"I tell ya who needs educatin'": non-Indigenous cultural self-awareness in prisoner education

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> **Glen says*, "current education is colonial; it ain't ours. I tell ya who needs educatin', wadjellas".* Glen is a Noongar man who, along with several other Aboriginal adults living in Western Australia, teaches me in a PhD research project about prisoner education from their perspective. His words pose a question for wadjellas like myself who are raised, taught and work in a white neo-colonial society. We have been raised in, taught in and work in a colonial system. As non-Aboriginal people we have unearned privileges which are often invisible and unacknowledged. How then to address the outcomes of this in a way that might lead to working co-operatively alongside Aboriginal people? What kind of 'educatin' could teach us about our own unacknowledged privilege and the disadvantage this can lead to for others? Is the standard cross-cultural awareness training enough?**

> **This paper shares some of the teachings of Glen and other participants in this research. It expresses the view that, ultimately, the usually unacknowledged legacy of colonisation and associated issue of denied Aboriginal sovereignty lies at the heart of much of the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people today when considering education and the prison system. Addressing gaps in non-Indigenous cultural self-awareness by learning from Aboriginal people is an important factor in improving their experiences of education.**

Locating myself and the research

I begin by introducing myself, the research and the participants. Moreton-Robinson (2000: xv) states, "the protocol for introducing one's self to other Indigenous people is to provide information

about one's cultural location." Identifying as wadjella (the Noongar term for whitefellas like me) situates both the research and I on Noongar country in the south west of Western Australia. I would like to honour the sovereignty of the people of the Noongar nation on whose country I live, work and have undertaken this research.

During the course of this PhD study, *Closing the Gap in Indigenous Prisoner Education,* I have listened to and learned from Indigenous adults about what helped and hindered their experiences of education in Western Australian prisons. The research has been conducted from the standpoint of a critical ally and is therefore driven by underlying questions such as those identified by Carnes (2011b: 20)

- How has colonial history impacted on sovereign First Nations people?
- How can the sovereignty of First Nations people be respected?
- What can be learned from listening to First Nations people?
- How can I be sure that I am not making things worse for First Nations people?
- Am I following an agenda of importance to First Nations people?

Following a brief overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the research, the paper explores an issue of concern for participants and identified as a hindrance in their experiences, namely non-Indigenous Australians' lack of awareness of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. Glen sums this up when he says, ***"I tell ya who needs educatin', wadjellas".***

I argue in this paper that developing cultural self-awareness by non-Indigenous Australians and their ongoing learning about the impact of white noise is required for lasting change in the experiences of education in prisons by Aboriginal people Based on what this PhD research has shown, the paper will outline possible tensions in purposes of education, the role of unacknowledged privilege and denial of Aboriginal sovereignty as impacting on how Aboriginal participants have experienced education. Discussion then shifts to potential ways of building whitefellas' cultural self-awareness.

The participant-teachers

Like Iseke & Brennus (2011: 247) I argue that research is a way of learning. Therefore, while I have a number of roles, a significant one is learning from rather than about participants. This makes them my teachers and is why I refer to them as participant-teachers. These participant-teachers have been imprisoned on and hail from a range of First Nations countries in Australia including Noongar, Yamatji, Wongi, Eora, and Ngaanyatjarra. To show respect for the voices of these teachers their words are italicised and bolded.

People self-selected into this project and agreed to yarn with me, some in groups and some as individuals. Yarning is a culturally and academically rigorous research method (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) that respects the accountability I have not only to individuals but also to community.

It was never intended for the research to try to provide a representative sample of Indigenous people in Western Australia. The participant-teachers ranged in age from eighteen to well into their sixties. Some were men and some were women and some had been in a number of prisons many times. For some English was not their first language. Some came from metropolitan Perth and others from remote communities. All together fifteen people yarned with me either individually or in groups. They had the option of using their own first name or a pseudonym; most chose to use their own name.

Responses from the participant teachers to the question *"What helps and hinders education in Western Australian prisons?"* go beyond a prison setting and western concept of education. The impact of experiences in prisons was not seen as divorced from the web of relationships, country, colonisation, justice and personal experiences of the teachers lives.

Theoretical underpinnings

The research was based on the understanding that whiteness is not a physical characteristic. It is "the invisible norm against which other races are judged in the construction of identity, representation, subjectivity, nationalism and law" (Moreton-Robinson, 2004: vii). The privilege and dominance of whiteness establishes conditions that privilege non-Indigenous people (Gillborn, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009, Moreton-Robinson, 2000, 2003; Riggs, 2004, 2007) and leads to a cultural deafness that does not consider the legitimacy of other worldviews (Carnes, 2011a:171). The resulting *white noise,* has been noted by Carnes (2011a) to occur in the thinking, decision making and communication of dominant Settler cultures in relation to Indigenous people. Like the indistinct, fuzzy static of a not quite properly tuned radio white noise inhibits a clear reception and prevents hearing messages distinctly. As much a systemic issue as an individual one, it results from assumed privilege and lack of knowledge of worldviews other than those that dominate.

Attending to white noise and privilege, I maintain, requires opportunities for whitefellas to experience shifts in what Mezirow (2000: 17) calls habits of mind, "broad, generalised, orienting predispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience". These habits of mind, otherwise referred to as norms, values, attitudes, thoughts and beliefs, are considered by English and Peters (2010: 105-106) to "shape, among other things, our psychological self-image, cultural expectations, and epistemic frameworks about what counts as important knowledge". It is not enough I contend for Indigenous people alone to have to make such shifts in thinking in order to match expectations of white world views. Changes and shifts are also required of non-Indigenous people's habits of mind and it is this kind of education that Glen's comments refer to.

The story I tell here dares whitefellas to listen speak, live, practise, research and ultimately learn from a "place of discomfort" (Powis, 2008). Therefore it is not always easy for whitefellas to hear this story because a temptation of white privilege can be to dismiss uneasiness. Though based on research conducted in the Western Australian context, what is discussed may also ring true in other colonised parts of the world. The remainder of this paper will consider, from a critical allies

perspective, gaps perceived in whitefellas cultural self-awareness and what could assist in closing those gaps.

"Education is colonial, it ain't ours"

Historically, Aboriginal people have always been educated, just differently and for different purposes to the western world. Deep listening in education based on an oral tradition utilises all of aural, oral, visual and kinaesthetic senses. Learning is not an added on activity, it is part of all and every day. Diversity is valued, all people are of equal value and have a right to be heard (Atkinson, 2002; 35-36).

White teacher, Green (1983: 9-10) explains what he is taught by Ngaanyatjarra people about the centrality of the kinship system, the principle of reciprocity that is based on the obligation every person has to every other person and the learning of decision making processes around the campfires. Another white researcher, Welch (1998: 207) states,

> "Aboriginal education was not so much a preparation for life, as an experience of life itself … This spirituality helped impart a unity to Aboriginal traditions of education, without the subject divisions common to white schooling practices."

This way of learning is not relegated to the past. "A traditional spiritual learning basis that is related to their own country is still essential for Aboriginal people to feel strength, pride and a sense of wholeness" (Bessarab, 2008: 57-58). This is so no matter if people live in the bush, a city or a country town. Education provided in prisons does not appear to address such a spiritual learning basis. As Glen says, **education is colonial, it ain't ours.**

Post-colonisation: The purpose of education of Aboriginal people

From the time of colonisation formal Aboriginal education stayed exclusively in the hands of the colonizers who Welch (1998: 208) says have provide this education in ways that have included ignorance, disdain, separation, assimilation, integration and self determination. All of these approaches have been decided upon by mainstream education systems In the 1800's the purpose of education of Aboriginal Western Australians provided largely by Christian missions, was to tame and bring civilisation to the savage who, was seen as inherently inferior to the white colonisers (Brooks, 2007: 135). Thus education was provided to meet the needs of the colonisers, rather than the needs of Aboriginal communities, families or culture. In the twenty first century, education decision making still lies in the hands of colonial systems and agencies who for example introduced interventionist policies such as tying receipt of Centrelink benefits to children's school attendance. Trials of such a policy have been held in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia, largely in communities where a high percentage of Aboriginal people live.

At the initial conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities in 1937, A O Neville, (Chief Protector/Commissioner of Native Affairs in Western Australia for decades) states that the policy of protection in Western Australia for Aboriginal children is that "The child is taken away from

the mother and never sees her again. Thus the children grow up as white, knowing nothing of their environment" (Commonwealth of Australia, 1937: 11). Those affected by such policies, which continued until the early 1970's, are now referred to as the "stolen generation" and some of their history recorded in *Bringing Them Home* (HREOC, 1997). The impact of history such as this is still felt in policy making and development of processes and programs across the education sector as children who lived under them become parents and grandparents and descendants live with the repercussions from one generation to the next (Atkinson, 2002). Non-Indigenous people still have the largest say in what, how and why Aboriginal Australians are educated.

Different purposes - a basis of tension between Western and Indigenous Education

Based on Grande (2000:356) Figure 1 illustrates tensions between underlying purposes of Western and Indigenous education. It is important to note that experiences of education by Indigenous people since colonisation has led to a much more complex picture (Kumar, 2009: 53) than that indicated by this table. The purpose of including it here is to illustrate the focus in white, western education on economics and "equality" at the expense of Aboriginal sovereignty and self-determination. Unfortunately equality can be interpreted as "everyone being the same and being treated the same" which reinforces white privilege. When education in Australia prioritises "getting a job" and a vocational agenda above all else (Down & Smyth, 2012), any gap in education is defined, addressed and evaluated by an economic, equality agenda and the focus remains on absorption into a white world.

THE ISSUE	WESTERN/"WHITE" VIEW	INDIGENOUS VIEW
World crisis is	Economic	Spiritual
Education's central question is	Democracy and greater equality	Sovereignty Self determination

Figure 1 Sources of educational tension

Nationally, prisons have the educational goal to provide prisoners and offenders with 'educational and vocational pathways which will support their productive contribution to the economic and social life of the community' (ANTA 2001: 3). The decision of what constitutes a 'productive contribution to the economic and social life of the community' and what the "community" consists of is totally in the

hands of the dominant white culture. Considering this, it is not a surprise when Lesley says, "***In prisons and in schools, you people don't take the f…n' time to teach us …we have a different pedagogy of learning, OK? So you need to stop doing that shit with us.***"

Aboriginal people were traditionally seen as a "problem" as exemplified by the aforementioned meeting of States and Commonwealth held in Canberra to discuss the "Aboriginal problem" (Commonwealth of Australia, 1937). Kate's' comment indicates that this is not a thing of the past, ***Aboriginal people are seen by departments as this insurmountable problem… "We don't know how to deal with it so we'll just ignore it". Western Australia is the biggest education area in the southern hemisphere and there are lots of differences. In central office they don't understand… in the Kimberly you've got something like 54 language groups, you've got different protocols and you can't say "this is what is going to happen across the state". It won't work. They don't understand the differences and that each region and community is different to one another.***

Like Glen, Kate believes that whitefellas need education; ***Wadjellas have so much to learn from Aboriginal people if only …Wadjellas would just shut up and listen. … "You've got all the qualifications and you know everything… but will you just bloody shut up and listen?"***

Daisy too refers to the need for whitefellas to learn and listen, ***Shouldn't be Aboriginal people having to change all the time; white people need to do that too. Teach them what they have done to us so they understand.*** On another occasion she says, ***Government and politicians need to come to the lands for a week and see how people live, how they are crowded in houses like sardines, not just fly in, talk some rubbish and leave. …come three times; once to see, once to learn and once to understand. They need to sit and listen.*** The cacophony of "white noise" (Carnes, 2011a) from fly in/fly out visitors must be deafening to Aboriginal ears.

With privilege comes denial

Black and Stone (2005: 251) believe that "privileged persons live in a distorted reality" similar to the denial of someone with a chemical dependency. Denial serves to maintain the status quo and avoid the unpleasant consequences of acceptance, including the need to act to bring about change. Being privileged enshrines the option of denial and disrupts the chance to build strong relationships. Challenging the assumptions under denial is required to build relationships of trust Armstrong & Shillinglaw (2011) see as necessary for effective education in any setting.

The dominant history of Western Australia is a series of denials and myths providing a basis of Aboriginal policy (Milnes, 2005). Terra Nullius, the founding myth upon which Australia is colonised, enables settlers to "render a people invisible" Milnes (2005: 15). There is still a very long way to go. The Australian government in September 2012 postponed a referendum to change the constitution to recognise First Nations Peoples in Australia as the first inhabitants. The disturbing reason given for postponing is that "there is still not enough community support for a successful referendum" (Cullen, 2012). Despite the 1967 referendum including Aboriginal people in the Census statistics,

white privilege still dictates to the majority of Australians that the First Peoples of the continent need not be acknowledged as such.

In the twenty-first century "mutual obligation" is another myth used to excuse interventionist policies. In effect such policies do little more than perpetuate welfare dependency and continue to deny Aboriginal sovereignty (Cronin, 2007). Sovereignty of Aboriginal people in Australia has never been acknowledged; there has been no treaty or constitutional protection of Indigenous rights (Hocking, 2005, 268). As Lesley said, *This is my f…ing land and I've got nothing. You've … taken my family, you've taken my f…ing culture, you've taken my lifestyle, you've left me with nothing. And then blamed me, said this is because I'm a lazy black. She pauses for a long time before adding quietly, "And you wonder why we're cranky."*

Denying sovereignty denies the very existence of Aboriginality. Svensson (1992) acknowledged this by saying, "Cultural survival is closely connected to self-determination and political rights" (cited in Hocking, 2005, 249). Katherine speaks of her experience of denial of sovereignty, ***I didn't grow up with culture and that's really hard and I struggle with that… It stuffs you up to not know who you are… I felt I was despised everywhere you know. I had a real loss of identity and a lot of our kids face that kind of loss of identity.*** This comment epitomises the experiences of thousands of Aboriginal people (HREOC, 1997)

As western and Indigenous views on education differ, so do meanings of the term sovereignty. This difference is highlighted here because it is another point of tension in the white, dominant discourse. Sovereignty, as whitefellas understand it, developed originally in Europe as a way of ensuring the power and privilege of the monarch or the church (Falk & Martin, 2007; 35). In this model the power resides in a figurehead and is exercised downward (Brady, 2007: 142). In colonised countries, lands are claimed in the name of the sovereign king or queen. Over time, the meaning changes to include independence of a state from any other state (Falk & Martin, 2007). Today, however, sovereignty is variously used to mean domestic, dependent nations as in the USA, connected to self-government as in Canada or, as Cunneen (2005, 52) describes, "a state of denial" as in Australia.

Aboriginal Sovereignty is more than mere statehood

Redbird (1995) believes white institutions and law are based on political understandings of sovereignty as outlined above. To the Aboriginal teachers I listen to, however, it is much more than this and does NOT refer to statehood (Behrendt, 2003:102).

Aboriginal sovereignty is based on responsibility, community and belonging; it is who someone is, how they identify and where they belong in the world. Sovereignty is held within the individual in the context of the family, community and country. The 'belonging' is geographical, communal, familial and spiritual. As Brady (2007: 148) says, "when Indigenous Australians are removed from, or choose to leave, the land of their nation, we do not locate it outside of ourselves, but in contrast carry that connection within our being." Sovereignty of self is inextricably tied with where a person is from and their kinship system.

For Australia's Indigenous peoples, self-determination is key crucial to sovereignty. Self-determination is not, as so often used in Australia, a distinct administrative policy to be implemented by mainstream colonial institutions such as education and policing (Cunneen, 2005, 55). It is, as clarified by Waters (2005: 192) "about having political power to exercise community or individual self-determination".

Aboriginal sovereignty does not require permission or paternalism from whitefellas to exist. "It is maintained through pre-existing, pre-European models of governance. Such models continue to be culturally and politically sustainable, regardless of a lack of legal recognition by Australian governments" (Birch, 2007: 107). As Vicki says about Aboriginal culture, It's **a living thing, whether you believe it or not. It's living and in here** (she gestures to her heart).

Beyond cultural awareness to cultural self-awareness

Glen is clear about what kind of education is required, *The Aboriginal side of history needs teachin' as well.* Daisy's words clarify this further; *White people should learn about their place in the history of Aboriginal people from Aboriginal people point of view and learn from Aboriginal people.* Whitefellas need to learn about white privilege if denial is to be addressed. Such recommendations were made fifteen years ago in Bringing Them Home (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997: 255-256). Recommendations 8a, 9a and 9b specifically advise that primary and secondary school students, professionals working with Indigenous people of any age, and all undergraduates and trainees in relevant professions should include, as part of core and compulsory "education about the history and effects of forcible removal."

As far as I am aware this has not yet occurred. It is time for the privileged decision makers amongst us to ask "why?"; "what assumptions underlie the decisions to continue not to act?" Fredericks (2008: 81) calls for similar action when she highlights the need to "extend beyond knowledge gained through cross-cultural awareness training to … programs designed to raise awareness of and address white race privilege … and that knowledge should encourage and instil the will for change and action."

I call such a training process cultural self awareness. The focus is on white privilege and the impact it has on us all; it requires turning the mirror onto the whitefellas world and the way it works to exclude and disadvantage Indigenous people. It requires white organisations and individuals to be honest about assumptions and examine critically the quality and reliability of their sources of information. It does not focus on guilt but on transformative inquiry, education and learning. It is a process that requires willingness and commitment, not a one off, 'tick-a-box' duty.

Such training differs from standard "diversity" training because it focuses on developing relationship with Aboriginal communities and assumes Aboriginal sovereignty. The training is based upon learning from Aboriginal and other Indigenous academics and authors as well as some media such as movies that show an Aboriginal view of history.

The discomfort mentioned at the beginning of the paper can really kick in when whitefellas are challenged. To extend the chemical dependency metaphor of Black and Stone (2005), there is likely to be an "arcing up" and "acting out" similar to that often witnessed when someone with a chemical dependency is challenged about their addiction. Therefore, this type of work requires committed critical allies who are able to stay with the journey it will be and who themselves have a strong, trusting mutually respectful relationship with Aboriginal people at a personal level.

As exemplified by Martin's (2008; 131-133) research protocol, respecting sovereignty begins with relationship building and maintenance of agreed good manners in a way that is operationalised into demonstrable researcher behaviour. For example, respecting culture is evidenced in self-regulating researcher behaviour of "not moving objects, nor taking anything from Buru (country) and giving priority to the needs of Buru Bama and Community" (Martin, 2008: 133). Based on 'the principles for maintaining personal and communal relatedness" (Martin 2008; 132) this form of respect happens out of desire for strong, reciprocal relationship, not duty. Whitefellas do not have to wait for governments to "get on with tackling the rules of co-existence" (Brennan *et al*., 2001: 8)

Humility

Powis (2008: 86) ponders the difficulties of how to do whiteness differently and decides that increasing self awareness is not "singular epiphanies … grand moments on the road to Damascus: rather they recur for me, return to me, in the ordinariness of every day." (Powis, 2008: 86). She believes that being reflexive and aware of being in dialogue with al the voices with which she is in relationship is a place to begin. This resonates with my own journey over the last decade of an emerging understanding of the importance and place of humility. I would add, however, the importance of avoiding self-indulgent navel-gazing that makes my whiteness rather than Aboriginal sovereignty the issue.

Powis (2008: 90) also recalls being confronted by an Indigenous Australian with, "you haven't been around that long – where do you fellas come from anyway?" Her response describes my experiences in this learning project. "In that moment I felt humbled by an apprehension of similarities and profound differences in the form that 'our' historical work might assume: …. I touched the edges of humility, and realised …how little space we give humility in conversations within psychology." The same is true of conversations in education. Yet, for me, grappling with humility is one of the most central and vital things I am learning. Whitefellas transformative education needs inclusion of conversations about humility.

Holding up the mirror

On the journey I take, the prioritising and privileging of Indigenous voices gives me an opportunity to hold up a mirror to my own white privilege and see a reflection containing some of what the Aboriginal teachers would see in me. Jo's teaching for example comes to mind when I reflect on white privilege, ignorance and the need to learn humility.

The Judge … made a statement … "before I sentence these young men I want every parent of every one of these kids to do something about the feuding. I don't care what they do and I want evidence." Do you know how ridiculous that was?!!!! Who is going to talk to a feuding family member and say "well what are we going to do about this?' The judges and the white people they don't get the full thing about Aboriginal family feuding.

Aware, sensitive, competent, safe… or culturally self-aware?

It has been found that training in cultural awareness does not always ensure cultural competence and culturally safe service delivery (Westerman, 2007: 138). Bin-Sallick (2003: 21) acknowledges that education can learn from health in relation to culturally safe practice when she says, "We need to extend [cultural safety] from our psyches and put it out there to be developed, discussed, debated and evaluated. This is what is beginning to take place within Indigenous health – so why not Indigenous education?"

Based on the teachings of the teacher-participants in this research, I argue that increasing cultural self-awareness in mainstream institutions such as prisons and schools is a necessary step. This need is further supported by indications from reports from the Western Australian custodial inspector (OICS, September, 2010; August, 2010) who indicates inadequate provision of even basic cultural awareness to prison staff.

What it is called	What it is usually about	The focus is on	Usefulness of training limited by
cultural awareness	Acknowledges we do not all have one shared history; demystifies the unknown.	Focus is on learning about our difference	The level of whitefellas cultural self awareness
cultural sensitivity	Sees differences are not right/wrong, better/ worse … they just "are". Involves a growing awareness that actions impact on others		
cultural competence	Improves the skills of professionals and their ability to honour and respect beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of clients and staff		
cultural safety	'is about … learning together with dignity and truly listening'. [Eckerman *et al.*, 2006: 213]. Has a focus on building relationships with diverse groups in the community and being guided by them as experts in their own needs and lives. Means becoming more and more aware of how you are perceived by and impact on others. Works to extend the frame of reference beyond a merely western one	Us learning how to relate	

Figure 2 Defining cultural awareness, sensitivity, competency and safety

The Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS, September, 2010; August, 2010) reveals that the 'one size fits all' cultural awareness training on offer does not work effectively in either metropolitan or regional prisons. The staff at Greenough prison for example "had concluded that the Department's training package was too metropolitan focused and not culturally appropriate for the prisoners held at Greenough" (OICS, August 2010: 34). On the other hand at Casuarina, the largest metropolitan prison, the Inspector concludes that "despite the very high numbers of Aboriginal prisoners, this inspection found that little training in culturally appropriate custodial management had been provided to staff" (OICS, September 2010: 49). Prison Support Officer staff at Causarina speak of the need for ongoing cross cultural training and the perceived ignorance of many custodial staff of what is and is not culturally appropriate (Carnes, 2011c: 9)

Figure 2 provides my understanding of some of the common terms in use in "cross cultural" training. It draws heavily on work from the health sector, especially from the Australian publication *Binan Goonj: Bridging cultures in Aboriginal health* (Eckerman *et al*., 2006). I also am informed by *Anti-racist Health Care Practice* (McGibbon & Etowa, 2009) and *Cultural Safety in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Wepa, 2005). It is also important to note that models exist that aim to increase non-Indigenous cultural self-awareness. One such process has been developed by Indigenous Australians in the form of an audit sequence for individuals and organisations outlined by Walker & Sonn (2007: 173-176). What is emphasised is not so much the content of learning but the ongoing process that needs to be adopted.

The impact of white privilege and ignorance is not Aboriginal bliss

White ignorance has not led to Indigenous bliss. For Aboriginal people, the outcome of colonisation, dispossession and loss of sovereignty is a legacy of historical trauma, loss and grief (HREOC, 1997: 4). Symptoms of trauma and loss include social disadvantage, economic disadvantage, community disintegration, health problems, self invalidation, dysfunctional relationships, inadequate education, suicide, homicide, accidental deaths, domestic violence, child abuse and alcoholism (Cajete, 1994: 189; Sotero, 2006: 99; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998: 56). Walls & Whitbeck (2012: 1289) argue that such disadvantages traverse generations.

Aboriginal sovereignty and the impact of trauma for Aboriginal peoples as a legacy of colonisation, remain largely unacknowledged by mainstream Australia. In the 1990's there were reports and inquiries such as *Bringing Them Home*, the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*. Unfortunately, as Hocking (2005, 268-269) notes, official and government responses to these reports "contributed to the failure to achieve full reconciliation in Australia". This leaves Aboriginal Australians living the consequences of decisions past and present that continue to be made about them, and fighting for recognition as Australia's First Peoples. Despite this Aboriginal culture, though severely harmed, has not been totally eclipsed and in many ways stays strong in the hearts of people, their families and communities. I think Glen captures what is necessary when he says, ***"I tell ya who needs educatin', wadjellas"***.

Conclusion

The teachings of Glen and other participants in this research reveal a gap in whitefellas cultural self-awareness. This gap is related to persistent white noise created by being raised in, taught in and working in a colonial system. As non-Aboriginal people we have unearned privileges which are often invisible and unacknowledged. Ultimately the heart of the resulting gap links to an unacknowledged legacy of colonisation and the associated denial of Aboriginal sovereignty. Addressing this gap in non-Indigenous cultural self-awareness by learning from Aboriginal people and adopting ongoing review of the impact of white noise is an important factor in improving education provision in any context.

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