and were affiliated with one another through very strict Laws of relationship and obligations. These responsibilities were not recognised by the invaders. Hence, the main focus of the workshop is to allow participants to experience the historical conflict between Aboriginal cultures and the colonists.

Aboriginal Australians were multi-cultural long before the "white man" came to Australia, which made the situation in Australia more complex than was recognised by white society. There were over 500 different Nations across Australia with different languages, social structures and modes of behaviour, but with many common denominators. Specifically Kinship, Connections to Country and Religious ties were central to social structures.

Through a series of role plays and discussion, the participants will begin to see why Aboriginal people face particular problems when interacting with the (colonial) Australian social, service delivery agencies and legal systems.

The Law Reform Commission of Western Australia Report *Aboriginal Customary Laws* (Final Report, The interaction of WA law with Aboriginal law and culture, Project 94, September 2006, p. 66) highlighted the importance of Kinship to Aboriginal people:

> *"Kinship is at the heart of Aboriginal society and underpins the customary law rules and norms... Importantly, kinship governs all aspects of a person's social behaviour... It is important to note...that while the kinship system was an undeniable part of traditional Aboriginal society...it is also strongly instilled in contemporary Aboriginal*

society, including urban Aboriginals...certain kinship obligations, such as the duty to accommodate kin, are taken very seriously regardless of urban or remote location."

This presentation assists understandings with contemporary Aboriginal relationships and their importance in today's social structures.

Although the Kinship systems throughout Australia are extremely varied and it is not possible in the workshop presentation to examine the differences between them, participants in the presentation gain a new and deeper understanding of how Kinship systems operate.

By the end of the presentation participants will have gained insight into:
- The social structure of Aboriginal society.
- How this social structure and world view differs from the western liberal world view.
- How this difference impacts upon Aboriginal people in the social systems which operate in Australia, such as: through education, criminal justice systems and the legal system more broadly.

The presentation has been of interest to:
- Educators.
- Legal practitioners in Criminal Law, Family Law and Care and Protection (the 2-hour workshop is worth 2 CLE points).
- Government personnel who interact with Aboriginal Australians (especially DOCS, Juvenile Justice and Corrective Services).
- Organisations who work with or for Aboriginal people.
- The Magistracy and Judiciary.
- Police.
- Students.
- Anyone who wants to know more about Aboriginal Australians.

Teaching Process

We describe here some of the aspects of teaching used to develop the online workshop. First we took a workshop that had proven success, and needed to be extended for the purposes of online interaction. We then focused on providing an immersive narrative learning environment, for sharing Aboriginal knowledge. Finally we have been meeting with professionals, trainers and community to develop the teaching framework for the final online video and game system.

Topic of workshop suitable for instruction
The Kinship presentation has proved to be extremely effective over many years of presentation and has been used in cross-cultural in community settings as well as teaching programs in Schools, TAFE and University but is reliant on the availability of one person, Lynette Riley, Koori Centre, Sydney University who owns the intellectual property. Hence we are using online learning to extend the range

of this workshop, and online narrative submission to enable more people to add their experiences to the workshop for developing games in the form of role plays.

Immersion in Narrative

We have chosen to use a narrative teaching style as this is the process used by traditional Aboriginal teachers within the context of sharing Aboriginal knowledge. Also this provided the opportunity to use narratives from Aboriginal students, staff and community members to convey Aboriginal knowledge to non-Aboriginal students. The teaching of culture would be invalid without the contributions of Aboriginal contributors 'translating' their experiences into the new context (Ramsey and Walker, 2010). In particular, we need to reverse the present 'systemic undervaluing of local knowledge and Aboriginal culture, a deeply ingrained unwillingness to "see" more sophisticated Aboriginal knowledge and processes' (Yunkaporta, 2009, 105). Battiste (2002) argues that integrating the voices and experiences of Aboriginal people into mainstream education creates a balanced centre from which to analyse European culture and learning. This supports an online teaching approach that uses storytelling and interactive gaming.

These narratives form an effective way to teach non-Aboriginal students (Egan, 1998; Blakesley, 2010; Andrews, 2010) and respect traditional storytelling methods (Bradley, 2010). This work is based on a constructivist approach to teaching and learning which presumes students learn through active construction of their own knowledge rather than by memorising or absorbing ideas from presentations by their teachers (Hanley, 1994). This suggests a student centred approach based on learning through experimentation, such as interactive games.

Teaching Framework

The aim of this project is to develop a pedagogical framework that takes into account Indigenous epistemology both in methods and content, so that education will be a process that builds on Indigenous cultures and identity (NAEC, 1985). In particular we are working with Indigenous students who are 'traversing the cultural interface' (Nakata, 2002, p. 9) and whose stories reveal the consequences of interchanges with Western 'ways of knowing'. Also we will use the stories from non-Aboriginal professionals who have learnt from their work experience. This framework will be developed through discussion with community members, University teaching staff and Aboriginal students. This will provide the design for the online workshop and the game scenarios These scenarios will give students the opportunity to select games relating to a range of service delivery areas; and across a number of Aboriginal communities.

Embedding Indigenous Knowledge in mainstream courses

The collection of Indigenous knowledge is an ongoing project and is particularly relevant to university education. However it has always been difficult to use this knowledge in mainstream teaching. We are connecting to previous ALTC projects involved in collecting Indigenous stories, and using their teaching strategies to advise our teaching framework for using Indigenous knowledge as transformative material in game scenarios.

We also ensure we utilise previous efforts in this area by linking our work to other projects collecting Indigenous narratives at University. However we also extend previous work by embedding the workshop in University courses, which is vital if they are to be useful in teaching and learning.

Software Development

Collection of Knowledge

While much of the aim of the Australian Government's recent 'Closing the Gap' policy in education is to encourage Indigenous students at tertiary institutions to study mainstream courses, their learning will be enhanced by a better understanding of where their prior cultural learning fits into the broad spectrum of learning styles and cultural practices (Willmot, 2010). We will be collecting the student's narratives during computer workshops and we will ask them to explain their experience to the non-Aboriginal students through their stories. This process also enables greater respect for the learner as knowledge holder (Grzega, & Schöner, 2008). The site will be a combination of Aboriginal people's experience, including those of students and staff at the University of Sydney, Koori Centre and Aboriginal Elders, forming a community narrative.

This project brings together Aboriginal staff at the Koori Centre and non-Aboriginal academic staff in professional teaching areas across the university to collaborate with open source software development at UNSW. Progress on the software and teaching goals will be verified with our technical and cultural reference groups.
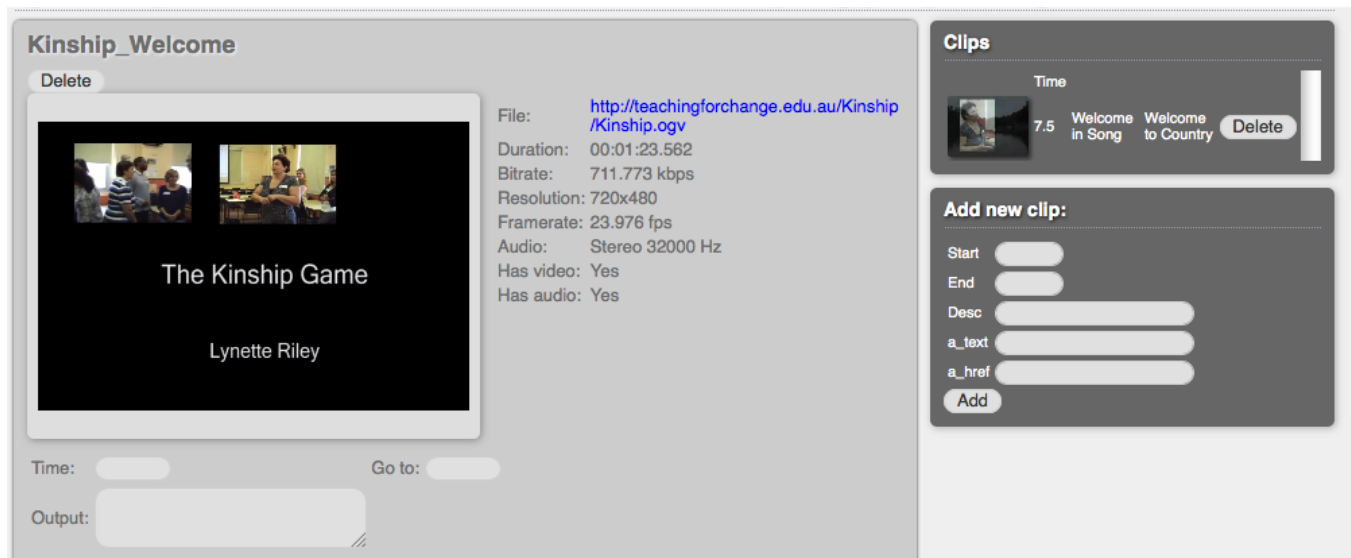

Figure 1 Annotation interface adapted from Arkaiv by Denis Crowdy University of Macquarie

Video Introduction as focus material

In the first stage of the project a video of the original Kinship workshop provides the main focus for the story narratives, to be extended by the Aboriginal staff and students' experiences. These new stories

are uploaded to the website repository and linked to the original video. We are using Annodex media annotation tools to enable audio and video material to be linked online.

Aboriginal Elders and students will be assisted by staff to investigate how their prior cultural learning relates to the broad spectrum of learning and cultural practices at the university and in their profession. Their stories will initially be linked with segments of the video (see Figure 1), and tagged with aspects such as the author's identity, the location of the story and whether the experience is 'within culture' or 'between culture'.

The contributors are aware their narratives will be used for teaching others and this has the benefit of validating their expert knowledge and identity (Willmot, 2010; Mooney & Craven, 2006) as their knowledge will be incorporated later within the games. This will help tag and define where the stories fit within the games as they are developed

Flexible Repository
The first version of the workshop already allows us to insert further information at points in the video, so that the students can view these when they reach that point in the video. This allows us to continually update the focus material from other resources. The final collection of workshop and stories will provide a repository of material. A Teaching Handbook will be provided on the site to enable University Staff to use the workshop in their teaching and select the stories or comments they wish to make public to their students. They will be provided tools to develop scenarios from a range of options and will assigned the selected stores to a scenario game.

Students who participate in workshop training will be able to enter the scenarios and will transverse these as a game, where this range of comments will inform them of different peoples experience relevant to that scenario. The repository of stories can be continually updated so that the stories in each game will be regularly refreshed. We are still designing how to move from narratives linked to the focus material, and the games.

Game format

The development of all user interfaces will use modular designs so that different focus material can be used for implementation within other courses. At present we are focusing on uploading and linking video and audio material. Also we can 'clip' and annotate the video so the workshop can be presented online in segments. At the end of each segment either a video of a small face-to-face role play will be shown online, or later, a game will be offered where the student can go through the scenario interactively.

When playing a game, students will select their thematic interest (eg law, education, social work) and be assigned a Kinship position. As students navigate this world with their avatar, they will encounter other users' stories in different Kinship roles, and move between various scenarios set up by the trainer (see Figure 2 below).

An example scenario would be giving a student a job as a legal representative in the community. They would travel to the community, and the people they elect to see will be monitored. IF they fail to see relevant people, or fail to consider pertinent issues, such as does their translator have the right to speak to their client, they will start to be told 'out of culture' or conflictive stories and realise they will not be able to pursue their work. They will then have to take action or restart game, to get back into culture and hear the 'cultural stories' to help them carry out their work.
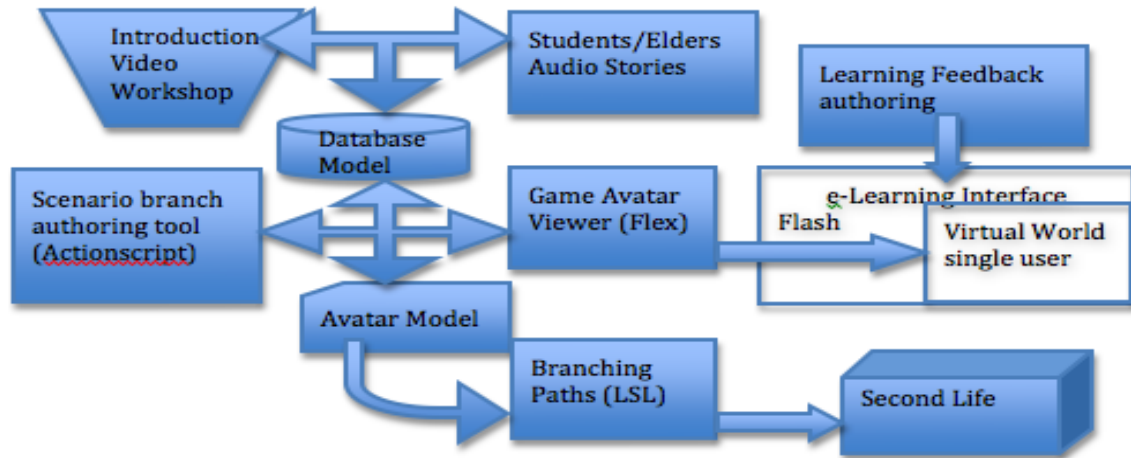

Figure 2 Architecture for learning design with Model View Control (MVC) separation

We also hope to develop a select number of avatars for the Second Life system to extend the game to multi user forma. This will be a feasibility study for future online collaborative workshops, with the potential for Indigenous communities and students providing live feedback to non-Indigenous students, on their experience.

The gaming system will use separate tools for scenario modelling and teacher feedback (see Figure 2 row 2), using the experience from other game based e-learning system such as <e-Adventure> and modular online learning and assessment tools such as Adaptive E-Learning (Ben-Naim et al, 2008).

Need for the Project

The project supports the principles of:
- Cultural diversity in our student population through exposure to alternative experiences.
- Long-term change through professional development through all courses. By involving staff across three university faculties, we will collect relevant material in each domain. Teaching staff can use this workshop to stimulate discussion of different ways of knowing, and different knowledge systems.
- Collaboration across different faculties at Sydney University with the Koori Centre and community groups to develop curriculum goals on Aboriginal knowledge sharing, and with staff involved in similar

projects across Australia.

By providing such material as an online course we are considering:
(i).   The importance of Indigenous people's stories to explain the significance of cultural differences and thus validate the knowledge of Indigenous people.
(ii).   The value of a repository of resources for Aboriginal students to share with non-Aboriginal peers on different approaches to culture within the community, and the need for a regular update of the repository, including real-time interactions in multi-player games.
(iii).   The wide range of issues that exist as cultural variations, and the opportunity provided by the web to provide tools to support course development in such areas (Kutay and Mundine, 2011).

At the same time we acknowledge that the experience of Aboriginal people is highly varied, and that Elders, staff and students will want to present different aspects of this experience. Existing courses in Aboriginal Studies for education students have a diverse range of foci across teaching institutions (Craven et al, 2005) which can be supported by enabling teachers and lecturers to create their own learning scenarios.

Evaluation Framework

The project will provide the opportunity to evaluate software developed for e-learning in this domain. This will be published and provide guidance for others teaching online in the area of cultural studies and Indigenous knowledge. The process of evaluation is important, as it is an iterative process that enables the software and teaching framework to be developed in close consultation with the partner organisations and community groups. An external evaluator Sally O'Sullivan from the Batchelor institute of Indigenous Studies has been appointed in the initial stage of the project as a critical friend to guide the project. The evaluation of the work will be based on:
• The development of a clear teaching framework as a basis for the modules
• The development of a successful tool for teaching the modules

We will also collect formative evaluation throughout the project to include:
• Mapping the progress of the project against the objectives and outcomes at regular stages
• Mapping the process of the development of the workshop and narratives against the teaching framework as it is developed
• A pilot of the workshop and the games at various stages through the project to provide critique and improvement
• Evaluative questionnaires during workshops

As well as the questionnaires to the students on their learning experience, we will ask the staff similar questions, and the project team will use these to inform their work. The questions will vary according to the focus taken by the students at each workshop, and the issues they raise as significant.

Collaboration

An important aspect of the project is the level of collaboration involved. The main collaboration is between the Koori Centre and Academic teaching staff at Sydney University and Computer Science and Engineering Staff at UNSW who specialise in open source web services for learning. We will also collaborate later in the project with other university projects for dissemination of Indigenous knowledge within their tertiary education programs. Furthermore, the project is collaboration between community and University staff, enabling the input from Indigenous people in the community into University teaching, where the silence on Indigenous knowledge and learning is

Conclusion

Whilst this is a new venture in translating a cultural awareness presentation into an interactive on-line process, it is hoped to be able to convey a sense of engagement and understanding of Aboriginal culture; and on-going relevance of contact to all Australians, whilst providing a voice for Indigenous Australians through an interactive web service. We believe it is important to include Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge within the university sector in a manner that respects the Aboriginal students at university as experts, and that this should be done in a way that allows all students to benefit from this Knowledge. For too long the majority of Australians have been ignorant of their national heritage in this area. Yet this knowledge and its teaching supports the development of respectful relationships with other people, animals and the land.

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