

“...it is not just a game”: Connecting with Culture through Traditional Indigenous Games

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Received October 16, 2014; Revised October 29, 2014; Accepted November 02, 2014

Abstract Traditional Indigenous Games (TIGs) have been played in Indigenous Australian communities as a means of teaching children life skills as well as a general leisure pursuit. This paper presents the findings of a small study in one north Queensland public school, Australia, where school students engaged in TIG through their physical education (HPE) classes. Twelve regional games were introduced to students in years five and six. They were played in HPE classes with a focus on inclusivity and gaining an understanding of culture. A culminating TIG carnival was also conducted. Students reported that playing the games and participating in the carnival was a positive experience. All students described the nature of the games in traditional communities, not only as a means of teaching children life skills but as community social practice. Students' participation resulted in enhanced cultural knowledge and cultural significance.

Keywords: *traditional indigenous games, connecting with culture, teaching children life skills*

Cite This Article: Maree DinanThompson, Kathryn Meldrum, and Juanita Sellwood, ““...it is not just a game”: Connecting with Culture through Traditional Indigenous Games.” *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 2, no. 11 (2014): 1015-1022. doi: 10.12691/education-2-11-3.

1. Introduction

Traditional Indigenous games (TIG) have been observed being played in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities since colonisation [1] and many explorers and anthropologists took opportunities to describe them in their writings of the time. Edwards [1] describes TIG as “all aspects of traditional and contemporary play cultures associated with Aboriginal and Islander cultures and identifiable communities and are generally accepted as an adequate reflection of their cultural heritage and social identity” (p. 33). Historically, games played by Aboriginal and Islander clans were very important in the lives of children as they provided a means for imparting the unique survival skills and aspects of daily camp life necessary at that time [1]. However, these games are still played in communities today reinforcing their focus of enjoyment, strengthening social bonds, sharing and sustaining cultures, and passing on traditional knowledge.

Several significant issues identified by Edwards [1] related to the sustainability of TIG are the comparative lack of investigations into the games, the loss of some of the games to new generations as customary activities have “fallen into disuse” (p. 32) and the fact that there is no traditional games event in Australia. In a bid to prevent further loss of cultural knowledge of TIG, Ken Edwards has been instrumental in compiling significant resources describing a variety of TIG in his publications Choopadoo [2] and his assistance in the production of “Yulunga:

Traditional Indigenous Games” [3] which have catalogued and classified the games. The games that have been catalogued to date are unique in that they represent the variety of ‘country’ that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clans inhabited.

“In the context of Australia’s Indigenous culture “Country” refers to a specific place within Australia and not Australia itself. Over 260 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander countries and language groups are represented across Australia. Country refers to “this” place, the traditional language group of the area where an event is held” (p. 1) [4].

The resources (Choopadoo and Yulunga) have facilitated the implementation of a variety of school-based TIG projects that have focused on health and physical activity promotion [5,6] for Indigenous students. There is also abundant ‘grey’ literature (see the Australian Indigenous Health *Infonet* www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au) indicating that they are being played in schools and that carnivals are being held. However, there is limited research on participation in TIG, the sense of cultural significance and the impact that playing the games has on students and teachers.

With the dual focus of the Australian Curriculum, developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), on the cross curricular organiser of “embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures” (p. 27) [7], as well as the Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum’s identification of years five to eight as an opportunity to engage students with traditional Indigenous games [8], as educators we are being presented with an renewed

opportunity to imbue both colleagues and students with TIG. However, in support of the underpinning philosophical drive of the HPE curriculum towards sociocultural aspects of the subject area, the focus of TIG can be enhanced rather than constrained by just considering their role in health promotion. Playing and learning TIG in schools has the potential to improve the social sustainability and cultural importance of them. This presents a strong rationale for their promotion in schools.

The aim of this paper is to describe how the introduction of TIG to students in years five and six in one North Queensland public school promoted understandings of cultural awareness and significance. This paper also describes how aspects of the students' understandings link strongly with the intentions in the new Australian HPE Curriculum.

1.1. Background to the Project

In 2011 the authors' were approached by a North Queensland regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS) office to be involved with an inaugural Traditional Indigenous Games Carnival as part of the Learning Earning Access Places (LEAP) initiative. The focus of the regional ATSIS office for the proposed TIG carnival was to engage Elders and community members with local elementary school students through the games. The emphasis was strongly on valuing local Indigenous culture so only games from the geographical region were chosen to be played. Traditional Indigenous games were introduced to the students during their physical education (PE) lessons and played for approximately one month before the carnival was conducted. The students were also introduced to the cultural significance of the games at school so that they were able to see how playing them would have contributed to traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life. An atmosphere of cooperation as opposed to competition was also fostered with the students so that they could engage with the TIG cultural significance. While significant anecdotal evidence supporting the value of the initiative was collected during preparation for and at the carnival, the authors' concluded that the initiative presented an ideal opportunity to investigate the students' perceptions of TIG with a focus on their cultural significance.

Subsequent to the initial carnival which involved multiple schools the authors' worked with one local, public, elementary school to conduct a carnival using the same principles. The leadership team at the school where this project was conducted have been actively promoting

pride in culture and fostering a strong sense of personal identity in their students. Their involvement with this project provided students with another opportunity to develop knowledge and understandings about themselves and their peers.



Figure 1. The Far North Queensland region where the games originate in the context of the larger Australian continent (Adapted from: <https://maps.google.com.au/>)

Students in years five and six engaged with twelve regional TIG in their physical education (PE) lessons for the five weeks leading up to the carnival. To promote consistency of knowledge and experiences of the games, the students were engaged with understanding the cultural significance and an active promotion of cooperation. The carnival was conducted on one day and involved a traditional Welcome to Country and a performance from the school's Torres Strait Islander dance group to begin proceedings. This set the scene for a celebration of culture. Table 1 outlines the selected twelve games contextually significant to Far North Queensland and Figure 1 presents their geographical origins (see the Yulunga resource available at https://secure.ausport.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/238407/TIG.pdf for further details about the games).

Table 1. Twelve Far North Queensland Traditional Indigenous Games

Name	Origin or connection with language	Game type
Chiba	Clump Point, North Queensland	Ball
Gorri	Australia wide	Target
Kai	Torres Strait Islands	Ball
Kalkadoon-kee-an	Language name Wik-Mungkan, Cape York	Target
Kalq	Cape York	Ball striking
Kangaroo	Language name Gouguyimithirr people in (Wahalumbaal) Endeavour River	Running
Kolap	Mer Island, Torres Strait	Target
Puloga	Cardwell - Tully	Ball
Tarnambai	Tiwi Island, Torres Strait	Running
Thapumpun	Cape Bedford	Tag
Thepan	Tully	Striking
Woomera	Dunk Island	Throwing

Approximately 160 students were subsequently organised into mixed gender and year level groups for the

duration of the carnival. Groups were allocated a number and rotated around six of the TIG during the morning

session and a further six after lunch. During the morning session the school's photographer circulated amongst the groups taking candid photographs of the students participating in the games. After the carnival concluded a formal closing ceremony was conducted and the students returned to their normal classrooms to discuss and formally reflect on the day's event through oral discussions and a written piece. This activity supports the oral traditions of Indigenous societies and capacity for sharing culture [9]. During the afternoon session the photographs taken in the morning were compiled into a slide show. The slide show provided a final reflective opportunity for the students as they gathered together at the end of the school day to watch it. The reflective activity also provided the school leadership team with an opportunity to reinforce their focus on promoting pride and fostering a strong sense of personal identity with the students.

2. Materials and Methods

The aim of this project was to conduct a TIG event, including in-class activities and a culminating carnival, in one north Queensland (Australia) state elementary school. For this school, PE is taught by the specialist PE teacher in discipline-specific lessons, although learning and assessment make contributions to the overall HPE curriculum. The PE classes provided the teaching of the twelve TIG before the event.

While both students and teachers were involved with the TIG event, this paper describes the experiences of the students. Student voice, especially Indigenous, was an important component aspect of this project as it is rarely captured. The research questions guiding this aspect of the project were:

- What are the student's understandings of the TIG?
- What are the student's perceptions of participating in the games?
- What is their understanding of the cultural significance of them?

These questions were co-constructed by researchers and School Administrative personnel.

2.1. Data Collection

Prior to the conduct of the project ethics approval to conduct an investigation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants was obtained from the Human Ethics Committee at the authors' institution. After the carnival and during the formal reflection time, focus group interviews [10] were conducted with two groups of six students. Focus groups were recruited by the school and included Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Focus groups interviews were conducted by the authors and were audio recorded using iPods. Focus groups and interviews were semi-structured and guided by pre-prepared questions that emanated from the project aims. The data used in this paper presents student voice from the focus groups only.

2.2. Data Analysis

Audio recordings of the focus groups were transcribed verbatim and were then distributed to each author. Each

transcript was subsequently coded by every author using content analysis to identify themes using Patton's [10] methodology and guided by the research questions. All authors then met to discuss their individual coding decisions and consensus was reached. The data presented here is organised around the following themes: Participation in the games; knowledge about the games; and understandings of their cultural significance.

2.3. Limitations of the Project

This project took place in one school located in north Queensland, Australia, with a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The demographics of the school meant that the leadership team had a particular focus on actively promoting culture. While the project itself was deemed to be a success in this context the results obtained here may not be transferrable to other schools. However, the inclusive pedagogical and sociocultural approach that the authors suggest, particularly focusing on the role that TIG played in traditional Indigenous communities has the potential to help all students gain an appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. It is the authors' intention to continue this project with other schools.

3. Findings

3.1. Participation in the Games

Students reported that their participation in the TIG project was a positive one. This finding supports that of Parker and her colleagues [5] who also reported a positive experience by students of a similar age group. The experience of the carnival itself was particularly affirming with students indicating that they enjoyed participating for a range of reasons. These included; the novelty of new games, playing with their friends, and sharing culture. "I thought that the experience today was good because I have never actually played any Indigenous games." "...everyone was like moving and laughing and enjoying themselves whilst playing the game." "I felt proud because we were learning about our culture and that we were playing our Indigenous games and that the non-Indigenous are probably loving it too." While these student voices illustrate that the students had different reasons for enjoying the experience, the sense of sharing and group participation is strong.

Notions of inclusion also supported group participation in the games. The student's recognition of the inclusive nature of the games was illustrated in a number of different ways that represented opportunities for everyone to participate in a non-competitive atmosphere as well as the importance of understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture as a means of reducing discrimination. One student who stated that he usually felt marginalised during PE expressed a new sense of opportunity to participate in the games. "...I can't play a lot of sports but I found it a good experience to play because they involved everybody, so it didn't matter if you were the fastest runner or the slowest runner, the best thrower of the worst thrower you were all the same." The following passage also highlights the sense of group participation and inclusion.

Interviewee: "In cricket and football it is not really fair. Aboriginal and Torres Strait games are fair."

Interviewer: "Why is that?"

Interviewee: "Because you all get a go of the same thing. Where in football you don't like get to be like fullback all the time."

Interviewee: "There are no people on the sidelines, everyone just has a go."

Interviewee: "There is no hogging, everyone gets a go. And it is not really individual; it is like all a team. There is a lot of encouraging and respect and things like that."

All educators would recognise the importance of fostering a sense of inclusion in HPE [11]; perhaps the TIG presented a heightened opportunity for inclusion because the games were unfamiliar to the majority of the cohort.

Another aspect highlighted in the focus group discussions was the opportunity for enhanced understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture as a way of reducing discrimination in the school. This student indicated that they thought that the games "...bring non-Indigenous and Indigenous people closer together." Problems of discrimination in the school and TIG being a way of ameliorating the issue were highlighted by this student: "It makes non-Indigenous people start defending Indigenous people so we don't have discrimination around our school. Because we have had a little bit of that happening but I think now that these games have happened we will all get along together." Finally, this quote "It would be great to have it every year at our school so that everybody can learn." seems to indicate that the learning is not just about the cultural aspect of the games, but also about participating cooperatively and respecting one another.

3.2. Knowledge about the Games

One of the key foci of the project was that the students would learn about TIG. This focus emanated from the fact that the future social sustainability of the games relies on understandings of, not only the games themselves but also their cultural significance. The students that participated in the focus groups as well as those who answered questions posed by the facilitators during the carnival all demonstrated that they had retained knowledge about the games and also made some interesting insights. It is important to remember here that the games chosen for this project were from the local region and that they highlighted the skills needed to survive in the bush, rainforest and on the sea. Fundamentally the students were able to recognise that "All the games have a job in the Aboriginal culture. Some games are for spears to catch fish and stuff." "They are games, normally to practice life skills."

The students were able to identify how some of the games contributed to developing particular skills as well as remembering some of the names of the games. "I think one game is named Kalq where you have a tennis bat and moving target ball." "Woomera..... the woomera is the part that they used to throw the spears and it would help the Indigenous boys to hit targets and go fishing." The students were also able to identify that the majority of the games played by them were focused on developing the hunting skills of boys in particular. "I found that most of

the games were for boys because most of the games were only played by boys or men. But it was good that us girls got to have a try."

When the students were questioned about the origins of the games they showed some naïve understandings of the timeline, this quote indicating that this student thought that they were a relatively recent inception. "They probably started as like the Elders of today probably started them when they were little and they probably grew up by generation and which shared like around community." Although the timeline here is incorrect, the fact that this student was able to recall that they have been passed down and shared in community is an important understanding. Passing down and sharing community knowledge is an important component of social sustainability that is supported by UNESCO "local and indigenous knowledge is a key resource for empowering communities to combat marginalization, poverty and impoverishment" [12].

The following quote reinforces this notion: "Some games came from different tribes; they would just use the same games, but change them up so that they were their own and have different things in them." The fact that this student is able to identify that different mobs "changed them up" and "had different things in them" indicates that they understood that the games were adapted, especially with respect to the resources that were available to play them. It also illustrates that the participants were able to identify that different games were played by different mobs, therefore acknowledging that they were as diverse as those who played them. Another example is highlighted here "Like Thapumpun was created by the Indigenous people who lived by the sea..... they made up the game because of the shark. That is probably why they made up that game." The sophistication that the students were able to demonstrate during the focus group discussions with respect to their knowledge of the games presents a good segway into their understanding of the cultural significance of the games.

3.3 Cultural Significance

One of the key highlights of cultural awareness and respect that the students were able to demonstrate during the focus group interviews was that of meaning making. This student quote elucidates the strong sense of cultural significance evidenced across the carnival: ".....it is not just a game – it is actually what they were teaching the Indigenous people." Student comments suggested a difference between TIG and games like football and cricket were that they had an underlying meaning and were not just games for fun. This point is illustrated by the following quotes: "There is a bigger goal than our Australian games like cricket or soccer. It is bigger because they are playing these games for life like catching their food and getting water and stuff." "In like cricket or soccer there isn't any meaning to it, you just play it if you like it. But here they have a meaning that I quite enjoyed."

"It has a bigger meaning to itit is not just like, it has a background story to every single game and it is interesting how they do that sort of stuff. You know like if I was back there [playing other games] I wouldn't think of that."

This point also links back to a statement made by a student about the introduction of the games into the PE

classes. "I thought, at the start, that it was just going to be another activity that we were doing for PE, but when the teacher explained it I found out more meaning to the activities." The notion of TIG "being just another activity" is an important one to highlight here. Schools across Australia have consistently been asked to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in their curricula (for example Mapping Aboriginal Perspectives and cross-curriculum content [13]; Indigenous Education Action Plan [14]; Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in Schools [15]). This has been restated again by ACARA with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum; however, without the right knowledge and connections with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities this has been identified as a difficult thing to do without being viewed as tokenistic [17]. As this student highlights, connecting them with the meaning of the activities and engaging them with the games holistically was an important pedagogical focus of this project. If they had been presented as "just another activity" then their cultural significance would have been lost entirely.

This is also reinforced by the Indigenous students who were happy to express that it felt good to learn about their culture. "I felt good because you learn more about your culture and what happened in the old days." "I felt proud because I was learning what my ancestors used to play." This quote further highlights the importance of the games to an Indigenous student: "I think that it helps non-Indigenous people learn about Indigenous children and it also helps the Indigenous people to know more about their culture as well, and to reconnect with their culture." Non-Indigenous students were able to express the fact that the games were a key focus in traditional community and that they played a role in fostering a sense of teamwork and cooperation "At some of the places that the games originated from, they work as a team to go do stuff." "...the community always encouraged people, so it wasn't just like people would just go off by themselves, they would always have a team mate." This view is supported by the findings of Salter [1] that playing the games "solidified internal relationships" strengthened and promoted goodwill and "social intercourse" (p. 38).

4. Discussion

The findings of this project indicate the introduction of TIG in this public school was a success both in terms of engaging students with participation and fostering a sense of inclusion, but also as a means of engaging students with an authentic understanding of their significance in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. The discussion raises the opportunities for deeper engagement through the new Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education [8].

4.1. The Possible Place for Indigenous Games in Schools

Aside from the importance of maintaining knowledge and practice of the games to promote the social sustainability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, the inception of the Australian Curriculum cross

curricular priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and history as well as the new HPE curriculum [8] present a rich opportunity to introduce traditional Indigenous games in schools. In particular the HPE curriculum indicates that the late elementary and early secondary years may be the ideal time to introduce them.

At years five and six the HPE curriculum outlines a core content description to be taught in Years five and six (elementary school) asks student to "participate in physical activities from their own and other cultures and examine how involvement creates community connections" (p. 38) [8]. Certainly both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous students that participated in this project were able to demonstrate that they achieved this. Indigenous students identified that they felt that they belonged "I felt proud because we were learning about our culture and that we were playing our Indigenous games and that the non-Indigenous are probably loving it too." The non-Indigenous students articulated that they appreciated the uniqueness and diversity in their community "It was a good experience to learn how they do their life skills and how they live and how they come together as a community."

Teaching TIG and adding an associated carnival aligns with the HPE curriculum Years five and six content description: "Investigate and reflect on how strategies for valuing diversity can positively influence the wellbeing of the community (p. 38) [8], as further evidenced in the Content elaboration: "planning a day that celebrates the cultural diversity of students [by] sharing food, stories and games from their cultural background" (p. 37). This Content description comes from the personal, social and community health strand under the key idea "contribution to healthy and active communities" (p. 37) where the focus is on the health and wellbeing benefits of physical activity in communities with which they identify. The games were promoted as a key community activity as the school is situated within a community with a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

All of the focus group participants were able to identify that participating in the games was a celebration of the cultural diversity of their peers and one suggested that "I learnt different games and teamwork, cooperation, respecting a different culture. It was also fantastic to see the people dancing and understanding the background origins of it." While another student supported it as an annual activity "It would be great to have it every year at our school so that everybody can learn." Learning about teamwork also provides another link to the new HPE curriculum, in particular the General Capability of Personal and Social Capability (p. 14) and the Learning through movement Content description "Participate positively in groups and teams by encouraging others and negotiating roles and responsibilities" (p. 39) [8].

The HPE curriculum for Years seven and eight is more explicit about the inclusion of cultural games, and in this case TIG. TIG feature here in the movement and physical activity strand and are featured under the strand of "Understanding movement" [8]. Students in Years seven and eight are required to "participate in and investigate the cultural and historical significance of a range of physical activities" (p. 45) [8]. The students that participated in this project were definitely able to demonstrate that they knew

about both the cultural and historical aspects of TIG. This is demonstrated in the following quote: “All the Aboriginal games have a meaning..... What it meant to me was that life skills like aiming and, throwing and catching.”

The HPE curriculum may be more explicit in identifying TIG learning, opportunities for a dual role as a cross-curricular focus of the Australian Curriculum presents great possibilities. This was highlighted by one of the focus group participants in the following quote: “I think that they will help for our school learning because in SOSE and other studies we have to use this information.” As this student highlights, not only do TIG provide an authentic understanding of the roles of the games, culturally and historically, this knowledge can be used in other subject areas such as History. An understanding of the relationship between games and the type of country they were played on may also assist in studies of Geography. The introduction of TIG also provide for the potential to embed Indigenous knowledges and frameworks, such as “My Land, My Tracks” (deta.qld.gov.au/indigenous/pdfs/uncle-ernies-framework-11052007.pdf) or “8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning” (8ways.wikispaces.com) through learning about language names for the games, the relationship that the games had with the people and culture. Using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander frameworks to design learning experiences enable a more authentic approach to engaging students with aspects of the new Australian Curriculum which ask us to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as well as the other approaches suggested earlier in this paper. Internationally, the Indigenous Games have prominence in many countries, including New Zealand, Sweden and Canada and we see potential for authentic student learning in making links to curriculum and culture. We wish to highlight though the risk of tokenistic implementation and prioritise the preparedness and potential for cultural significance.

An authentic and inclusive pedagogical approach was intended and advocated in this project. Garrett and Wrench [11] suggested that “the ultimate challenge is truly to value and believe in inclusivity and then commit to actions and pedagogies that recognise and celebrate student diversity” (p. 200). The relationship between inclusive pedagogies and critical theory ask us to question the intersections between ideology, power and culture [16]. Using questions such as:

What knowledge and skills are being valued?

Who is being privileged because of these values orientations?

What is happening for those not privileged?

What is the role of schooling in the construction of a child’s identity?

(Garrett &Wrench, 2006, p. 201)

to frame the development of units rather than reverting to well-practiced non-inclusive design. Engaging with the notions of how gender, culture, disability and religious identification influence and restrict learning opportunities for some students and privilege others is the key feature of inclusive pedagogy [11]. They also suggest that the kind of pedagogies that emanate from a close questioning of restriction and privilege during learning provides teachers and students with an opportunity to “challenge and alter inequity in a practical way” (p. 201) [11]. Participants in

this project identified inclusive experiences as they were engaged in thinking about the importance of and respect for culture (their own or their peers),that it was possible to have fun, feel included and valued as part of the group as well as promoting reconciliation within the school.

Yulunga provides a brief cultural background to each of the games which are vital to authentic implementation. This also presents an opportunity to engage students with inclusive and inquiry approach espoused by the HPE curriculum [8]. Questions such as: Why would Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people have played this game? Where would it have been played? What gives you clues about this? What skills/and or strategies would it have developed? Who would have played it? If this approach is adopted, use the information provided in the resources as well as local knowledge to discuss this with students.

Introducing new aspects of curriculum can be problematic. The following quotes illustrate that while some students reported that they were initially sceptical when the games were introduced in their PE lessons it proved to be a good experience for them.“To be honest I wasn’t really up for the thing at first, but after we started playing I said this is going to be good. It turned out how I expected, really good.”“I thought it was good because we got to practice all the games in PE and then we got to put them together, making a team with other people and trying to work together.”When the games were introduced into the PE classes in this school some of the students identified that they initially found it difficult to understand how to play them. This problem is highlighted in the following passage:

Interviewee: “.....first of all it was kinda confusing because in some of the games, like the one with the tags.....”

Interviewer: “Puloga.”

Interviewee continued: “.....you have to multi task and there are a few more..... it is harder to do.”

Students described that they compared them with games or activities that they were already familiar with and liked in order to determine how they were played. The following quotes provide some examples.

“I liked Thapumpun because it was kind of similar to tiggly and I already know a little of what to do.”

“I liked the one where we had to throw the ball (Tarnambai). I liked it because it is kinda like when you throw a ball for your dog. I like throwing a ball for my dog and I really enjoyed it.”

Fostering an attitude of cooperation as opposed to competition was emphasised with the students. While this supports an inclusive pedagogical approach it is also important for a variety of other reasons. The nature of the games was not only to teach important life skills to children, but also as a means to “reinforce culture, promote good will and interpersonal relationships” (p. 16) [1]. Promoting cooperation in the students reinforces one of the key roles that TIG played in communities. Also, as the games will be new to most students this presents an opportunity for a shared experience through unfamiliarity of skills and/or strategies. The opportunity for students to work cooperatively and to learn together is presented as well as opportunities for sharing, helping and respecting one another as well as culture. All of these aspects were reported by the students who participated in the focus

groups as what they enjoyed and learnt from participating in the games.

The practice of reflecting on learning is congruent with the inquiry model [18]. The practice of reflection is also an important part of inclusive pedagogical practice as it helps the students' understandings of 'the other' and to articulate their experience with it. The students involved with this project actively reflected on the experience of learning about TIG and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through a formal written piece after the carnival had finished. This practice provided a great opportunity for all of the students to formalise what they had learnt and engaged them with the intent that they had not just participated in "another activity for PE." Klapproth [9] sees this action as an important element of oral histories and traditions. The compilation of a carnival slide show provided a further opportunity for the students to see themselves in action and provided a focus to finish the carnival day with a positive feeling about the experience for all parties involved.

4.2. Embedding Cultural Significance

One of the key foci of the original initiative was the engagement of local Elders and community members with school children as a means of promoting and maintaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Kiran and Knights [6] reported that their participants were not able to make a strong cultural connection after their TIG community health promotion project. To use Hokowhitsu's [20] words, this study could have highlighted the use of the Yulunga resource as a form of "ethic formalisation" and meet the education system requirement of integrating Indigenous perspectives in teaching and learning. The TIG may be seen as a list of games available to teachers (and others) that formalises Indigenous knowledge and experience. Hokowhitsu [20], a prominent writer about Indigenous Maori knowledges and experiences in New Zealand, asks for recognition of "Indigenous intelligence". Similarly, Nakata (p. 56), a Torres Strait man, calls for Torres Strait Islanders to be seen as "a people of knowledge" [21] in Australia. Cultural connections with community for Indigenous Games teaching and events is essential for recognition of Indigenous knowledge and cultural sharing, and presents opportunities for discussions about geographical significance and gender specific games, opportunities to play with traditional equipment, and participation in other cultural activities.

5. Conclusion

Approximately 160 students in years five and six from one public elementary school in north Queensland participated in a five-week TIG implementation in their physical education classes and a culminating event. Students' voices indicated that participating in the games was inclusive and encouraged active engagement. The students were also able to demonstrate that they had significantly greater knowledge about what TIG were as well as their role in traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

A tokenistic experience was avoided by actively engaging students with the TIG meaning, and further, such experiences promoted 'indigenous intelligence' as

discussed by Hokowhitsu [20] and Nakata [21]. These activities, employing inclusive pedagogies and inquiry models, present an opportunity for inclusion and reconciliation through a better understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. This is summed up in this quote from a focus group participant "It is their tradition and we can't change it because we respect their tradition."

List of Abbreviations

ACARA: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
 ATSI: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services
 DEEWR: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
 HPE: Health and Physical Education
 LEAP: Learning Earning Access Places
 PE: Physical Education
 QSA: Queensland Studies Authority
 TIG: Traditional Indigenous Games
 UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Acknowledgement

The authors' would like to acknowledge the investment of time and effort that the school put into engaging with this project. We would also like to acknowledge the important work of Ken Edwards and Sharon Louth in continuing to develop the games for schools.

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