KATE ANDERSON: Okay, so I would really like you to welcome Max and Marleigh to the stage, Max Jackson and Marleigh Zada from Curtin University presenting in absentia with Anthony Kickett, and they are going to present on reinvigorating Nyungar Boodja: Collaboration and implementation of Nyungar and UDL pedagogies to rekindle desire for participatory action by indigenous and non-indigenous students. This session will go a little bit late because of our technical delays this morning, so please I appreciate your patience and welcome. Thank you.

MAX JACKSON: Thank you.

Thank you everyone for attending. First of all, I'd like to thank Colin for his welcome. It's always very important for us visitors from other countries to have a welcome to come and perform business on someone else's country. We acknowledge that we're on other people’s country, and I'll use my old language because like this side of the country, our side of the country, we use the old language because our old people understood the old language. English has only been here for 250 years. So even though my language is from the other side of the country, it comes from the same foundation. It is built on country. (Indigenous language spoken).

Hello everyone. We are coming from Whadjuk Noongar country. We are happy in our hearts that everyone is here on the Kulin Nation to learn and share information. I pay respects to all our elders past and present who would be happy we're all meeting on Kulin lands to exchange knowledge. We're an egalitarian society. We share and I know, without knowing my really old people, that that's what they would like. You also want to add your

MARLEIGH ZADA: [Indigenous language spoken] - Good morning, everybody. [Indigenous language spoken] - I’m a proud Barkindji and Afghan woman, I’m not Noongar, I just want to acknowledge that as well before I get started. I've been very privileged to be able to be accepted into Nyungar country to be able to assist with the education of our topics, and I also just want to acknowledge that we are standing on Wurundjeri country today. Thank you to Colin as well this morning for our beautiful welcome.

MAX: Alright. I suppose this came across our desk and, you know, universal design for learning, we sort of looked at it and said this is what we seem to do. This is based on our practice, our cultural practices, which is about sort of, you know, being an egalitarian society, built on reciprocity, built on it's the cultural protocols and all the other values and practices of the indigenous community is about looking after each other. It is about inclusivity. It's about building confidence.

So we thought this would be a really good sort of forum to come and spend some time and maybe share what we do, and that way we might be able to support others in what they do.

So our unit is we sort of looked at a lot of people will go out on country to find out about indigenous culture, but this you know, our cities were always country and they still are. But the difference is too that in our cities we live next to places of cultural significance. I drive past Yellagonga Lake and Yellagonga Lake is named after the first indigenous person that made contact with non-indigenous people. He left them thinking they were the old spirits and they looked weary, so he left them to rest. He came back, they hadn't left. But that's the way the culture was. And when our students drive past that place every day, we thought the confidence, the investment, all those things, will make them stronger people, and make them stronger with our you know, our values are about being relational people, not transactional.

So we looked at this assessment, and it's a pity that Uncle Anthony Kickett is not here because he really I did this unit before him, but then as he started to do it and really put that cultural stamp on, we really started to see some really strong sort of outcomes in regards to our students, and especially our international students because we built this unit based on indigenous culture, which is about family. Our international students, that's what they're missing the most, the family, the familiarity, the belonging. And so as we went, we'll go through this unit, we'll start to understand how it really started to create strong students. But also little communities within students. I'm a business graduate, so I found that international students and non-indigenous Western Australian students didn't leave the unit with really strong relationships. But what we find with this is they become a little family within themselves, and I think it's because of what Anthony introduced.

So, you know, our students have that two worlds colliding, and this is actually creating those safe spaces for negotiation when they engage with indigenous people. Because as myself, Marleigh and Anthony, we have our own shared spaces. Marleigh does have other cultures, her Afghan culture and that, so we have to create those safe spaces for negotiation and we try and create this with the students.

The way we as the foundation, the Nyungar Nyitting and the 8 ways of learning. And the reason for that is our cultural ways of teaching is that values base, like I said, that egalitarian, reciprocity, respect, community, protocol complying and inclusivity, and it creates that belonging. But with these type of practices, these practical ways sorry, that's not a word I usually get stuck on but they allow the students to customise their engagement because there are so many options. They are multi optional. We go out into the country and say engage the country, inanimate objects. How do you engage the country? Use all your senses. Feel something, smell it. It is telling you something. Feel the wind, listen to the wind. Those are the types of things we try and get our students to move back away from that transactional process of the hustle and bustle of the big city life and actually get back to things which really they can control, but also things that they can share and they can reflect on and things like that.

So I think it really supports the students but also supports the community of the students because we get students that nowadays have a lot stronger identities than I think some of us. Me myself, as an Aboriginal man, I had to hide things growing up. My first job, one of the first generation that actually ended up in an office, you had to leave your culture at the door. We have strong non-indigenous allies around us and activists that actually support that we can bring our culture and it can be celebrated. So it sort of it creates this community which a lot of our students they have these strong identities but how do they use it in community. And these type of practices that are usually old cultural practices allow these things to develop and strengthen the strength they have, but especially international students. They won't bring them here because they think the curriculum, it doesn't belong in the curriculum, but once we allow them to do that, they become very strong students, a lot stronger.

MARLEIGH: I agree with that as well. I think bringing yourself to the classroom is particularly important in this type of subject, no matter where you are, who you are, where you come from, that type of thing, what your abilities might be, bringing all of that diversity of perspective to this practice is extremely important for us.

As you can see, this is using our Aboriginal pedagogy to implement part of what we know as UDL now. We had actually not heard of UDL before coming here, so we were actually a little bit relieved to hear that our previous presenters are quite new to this space as well. We're very much the same, in the sense of giving it this particular title, although this is something that, you know, our people have been practising for thousands of years.

So I think that getting beyond the traditional classroom setting really allows the students to engage in a way that they haven't had an opportunity to do so probably in the past through their typical mainstream learning journey. And I think getting outside of the classroom as well really does allow the students to stay engaged with the topic. We only have them for seven days. This unit is run between our semesters in the winter break, so it's an intensive course. So because it is so full of information, and it is quite hard, as you can appreciate, to sit and listen to lectures all day every day, getting them outside and being on country, as Uncle Max said, not just being two hours away from the city and thinking a non-built up environment is on country, air quotes, and, you know, allowing the students to see there is very much still country, as we know it, under these big concrete jungles that we live in now. It allows that sustained effort.

MAX: Yeah. And I think it's like one good lecturer, one good tutor, one good unit develops confidence that actually then transitions across other units. I actually run an Intro to Indigenous Australian Studies, which is once a week for a whole semester. I don't get the same outcomes because the students are distracted with other units. The students go away and they've lost before they come back, so the 7 day intensive between semester works a lot better because the motivation, the investment is really strong because they don't have these distractions. That's sort of the way we do it. Do you want to talk to

MARLEIGH: I guess in terms of the how to, this is just one of the ways that we like to explain what we do, giving visuals to some of the complex concepts that we apply as Aboriginal people. Our good old spider web analogy. If we have a look on the outside, you can see that there is a red dot on the outside of the spider web and this concept of yarning is really big in Aboriginal culture. I don't know if anybody has heard of that term before. We don't go from A to B in a conversation. We'll add in bits and pieces and we'll tell a story. It is a journey while we go through our learning.

So we might start out here on the side, and we'll go straight for a little while, but we'll divert off to the side, and then we'll come back, and eventually we'll get to what you guys know as the point of the conversation. But it is coming, so if you end up in a yarn, please be patient. Everything that you need to know throughout that process is being given to you for a specific reason. It might initially sound like, "Oh, where is somebody going with this conversation?", but there is a point to why you're hearing about that. And it really does speak to the interconnectedness and the intraconnectedness of our culture, knowledge and practices.

MAX: This is a bit of a map of our six seasons which we have in Western Australia, but what it is is actually the template too also, because our local country is also an educator, it's a teacher, and it's getting the students to understand that.

The protocols are actually the key to this. So when the students leave, if they understand the protocols then they know how to engage country, then they know why to engage country. These things become the foundation for the student learning, but also the student development, their confidence with engaging indigenous people. Because quite often these international students, non-indigenous students, as we will see in the later slide, there is that divide. There is that understanding that we are whether it's stereotyping, we are all a certain type, that we cannot engage in a rational way. So by building this up we sort of develop the confidence. And the confidence comes from the education and the understanding as that engages psychologically, physically on all different levels. So the country becomes their teacher, and it's that ongoing sort of relationships that we try and develop where they can go out and actually become comfortable in actually engaging with country themselves when we're not there, or engaging our communities when they need to engage our communities.

And this is what's created so many problems over years, is not having people, especially in positions of power, not actually being able to engage the community and understand what's needed. We've spent tens of billions of dollars on business background, so the amount of waste that comes from this, it's crucial to have stronger indigenous people that understand indigenous culture in positions of power.

MARLEIGH: I think that the other benefit of just displaying this for you guys as well is not just so that you know what month it is in Noongar country at the moment, which you can see on the outside of this particular figure, but it's really about getting the students to contextualise their learning. It can be quite easy for us to say, "Yes, all Aboriginal people love to have a yarn", but we are not a homogeneous peoples. There are over 250 different language groups. And so we localise it, we contextualise it, and that's really a part of our Aboriginal pedagogy as well, is to learn in situ, and that's also a part of that retention of information, to go out on country, learn about a particular thing in the place where it is so that you can actually remember part of that information as well.

Country is one of our modes of representation. Country is a teacher, an educator, the same as what we are. She's not always credited as being such a teacher, although we know that she has so much to offer, should we just sit still and listen sometimes, which we can forget being in the hustle and bustle of the city, again which is why we choose that particular aspect of country, rather than going somewhere two hours away where students are not likely to return to a lot of the time as well, without having somebody else with them. Uncle Max, you talked about the protocols, do you want to

MAX: Yeah, I'll reference them again. These are the keys. It's understanding the protocols, understanding how to create relationships. When they no longer have the staff to facilitate and support them, understanding the protocols is based on what they'll actually how they'll engage community with new relationships.

So country, as we've spoken about, is important. The value system is critical because the value system is built on supporting those most in need.

Myself and Marleigh mentioned about students with disabilities, but we really couldn't come up with it because we always looked at someone coming to us with strengths, and disabilities can be in different forms. We may not see them. So you always be prepared to look at that and you always be prepared to be mindful of that. And that's why we have multiple staff, because the multiple staff represent the multiple levels of students. Marleigh engages the students at a level which is the same level. Anthony engages them at an elder's sort of level because he's invested a lot more. I'm always trying to catch him up because I actually moved away when I started working. I isolated myself from my culture because I thought I had to leave it at the door to survive in a western business. So I'm like the older cousin. I'm the one that's trying to keep to the time where Anthony takes too long, but the students have those different layers and those different layers are part of the protocols. You know, the reciprocity amongst us. We give them the examples and then they see it in real in a real way, not just reading it from a book and trying to sort of contextualise it through a book, but actually seeing it in real-time with real people.

MARLEIGH: Yeah, and one of the ways of doing that is, you know, the respect of, I suppose, positionality. So myself as a younger person, you know, it's so important that we give respect to our elders just by naming Uncle Max as uncle and Uncle Anthony as uncle as well. It's a very clear demonstration of positionality and strength within that and knowledge within that as well.

Us young people are always dedicated to going and getting cup of teas for the elders so they get to see that as part of a practice as well, and something very simple that can be implemented for themselves.

But it is about the relationships. The relationships are extremely important to what we do. And it's not just about us. As Uncle Max said, it is based on reciprocity. So as much as we give all of ourselves to the students, we ask that they give that in return because we genuinely want to get to know who they are. And we typically being that this is also an elective unit, we typically have quite small cohorts, which does allow for that more intimate connection as well for us to actually get to know everybody. I suppose we've put this sorry, do you want to speak to that one?

MAX: I was going to say a little bit, because when we look at country family is everything. Family is not just it's the animals and the plants. My totem is the...the emu. We sort of introduce them to those kind of relationships. I suppose the whole reason we need to do this is because history has divided our communities. The international students will get their understanding of they may get their understanding of Aboriginal people from other sources which actually still support this kind of division. You know, 1905 Act was actually our Act in Western Australia, which actually was the assimilation and segregation, and had all these sides to it, which actually separated the indigenous and non-indigenous community. So this is what we're trying to work with. We're trying to rebuild relationships.

Our culture was always bit on relationships. We allowed people to come to this country, we tried to look after these people because they were most in need. They didn't know where the water sources were. They didn't know what food they could eat, what plants they could eat. So it was built on relationships. So it's trying to come back to these relationships which are a lot stronger and actually sort of have those investing in these relationships, who may not usually invest in the relationship, may not understand the importance because the importance is a strong student with confidence that understands how to engage different types different types different groups of people and support each other and things like that. So that's what this is about.

MARLEIGH: I think understanding the why, why we're doing this. We're not just doing this because we think we're the best and we should be at the forefront of everything not biased but understanding the why. How did we get to this point where, you know, we're at right now and understanding why it's important for us to be in this space together? And again, being an elective unit, we typically get students who are quite far along on their indigenous learning journey. Some of them do come in with this knowledge. However this, for a lot of students, can be a more deeper learning and a more complex learning.

So particularly for our international students, they might not know some of this sort of stuff, so we feel it's really important to, as we've done with you guys today, talk a little bit about or a lot about our pre-colonial history and our strengths; talk a little bit about our colonial history and our current colonial relationship; and then we move forward into, okay, where do we go from here? So this is where we start to talk more about our family sort of aspect. Feel free to take photos of this if you would like, implement some of these language words if you feel like you would like to. Uncle Max is an expert so he would be more than happy to help you with this.

MAX: We've probably covered this, trying to rebuild that family for people who are away from their family, but also trying to rebuild how to work within that family. That's sort of the strength of it. And that's what I really started to notice when Anthony took over the unit, how he sort of structured it that way, because myself, I was probably running it in a way that was more of the standard educational delivery type style of mode.

MARLEIGH: I think it's also important to note we don't actually go into the classroom thinking "I'm an older cousin" or "I'm more of a sister age". This is something that just is inherent to us, so we don't really try to implement this, but through, I suppose, understanding these western colonial concepts we can see how this relational versus transactional mode of working is far more beneficial than just going into the classroom, talking at a bunch of students and letting them go to create their own ideas.

MAX: Those sort of culturally we've probably gone I just want to make sure I get Anthony's quotes, I suppose. Yeah. So like I said, it's getting the students to really understand where they're living, you know, what is the cultural significance of the place. And when they pass it, you know, the sort of having familiarity with what they're going to, not going away to country once in their lifetime and never going back, and so it's not rejigged and things like that. So we go all around the city, we visit all different places and, like I said, the connection is always maintained because we do it we could take them away there's another unit that takes them away for a week and they go, you know, there's no phone, it's so isolated and that, but I think this is sort of something which I think, as with the results, it sort of really does sort of make a difference. And it sort of we've had students now coming into other units because what they've got from this has really sort of they've really developed confidence in actually then wanting more, and I think that's sort of proof of how it, you know, sort of how well it is sort of achieved.

And I think what this does too, it also builds an understanding of the culture, because if we're working in places where there's we look at outcomes of what this is, if you don't understand the culture, how do you understand about trauma? How do you understand about health conditions, you know, if you don't know about the actual culture that is actually influencing the person's behaviour? So I think that's really important about this unit.

MARLEIGH: Yeah. And I think the other important aspect, which I think we actually forgot to touch on, is that this unit, we typically will run throughout NAIDOC Week because we also want to get students engaged in our broader community. So part of our modes of representation is not just having two or the three of us out the front of the classroom all the time. We work in the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University, and so we have a wide variety of our teaching staff actually come in throughout the week to give their own personal perspectives on a lot of our topics. But we actually get the students engaged in the community as well. So again it's the relational aspect, not just for us in the classroom with the students or with country, but out with the community as well, and it really gets this nice synergy going on. It's this interconnectedness of all things, right? So, you know, students might not have felt comfortable going out to one of those community events in the past, but where they then have this knowledge of how to approach people, and how to speak with respect, and how to acknowledge the people in the right way, they feel more confident to actually go out and engage in their community activities, which are as much for them as they are for the celebration of our culture for us as well.

MAX: And they see the strength base of the Aboriginal culture, of indigenous people working in roles where it's not just reading about it in the media, because our media is pretty sort of negative. It sort of won't talk about six indigenous doctors that are going back to the communities. They won't put anything in the paper, but then they'll put something in regards to a break and enter or such.

I think the other thing I'll just mention before we finish up is Marleigh always speaks about activists. I always say "allies", not "activists", because after The Voice, we don't stop. It's not that's the end of it. My next sort of step is trying to generate more allies that actually then will support us when they're sitting in these offices talking about the next Voice, as such, and things like that. So I think this is really sort of significant in developing our allies because that's what we need as indigenous people. We're a small percentage. We need the selfless act of non-Aboriginal people to actually stand up for us and that didn't happen with The Voice. And that's all it was. The politicisation of it created other agendas but that was really what it was and this tries to drive that.

MARLEIGH: For me it's about the activism of it. It's all well and good for you to sit there and give us the thumbs up and say, "Yep, I'm with you", but we only make up 3% of the population, so we really need people who are on board with us to use their voice on our behalf as well. And unfortunately sometimes it's people that look like you you're more likely to listen to. So being in the spaces and places that you guys are, it's a huge help for us if you're able to use your voice as well.

Just finally, I just wanted to touch on these couple of quotes. We wanted to highlight Uncle Anthony, who is an absolutely integral part of what we do. These were just a couple of student testimonial quotes. In terms of how we measure our practice, we get students to give feedback, as we always do, but a lot of what they do is really, again, about the personal aspects of the relationships that they have with us and particularly with these guys as elders. So

MAX: I apologise too, the previous slide was me on the reserve I grew up on, because I've still got the concrete pad. So we take and see stories connect to the places, personal stories as well, but I think we're at time too. Thanks everyone for listening. I hope that we managed to provide some sort of assistance in maybe what you're doing in your own life and, yeah, much appreciate it. Always happy to come and share knowledge. Thank you.

KATE: Max, Marleigh, thank you so much. You've given me a lot to think about, engaging with local pedagogies, how to teach and learn through country, and also thinking about creative ways of measuring impact that aren't just about metrics. So thank you so much. I look forward to continuing some conversations.