This is the original version of the article that was translated into Finnish and published in the Futura journal as *Minniecon, Cherie & Ivana Milojevic (2022): Alkuperäiskansojen perinteisten kansojen tietämys ja näkemykset: kahden tutkijan vuoropuhelua tulevaisuudentutkimuksen tämänhetkisistä ja nousevista diskursseista, Futura 3/2022, s. 4-15*[1].

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Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge and Views: A Dialogue in the Context of the Contemporary and Emerging Futures Discourses

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The authors acknowledge that this paper was written on the land of the Gubbi Gubbi, Turrbal and the Jagera Peoples and pay respects to the people of these lands and their knowledges that have sustained these places and all that is connected to it for thousands and thousands of years and who activate the possibilities of their ancestors for the generations to come.

Introduction

Positioning. Cherie Minniecon

There is energy and excitement about Indigenous and traditional knowledges and how it can help save the world from collapse scenarios and be integrated into future thinking and foresight processes. When I was asked to contribute to this article, I felt hesitant. I felt hesitant because a familiar feeling of disillusionment has been sitting with me amongst all this excitement as I have observed that the same enthusiasm is

1 Editors: Sanna Ketonen-Oksi & Hazel Salminen (Special Issue: “Unohdetut tulevaisuudet, sivuutetut äänet”, Engl. “Forgotten futures, ignored voices”). Publisher: The Finnish Society for Futures Studies (tutuseura@gmail.com).

not evident when it comes to Indigenous-led resistance efforts in the present – to protect these very desired knowledges and the people and places it derives from which could create the alternative futures that many are yearning for. The future is now in these very places of struggle and resistance. And thus it makes me question, for whom do we want this knowledge? For whose future?

I am a Yorta Yorta woman from a unique stretch of forest-wetlands in what is otherwise known as the central Murray Goulburn region in Victoria and what is currently known as Australia. I am also the descendant of a Stolen Generation survivor (the Stolen Generation is the period between 1910-1970s where many First Nations children were removed from their families as a result of government policies). As a result of ideological and institutional oppressive structures, my family history has been one of dispossession from family, land and language. My whole life experience has been the process of reconnection, healing relationships, learning and grieving.

There are many people and resources out there focused on decolonising research and ethical engagement with Indigenous peoples. For example, *True Tracks* by Terri Janke, a Meriam and Wuthathi lawyer, who writes on respecting Indigenous knowledge, or *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Story Work as Methodology* by Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan and Jason De Santolo. There are many voices (that have been) speaking on this issue for many years, way before it became popular to turn to during this time of collapse. A part of me felt that there is not much for me to add that has not been said and is not already out there to learn and engage with.

Eventually, I decided on co-writing this with Ivana not because I view myself as someone who has all the answers – I don't. I am writing this based on my lived experiences and as someone who has studied and participated in futures work and sat on the edges of the futures and foresight community since 2014. This contribution is thus based on my own personal observations, reflections.

Consequently, I decided to approach this paper from the angle of someone who has undertaken futures studies, observed and participated in many futures workshops, processes and community gatherings and as someone who sits with the tensions that this paper is about the everyday of my existence.

Context and Intention. Ivana Milojević

I am writing this on the land of the Turrbal and the Jagera Peoples, in Meanjin, otherwise known as Brisbane, Australia.

When I arrived to Australia from (now non-existent) Yugoslavia in 1994, I knew hardly anything about the First Nations that inhibited Australian continent prior to colonisation. And I was not required to know anything, main requirement being integration or assimilation into the mainstream Anglo-Celtic Australian society. To this day, one can still choose to ignore both history and ethics in present-day Australia. At the same time, things are changing. Protocols are being observed and acted on. Incorporating Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country (such as at the beginning of my introduction here) is becoming more and more mainstream in meetings, gatherings, and events. In today's Australia, incorporating and upholding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols is seen as part of a Reconciliation and a critical reminder that "every day we live, work, and dream on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands" (Reconciliation Australia n.d.). This is because:

> *Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have always been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Boundaries were clear, and crossing into another group's Country required a request for permission to enter. When permission was granted the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage and protection of their spiritual being during the journey. Visitors had to respect the protocols and rules of the land owner group while on their Country. Today, while these protocols have been adapted to contemporary circumstances, the essential elements remain: welcoming visitors and respect for Country* (Reconciliation Australia n.d.).

However, there is resistance to these protocols, even backlash exists. Many in Australia would still like to continue ignoring facts-based (also genocidal-colonising) history and provide the alternative (euphemistic) discourses of 'discovery' and 'settlement'. To this day, children in Australian primary schools learn about non-Indigenous 'explorers', 'trailblazers' and 'pioneers' whose names continue to be used for Australian cities, roads, institutions and landmarks. Not surprisingly, 26 January – the official National Day of Australia which marks the 1788 landing of the British 'First Fleet' – is also always accompanied by large protests, under the

reframing of the Invasion Day and the motto of “Always was, always will be Aboriginal land” and “Sovereignty never ceded” the protests have increased in size and impact. The issue remains divisive, both in terms of how and when Australia Day is to be celebrated or if it should be celebrated at all.

Moreover, the very discourse of Reconciliation has been challenged by numerous Indigenous scholars, activists and elders. For example, Indigenous Australian media personality and teacher Ernie Dingo (2016) writes:

> *Reconciliation is not for Aboriginal people. Reconcile the injustices that your forefathers have done, sit down, think about it, talk about it, get it out of the way and we'll acknowledge your apology and move on. You want to bridge the gap? Try it from our angle.*

Aboriginal elder Wadjularbinna Nullyarimma (2016, 19) similarly argues that some aspects of Reconciliation are an effort by the Australian government to “conceal what they are [still] doing to us – stealing our lands, harming our people and destroying our culture”. This is an effort “to fool Australians and the rest of the world into believing that we accept reconciliation. But we do not” (ibid.). Moreover:

> *Reconciliation Place is about creating a ‘warm and fuzzy’ feeling for the government and Australians in general. It is not recognition of our grief and pain. It can never heal our pain, suffering and trauma, but, instead, will be a constant reminder of the evil acts of the colonists, whom we believe are the Masters of Terrorism, oppressing many Peoples around the world. …. There can be no reconciliation without justice. When all of these issues are dealt with, reconciliation will happen automatically and they will not have to build monuments to prove [it].*

Navigating the conflict around Reconciliation or National Australia Day as well as on issues such as Indigenous deaths in custody, the ongoing removal of Indigenous children from their families, and continued social, cultural, political and economic marginalisation of Indigenous people is not easy for anybody, and it is especially difficult for relatively recent arrivals. There is a steep, often uncomfortable, learning curve, providing, of course, one is to choose the learning rather than the

denying path. The learning curve is commonly accompanied by uncertainties, confusion and both emotional and cognitive discomfort.

In the remaining parts of this article, my intention and goal are to try to normalise that these reactions are a part of the learning process when engaging with Indigenous knowledge and issues. This is because of the need to acknowledge history truthfully, work towards socially just and 'good' societies upon which a creation of liveable/sustainable/ethical presents and futures depends. I make this effort in partnership with Cherie, whose lived experience, I believe, 'checks and balances' my more text-based and theoretical leanings.

Should non-indigenous futurists even engage with indigenous knowledge?

I (Cherie) was sitting in a futures forum and a futures practitioner was sharing a story about how a futures colleague and facilitator had been run out of a community workshop in Africa. This is not an isolated story in the futures and foresight community. I remember the person relaying the story being genuinely confused and very blind to why this may have happened but also assuming that this community didn't know how to do "futures work".

As a non-indigenous futurist (Ivana), I discuss the sub-heading question and then we continue to provide some pointers in relation to the ethics and guiding rules of this engagement.

Let's start with the above-mentioned dilemma of whether non-indigenous futurists should engage with the concept of 'indigenous knowledge' and in knowledge production that takes this knowledge into account. In order to not 'reinvent the wheel', we summarise critical points by Ladislaus M. Semali and Joe, L. Kincheloe's seminar *What is Indigenous Knowledge? Voices from the Academy* (1999). Concretely, they argue that (1999, 2):

> *Western scholars and cultural workers concerned with the plight of indigenous*[2] *peoples and their knowledges are faced with a set of dilemmas. Not only must they avoid essentialism and its accompanying romanticization of the indigene, but they must sidestep the traps that transform their attempts at facilitation*

2 Indigenous – in small letters – here refers to the original inhabitants globally. When referring to Indigenous Australians, the Australian protocol requires always capitalising Indigenous and Aboriginal (Monash University, n.d.).

> *into further marginalization. Walking the well–intentioned road to hell, Western scholars dedicated to the best interests of indigenous peoples often unwittingly participate in the Western hegemonic process. The question: how can the agency, the self-direction of indigenous peoples be enhanced? must constantly be asked by Western allies. What is the difference between celebration of indigenous knowledge and an appropriation? Too often Western allies, for example, don't simply want to work with indigenous peoples—they want to transform their identities and become indigenous persons themselves.*

They also argue that, on one hand: "Western ignorance of indigenous knowledge holds profound consequences for everyone" (Ibid., 39) but, on the other ask if "the study of indigenous peoples and their knowledges in itself is a process of Europeanization?" and respond that "in some ways, of course, it is, as Western intellectuals conceptualize indigenous knowledge in context far removed from its production" (Ibid., 20). Moreover, the very concept of the "indigenous" arrived with the colonisation. This tension currently remains unresolvable.

On one hand, in a nutshell, there is a demand for inclusion:

> *It is important that this [indigenous] knowledge be recognized and valued … and that it be incorporated into the teaching/learning process (George 1999, 90).*

> *Particularly I think the appropriate education ensures that Aboriginal perspectives are included across … and ensures that community members are playing an important role in the education of not only Aboriginal students, but all students. (Davison 1999, 22)*

On the other hand, there is an acute awareness that the very process of incorporation of indigenous knowledge by non-indigenous writers carries the great risk of the intrinsic 'western gaze', in the appropriation, commodification and essentialising of indigenous knowledge. An obvious solution is to enable higher participation of indigenous writers, theorists and educators. However, that too is not without problems (Woolombi Waters 2018; Janke 2021). For example, some indigenous thinkers, writers and educators are, rightfully, increasingly becoming impatient with the lack of awareness of indigenous issues within mainstream

communities. Some also feel that they are entrapped within a singular discourse and are only ever asked to contribute on that one issue.

Moreover, their contribution is commonly expected to be on pro-bono, voluntary bases (Huggins 2022), thus reinforcing economic discrimination they already face. There may also be wariness based on a "long history of violence, mistrust, guilt and fear that cannot be erased overnight" (Huggins 2022). Lastly, as they are repeatedly asked to teach mainstream communities about (certain, selected, 'feel good') issues for free they may express their frustration as: "here we go again—educate another whitefella" (Craven 1999, 52).

Unfortunately, because of some of these tensions, dilemmas, and difficulties, most non-indigenous scholars and futurists stay away from dealing with issues of indigenous knowledges and issues. Some, which is desirable, work closely with local indigenous communities, which is the most preferred model of cooperation. But what of theoretical work? Could and should a non-indigenous person study 'indigenous knowledges' and if so, how? Going back to Semali and Kincheloe (1999, 20–21), they argue that in this respect western intellectuals have 'little choice':

> *. . . if they are to operate as agents of justice, they must understand the dynamics at work in the world of the indigene. To refuse to operate out of fear of Europeanization reflects a view of indigenous culture as an authentic, uncontaminated artifact that must be hermetically preserved regardless of the needs of living indigenous people.*

They also argue that:

> *. . . as complex as the question of indigeneity may be, we believe that the best interests of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples are served by the study of indigenous knowledges and epistemologies. An appreciation of indigenous epistemology, for example, provides Western peoples with another view of knowledge production in diverse cultural sites. Such a perspective holds transformative possibilities, as they come to understand the overtly cultural processes by which information is legitimated and delimited* (Ibid., 17).

Another argument in terms of how to approach indigenous knowledge has been popularised by Indigenous activist and educator, a Gangulu woman, Lilla Watson. She stated, “If you have come to help me, then you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine then let us work together” (Watson, 2004). She later specified that this should be attributed to the Aboriginal activists group Queensland, 1970s (Ibid.). Or, as in the words of Indigenous scholar Jessa Rogers (2016): "*Nothing about us, without us* is a phrase that represents our rightful call as Indigenous peoples to control our own destinies and to be given decision-making power over things that affect us at all levels of government and leadership" (emphasis added).

Thus, western approaches to indigenous knowledge have to be done in the context of **mutual learning and respect** as well as in the context of **joint strategy**. Or, as Craven, D’Arbon and Wilson-Miller (1999, 260) argue, it is important to move from teaching *about* indigenous people and knowledge to learning *from* indigenous people by maximising indigenous viewpoints and perspectives. In that sense, perhaps we could talk of a joint strategic interest between indigenous peoples and other theorists and educators who find emerging hegemonic futures discourses problematic, as well as about joint strategic interest among those who are committed to social justice and fairness issues and to exploration of alternatives that promote social innovation (Slaughter, 1996). This is crucial, as indigenous peoples offer “genuine alternatives to the current dominant form of development” argues Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 105). That is because Indigenous peoples have “philosophies which connect humans to the environment and to each other and which generate principles for living a life which is sustainable, respectful and *possible* [italics added]” (ibid.).

This mutual learning and joint strategy are, of course, most topical and critically important in view of the current and projected future ecological problems all of us currently face. But first, there is a long history that needs to be acknowledged and addressed. For example:

> *The western arrogance and ignorance not to embrace a culture whose harmonious existence nurtured a co-existence with the land, its habitat and its people, remains a puzzle to me and many of my people* (Smallwood 1995, 13).

> *You [who call yourselves Australians] must now accept the full responsibility for the many inequalities and injustices of 20th Century Australia [end beyond]. You are responsible for the continued destruction and desecration of my people's culture and the natural environment. … So in the interest of our children and all future generations, in the interest of the survival of the human race we must all become a part of the solution and stop being part of the problem* (Bayles, 1989, p. 6).

Certainly, after several decades of recovery of indigenous traditions, marked by indigenous activism, knowledge production and various educational initiatives, non-indigenous people are increasingly expected to 'do their own homework' and educate themselves about indigenous issues, perspectives and ways of living and knowing. In doing so, they need to walk a 'fine line' between ignorance or denial and the appropriation/essentialising/romanticising of 'indigenous' knowledge, teaching and learning.

To conclude this, and forthcoming sections, we provide a number of pointers as to the ethics of the engagement with indigenous knowledge. These pointers should be read as representative of the learning and current level of knowledge and awareness of the two writers of this text, resulting from several decades long engagement with the issues discussed here.

Pointer 1: Ask: Who is this knowledge for? For whose future? What may be the mutual learning and joint strategy benefiting both groups? How can the already existing projects designed by Indigenous people for Indigenous people best be supported by the non-indigenous alleys?

Pointer 2: Consider your own positionality prior to doing the work/project. What is your own cultural and historical context? Why are you here and what is your intention? More so what do you see as your responsibility here and who are you accountable to? Does that accountability lay with the Indigenous community? For projects with Indigenous peoples consider the following: Were you invited? What are the depths of your relationships and, in the context of working with Indigenous peoples, what is their relationships with the communities/organisations you would

be working with? Is there someone better suited to do this work? Do you simply need to move out of the way?

Pointer 3: Start with getting to know the land you are on and what is happening to it? Who is in a deep relationship with the land you are on? Who are the Indigenous peoples caring for the country? Where are you conducting your workshops/programs etc? Moreton-Robinson (2020) proposes to shift the epistemological centre that she says is currently grounded in culture to centring mother earth. Land as teacher automatically centres Indigenous knowledges due to our relationship with and of it.

How should non-indigenous futurists engage with Indigenous Knowledge/People?

Some writers and social scientists have asked me about their ethical concerns when writing about Aboriginal people. In fact they asked me so often that I thought I'd better draw up a formula to assist in their dilemmas and to save myself from repeating it so often. It is so much quicker when one can say, 'Now read this.' My article is however by no means the perfect prescription. Human error can enter into every judgment and the way I view my world is not the same as the next person. To all those who presumably represent us this essay was a plea that the process is crucial to the best outcomes (Huggins 2022).

When discussing historical texts written by the non-indigenous people on indigenous issues, Aboriginal Australia author, historian, academic and advocate Jackie Huggins argues that the best texts "written about Aboriginals by non-Aboriginals are by those who have some relationship and friendships with Aboriginal people themselves" (Ibid.). Her other "pointers" include (1) doing homework, i.e., reading books, watching films, doing Aboriginal Studies courses, etc.; (2) being aware of the language, and how it changes – and use the terms Indigenous people themselves find acceptable; (3) avoiding being patronising via the romanticising of a pristine Aboriginal past or present; (4) avoid expecting Aboriginal people to be "spiritual" – as most of the spirituality has been "knocked out of us through our daily survival"; and (5) instead of perpetuating stereotypes and racism, the positive role models should be depicted instead.

Regarding point 4 mentioned by Huggins, it is perhaps pertinent to notice that there is much excitement around **topics of spirituality and sustainability** when it comes to futures imagery and Indigenous peoples. At the same time, there is commonly a complete blindness to the **issues of political and economic rights and justice**. Therefore, it is imperative to go beyond "feel good" topics of spirituality and sustainability and towards perhaps more uncomfortable issues of political rights and economic justice.

Going back to the "formula"/pointers by Huggins, regarding many ethical issues which need to be considered when dealing with Aboriginal issues, she summarises them as follows (Huggins 2022):

1. Detached observer status is not advisable. Consult with the relevant Aboriginal organisations and individuals before beginning the project.
2. Research relevant literature, films and audios associated with the project.
3. Keep Aboriginal people informed and advised, and where possible provide regular updates. (Huggins 2022).

Rhonda Craven, Mark d'Arbon and James Wilson-Miller (1999) similarly develop a set of guidelines in terms of the type of knowledge that could be taught by non-indigenous educators and those that should only be taught by indigenous people. Arguably, this can perhaps be applied to theoretical research as well. According to them, the topics that should be taught [and studied?] only by indigenous people (if they deem it appropriate) include: ceremonial life (sacred symbolism, ritual, mystic language, sacred stories), languages, spirituality, information about sacred artifacts and men's business, women's business (Craven et al. 1999, 240). There are however, they argue (Ibid.), some topics that can be taught by non-indigenous educators. These topics include: *contemporary issues* [italics added], economic, political and social relationships, about belonging to the land, Land Rights, educational pedagogy and historical practices, *futures perspectives* [italics added], gender roles, historical events, about kinship, land and water usage and management, conservation and technology (Craven et al., 1999, p. 240). They also stress that "whenever possible, activities should be developed, implemented and evaluated with consultation and participation of the local Indigenous community" (ibid.).

The above pointers have been developed by Australian-based theorists and are thus mostly applicable to this context. The academic texts, on the other hand, once

published in books and journals, have a much broader reach. Which points at another dilemma, best described as **local/global issues and tension**. That is, originally, indigenous societies and the knowledge they created were firmly based in their own localities. After colonisation, indigenous issues have also become part of issues debated at the nation–state level (i.e., such as in the context of Australia) and have moved toward the global level as well. Which critically points out that **indigenous societies and the knowledge they produce are not static**. They have survived against many odds, "despite the limitations and restrictions" imposed upon them (Valadian 1991, 6). Part of this survival strategy was an adjustment to mainstream society and a rebuilding of their own social organizations (ibid.). Indigenous knowledge is therefore no longer only local.

Indigenous issues have moved to the global level because the social context has changed. Globalisation has accompanied discursive formation of "indigenous' knowledge as written in the current global "lingua franca" (English). And so while no one should ever assume the position of independent and objective knower nor to speak for indigenous peoples themselves it is possible to analyse *the discourse* on indigenous knowledge, for example, within the global context of the recovery of 'indigeneity'.

Yet while this seems perhaps reasonable and based on some accurate observations, the conflict and the discomfort remain. For example, as argued by Kolig (in Harris 1990, 6), there is a conflict between different knowledge systems that is basically unresolvable:

> *. . . the naked fact of the matter is that Westerners believe that intellectual enterprises do not stop at arbitrarily drawn borders. They believe that knowledge should be thrown wide open to dissemination, discussion, speculation, and critique every bit as much as the Aborigines staunchly adhere to secrecy and the non-disputability of established truths. Regardless of which side you may favour, basically no compromise is possible.*

Harris (1990) also argues that there is a huge discrepancy in what is considered as an appropriate knowledge production approach among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. For example, he argued that:

The kinds of Western thought processes which are central to the positivistic/scientific outlook and which allow a great deal of control over the physical world through science and technology are distinctly un-Aboriginal. These un-Aboriginal thinking styles mostly involve imagined situations of no personal or immediate relevance to the student and include: Extensive verbal comparing and contrasting; extensive generalising; hypothesising unrelated to a practical task; evaluating objectively other people's or culture's beliefs and extensive summarising, enquiring, justifying, clarifying, interpreting and challenging. … Transmission of knowledge by verbal means alone, away from any real–life context to which the talk is related; transmitting knowledge through hypothetical problem posing; acceptance of the question–and–answer technique for transmitting, reinforcing and testing knowledge; and accepting that knowledge is not personal property but is objectively available to anyone. (ibid., 5)

With the risk of doing exactly the same as what Harris critiques, we conclude this section with the following:

Pointer 4: Clarity about the context of the knowledge production is needed. How local or global is it? And, if local, how are the custodians of land/knowledge upon which this production takes place?

Pointer 5: Clarity about the appropriate topics within the knowledge production is also needed. Is there at least some agreement that they are within the bounds of what is considered "acceptable" for non-Indigenous scholars to delve into?

Pointer 6: Are there any 'unresolvable' issues and conflicts? Can we 'sit with it' instead of insisting that they must be (urgently) 'fixed'? Can we continue working on relationships and maintain (above all) respectful, truthful and appreciative dialogue and inquiry?

Pointer 7: Have only "warm and fuzzy"/"feel good" issues (such as spirituality and sustainability that gets separated from the ways in which Indigenous economies are tied into these very concepts) been considered? Are you only focused on the historical traditional practices? Are you ignoring the knowledge held by those in the present who do not seem "traditional" enough? How about more uncomfortable topics of genocide, trauma, continued disposition, neo-colonisation, economic discrimination, political disenfranchisement?

De-colonising concepts critical to futures studies

> *Our language around time and space is very different from Western time and space. There is obviously daylight and night time, and different sorts of seasons. We don't have a Protestant ethic about time and we don't have this view that people control time. It is the Western view that humans impose their rules over time and space whereas I think, for many Indigenous cultures and also other cultures, it is the opposite. Time and space, and the rhythm of time and space, govern how we live* (Tuhiwai Smith in Shringarpure 2021).

In the true Western tradition where everything related to 'the civilisation' itself starts in Greece, Edward Cornish (1999, Chapter 4, para. 2) makes an otherwise excellent point that it was not the Delphic oracle but "ancient Greece's *logographoi*, the first men who could be called historians, [that are] the very distant ancestors of the modern futurists". Unfortunately, this type of language and classification denies the experience of other cultures and civilisation – most significantly the traditional and indigenous ones. For example, the co-author of this article, Cherie Minniecon, has published a peace entitled The Original Futurists, which she dedicates to "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the ***Original Futurists*** of this land whose foresight, creativity, innovation and adaptability are evidenced by being the oldest living culture in the world today" (Minniecon 2020). We thus need to de-colonise and rewrite discourses and narratives in relation to **history** in general, and history of foresight in particular.

It is to be expected that Eurocentrism would be evident in most discourses in the area of futures studies. To start with the concept of **time,** upon which the chronological content is usually designed, both are firmly based in western intellectual history. That is, time is understood as movement from the past towards the future which is again defined in a very specific way, as progress or development. This, in turn, maintains and further creates a persistent theme in western mainstream discourses: the future is the one created in the west and the only choice for 'others' is to progress towards this particular future. Non-western, traditional and indigenous histories are either silenced or superficially included within this particular discourse. For example, the most common organisation or structuring of ideas and practices from the past follows a general western chronology in the way

progress and development are conceptualised. Other historical cultures and systems are forced to fit into a western “artificial divisions of history as early, middle, and present” (Nakosteen, 1965, p. 4). In practical terms, this means that history is firstly divided between primitive and civilised people. Then, early civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, India and China are explored in generalist terms until the appearance of the Helenistic Civilisation. After that, more attention is paid to the Greeks whose contribution is discussed in detail. This is because Greeks are seen as “the beginners of nearly everything, Christianity excepted, of which the modern world makes its boast” (Castle 1961, 11).

As indigenous knowledge has been perceived to belong to the earliest stages of human history, which are by definition, simple and undeveloped, the mainstream discourse assigns it a particularly limited and inferior place. And so futurists who hold these deeply unconscious beliefs could arrive to a community with an assumption that they “do not know how to do futures”.

From the vantage point of the year 2022, some of the discourses, dominant for centuries, seem pretty shocking. For example, at the beginning of the 20th century, mainstream Eurocentric discourse on indigenous education was an account of “non-progressive education (among) savages or nature peoples” (Graves 1909). This particular discourse within Eurocentric educational histories reflected a particular view of time and the future that was culturally and temporally specific. That is, education practices and knowledge within traditional indigenous societies were judged not in connection with the indigenous approaches and understanding of time but exclusively in connection to western ones. This resulted in an understanding and labelling of indigenous education as undeveloped, inferior. At the beginning of the 20th C, Graves writes:

> ‘*One set of savages is like another’ … The government, customs, and mentality of all savages have proved to be strikingly similar in their simplicity and crudity. When the human race is yet in its intellectual infancy, which it seems to be in the case of all primitive peoples both of the present day and the past, society is found to be on a comparatively simple basis, and there is little differentiation of thought or occupation . . . [The savage’s] social organisation is undeveloped, he is absolutely incapable of abstract thought, his religion is*

> *superstitious and crude, his occupations are largely limited to securing the products of nature that are at hand, and the education he receives is imitative and fixed . . . (Graves 1909, 8–19)*

This discourse was present for a very long time, and can be found in, for example, 1970s edition of Laurie's 'Historical Survey':

> *In a historical survey we can afford to ignore the vast variety of tribes which are still in a savage state, and which, either by innate incapacity for development, or by the force of irresistible external circumstances, have risen little above the beasts that perish. The human possibilities of such tribes may be, in germ, as high as those of many more favoured races; but this is doubtful. They labour to acquire skill in getting food by the exercise either of bodily vigour or successful cunning, and they cherish the virtue of bravery in warding off the attacks of others like themselves. As they have, however, no political or ethical ideal, they can have no education in the sense in which we use the term in this book.* ***They can teach us nothing*** *[emphasis added] (Laurie, 1970, pp. 2–3).*

These painful histories **must be acknowledged** – although not done in ways that compound trauma or the experiences of violence. Most importantly, the way these outdated discourses may still impact futures discourses in general also has to be investigated. As argued by Wadjularbinna Nullyarimma in a quote mentioned earlier in this article, recognition of true history, damage done, restorative justice and so on, is a prerequisite for 'moving on'. In other words, once the colonising nature and history of many critical concepts within the area of futures studies are acknowledged, and many of the still existing assumptions within the field are addressed, a new space will open up 'automatically'.

Given the extent and brutality of colonisation of Indigenous peoples and their knowledges, there is probably not one area of futures studies/foresight that has not been touched by this. Due to the space limitation within this article here we focus on one more critical issue – that of **hope**.

Much of futures training, thinking and discourses centre around cultivating hope via alternative imagery of what the future could be. It is implied that these

processes in themselves evoke agency and a pathway out of the undesired aspects of the present to a more plausible future. However, while this indeed may be the case, there is also a danger that such "overreliance on hope" leads to more harm and inaction. For example, when one searches for the word "hope" in *The Journal of Futures Studies* there are some 170 results. At the same time, the word "sovereignty" shows up only 17 times. In the *Futures: The journal of policy, planning and futures studies*, hope appears 2,328 times, while sovereignty yields 200 results (years 1998-2022). This is in contradiction within conversations relation to the future within the Indigenous (Australian) context. These conversations are rarely about hope. Rather, they have always been more centered around **sovereignty** and how sovereignty allows "us as Indigenous peoples to thrive in spaces that were designed to distinguish us" (Cherie).

I was reminded of this in a workshop with a predominantly Indigenous group when a non-Indigenous futures facilitator suggested exploring the future scenario of "what if all the Indigenous people die"? What was interesting was there was no future scenario suggested about what if we all die? Or what if non-Indigenous people die?

There is even resistance to the idea of investing in hope as an evoker for agency especially when not grounded in sovereignty. For example, Watego (2022) writes a whole chapter on hope titled "fuck hope" in her book *Another Day in the Colony*. Here she writes:

> *Hope is the most ridiculous strategy for blackfullas in the colony precisely because it doesn't actually do anything – for us. It relies upon a false sense of respite from the reality of the everyday racial violence in the colony; that we suspend all logic and cling to hope, a waiting for a future good while living in a permanent hell. It tells us to wait, that one day we will get our turn. It tells us that we are not worth fighting for right now, but what it doesn't tell us is that day never actually arrives.*
> *Hope is a suspension of Black trauma in the midst of Black trauma and a premature death sentence for those destined to be betrayed by it. Retiring hope is not a giving up, but a matter of a turning up each day in truth. Accepting the truth of the limitations of this place offers us far more promise than hope ever has.*

Because hope is just a matter of holding on – it does not give oxygen to your lungs, it just stops the water from entering them, and as a long-term strategy it is bound to kill you. To emerge from that water, to take a breath is to be sovereign. And both are found in the living.

Watego ends the chapter with the line "Fuck hope. Be sovereign". Watego leans on Paola Balla's explanation of sovereignty which is to love and resist simultaneously.

Hope itself is not problematic, however, in the context of colonisation and de-colonisation, if this notion is not built on a notion of sovereignty, then hope which is promoted, in effect, can come with no or limited agency.

Laura Harjo (2019) *Spiral to the Stars: Mvskoke Tools of Futurity* dedicates a whole chapter to sovereignty titled "The Lush Promise of Radical Sovereignty" where she outlines the limitations and impacts of formal sovereignty and proposes that it be broadened outside of legal discourse. She states her offering as Este-cate sovereignty, as an agentive community-based approach to living in the world that valorises community worldview. She also includes what Sovereignty means to Anishinaabe spiritual leaders Eddie Benton-Benai and he says:

"Personally I am sovereign, So sovereignty isn't something someone gives you. It's a responsibility you carry inside yourself. In order for my people to achieve sovereignty, each man and woman among us have to be sovereign."

The rise of Indigenous Futurism, for example, is a site of Indigenous sovereignty. Sovereignty theorised by Indigenous peoples thus brings a powerful presence into the present, which allows for alternative futures to emerge or Leanne Simpson would say a resurgence. And while it may provide alternative future imaginings that enact the agency of hope and discuss its potential power, it is, once again, the context that matters.

We conclude this section with two final pointers as to the ethics of the engagement with indigenous knowledge.

Pointer 8: Respect Indigenous sovereignty. Instead of prioritising to get Indigenous people to join futures frameworks/projects designed by the non-Indigenous people, especially with no existing relationships, participate where appropriate in Indigenous led projects, including supporting resistance efforts. Know that Indigenous people may be tired of waiting for an invitation to the table with equal power and therefore creating their own.

Pointer 9: Engage with Indigenous literature by Indigenous peoples. There are Indigenous writers who may write for the non-Indigenous reader as a means to educate. There are Indigenous writers who refuse this and write primarily for Indigenous peoples. This writing may be more uncomfortable to read – one can feel conflicted, confused and unsettled as the very frameworks of how knowledge is constructed are challenged. It may also be confusing as you begin to see the depth of diversity in Indigenous perspectives regarding Indigenous issues. Confusion is a good thing. Keep listening and learning and eventually your responsibilities may become clearer.

Pointer 10: Be mindful of when you are using futures methods and tools that you do not use them as a means to bypass the tensions of the present. One cannot get stuck in the heaviness of the present but one cannot also ignore the conflicts at play and expect change to occur in a way that benefits the most oppressed people in our societies.

Conclusion: A few words to the present and emerging Indigenous futurists

While the article was predominantly written for the futures and foresight community that mainly consists of a non-Indigenous audience, we would like to acknowledge that the futures and foresight community is becoming more diverse with Indigenous futures practitioners on the rise. However, diversity alone does not create shifts in the way things are done.

There is a rich history and even richer present as to how Indigenous people engage with time, history, and future. As much as these resources should be protected, they are invaluable and should thus be (carefully) shared with others. As relational people this is how it has always been.

In acknowledging that the majority of the futures discourses and practices have come into being without much engagement with Indigenous knowledge and

protocols we also acknowledge that futures space could be experienced as a culturally unsafe space for Indigenous practitioners.

However, as the future is a highly contested space and a space that Indigenous will be in, it may result in a radical alternative present in the futures community itself. The space could be one, as stated by Leanne Simpson Betasamosake, which is “based on deep reciprocity and the gorgeous generative refusal of colonial recognition”.

Finally, it is critical not to lose sight of which issues and topics are to be prioritised. For example, we argued here that it is critical to prioritise the respect for Indigenous sovereignty over the complacency of hope, and the way it is understood within Indigenous frameworks. We also argued for a broadening of the historical narrative of which futures and foresight work education is founded upon. And finally, rather than disengage, we called for leaning into discomfort that emerges in this process in order to allow for transformative changes to take place in ways that diversity in the way of demographics alone cannot.

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