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'I now know I can do this now': Indigenous women and writing in the Australian higher education sector

Abstract
This paper explores the challenges of writing and publishing faced by Indigenous women who work in the Australian higher education sector. It demonstrates that Indigenous women are under-represented in the academy and argues that Indigenous styles of writing are typically not valued for broader publication. The authors describe a writing mentoring and support program specifically developed for Indigenous academic women in Australia. The Tiddas Writin' Up Workshop *provided a safe and culturally-appropriate space for women to learn about academic writing and develop their writing skills. The workshop led to the publication of a special issue of the* Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues *– known as the Tiddas Collection. The authors highlight the power and strength of well-developed support programs to address skills development, confidence, inequities and under-representation of Indigenous women within the higher education workforce.*
Keywords: Indigenous women, academic writing, publication, mentoring, Indigenous women academics

Introduction

In this paper, we focus on Indigenous Australian women employed as academics whom we will refer to from this time on as Indigenous academic women. We give an overview of the situation facing these women and discuss their efforts to write and publish within the Australian academic environment. We then provide an overview of a mentoring and support program for Indigenous Australian academic women, and describe its success in helping women to write and publish academic work. We argue that support programs – provided for Indigenous women by Indigenous women – are needed to support the careers of Indigenous academic women and help them move from the margins of the academy.

Indigenous people in general are under-represented in higher education in Australia, both as students and staff (Asmar & Page 2009). Less than 1% of Australian academic teaching and research staff are Indigenous – a clear population disparity when Indigenous people make up 2.5% of the total Australian population (ABS 2008). In 2011, there were over 109,500 full-time-equivalent teaching and research staff across Australian universities (DEEWR 2011a), and only 1,050 of these were Indigenous (DEEWR 2011b). Of the total Indigenous academic staff at Australian universities in 2011, 69% were women (DEEWR 2011b). While this is significant when compared to the small numbers of Indigenous male higher education staff, it still equates to population disparity. Figure 1 compares Indigenous employees by their function with the number of Indigenous staff needed for population parity representation in Australian universities (IHEAC 2011: 10). The numbers are such that without deliberate strategies to address the present inequities it will be difficult to achieve population parity especially in 'research only' and 'research and teaching'. Indigenous women working in teaching and research positions at Australian universities tend to be employed at lower levels than their male counterparts (DEEWR 2011b). For example, there are more Indigenous men at professorial and senior lecturer levels than Indigenous women (DEEWR 2011b).

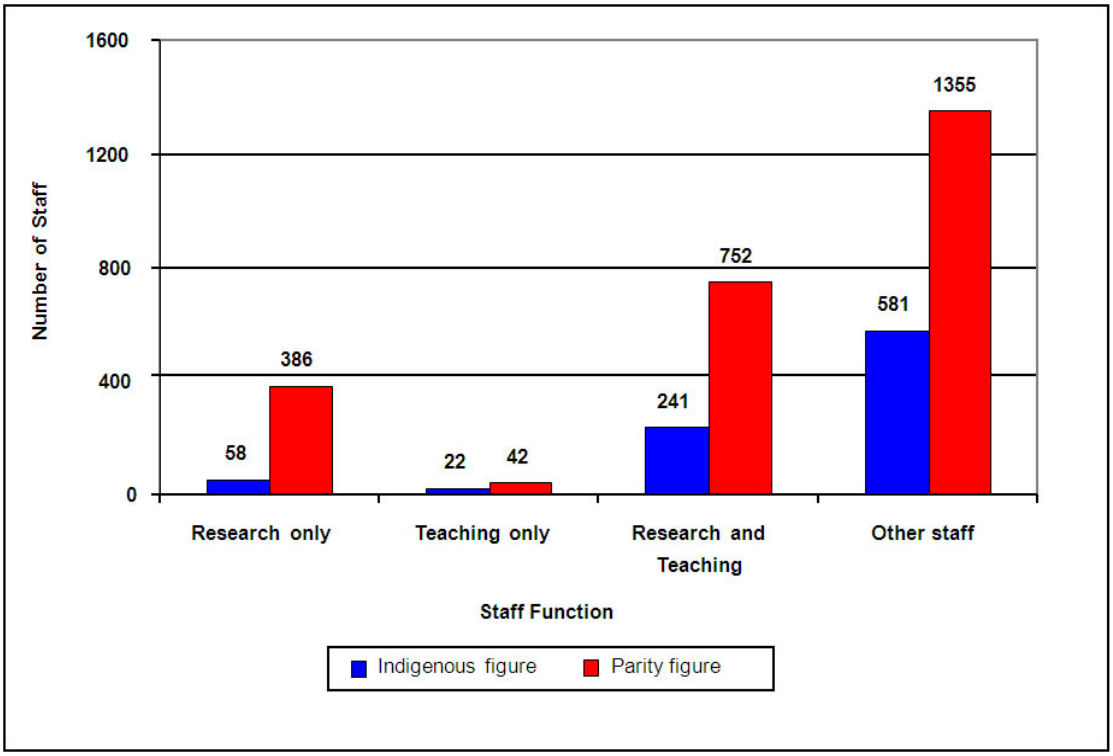

Figure 1. Indigenous Higher Education Staff: Actual and Population Parity Figures (2009)
Figures represent numbers of staff in each function, not Full-time Equivalent staff

Parity rates are calculated on ABS national-level population estimates, Indigenous Australians representing 2.5 percent. Staff figures taken from DEEWR's *Staff 2009: selected higher education statistics tables* (quoted in IHEAC 2011: 10).

The under-representation of Indigenous academic and professional staff within higher education sends a negative message to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people about the position of Indigenous people in universities (IHEC 2011). The report titled *On Stony Ground* (Moreton-Robinson et al 2011) further discusses this negativity and ranks universities in terms of outcomes for Indigenous people including employment based on their own data as reported to DEEWR for the funding they receive from the Australian Government. They along with Indigenous Higher Education Council (IHEC) (2011) identify ways to increase Indigenous employees, research efforts and education outcomes for Indigenous peoples. One of the concerns expressed in all of the reports (Behrendt et al 2012; IHEC 2011; Moreton-Robinson et al 2011) is that without Indigenous specific strategies to increase Indigenous employment, research and teaching capacity building and curriculum content that we will not reach parity for at least 100 years. The IHEAC accepts that for representative Indigenous employment within the higher education sector, the principle of equal treatment will not in itself result in equitable outcomes. Treating unequal peoples equally merely entrenches existing inequalities. For significant improvement specific measures will need to be taken to overcome recognised disadvantages. In this regard we sought to address the needs of Indigenous academic women and work through the issues of women in terms stops and starts in career due to child rearing, caring roles, and other family commitments which do not produce linear career progression (Stevens-Kalceff et al 2007, Diezmann & Grieshaber 2009). These different patterns need to be taken into account as new members of staff are recruited in a highly competitive environment (Eagly & Carli 2007).

In Australia, in 2008, 55.2% of student enrolments and 55.8% of commencing enrolments were female (DEEWR 2011b). This gender composition is not reflected in representation of academic women especially in senior leadership across the sector, nor is it reflected in significant changes in the distribution of women across broad fields of education. This picture raises questions about the role models that are being provided to students, especially those in the PhD cohorts who represent the future generation of university leaders (Dever 2008). Moreover, when Indigeneity is added to this equation, the picture becomes grim for Indigenous women.

Moving from the margins through publication

The factors that marginalise Indigenous Australian academic women are complex and often interrelated (IHEAC 2010). An important factor is the well-documented and complicated interplay

of gender and culture within the workplace and society, and the leadership faced by Indigenous academic women within a westernised post-colonial tertiary system (Asher 2010; Fitzgerald 2003a & 2003b; Shah 2010). Indigenous academic women are confronted with some specific challenges in building their academic careers. 'Indigenous women academics experience many of the same issues faced by other academics and women working in higher education institutions ... we also face issues that are particular to us as Indigenous employees and as Indigenous women academics' (Fredericks 2011a: 42). One real concern for Indigenous academic women is the potential for conflicting identities which can pull their emotional and professional responsibilities in contradictory directions, through their connections to social, political and religious events outside the university (Mihesuah 2003).

Several authors express ongoing concerns about the struggles confronting Indigenous women within higher education, where they are often marginally positioned, locked into Indigenous-specific roles within Indigenous centres, units or programs and face barriers to career advancement (Asher 2010; Fredericks 2009; White 2010; White & Fredericks 2011).

Peer-reviewed publication is required for academic career advancement. But achieving publication can be extremely difficult for Indigenous women, for four reasons:

1. Complex workload issues can influence the time and energy required to write or prepare publications. Indigenous women may be the only Indigenous person in their school or department and be 'the one' Indigenous person whom everyone goes to for Indigenous issues regardless of whether it is one's job or not. There are also the complex community and family issues to deal with as a member of the Indigenous community. As we say 'living the statistics' that others read about.
2. Producing papers and/or a thesis requires high-level writing skills. Not all Indigenous people working in the academy have these skills in the same way that not all people in the academy necessary have these skills. Sometimes Indigenous people are employed for their content knowledge and the other skills they possess in working with Indigenous peoples and not necessarily for their skills in writing. This is in contrast to the way that others may be selected for positions. For example, Anglo Australians are not selected on the basis of their ability to work with Anglo Australians. Indigenous Australians are often also selected on their ability to demonstrate that they can work with Indigenous Australians.
3. Submitting papers for publication requires an understanding of the publication system – including what to write about, how to submit the work, and associated processes such as peer review. This is in a system in which most journals also do not include any Indigenous representation on editorial boards nor is the content necessarily reflective of Indigenous interests. Moreover, specific calls for papers might not find their way to sites which might be of interest to Indigenous women. It might be presumed for example as in the 'Introduction' to a *TEXT* Special Issue on Australian women's experimental writing (Gibbs 2013) that sometimes Indigeneity is not always the focus.
4. Submitting a paper requires confidence about an individual's ability to write.

Collectively, Indigenous women have limited experience in achieving academic publication. They are proportionately under-represented in all forms of writing and publication, including academic works that attempt to contribute to knowledge, influence policy and transform the thinking of others. Increasing Indigenous women's writing and publication output will contribute in a significant way to moving their work from the margins.

Are Indigenous women writing?

It is not that Indigenous women do not write. For many years, Indigenous Australian women have been writing about the changing position of Indigenous women and the continuing issues of colonisation, racism, sexism and classism as they impact on Indigenous women today (for example, Daylight & Johnston 1986; Flick 1990; Heiss 2003; Holland 1996; Moreton-Robinson 2000). These works articulate the current positioning of Indigenous women. Some of this work is grounded in a physical place; for example, Mabel Edmunds (1992, 1996) and Pamela Croft (2003) both focus on the Rockhampton region of Central Queensland. Other writers such as Anita Heiss (2003) have explored what it means to write and be Indigenous, along with writing in a range of genres.

Indigenous women have been particularly engaged in writing life stories and autobiographical narratives, and this has become a dominant genre in Indigenous writing (although the works don't often fit the chronological narrative generally used in autobiographies) (Heiss 2003). While this genre was predominantly focused on Indigenous men during the 1960s and 1970s (Brewster 1996: 7), it is Indigenous women who now dominate it. The 1970s saw the first books published by Aboriginal women, with a focus on their experiences and daily lives in comparison to the lives of

white women. Moreton-Robinson (2000: 3) states that in 'life writings Indigenous women speak of the practical, political and personal effects of being "other"'. Torres Strait Islander women increased their published writing in the 1990s.

Sally Morgan's 1987 book, *My Place*, is regarded as a significant contribution to Indigenous women's writing, in that it gave all Australians an understanding of contemporary urban Aboriginal life. Her work detailed some of the complexities of families who live in large urban centres away from their Country, along with the multiple issues that surface when exploring identity.

Auntie Rita, written by Rita and Jackie Huggins (1996), is another example of this genre. It is a significant contribution that outlines the removal of family, the violence of domestic service and relationships, and the common servant-master relationship between Aboriginal women and white women. It was short-listed for the 1995 Nita B Kibble Literary Award.

Some recent books by Aboriginal women provide a broader biographical focus and explore the histories of families. For example, Mary Ann Bin-Salik's (2000) publication, *Aboriginal Women by Degrees*, is a collection of Indigenous women's stories about their journeys towards academic achievement. This type of work is an example of the position that Brewster (1996: 7) identifies as both autobiographical and biographical. This positioning provides a greater understanding of the lives of Aboriginal women, often across generations (for example, Huggins 1991, Huggins & Huggins 1996, Morgan 1987). These works examine issues that are relevant for Aboriginal women, including their sense of Aboriginality. Brewster (1996: 9) explains that the genre includes 'many Aboriginal writers whose exploration of the past is an arena in which they can define their own Aboriginality'. Collellmir (2002: 53-76) also discusses this point. While Huggins (1994) discusses the nature of respect with regards to Indigenous content within writing and Heiss (2003) explores who is writing and what is the nature of Aboriginal writing, including what might be deemed to be biographical. Her work is particularly relevant when understanding Indigenous Australian writing (Heiss 2003).

The biographical and historical genre of Indigenous women's writing explores issues of history, sociology, psychology, health and place in the context of colonisation. The works provide representations of Aboriginal women and Aboriginal women's experiences of colonisation, dispossession, racism, classism, sexism and white privilege as told by Aboriginal women. They reveal how Aboriginal women have learned to survive, and provide an historical background for the contemporary context.

Indigenous women's writing, with its focus on biography and history, can be seen as mapping the territory between an oral and a literate society. Much Aboriginal writing is adapted from the spoken to the written, and presented in the way that it is thought and spoken. This has led to some criticism of the genre, particularly for switching between the personal (first person) and the impersonal (third person). We note that much of the criticism has come from non-Indigenous people and are typically measured against Eurocentric notions of literary and academic merit. Grossman describes Aboriginal writing as

> one version of the final frontier of Indigenous participation in the colonising culture… Aboriginal writing is conceived as a frontier territory along which lies, on one border, 'writing', 'theory', 'textuality', 'history' and 'mediation'; and on the other border, 'talk', 'experience', 'story', 'performance' and 'witness'. (Grossman 2001: 152)

Fredericks argues that Indigenous people can

> use writing as a vehicle to document what we think, how we do things and what matters to us. We can also leave writing for the generations that follow us so that they can quote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars and writers, politicians, activists and community members about our business. (Fredericks 2011b: 266)

Indigenous writing offers an option, and a way of documenting the past, for now and for the future. Writing is important to Indigenous people for historical, cultural, political and personal reasons and often explores a complexity of issues and contexts. Gibbs concludes that while Indigenous writing might be seen as autobiographical may be it can 'under some conditions, be read as experimental, and can open new formal possibilities in and beyond the autobiographical genre despite the fact that it was not written for that purpose, nor intended to be read in that light' (Gibbs 2013: 4). It is terrific that people are starting to explore the nature of what Indigenous writing might be rather than just 'plonking it' under the heading of Aboriginal writing.

Academic recognition of Indigenous writing

The westernised Australian tertiary system typically neglects to formally recognise Indigenous knowledge systems as separate structures that are worthy of attention. Some universities are attempting to address this through either 'Indigenising the curriculum' (e.g. Central Queensland University 2014) or 'embedding Indigenous perspectives' (e.g. Queensland University of Technology 2014). Indigenous Australians possess the world's oldest living knowledge system, with the capacity to articulate culturally-distinct knowledge bases, values, research methodologies and ideologies (IHEAC 2008). There has been some effort to in incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems into university curricula and publishing. Over the years there have been a few edited collections of Indigenous writing such as *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians* (Grossman 2003) and journals featuring Indigenous research works such the *Cultural Studies Review* in 2009 which included Indigenous theory. While there have been some collections in the past, there are limited publishing sites that specifically encourage or seek out submission of Indigenous works or seek to explore Indigenous knowledge.

This presents very real difficulties for Indigenous women who are seeking to build a publication profile. They are required to publish as part of their work, and publication rates are a recognised measure of individual and institutional performance (White & Fredericks 2011). There are a small number of Indigenous women from the small percentage of Indigenous women and men in the academy who have managed to be recognised for their individual and academic performance. It is these women who are 'named up' when the issues of equity and the need for specific strategies are discussed. It needs to be remembered however that some 5 to 10 women or so do not represent the numbers of Indigenous women struggling within the institutions in which they work in the same way that a small number of white women would not.

Underneath these career issues is the power that is held within the written word of Indigenous women. This is perhaps best emphasised by Mihesuah (2003: 25) who asserts that 'writing is a way to empower us, to state that we are not victims and that we are attempting to find answers and solve problems'. The power of publication is particularly pressing in the light of current discussions about Indigenous issues, inequities and disparities through the 'Close the Gap' initiative (a government initiative committed to reducing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians).

Through their publications, Indigenous academic women can contribute to social justice and inform the 'Close the Gap' debate (White & Fredericks 2011). Their writing can highlight the pain and suffering experienced by Indigenous people, and be part of a cathartic, healing process.

In this complex context of the need to publish, the difficulties in achieving recognition for Indigenous academic writing, the under-representation of Indigenous academic women in publishing generally, and ongoing agenda for social change, the *Tiddas Showin' Up, Talkin' Up and Puttin' Up* project was funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council from 2007-2008 (Fredericks et al 2011). An extension of that project, the *Tiddas Writin' Up Workshop*, specifically aimed to address some of the inequities about publication experienced by Indigenous Australian academic women.

The *Tiddas Writin' Up Workshop*

The *Tiddas Writin' Up Workshop* specifically addressed academic publishing. It provided a safe space for Indigenous women to interact and learn, within an environment that acknowledged their unique cultural value systems. By providing a much-needed platform for Indigenous academic women to have a voice, the workshop sought to pave the way for Indigenous academic women to contribute to writing, research and publishing. Permission was given by the women participants to utilise their comments and feedback to assist in building the knowledge base about Indigenous women's writing.

The name 'Tiddas' is an Indigenous generic language term that is close to the white way of knowing the familial relationship of 'Sister'. For the original project, the words 'Showin' Up, Talkin' Up' were drawn from Moreton-Robinson (2000) and, with 'Puttin' Up', 'calls into being the constructions of our leadership as Indigenous women, grounded in our communities and with particular reference to our leadership in universities' (Fredericks et al 2011: 3).

The *Tiddas Writin' Up Workshop* was conducted as a three-day, live-in residential held at the Virginia Palms Motel, North Brisbane, in August 2010. It brought together 38 Indigenous academic women from across Australia and one international Indigenous academic woman. The women who participated in the workshop came from every Australian state and territory.

The *Tiddas Writin' Up Workshop* was developed by Bronwyn Fredericks and Nereda White. Its governance structure was similar to that used for the first *Tiddas* project, with a Senior Circle of Indigenous Women and group of Senior Executive Women who provided guidance and input (Fredericks et al 2011). In addition to participating in the planning, women from both of these groups were invited to be actively involved by sharing their stories and providing advice about their own journey in academic publishing. This process ensured that an integral part of the learning occurred through leadership in action within an Indigenous culturally-safe space.

The *Tiddas Writin' Up* Workshop focused on the processes and techniques of academic publishing within an Indigenous-specific context. The workshop was designed to improve the research output of participants and support their scholarly writing activities. It involved a combination of practical activities and presentations from influential Indigenous guest leaders, whilst encouraging participants to be proud of their respective Indigenous cultural heritages.

The workshop covered a broad range of topics, including understanding journal rankings, targeting relevant journals for career advancement, creating opportunities to publish, becoming members of editorial boards, understanding the process of publishing, building research into learning and teaching, working with others in collaborative writing projects, understanding intellectual property, and using poetry as a form of academic expression. Women presented sessions on writing for peer-reviewed journals, the complex process of peer review, using critical friends, and working with proof readers and copy editors. The difficult aspects of receiving and giving critique and feedback were discussed and the women formed work groups to support each other's writing. All sessions were delivered by women and the workshop was established as a women's-only space.

Participants learned through formal sharing sessions with authors, readings, practice writing exercises, and simulated reader and author events. A simulated 'meet the author' bookshop was established to hear Aunty Ruth Hegarty talk about her writing and publishing process, and her published books. Aunty Ruth read some of her work and took questions from the participants. As an Elder Aboriginal woman in her 80s, Aunty Ruth is an inspiration and proved to the women that one is never too old and we always have something to offer others.

The evenings were filled with fun social activities. On the second evening, some participants read their creative works (poems, songs, prose) and shared in casual discussions about their work. A quick 'poetry slam' took place. These activities helped to encourage the women to think about all forms of writing and to write across any medium that may help them to move to academic writing.

The *Tiddas Writin' Up Workshop* was designed as an engaging writers' retreat, similar to what might be offered through a Writers' Centre or formalised writing group. Its focus was not to be a workshop where people would just gather and write, but to be a workshop where people shared, challenged each other and supported each other to write. This focus grew from Bronwyn Fredericks's long-term involvement in writers' groups, and she anticipated that the *Tiddas* workshop might encourage Indigenous women to join local writers' centres or groups at their universities (Fredericks 2011b).

The workshop sought to encourage participants' writing confidence and remove the mystery associated with writing and publishing. The program was designed to give women the confidence to produce academic pieces of writing that would be suitable for publication, whilst simultaneously developing networks that could give rise to opportunities for writing partnerships and mentoring of less experienced writers. Women were encouraged to write both as individuals and groups. Fredericks (2011b: 266) asserts that 'collectively we can all make a difference to the struggle and re-history our history and what is known about us as Indigenous peoples'.

What did the Tiddas say?

The Tiddas who participated in the workshop gave it overwhelmingly positive feedback. The workshop's objectives were clearly met, and there were tangible changes in the women's confidence and self-assurance. Most significantly, these changes had the potential to be taken from the workshop into the women's everyday personal and professional lives. Some of the women's words and changes they have made as a result of the workshop are included here with permission.

The opportunity to share a space with like women was significant for the majority of participants. They described an overwhelming strength that arose from being in a group of Indigenous women who tended to have a common background in higher education. All of the women described experiences of difficulty in being within the higher education sector. At the *Tiddas* workshop, they discovered that their struggles, which come from the dynamics of being Indigenous women scholars positioned in westernised educational contexts, were universally experienced by participants. As one participant stated, 'We come from afar, but we connect as one strong group of women'. Several

participants stated that their collective group potential surpassed what they could achieve individually. 'Sharing is inspirational, being with sistas increases the sense of belonging and potential.'

A common theme of the women's feedback was their desire to achieve change though their writing. This focus on activism echoes Fitzgerald (2003a), who indicates that, whilst Indigenous women represent their communities, they also work implicitly as change agents. *Tiddas* participants made comments such as, 'I don't feel like I'm walking my path alone … there are amazing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who want to work together ... share our ideas and change the world', and 'our writing holds a place of prominence in achieving change and needs to complement action'.

Participants acknowledged the value of the women-only, non-threatening environment of the workshop, and the safe space it provided for them. They recognised it as a nurturing platform to encourage and facilitate further writing. One woman stated that it was an 'encouraging and safe place to laugh, learn and share experience, knowledge and wisdom'. Another woman described 'the laughter with so many deadly black women connecting in a safe and nurturing environment'. The women's feedback underscores the importance of providing supportive environments; providing a culturally-safe space is important for Indigenous women, and it makes a difference. In this case, the workshop space will facilitate further research, writing and publishing from Indigenous women academics.

The workshop provided participants with a plethora of practical skills that can be transferred to future writing work. Several participants were not aware of standard writing, editing and publishing procedures, undoubtedly making their initiation into the writing process within higher education very difficult. This is a notable concern, and suggests that further support for Indigenous academic women is needed. As one woman explained, '[I've learnt about] the publishing process especially making more of what you write for publication' and another said '[I've learnt about] the editing process – points which make what I am reading more intelligible and understandable'.

Other practical learnings highlighted by participants included an understanding of journal rankings, peer reviewing, and writing and publishing for different audiences and contexts. One of the participant's commented:

> The mystery of writing and publishing has been explained, demystified, and I now have a clear picture of the peer review and editorial process. I now have confidence just because I know. It has removed that part of not knowing that made it scary for me.

Participants discussed the value of creative writing and story-telling, and some women were particularly interested in these aspects of writing. A number of the guest presenters discussed ways to be creative within academic writing (such as building a creative structure into an academic paper). Some women felt that, without a creative approach, their writing would 'be boring' or 'not relevant to community'.

Within this context, participants discussed the audience of their writing. Not all of the work written by Indigenous scholars is developed specifically for the Indigenous community. It may be written for the broader community, policy makers or government as an endeavour to make a difference for Indigenous peoples down the track.

Perhaps the most outstanding outcome from the workshop was the increase in self-assurance that many of the women conveyed. Armed with their practical 'toolbox' of writing skills and their rise in confidence, the women finished the workshop with a strong urge to start or continue their writing. One woman wrote, 'I'm not just an academic. I'm a writer and story teller.' Another stated, 'All those ideas I have been keeping on the drawing board will now be able to be born'. A woman who has taken some time in her doctoral studies said, 'I feel I could move forward with [my] doctorate' and another said 'I now know I can do this now'. Another, who had finished her doctorate, stated, 'I wish I knew this before, but at least now I feel I can turn my thesis into a series of papers and I have a team of sisters who can support me, read for me and give me feedback on my work'.

It is this self-assurance, directly generated through the *Tiddas* workshop that has the potential to address the current under-representation of Indigenous women scholars who write and publish their work. It is clear that Indigenous women academics can thrive if they are offered opportunities for professional, personal and cultural development, supported by others who are like them. This was acknowledged by one participant, who stated, 'The chance to come together across nations cannot be underestimated and I would love others to be able to have these experiences'.

From workshop to publication

To finalise the project and take a concrete step towards increasing the publication output of Indigenous academic women, *Tiddas* participants were invited to submit their work for formal publication in *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Issues*. Bronwyn Fredericks, a published Aboriginal woman academic was asked by the *Tiddas Writin' Up Workshop* to negotiate production of a special edition – aptly named the *Tiddas Collection*. The collection shares the writing of Indigenous academic women, while focusing on educational leadership (Fredericks et al 2011, White & Fredericks 2011).

Submission for the journal was open to all Indigenous women who had attended any single *Tiddas* workshop (five workshops were offered over three years). However, women who attended the *Writin' Up* workshop were invited to bring their draft papers along and receive individual, critical feedback from a range of critical friends and mentors engaged by the *Tiddas Writin' Up Workshop*. This personal writing tutorial helped these women to further develop practical academic writing skills, and helped to build their understanding of the journal submission and refereeing process. The women were also offered a writing mentor to guide them through the publication process. With their mentor, the women could continue to develop and fine-tune their papers, meeting either face-to-face or by telephone.

Papers submitted to the publication were fully peer reviewed by academic women. Once the review process was complete, Judy Gregory (Information Design Centre) copy edited the collection before it was submitted to the *Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues*.

Significantly, for some Indigenous women, their contribution to the *Tiddas Collection* is their first publication as a single author in a refereed journal. This is a major accomplishment for the women individually, and indicates the success of the workshop in achieving tangible outcomes. The *Tiddas Collection* was launched in May 2011 by Dr Vicki Grieves (University of Sydney) at the National Indigenous Writers and Educators Conference (NIWEC) at the University of Wollongong. The collection is formally named *The Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues Demonstrating Indigenous Women's Educational Leadership: Tiddas Showin' Up, Talkin' Up and Puttin' Up!* and is perhaps best captured through its editorial, which declares:

The words of the Indigenous academic women contained within this edited collection are words of power and survival. They are words that contribute to our understandings of Indigenous women academics within Australian higher education and that demonstrate the strength of the intersection of Indigenous, womanhood and academic. (Fredericks et al 2011: 5)

Most importantly, the writing of those who attended the workshop did not end with this publication. Several of the participants have gone on to write and publish, and others have submitted abstracts for conferences (something they would have lacked the confidence to do previously). For example, Frances Wyld published in *Social Alternatives* (Wyld 2011a) and delivered a paper at the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) Conference (Wyld 2011b), and Amy Clelland delivered a paper in India (2012) and submitted an abstract for the Nga Pae o e Maramatanga Conference in New Zealand (Clelland, Fredericks and Watson 2012). Both of these women have said that the *Tiddas* workshop and publishing in the *Tiddas Collection* had an enormous impact on their academic lives. Amy Clelland stated, 'Every time I see Tiddas again across the country, everyone speaks so fondly of the memories of the workshops and I still can't believe what the Tiddas has done for me not only in my career but personally. I'm so privileged' (A Clelland, personal communication, 14 February 2012). Other women have expressed similar thoughts.

The *Tiddas Writin' Up Workshop* and the *Tiddas Collection* represent the success of small yet incremental developments in supporting Indigenous academic women and addressing their under-representation in academic publishing. The success of the program indicates that this type of work should be continued. Each year, as new Indigenous women begin their career in academia, their inclusion into the *Tiddas* group would forge a larger and stronger network of Indigenous women, creating comprehensive support structures and alliances across the country. This ongoing focus would allow real change to happen to address the under-representation of Indigenous women in academic publishing. In addition, this strong group of like-minded Indigenous women, who connect across the country and unite for common action, would have the potential to create authentic positive change within the broader Indigenous community.

Conclusion

Indigenous women are increasingly participating in the higher education sector and writing for publication. But specific support structures are needed to support these women and address their current under-representation in academic publishing. Projects such as the *Tiddas Writin' Up Workshop* and the special *Tiddas Collection* in *The Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues* are evidence of the potential success of formal support structures.

With adequate support, Indigenous Australian women can progress in academic careers and achieve parity with their non-Indigenous colleagues. The most appropriate support is specifically designed for Indigenous women, recognises and supports the practice of Indigenous knowledge systems within universities and addresses the continued marginalisation of Indigenous higher education workers (both and male and female) (IHEAC 2008).

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