

Abstract

As media employers increasingly shift the burden for the provision of skills training from themselves to universities, academics must develop innovative ways to ensure their graduates are truly job ready, beyond merely simulating industry practice and offering conventional work experience opportunities. Under the umbrella term Work Integrated Learning (WIL), universities have adopted a range of educational approaches that combine theory with practice to enhance learning experiences for students. But not all WIL initiatives are the same and nor do they always achieve their objectives. However, three series of the award-winning student TV production *Noongar Dandjoo*, produced by Curtin University, offer a new model for teaching substantive journalism, program production as well as cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity under an offshoot of WIL called service-learning. As this article seeks to demonstrate, *Noongar Dandjoo* is making a lasting and positive impression on students who are applying their experiences working with indigenous people beyond university.

**NOONGAR DANDJOO:
A WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING CASE STUDY**
by
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Trends within Australian Universities have replaced general, liberal arts degrees with offerings of a diverse range of occupation-specific courses. This in turn has created an expectation by students, government and employers for graduates to make a smooth transition into the workforce, for them to be work ready. With this expectation has come a greater emphasis and value placed on internships or work integrated learning programs. (Billett, 2009: 827-28; Billett & Henderson, 2011: 1-3) Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is a term used to describe a variety of different practicum-style learning experiences that generally take the student out of the classroom, away from the University campus and out into the 'real' world of the student's future profession or industry. Finding, establishing and maintaining a collaborative and mutually beneficial relationship with an industry or community host organisation is essential to the success of any WIL program, and is one of the most difficult aspects of setting up such a program – especially for students hoping for careers as journalists or program makers in the television industry. Opportunities for students to spend a useful period of time working in a professional broadcast environment are few – especially in a satellite city like Perth which produces very little local television content. This article describes an unconventional WIL project in which mostly undergraduate university students produce a television program called *Noongar Dandjoo* for local and national broadcast. It is unconventional because, firstly, even though the students produce the program on campus, with the assistance of University staff and using University facilities, it still meets the criteria and outcomes of more conventional WIL projects. Secondly, the program features Indigenous people, themes and stories produced by non-Indigenous students.

That only Aboriginal people can and should tell Aboriginal stories has been a long running subject of debate that has for the most part concluded in favour of cross-cultural collaboration. Marcia Langton argues that Aboriginality is "remade over and over again in a process of dialogue, of imagination, of representation and interpretation. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people create 'Aboriginalities'..." (1993: 33-34) She describes the different ways by which Aboriginal identity is created and includes a category of representation that is 'generated when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people engage in actual dialogue.' (1993: 34-35) *Noongar Dandjoo* is such a dialogue. It is a cross-cultural project that has proved successful in its story telling, in its collaboration with the Perth Aboriginal community, and in its capacity to be mutually beneficial to all participants.

When describing different types of WIL projects Cooper, Orrell and Bowden describe three different models: professional learning, co-operative learning and service learning. (2010: 37) Examples of the professional model include work placements such as those done by teachers and doctors which are a mandatory course requirement, are strictly regulated and managed to meet industry requirements.

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Co-operative learning is a collaborative model that is more likely to be an optional element of a student's university experience that sees the integration of classroom theory in a professional workplace environment. The third model, called service-learning, is defined by Jacoby as 'a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs...' (1996: 5) It is this model that best describes the WIL project that is the student-produced television program *Noongar Dandjoo*.

***Noongar Dandjoo*: a short history**

The three series of *Noongar Dandjoo* produced between 2007 and 2011 have been a collaboration between broadcast students and teaching staff from two departments of the School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts at Curtin University: Journalism and Screen Arts. The teaching staff involved are the authors of this paper. Series one of *Noongar Dandjoo* won an Antenna Award for Best Indigenous Program on Australian community television. In that same year, it also won Best Indigenous program at the West Australian Screen Awards. Series two was highly commended in the judging of the Ossie Awards in 2010, run by the Journalism Education Association of Australia. Series three was nominated for an Australian Teachers of Media Award (ATOM) in 2012, and again highly commended in the Ossie Awards.

Noongar Dandjoo was borne from a desire to do something different in our teaching collaboration than spend another semester producing a multi-episodic, magazine-style TV program featuring unchallenging and often unstimulating, student-initiated content, created on location and in the TV studio environment. From informal feedback, we sensed some of our students were also tiring of this format. For us, synchronising the objectives of a cohort of Screen Arts students interested primarily in technical, creative and production issues with a final year group of student journalists focused on delivering serious, short-form TV current affairs was becoming progressively more difficult, draining and unfulfilling. What was urgently required was a program idea that offered something for everyone.

It was against that background that the idea for *Noongar Dandjoo* was conceived. The title of the program features the name of the Aboriginal tribal people who are the traditional custodians of the south-west corner of Western Australia. Noongar country stretches from Esperance, on the south coast, to Geraldton which is located north of the state capital Perth. The Noongar (also spelt Nyoongar) people are made up of 14 different clans or language groups and, like the majority of Aboriginal people in Australia, irreparable damage has been done to their culture and language as a result of European settlement and a history of racist government policies. 'Dandjoo' is the Noongar word for 'gathering'.

A program like this would be uncharted territory. We were unaware of any similar endeavour in a West Australian university where students would explore Indigenous issues in a serious way with a broadcasting outcome. There have been other successful university based cross-cultural media projects with similar objectives (see

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Stewart et al., 2010; Stewart et al., 2012) but none with a television broadcast outcome. Our conventional program-making protocols, which were traditionally skewed towards making general interest, magazine-format television would need to be redrawn and thought would need to be given to the processes involved in fostering external and intra-campus collaborations that previously had not been part of our co-productions.

Our first chance to 'fly' the idea for *Noongar Dandjoo* came in mid-2007 at a meeting of the Management Committee of Curtin University's Centre for Aboriginal Studies (CAS). We regarded CAS' support as essential to our project if we were to successfully navigate the many challenging cultural and political issues that are part of Noongar community life. At the heart of our proposal were these fundamental undertakings: *Noongar Dandjoo* would be a series made with the Noongar community about the issues that interested them; it would be built on the principles of participatory program-making including shared editorial control; and we would commit to providing Indigenous perspectives not given sufficient air-time in conventional media. When our written proposal was received enthusiastically by the Management Committee of CAS and unconditional support was offered, we felt we had the foundation for an exciting project.

Fast-forwarding to 2012, three series of *Noongar Dandjoo* have now been produced and broadcast. Each has contained four episodes. In *Noongar Dandjoo 1* and *Noongar Dandjoo 2*, each episode was 30 minutes long but in *Noongar Dandjoo 3*, the four episodes each run just under one hour. In total, our students have produced from the ground up a total of eight hours of Indigenous TV programming. Along the way, all of us have learned many valuable lessons.

Cultural Awareness

While most of the Curtin students who have contributed to *Noongar Dandjoo* since 2007 were Australian born of non-Indigenous backgrounds, many were from overseas, particularly south-east Asia, and had no direct involvement with Aboriginal people. Even many local students remarked that *Noongar Dandjoo* was their first opportunity to interact with Indigenous people. This was a recurring feature of every student cohort. To help them all better understand Noongar culture and why Indigenous perspectives get so little traction in the mainstream Australian media, we invited Noongar elders and activists as well as Aboriginal academics and lawyers to talk to the students about issues such as Noongar history and culture. These sessions, always held in the first fortnight of semester, were immensely useful in making students attuned to issues such as media misrepresentation of Noongar issues and the sensitivity of Noongar people to a perceived hostile 'white' media. These sessions were also a vehicle for explaining to students how Noongar people often preferred to spend time building trust and relationships with anyone wanting to tell their stories. While students were discouraged from thinking Noongar people would drop everything at a moment's notice to participate in the programs, they were encouraged to be optimistic about the prospect of working with Aboriginal

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people who, they were told, would invariably be generous with their stories and opinions if treated fairly and with respect. In Series One, these cultural awareness sessions were bolstered by circulating to the student cohort SBS' *Protocols for Working With Indigenous People*. (Bostock, 1997) In subsequent series, we preferred to focus on letting our invited guests impart this information to the students as it seemed more effective. For Series Three, program host Dennis Simmons, a Noongar man, blended his discussion of cultural issues with a series of performances by members of his extended family, who are all talented dancers and performers. As well as being our host, Dennis has also been an invaluable point of reference for students on issues for inclusion in their stories and advice about who within the Noongar community our students should approach.

There are a number of perspectives by which this television program might be discussed including its value as a kind of media experiment that addresses the misrepresentation and stereotyping of Aboriginal people by the mainstream media. (see Mickler, 1998; Meadows, 2001) However, the focus here is on the program as a work integrated learning experience and the success of *Noongar Dandjoo* in that regard can be assessed in two ways. There are criteria that can be applied when determining the success of any WIL project and then there are criteria that are specific to this project as a service-learning experience.

Workplace Literacy and knowledge.

Billett refers to 'domain-specific occupational' knowledge which recognises that different professions and occupations require students to develop expertise and knowledge specific to that profession. Furthermore there are different forms of domain-specific knowledge that must be 'accessed and constructed' by the individual. Firstly, there is conceptual or *declarative knowledge* which can be represented in books and other texts. Then there is *procedural knowledge* which cannot easily be represented because it requires the student to engage with it and practice it, such as a journalism student honing their interview technique or a screen arts student developing their editing skills and engaging with the editing software. Finally, there is *dispositional knowledge* which 'comprises interests and beliefs...'

Dispositions are likely to be developed through individuals' beliefs, and are negotiated through their encounters with particular experiences.' (Billett, 2009: 833)

The privileging of conceptual knowledge over procedural knowledge is recognised within the academy as the theory-practice divide, but Billett argues that all these forms of knowledge are 'interconnected and interdependent' and that recognition of the value of each form of knowledge will allow for a smooth transition from University to workplace, from novice to expert. (2009: 832 - 33; 2011: 23-28) That *Noongar Dandjoo* sought to challenge values and beliefs is evident not only in the television program itself, but also in the attitudes and ideas of the individual students who participated in its production. This will be discussed in more detail

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later, but the student experience is summarised by Billett when he says, “it is important to be reminded that educational provisions are nothing more or less than an invitation to change.” (2009: 835)

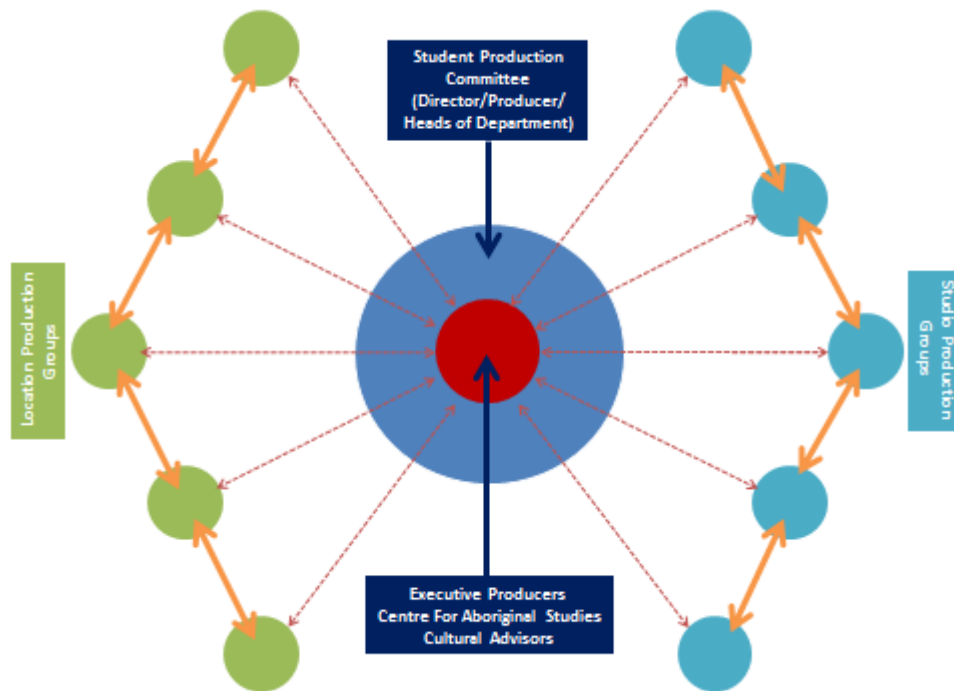


Diagram 1

Cooper, Orrell and Bowden also seek to define a successful WIL experience and list six categories of workplace literacy that employers value and look for in graduates. They are social, organisational, legal and ethical, profession specific, career, and cultural. (2010: 47) For students who engage fully in the process of producing *Noongar Dandjoo*, workplace literacy is achieved in all categories and is easily transferrable to any professional broadcast environment.

Social Literacy requires students to learn how to work with others, to mediate and resolve conflict. The production of any television program is very much a group effort and the importance of successful team work is emphasised to students from the first day of their first year of a Screen Arts or Journalism major. Collaboration and cooperation are essential for the successful production of both technical and story content elements of the program. Students are required to work in small groups of three to five when producing location stories, and also in larger studio based crews of about 15 to 20. (See diagram 1) Students must organise location shoots to meet the schedules of their group members as well as the story participants. Scheduling is often one of the most difficult aspects of the program’s

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production as students have demanding university timetables, other assignment work and ever increasing hours of part-time employment. Conflict arises frequently over scheduling and is only resolved through regular, clear communication and compromise. Coming up with ideas, choosing stories, and input from group members about creative aspects of production such as editing and lighting all require students to respectfully talk and listen to each other in order to get the job done. The multi-cam production stage of the program that takes place in the university's television studio requires students to work as part of an even larger team, to recognise their individual roles and the hierarchy of the television production crew. (see diagram 1.) Trust, effective communication and respect are all essential to working in a successful studio production crew and it can be difficult to maintain these qualities when crew members become stressed or tired as is often the case during a three or four hour recording session.

Organisational Literacy is about the students' understanding the workplace, its hierarchy, structures and culture. Because *Noongar Dandjoo* is produced on location as well as inside the university, the structure and culture of a specific broadcaster or workplace cannot be duplicated. For example, the language used in a studio control room may be different at Channel Seven compared to the ABC. The station identity of the ABC as a public broadcaster is quite different to the youthful identity of Channel 10. But small differences can be easily negotiated because there are structures, work flows and hierarchies that are common to all broadcasters and these are adhered to and duplicated in the production of *Noongar Dandjoo*. Each student has a production role and must understand where and how they fit in with the big picture of the program's production. There are very clear pre-production, production and post-production stages to the program that are tightly scheduled at the start of semester. There is a very clear hierarchy for the crew with a few students taking on leadership roles such as producer and director. Each role is defined in terms of what they must produce and contribute to the program as well as where they fit in the crew hierarchy. One of the most challenging aspects of the program's pre-production stage is the communication of broad concepts about the program such as style, structure and objectives which are pre-determined by teaching staff, and how these differ from the individual creative details that students are required to contribute in order to make the program 'theirs'. For example, in *Noongar Dandjoo* series 3, it was predetermined that the program would centre on a studio-based panel discussion in front of a studio audience. A colour palette was agreed upon as well as a contemporary look for the set. A student responsible for set design could expect to have such style and structure choices delivered to them by a producer or director in a professional broadcast environment with the request to then design a set that meets these criteria. Furthermore, a set designer must work in collaboration with the lighting director and director in choosing colours and design. Students come to understand that this is a professional way of working, and that there is still opportunity for significant creative input from each individual.

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Legal and ethical literacy is developed through recognition and practice of professional journalistic standards and television production which are strictly controlled by industry codes and regulations. Whether conforming to journalistic codes of conduct or meeting the strict technical standards required by professional broadcasters, students must know and conform to these standards in order to produce a program that is appropriate for a national broadcast. Technical standards in particular have become even more stringent as the opportunity for broadcasting on National Indigenous Television (NITV) saw us move up from the less demanding standards of community broadcasting. For example, the standards for audio levels fall within a very narrow range of tolerance. Sound levels that are even a few dB too high or low must be adjusted to fall within the strictly-applied range acceptable for broadcast.

That our program requires us to work with Aboriginal people is of particular significance, and will be discussed in detail later, but adherence to protocols and ethical behaviour in producing the program are crucial to its on-going success. Ethical program making and journalistic practice are theoretical aspects of the students' learning that have been covered in relevant course work prior to working on *Noongar Dandjoo*. This theory is now clearly integrated into their practical work.

Profession specific literacy such as camera and editing skills, research, interviewing and writing skills, and multi-cam production techniques must be developed and mastered by the students in order to produce a broadcast standard program. Skills are already in place at this stage of their course work but must be developed to a more advanced level. While not yet capable of the high level of production expected by a professional broadcaster, broadcast standards and professional behaviour are the benchmark by which the students are assessed.

Career literacy develops as students have the opportunity to explore a variety of roles during the production of the program. As second and third year students, the Screen Arts students have already developed preferences for certain types of production work. Some students are very quick to claim roles such as editor or director, while others are still exploring their production strengths and preferences. Each student will have the opportunity to perform different roles at pre-production and production stages of the program and will rotate through different crew positions. Journalism students, who are in their final year and often in the final semester of their degrees, have usually been introduced to the fundamentals of print, radio, television and on-line journalism so the production of *Noongar Dandjoo* allows them to further develop their broadcast skills and explore their career choices. It is emphasised to all students involved in *Noongar Dandjoo* that the experience of making an entire TV series with a 12-week production window will provide them with invaluable learning opportunities – and not simply technical ones – as they prepare to make the transition to work.

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Finally, *cultural literacy* is a significant outcome for students involved with the program. Working with Aboriginal people provides the opportunity to learn about a culture first hand, to better understand the impact of racism and stereotyping – particularly as it pertains to the mass media – and to discover ways of working with Aboriginal people that are respectful and mutually beneficial. It is cultural literacy that is most relevant to the *Noongar Dandjoo* project as a service-learning experience.

Service-Learning

The roots of service-learning can be traced back to American philosopher John Dewey who argued that ‘the interaction of knowledge and skills with experience is key to learning.’ (Ehrlich, 1996: xi) Unlike the professional and co-operative WIL models, service-learning does not require students to shadow experienced workers or observe professionals in the workplace. The emphasis here is on community engagement and the university partnering with not-for-profit organisations and hence this form of WIL is sometimes referred to as community service-learning. Students learn about complex social issues, about specific communities and about ‘the complexity of the human condition.’ (Cooper et al: 47) Jacoby hyphenates the term service-learning to highlight the importance of both elements of the experience – service *and* learning. (1996: 5) In arguing the worth of a WIL experience for the higher education student Billett also recognises community and introduces the notion of ‘vocation’ as opposed to a job, arguing that ‘a central concept for a vocation is that it is of worth to both individual and the community.’(2009: 827-43)

There is growing international recognition of the important contribution service-learning can make to the university experience, yet ‘service-learning’ is still very much an amorphous concept which continues to resist rigid definitions and universal understanding. (Sheffield, 2011: 195) How can the success of a service learning program be assessed?

It is argued that for service-learning to be of any value to the student it should be ‘transformative’. (Cooper et al:47) The student experience in a service-learning environment provides new information and understandings that have the potential to change attitudes and values. Eyler and Giles suggest that ‘...transformation of perspective is rare amongst students.’ (Cooper et al., 2010: 47) Sheffield is more optimistic about the potential of community service-learning and argues that a strong service-learning experience has the capacity for ‘inward self-reconstruction’ which is also ‘carried over and into acting to reconstruct, to transform, community.’ (2011: 195) He theorises the concept of ‘strong’ community service-learning in terms of hegemony, dominant ideology and social justice. The student participating in a ‘strong’ service learning program will be guided to reflect not only on their own ideas and attitudes but also on those external societal factors that create social injustice and shape the individual’s attitudes to those who are subject to the injustice. Sheffield argues that, at the very least, a community service-learning project must be democratic. The degree to which individuals are transformed and

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consequently challenge oppressive and systemic community structures is a further measure of the strength and success of the service-learning project. (Sheffield, 2011: 137 - 48) The production of *Noongar Dandjoo* meets Sheffield's criteria for a strong service-learning project.

When *Noongar Dandjoo* was first produced back in 2007 it was not primarily conceived as a way of changing student attitudes about Aboriginal people. The idea for the television program developed from an interest in community media and the observation that Aboriginal people are mostly absent from, and often misrepresented by, the mass media. Much of what non-indigenous Australia knows about Aboriginal people is learnt from the media which focuses on conflict and negative representation. With that in mind and in the words of academic John Hartley, 'If media can influence negatively then they can also be at the forefront of progressive positive change. They have that capacity.' (1996: 73) After the production of series one of the program in 2007 the feedback from the students involved was enthusiastic and overwhelmingly positive. It was clear from their reactions that the program had not only met its prime objective which was to give a media voice to the Noongar community in Perth and to tell positive stories. Not only had the students gained valuable experience and development in their ability as program makers; they had also had a mind changing experience.

The historical and social issues that have shaped the Perth Aboriginal community, and much of the wider Australian Aboriginal population, provide the framework and context for the student production of *Noongar Dandjoo*. As mentioned earlier, speakers from the community are invited to talk to the students about Noongar history and culture as a starting point for the program. With some cultural understanding acquired in the classroom the students go out into the field to work with Aboriginal people, listen to their stories, and develop personal relationships with the program participants. From there the students form a new and more positive understanding of Aboriginal culture and the complex social issues that affect so much of the community. These students are tomorrow's media professionals and they will now embark on their chosen careers with cultural understanding, empathy, confidence, and knowledge about ways of working with Indigenous people. There is now potential for these students to start to make a difference to the way the media represent Aboriginal people.

The democratic process that is highlighted by Sheffield as essential for success is evident in the program's production techniques and philosophy. In the spirit of Canada's *Challenge for Change* filmmakers, the students produce the program *with* the Aboriginal community, not *about* them. (Linder, 1999: 3-4) Jacoby suggests that service-learning 'encourages students to do things *with* others rather than *for* them.' (original emphasis) (1996: 8) The students are told to consult widely about what stories the community *wants* to tell and who are the best people to tell those stories. All cultural elements of the program are produced in consultation with Aboriginal advisors and participants have significant editorial control over the

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program's content. *Noongar Dandjoo* meets the criteria for a 'strong' service learning program. The dispositional knowledge that Billett argues is essential to 'effective occupational performance' (2011: 24) is evident in student feedback that confirms involvement in the program's production has changed their ideas and attitudes about Aboriginal people. There is also evidence that these individual transformations are having a more far-reaching impact on mainstream media representation of Aboriginal people.¹

Changing Minds

In an effort to better track the change in students' attitudes about Aboriginal people a survey was given to the students before and after the production of *Noongar Dandjoo* series 3 in 2011. The survey was an abbreviated form of the Reconciliation Australia survey that is published every two years on their website. (Reconciliation Australia, 2010) Most of the statistics produced from the survey represent subtle changes in student's attitudes. However, there was a significant change in students' responses in a part of the survey that asked students about their overall impression of Aboriginal people in terms of eleven different characteristics. Whereas the first survey saw that students were evenly divided about some qualities, almost all now saw Aboriginal people as friendly, good humoured, respectful and welcoming. The survey also allowed space for individual comments, and like previous years, these comments provided the most positive and informative feedback. Some quotes include:

"I think doing this series has taught me so much and has shown me true Aboriginal culture and not the 'masked' version the media feeds us. The answers in my survey now have changed dramatically from this experience..."

"*Noongar Dandjoo* provided a valuable insight into the cultural aspect of Indigenous culture. I met many admirable Indigenous people and gained greater insight into the plight and historical injustices Indigenous people faced..."

"Working on *Noongar Dandjoo* has changed my attitudes towards the Perth Aboriginal community. My knowledge has increased..."

"*Noongar Dandjoo* was the most rewarding and amazing experience in my life. Meeting so many different Aboriginal people really opened my eyes and changed my overall perception of Aboriginal people as a whole."

¹ Tanya Dreher discusses a form of community media strategy that she calls a 'media intervention' because of its ability to have an impact on a mainstream audience. See *Speaking up or being heard? Community media interventions and the politics of listening*. in *Media, Culture & Society* - <http://mcs.sagepub.com/content/32/1/85> We would argue that *Noongar Dandjoo* is a media intervention because of its potential to create change in mainstream media.

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Accounts from two students working in professional newsrooms are of particular relevance here as they confirm that their experience working on *Noongar Dandjoo* informed their reporting of two different Aboriginal stories. The first is from a student employed by the ABC in the regional newsroom at Kalgoorlie in 2009. She attended the Coroner's Inquest into the death in custody of an Aboriginal elder while he was being transported in a prison van from Laverton to Kalgoorlie for a court appearance. The dead man's family were gathered in Kalgoorlie for the inquest and the journalist approached them for an interview. They declined but suggested she come to dinner that evening and to 'bring a chicken'. The journalist met them for dinner, talked to the family, but no interview was given. The next night the family came to the journalist's house, uninvited. She invited them in, and had dinner with them. She later recorded an exclusive interview with the family that was broadcast on ABC TV, and maintained a relationship with the family in the weeks to come and as the case continued. The family trusted her to tell their story and would continue to seek her out for help and information. This young journalist's experience with *Noongar Dandjoo* meant that she took the time to develop a relationship with the family and was prepared to maintain that relationship into the future. (Personal Communication, 2009)

The second story is from a student on work placement in a Perth radio/TV newsroom. He saw a story listed for the day about a well-known Aboriginal man who had died in hospital under police guard while serving a prison sentence. Nobody had attempted to contact the dead man's family for comment so the student went out to visit the man's sister. It was from her that he learned that the family were upset that they had not been informed by the Department of Corrective Services about the man's death – they had found out through the media. The student followed up on the sister's story and then later broke another aspect of the story whereby the police had denied permission for the man's funeral to take place at the site of an Aboriginal community where the family once lived but had been closed some years ago by the state government. In an essay describing his work placement the student explains how his participation with *Noongar Dandjoo* informed his choices in the workplace:

After talking to a few people around the (newsroom), it became clear that a couple (of) journalists were particularly apprehensive about covering Indigenous issues with detail because of the ethical situations the stories can bring up. I think that attitude is quite unacceptable and believe it is important for there to be an Indigenous angle to many of the main stories in the news agenda. I know that it wouldn't have bothered me as much if I never was involved in *Noongar Dandjoo* because I wouldn't have had the understanding behind the situation of Indigenous people in Australia. (Personal Communication, 2011)

Reciprocity

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As stated earlier, any successful work integrated learning program must be mutually beneficial to all involved: the student, the University, and the host organisation. Jacoby suggests that reciprocity is a key element of service learning. 'Both the server and those served teach, and both learn.' (1996: 7) This is of particular importance for the *Noongar Dandjoo* project because reciprocity is also at the heart of Aboriginal culture. (see Schwab, 1995)

For *Noongar Dandjoo* to be produced over a period of six years required a degree of trust to be established between the community, the students and the academic staff who manage the project. The way in which the program is produced, our production techniques, and our processes of consultation are all crucial to developing that trust and to the program's success. There is not space here to address all these elements in detail, however, the way in which reciprocity is achieved is important to this discussion and has already been touched on earlier.

The program was originally conceived as a way of providing the Perth Aboriginal community with a positive media voice and this aspect of the program has been successful. Feedback from the community has supported that. Secondly, the program is duplicated on DVD and distributed to participants as a kind of electronic message stick that can be shared and archived for the community. These DVD's are also placed in some public libraries. Furthermore, the ways in which the program benefits participants and the reasons for the program's production are continuously stated before, during and after each semester of production. For example, at the commencement of each series 3 studio recording session the audience and panel were reminded about what we wanted to achieve. That the program set out to give the Perth Noongar community a positive media voice, and to provide the students with cultural knowledge and understanding that will one day impact on their representation of Aboriginal people as they take up jobs as media professionals.

Benefits to the University can be counted in two ways. Firstly, cultural awareness and understanding is one of the nine graduate attributes promoted by Curtin University. (2006) Secondly, a Reconciliation Action Plan was also adopted at Curtin in 2008 and *Noongar Dandjoo* delivers clear outcomes for that plan by introducing Indigenous content to the Journalism and Screen Arts curriculum. (2012)

Indigenising the Curriculum

Universities Australia has recently released new guidelines to embed Aboriginal content in all Australian undergraduate courses. The response to the guidelines has been varied with some academics welcoming the change and others expressing concern about overcrowding the curriculum and fears of politicising the curriculum with 'culture wars'. (Trounson, 2012; Dillon, 2012) Indigenising the curriculum to meet the demands of policy could be problematic, especially if Indigenous content is not introduced and managed by Aboriginal people.

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Our own academic colleagues, while sympathetic to the inclusion of Indigenous content in the curriculum, have voiced concerns about tokenism and raised questions about their own qualifications to teach such content. However, in the case of the Journalism and Screen Arts majors at Curtin these general concerns about curriculum content are overshadowed by the undeniable need to improve the media representation of Aboriginal people. This is a problem that can be effectively addressed by student participation in an Indigenous project such as *Noongar Dandjoo*. Indeed, recommendation 207 by the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recognises the role media plays in forming societal views about Aboriginal people and calls for all University Journalism courses to introduce Indigenous content to their courses:

That institutions providing journalism courses be requested to:

- a) Ensure that courses contain a significant component relating to Aboriginal affairs, thereby reflecting the social context in which journalist work, and,
- b) Consider, in consultation with the media industry and media unions, the creation of specific units of study dedicated to Aboriginal affairs and the reporting thereof. (Hartley & McKee, 1996: 3)

Noongar Dandjoo provides a model for Indigenous curriculum content that is not tokenism. The mainstream curriculum content remains the same but is supported and strengthened by Aboriginal culture and the people who participate in the program. The curriculum requires the students to produce a TV program for broadcast – they have been doing that for ten years. That they now produce a program with Aboriginal people makes the program and the curriculum better.

Conclusion

There is evidence that mainstream journalistic practice has changed, that journalists are increasingly tied to their desks and are afforded less time in the field to research their stories and personally pursue their contacts. The economic imperatives that now drive the 24/7 news cycle also limit the time available to journalists to engage with non-traditional sources which means that marginalised and minority groups are less likely to be represented in the news. (see Davies, 2008; Mason, 2012; Forde, 2011; Phillips, 2011) Aboriginal people are still largely absent from and misrepresented by the news media. Work integrated learning programs, such as *Noongar Dandjoo*, provide opportunities for journalism and media students to form important relationships with Aboriginal people, to learn about Aboriginal culture and history, and to learn ways of working with the Aboriginal community that are respectful of cultural protocols. As Billet has argued, programs like *Noongar Dandjoo* invite students to change. It offers the possibility, which Sheffield speaks of, to transform community. Students develop dispositional knowledge and cultural literacy, and therefore enter the workforce with empathy for Aboriginal issues and the motivation to engage with Aboriginal people. The *Noongar Dandjoo* experience not only prepares students for a job, it plants the seeds of a vocation for those who engage.

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Noongar Dandjoo series 4 is planned for production in second semester 2013. With NITV now broadcasting free-to-air on SBS Channel 34 the program's potential audience has increased significantly and so too its potential to create change in the wider community.

John Dewey wrote 'that education should be the primary means of social progress, not just a means to develop the intellect for its own sake.' (quoted in Jacoby, 1996: xv) There is a growing international movement within higher education that recognises the need for Universities to connect with community and for students to recognise their role as citizens. Service-learning programs such as '*Noongar Dandjoo*' provide a model for what Sheffield describes as a 'strong' service learning experience that not only has the potential for 'self-reconstruction' but also to impact on the wider community and create social change. Furthermore, the program successfully provides a work integrated learning experience that effectively merges theory and practice to prepare students for a professional life outside the academy.

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