

## **Considering a relationship between The Storyteller game and Deakin University**

Background notes for discussion with Professor Yin Paradies; prepared by Kellie Tobin, **Master of Applied Learning and Teaching Lecturer and Aspire Director**, and John Burke, Towards a Just Society Fund, with the approval of Glenn Shea, The Storyteller creator.

### **1. Background**

The Storyteller game, created by Glenn Shea, has been under development for nearly 15 years as an educational resource. In practical form, the game has been utilised in over 180 different organisations since 2010 – including education, community, justice, health - with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants.

Since 2016 Deakin University has developed particular experience in the use of the game, developing a five- to eight-week module for high achieving students from under-represented schools in the Geelong/Bellarine region through their Aspire program. This has been a resounding success in increasing awareness, knowledge and understanding of Indigenous history and culture within the student groups.

The game, and experiences around it, has also been successfully embedded in the Master of Applied Learning and Teaching Unit ECN729 and ECN728.

Through the alignment of *The Storyteller*, pre service teachers and academics are provided with an opportunity to explore and understand histories, cultures and contexts facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is delivered by Glenn Shea at IKE in partnership with Deakin and uses an approach that engages students using applied learning pedagogies.

Other relevant intensive use of The Storyteller experience at a tertiary level has included six years of application at VUT in the Community Service area with students at Cert IV/diploma level and in professional development of staff.

#### *A perspective on The Storyteller and possible relationships*

In considering a relationship with The Storyteller it is important not to see it solely as a board game with the various connotations of trivial-pursuit-like activity that could emerge. The Storyteller game is one manifestation of the vision of its creator Glenn Shea:

*To provide all persons the right to become part of a true national identity with...*

*...a collective sense of identity, place and belonging*

*...intercultural dialogue and empathy*

*...understanding of the history and culture of its first people.*

Playing the game encourages - through its substance and processes, including its oral, collaborative emphasis - engagement in a different cultural space and stimulus to further examination of particular issues. The game can also serve as an organising device for various groups to participate in its implementation in different contexts. Glenn's vision and exploration of underlying ideas extends into many areas.

It is therefore suggested that any consideration of a relationship by Deakin University with The Storyteller could examine a number of possibilities:

1. The use of The Storyteller provides a foundation for students and academics to think reflexively about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, and communities in a contemporary Indigenous landscape, and develops an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems as a starting point for teaching and learning.
2. Developing The Storyteller game as a resource for Initial Teacher Education to meet AITSL Standards 1.4 and 2.4
3. Other possible developments of The Storyteller experience in an innovative context within Deakin across faculties

In the following, we provide some brief information about each of these possibilities as a basis for a more detailed discussion.

### **1. The use of The Storyteller game as a vehicle for promoting cultural understanding.**

Use of The Storyteller with a range of different organisations has resulted in a number of approaches being developed and adapted to the specific needs of these organisations. These approaches include:

a one-day workshop, with playing the game and then conducting research and report back in teams – in some instances leading to more extensive research on particular topics and a subsequent half day report-back workshop  
multi-week programs

## **2. Developing The Storyteller game as a resource for Initial Teacher Education to meet AITSL Standards 1.4 and 2.4**

Deakin Academics within the Master of Applied Learning and Teaching have formed the view that The Storyteller is a unique resource that enables students to think reflexively about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges. Students are then able to meet the AITSL Australian Professional Teacher Standard requirements for:

### **1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students**

Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity, and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

### **2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians**

Demonstrate broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and languages.

As we have been giving particular consideration to understanding the Storyteller's relevance and potential use in Initial Teacher Education, we attach an outline of a more detailed project proposal in this area.

## **3. Other possible developments of The Storyteller experience in an innovative context within Deakin**

Glenn has pursued a number of other approaches to utilising The Storyteller and its underlying ideas, including:

a possible online version: some initial conceptual work was done with Deakin students some years ago

integration with a trilogy of plays commencing with "Three Magpies Perched in a Tree"

**Indigenous Learning** an investigative process that incorporates culture and curriculum through the performing arts to explore historical knowledge of an Aboriginal traditional language group, through the lens of, THE STORYTELLER Indigenous Cultural Education Resource...

The 'big idea' of this project is to have culture curriculum and performing arts collide to create innovation and mindset shifts." It would build an Indigenous/non-Indigenous performing arts team to facilitate in schools. Indigenous performing arts team to facilitate in schools.

<b>Attachment. Developing The Storyteller game as a resource for Initial Teacher Education to meet AITSL Standards 1.4 and 2.4: Project Outline</b>
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The purposes of this proposed project are to

consolidate and capture the experience with The Storyteller within Deakin

refine and codify the use of The Storyteller in the Deakin courses, based on a review of experience to date

support the broader use of The Storyteller in initial teacher education more generally

Accordingly, we identify three project components:

- a) Review of experience with the Storyteller, including assessing graduate teachers' levels of competence in Standards 1.4 and 2.4
- b) Refinement of The Storyteller experience
- c) Providing broader access to The Storyteller experience

While there are possibilities of parallel activity, we initially outline a possible approach for component 1, and sketch the other components.

### **A. Review of The Storyteller experience**

Firstly, we outline how The Storyteller has been used in practice in the pre-service program, then provide initial assessments of effectiveness from the Deakin staff, leading to the proposed project outline.

#### ***How The Storyteller game is used in initial teacher education***

The Master of Applied Learning and Teaching (MALT) at Deakin University includes two units (ECN728 and ECN729) that equip students to think reflexively about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and human rights in a contemporary Indigenous landscape, and develops an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems as a starting point for developing effective strategies for teaching. Aligned closely with Australian Professional Standards for Teachers the units support preservice teachers to focus on areas:

#### **1.4: Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students**

#### **2.4: Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians**

Through the alignment of *The Storyteller*, pre service teachers are provided with an opportunity to explore and understand the theoretical concepts of race and racism and its impact on Indigenous peoples in Australia. This connectedness further involves a focus on histories, cultures and political contexts facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and is delivered by Glenn using an approach that engages preservice teachers using applied learning pedagogies.

#### ***Initial assessment of effectiveness***

Glenn has worked closely with our MALT students since 2015 with over 200 pre service teachers undertaking *THE STORYTELLER* journey. This alignment has significant benefits to our pre service teachers; through their developing teacher philosophies, teaching pedagogy and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, society and culture from a generic and non-political perspective.

The success of this partnership with Glenn and our MALT course has also led to the further development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learnings module in our Aspire program. The Aspire program is a HEPPP funded partnership between Deakin University, Northern Bay College, Newcomb Secondary College and Bellarine Secondary College. Aspire aims to increase the aspirations of high achieving students from under represented schools. This program is further facilitated by preservice teachers. Glenn and Kellie co-developed an Aspire module that has introduced and engaged over 530 school students in these learnings since 2016. The success of this module with our school partners has now seen this module firmly embedded in our Aspire program as a core (compulsory) module.

Opportunities like this have been rare and we highly value the role *The Storyteller* plays in both the MALT course and our Aspire program at Deakin University.

#### ***Project proposal***

The Assessment Criteria for Graduate Teacher Standards 1.4 & 2.4, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/assessment-criteria-for-graduate-teacher-standards-1.4-2.4> provides a core reference for this research project.

It is anticipated the project will seek to determine how well these criteria have been met for the graduate teachers from the Master of Applied Teaching and Learning program, and the role of The Storyteller within this (including its particular methods of face-to-face, oral engagement).

As a working proposal it is intended that a qualitative research approach be adopted based on interviews being conducted with approximately 20 graduate teachers (of the approximately 100 who have been through the program and exposed to The Storyteller).

It is suggested that a research assistant be employed, at a high level, under the supervision of a chief researcher from within Deakin University, with tasks and days required:

*Chief Researcher*

Project management and final report (10 days)

*Research Assistant*

Literature review of  
approaches of other universities to meet Standards 1.4 and 2.4  
utilisation of face-to-face, oral methods in teacher training (10 days)  
Project planning (5 days)  
Ethics approval (5 days)  
Interviews (20 days)  
Analysis and documentation (5 days)

**B. Refinement of The Storyteller experience**

To be defined, with initial questions including:

How broad will this be within Deakin – across all undergraduate preservice teacher training?

The value of face-to-face/oral methods compared to online

**C. Providing broader access to The Storyteller experience**

To be defined, including the possibility of:

Establish a “train the trainer” program to be offered by Deakin to other pre-service trainers

A postdoctoral research report