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Introduction

The research project ‘Walking together to make a difference: A case study of Worawa Aboriginal College’ demonstrates the continuation of the narrative of this College, as described in *Building On A Dream* (2013). The narrative recorded on the DVD *Building On A Dream*, includes members from all sections of the Worawa Community, who were instrumental in realising the dream of Hyllus Maris through their involvement in the early years of the educational enterprise that is today Worawa Aboriginal College.

The previously stated purpose of the project is to focus on the key people at Worawa Aboriginal College and identify factors that enable or challenge:

- the nurturing of a strong sense of cultural identity
- the building of a sense of connectedness through the development of respectful relationships within the learning community of Worawa Aboriginal College
- the empowerment of students and adults in taking responsibility for their own actions
- rigorous student learning

and therefore answer the fundamental research question: What factors do students and adults at Worawa Aboriginal College understand as assisting the nurturing of a strong sense of cultural identity through connectedness, empowerment and learning in their life at school?

The key concepts, Culture, Connectedness, Empowerment and Learning, present in *Building On a Dream* were identified in the literature, related to the Worawa Values of Relationship, Responsibility, Respect and Rigour and used to develop relevant questions for interviews. Definitions of Culture, Connectedness, Empowerment and Learning derived from the Literature Review are:

Culture: the characteristics of Aboriginal people defined by their connection to people and place, manifested in a contemporary context.

Connectedness: a sense of belonging to a learning community.

Empowerment: the ability to act with confidence in order to direct one’s own life within the context of a learning community.

Learning: a complex co-emergent process of holistic development enabled through the construction of meaning, taking place within a community that is dynamic and robust in adapting to changing circumstances.

Existing exemplars were also collated according to these key concepts.

For purposes of collating the data and to avoid unnecessary repetition, these key concepts were incorporated into three themes. These themes are:

1. Connectedness and Empowerment Through Culture and ‘The Worawa Way’
2. Connectedness and Empowerment Through Respectful, Responsible Relationships
3. Connectedness and Empowerment Through Rigorous Learning.

Section 5 presents a rich picture of life at Worawa Aboriginal College in 2014, using data generated between December 2013 and December 2014 and existing exemplars. People in all sections of the College Community willingly contributed to the building of this picture. Thoughts expressed in interviews are corroborated by material in exemplars, material on the College website and in material in other relevant publications.

The following sections present the findings of the project in response to the research questions and identify the enabling factors and challenges.

1. Stated and Lived Purpose of the College

The Worawa College website states the purpose of the College and the belief that this purpose is achievable:

Worawa assists Aboriginal students to establish themselves in Australian society with a strong sense of Aboriginal identity and self-esteem. With hundreds of Aboriginal students attending from across Australia, many have overcome significant barriers to achieve their chosen goals. We, at Worawa, take immense pride in assisting our students to reach their full potential.

Emphasis is placed on threading culture through the curriculum and involving Aboriginal artists and other role models through a series of activities. The girls who pass through Worawa become strong and independent women, strong in their culture and Aboriginal identity and ready to take their place in the world.

The data in the previous Section demonstrate the commitment of all to the development of strong, proud Aboriginal young women, who can walk in two worlds. This is achieved through commitment to nurturing and celebrating culture, the development of a sense of belonging to, and the empowerment of students within the Worawa Aboriginal College Learning Community in the context of respectful, responsible relationships and a program of rigorous, holistic, personalised learning.

Enabling factor

1.1 Vision of Hyllus Maris

All at Worawa Aboriginal College are committed to the vision of Hyllus Maris, Founder of Worawa. All that occurs within the context of the College is informed by this vision. This is an enabling factor in achieving the purpose of education at Worawa. Hyllus’ vision was that the Worawa College curriculum “should be based on the best elements of both traditional Aboriginal and current

Australian education, aiming to produce an Aboriginal person versed in his/her traditions and proud of his/her identity, who has the tools and necessary qualifications to contribute effectively to the Australian community”. It is this vision that supports the development of strong proud Aboriginal young women, who can walk in two worlds.

Provision of significant links to maintain the commitment to the vision of Hyllus Maris, are evident in the data. Aunty Fay and Aunty Diane speak of this as the foundation of the College, and emphasise the importance of its continuance. They both commend Aunty Lois for her commitment to this vision. Mark Thomson, Chairman of the College Board and Shannon Faulkhead, a member of the Board connect the vision to Worawa’s two-way learning program. The data demonstrate that Aunty Lois as Executive Director and Principal, continually refers to the vision of Hyllus Maris, at all College events, such as Presentation Day, when she addresses all the assembled, and at others, for example ‘Debutante Dreaming’, when she addresses a particular group in the audience. Aunty Lois describes herself as the ‘caretaker’ of the vision of Hyllus Maris. Hyllus Maris remains an integral member of the College Community, not only through the articulation of her vision but through her ‘Spiritual Song of the Aborigine’, recited by the students on particular occasions and regularly at School Assemblies.

2. Connectedness and Empowerment Through Culture and The Worawa Way

Members of the Worawa Aboriginal College Community are connected and empowered through culture. They achieve this through nurturing and celebrating many aspects of culture. Connectedness, a sense of belonging, is demonstrated through the common commitment to and respect for Aboriginal culture. Empowerment is demonstrated through the common understanding that their culture enables them to live fulfilling lives and their consequent confidence and pride in doing so. The College seeks to develop in the students’ self-esteem and a sense of pride in their identity in order that they can set positive personal goals that will benefit them and their communities. A challenge for the College is to nurture and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal culture that is represented at Worawa. The data presented in the previous Section is significant in acknowledging the College’s successful meeting of this challenge, through maintaining a culturally safe environment in which to nurture and celebrate Culture. The following are factors that enable the nurturing and celebrating of Culture and ‘The Worawa Way’ to connect and empower.

Enabling Factors

2.1 Leadership

Strong, committed Aboriginal leadership ensures that culture is valued, nurtured and celebrated. Such leadership is evident in the data generated by the Elders and Board members; each individual participant expresses a range of thoughts. Some of their individual perspectives are particularly important to them. Collectively they build a broader picture.

2.1.1 Elders and Board Members:

Aunty Fay demonstrates a detailed understanding of the historical events that shape opportunities to nurture and celebrate culture, while Aunty Diane articulates the variation of student understanding of their culture. Mark Thomson speaks from his personal experience and the importance of learning about culture as a student at Worawa and Gary Thomas, a former Board member believes that culture informs all education and is therefore fundamental. Shannon Faulkhead, who knew little about her culture as a child speaks of the importance of this discovery as a teenager and her resultant passion for education, where culture is paramount. They all note the vision for the College was that of Hyllus Maris and the positive effect of this vision on life and learning at Worawa. The reflections of these people contribute to the rich picture of culture at Worawa, and enable the nurturing and celebrating of culture by their understanding of its importance and consequent encouragement of this at the College.

2.1.2 Executive Director and Principal Aunty Lois Peeler

Aunty Lois' leadership is acknowledged as fundamental in nurturing and celebrating culture. All participants articulate this. As well as the recorded material from Aunty Diane and Aunty Fay, both of whom value Aunty Lois' leadership, observers at College events often witness Aunty Fay's spontaneous tributes to Aunty Lois' leadership. As Elder in Residence Aunty Lois has an extensive knowledge of Aboriginal culture and history and comes from a family that for generations has been at the forefront of the Australian Aboriginal movement for social, political and legal equality. In addition she has well-developed skills, having worked in and initiated the development of senior positions in the Federal Public Service and has been a senior advisor to government and the public service on Aboriginal issues, at a national and regional level, in a range of sectors. This set of knowledge and skills is significant in that it is explicitly valued at various times by all sectors of the College Community and many sectors of the wider community. Aunty Lois is well able to promote the importance of Aboriginal culture, in any specific context and she constantly seeks new and innovative ways to celebrate all aspects of culture.

Staff selection enables Aunty Lois to build a team that can nurture and celebrate culture. She has selected strong leaders, who have cultural knowledge and understanding to implement the residential and academic programs. A set of rigorous Cultural Standards assists all staff to develop appropriate knowledge, understandings and skills. The members of the Research Team observed, utilised and valued Aunty Lois' cultural knowledge during the research process. For the students, the fact that the College Principal is an Aboriginal person makes a difference and renders Worawa different from their previous schools. They acknowledge Aunty Lois' commitment to cultural understanding and leading them to appropriate action. Succession Planning is understood to be important by Aunty Lois and the Elders, so that Aboriginal leadership is maintained and Worawa Aboriginal College remains under the guidance of the 'right' person.

2.2 Importance of Culture for Parents and Grandparents

The unequivocal support of the parents and grandparents in nurturing and celebrating culture at Worawa is an enabling factor. The parents and grandparents in their interviews all speak about the importance of culture in education. They speak from their own perspective and that of their girls. They are all very committed to two-way learning, where there is a strong cultural foundation. A number speak very emotionally about the changes in their young ones, since coming to Worawa; they value the girls learning more about and celebrating their own culture or where culture is already strong, they value their learning about others' culture. They cite the ability to provide an education in a cultural context as the strength of Worawa, as they understand this will equip the girls to walk successfully in two worlds. They articulate the importance of this for future employment in their home communities and express pride in their daughters and granddaughters learning about and celebrating their own and others' cultures.

2.3 Commitment of Staff Members

The project delineates, from the perspective of staff members, the various ways Worawa nurtures and celebrates culture. Head of Boarding, house parents, Head of Learning and Teaching and academic staff members articulate how this occurs in their jurisdictions. All staff members value the culture of each girl and the data demonstrate sensitivity to this. House parents, and academic staff members, all describe the many and varied positive aspects of nurturing and celebrating the girls' culture. Teachers in all Learning Areas articulate the importance of their understanding of Aboriginal culture, in order to enable their students as learners and also in the delivery of meaningful curriculum and learning experiences. They also cite themselves as learners in this context and empathise with those students, for whom the learning is difficult. The ways of celebrating culture vary from the traditional to the contemporary and it is evident that all staff members seek new and sometimes innovative ways to nurture and augment pride in culture. The enjoyment engendered through this process is also evident in the data. Both, Kim, Head of Boarding and Kathryn, Head of Learning and Teaching, express a clear and detailed understanding of and commitment to, the nurture and celebration of culture at Worawa.

2.4 Cultural Heritage of Students

The girls value their cultural learning environment. There is evidence of this in all sections of the data collation. Specifically they value the learning in cultural classes citing many aspects of Aboriginal culture and history they learned. They also speak of enjoyment in learning cultural dances. There is two-way learning as girls from remote areas enjoy sharing their culture with others, whilst those who come from urban cultural contexts share their contemporary culture experiences with other students and staff members. Some admit to being slow to value others' culture and describe their transition in some detail, while others embrace the opportunity very quickly. The girls enjoy learning contemporary expressions of culture and celebrating these. A significant number, both in their interviews and in public declared pride in their culture. While some people external to the College express wonder and surprise

at Worawa's ability to nurture and celebrate the diversity that exists in Aboriginal culture, the evidence demonstrates their success. The fact that the girls who visited First Nations communities in Hawai'i and New Zealand, expressed gratitude for this opportunity and were able to learn from the experience, further attests to their pride in their own culture. The openness of the girls who were interviewed to learning about and celebrating their culture is particularly significant, as without this, true celebration is impossible.

2.5 The Property

The project found evidence that Coranderrk, the property on which Worawa resides, is particularly significant in enabling the nurturing and celebrating culture. The beauty of the land, the historic nature of the site, the incorporation of a Dreaming Trail, the architect designed landscaped grounds where Indigenous plants are re-introduced to the area, combine with the thoughtful and attractive placement of buildings, significant items, and active and passive recreation areas, to provide a setting, where both traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture may be nurtured and celebrated. A traditional relationship with the Land is enabled through knowing and relating to the history of the people who walked the land in times gone by. This assists the spiritual dimension of Aboriginal culture to be part of the girls' education.

2.6 The Worawa Way

Members of the Worawa Aboriginal College Community are also connected and empowered through the Worawa Values of Relationship, Responsibility, Respect and Rigour, more commonly referred to in conversation, as the '4R's'. The values Relationship, Responsibility and Respect are traditional Aboriginal Values; Rigour is added at Worawa.

All the members of the leadership team, staff members and students make continual reference to the '4R's' in their interviews. As well as this, teachers and students make reference to these Values in formal and informal speeches as well as general conversation. Visual representations of the four Values are visible throughout the College, in both the boarding houses and classrooms. It is evident that these values are an integral part of the thinking, speaking, acting and reflecting of staff members and students. The observers in the research team were impressed by the continual reference to the Values, in all contexts, particularly in spontaneous conversations. The abundant evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of having few, well-articulated and well-understood values, that are continually referred to, in a relevant manner. This enables values to become part of the fabric of college life at all levels. These are further elaborated upon as enabling factors in subsequent segments of this Section.

3. Connectedness and Empowerment Through Respectful, Responsible Relationships

As well as being connected and empowered through the nurturing and celebrating of culture, members of the Worawa Aboriginal College Community are connected and empowered through experiencing respectful responsible relationships. It is primarily through these, that a sense of belonging is developed, as well as the confidence to expand their range of relationships and deepen existing relationships.

Many students have experienced difficulty in the establishment and maintenance of respectful, responsible relationships in their previous education setting and so it is a challenge for the College to enable them to change their perceptions and behaviour. This challenge is met with significant success by fostering respectful, responsible relationships in the culturally safe environment of the College and empowering the students by leading them to understand that they are able to change. This occurs in the context of the high expectations staff have for themselves and their students. These high expectations are evident in staff understanding of the traumatic backgrounds of those of their students, whose families have experienced one or more of the recognised ‘major stress events’ common to generations of disadvantaged Indigenous communities. High expectations are also evident in the respectful, responsible relationships developed between staff members and between staff members and students, and between students and students. They are also evident in the selection of the programs relevant for a trauma- informed school. The following are factors that enable the fostering of respectful, responsible relationships, through the development of the skills required to do so.

Enabling Factors

3.1 The Physical Environment

Respectful, responsible relationships begin with the relationship of everybody with the land on which the College stands. Both Aunty Fay and Aunty Diane speak of the importance of the historical relationship and in her speeches Aunty Lois constantly reminds people of the importance of the site. She believes that it is through the Land, the girls come into relationship with the people who walked there before them. Parents comment on the significance of the site and the girls comment on Aunty Lois’ constant reminder to care for the land. As well as a cultural relationship, there is also evidence of the development of a relationship with the site that engenders respect and responsibility in all facets of college life. The students and staff are proud of their living and learning arrangements, and this relationship engenders respect and responsibility.

3.2 The Leadership Team

Constant reference to the Worawa values by the members of the Leadership Team is an enabling factor in the development and/ or enhancement of respectful responsible relationships. The members of the Leadership Team acknowledge the

values of Relationship, Responsibility and Respect constantly in interview, conversation and when observed in action. There is significant evidence of Aunty Lois, Kathryn and Kim exhibiting respectful, responsible relationships with Elders, parents, staff, students and visitors, when discussing or informing. In relation to the students they articulate their responsibility to teach these values and associated behaviours, and each accomplishes this in a different manner; each of their approaches combines in a consonant approach. The evidence in the previous Section demonstrates their modus operandi, as they work with individuals to achieve this. They first develop a relationship with the individual by knowing each girl's story through and understanding of family, culture, languages, community and previous schooling experiences and then, building upon this, they assist her to develop skills to build respectful, responsible relationships. This task is ongoing but the evidence demonstrates success and this success is described by the students.

3.3 Relationship with Parents and Grandparents

The relationship with the parents and grandparents with the College is an enabling factor as it connects and empowers them, as well as their daughters and granddaughters. The data provides evidence of Aunty Lois including Elders and parents in her deliberations as leader of the College. There is significant evidence they value this. The Community Forum held every year in December, provides an occasion where the relationship between the College and parents and grandparents becomes an avenue for evaluation and suggestions for the future of education at Worawa. The reports of these forums contain significant data, describing the manner in which the community members learn about aspects of life at Worawa. They also contribute to educational thinking at the College.

Respectful responsible relationships are also evident in the testimony of the parents and grandparents, when describing their relationship with staff members. These relationships enable a true learning partnership between school and parent. The parents certainly value this, as it was not part of their previous experiences with other schools. They also value the evidence that their daughters and granddaughters are happy at Worawa because of relationships with staff and other students. They note the empowering change in their daughters and granddaughters, enabled through these relationships. This was also absent from their previous experiences in other schools. In their opinion, the differences between Worawa and other known education settings are quite marked. They also comment upon the improved family relationships at home; they attribute this to the translation of the Worawa Values into the girls' lives beyond school.

3.4 Staff Members' Relationships and Relationships with Students

The relationships between staff members and between them and their students are enabling factors. It is evident that the staff members, both boarding and academic, enjoy each other's company and value each other as professionals. There are specific statements to this effect and the general respect among the staff and their willingness to assist each other both personally and professionally is notable to observers. Similarly all staff members speak at length about their focus on establishing

respectful, responsible, relationships with their students. They too realise that it is important to know the girl's story in family and community in order to achieve this. There is evidence of a variety of approaches and they all value the assistance of Kathryn and Kim in their endeavours. Observers both inside and outside the College, comment on the respectful relationships between students and staff members. Boarding house staff members are committed to the development of a home-like atmosphere and this is demonstrated in the physical boarding house setting and the statements of Kim and the house parents. There is significant evidence of the successful strategies used by the boarding house staff members to overcome homesickness.

3.5 Provision of A Safe Environment

The safe environment provided by the College is an enabling factor, in the development or enhancement of respectful, responsible relationships. All staff members are committed to providing a safe environment for the girls, recognising the girls' right to feel safe. They believe that only as they become more trusting of a safe environment are the girls able to relax and consider others. They also believe safety and security provide the basis for the development of respectful relationships and that 'The Worawa Way' provides a strong value base and enables strong organisational structures that promote safety. Both in the boarding houses and in the school, the aim is to provide safety, security and predictability. Links between the boarding houses and the school are maintained through Kim's handover, where she communicates any issues that have occurred overnight. The teaching staff members meet before the start of each school day to review notes from the past evening and to plan accordingly for the day. During the day Aunty Lois and Kathryn maintain communication with Kim and the wellbeing coordinator. The residential staff members meet each afternoon for a briefing. The academic and residential staff members are very appreciative of this, as it assists them to deal with these issues promptly and in the most appropriate manner. Kim is very conscious of her responsibility to keep girls safe both at school and at outside venues. She believes this is achieved when they have boundaries and so she makes an effort to communicate these efficiently and effectively. Parents and grandparents agree with this and express their gratitude for the establishment and maintenance of appropriate boundaries. College personnel are aware that parents and grandparents need to know their daughters are safe and they communicate this understanding to them.

3.6 A Trauma-informed School

The members of the College Leadership Team maintain focus on the fact that Worawa is a trauma-informed school and that staff employed at the College must be trained in and suited to, working with this focus. Aunty Lois says that through the staff selection process, the College is able to build a quality team. People, who appear suitable at first may prove not to be so and choose to leave. Rather than understanding this to be problematic Aunty Lois understands it to be a fact that enables her to build a team of committed people, able to work productively in a trauma-informed boarding and academic environment. Therefore the process of attracting quality staff is ongoing. Observers noted that the length of tenure of staff members varied

considerably and that there are some of long standing tenure shown through the data in the previous Section to be very effective members of staff. As in other education institutions some decide for various reasons after a longer or shorter time to move on. There appears to be very few examples of short-term appointments, terminated because of inability to work in a trauma-informed environment. Induction of new staff members is critical for the continued implementation of ‘The Worawa Way’ and the Worawa Education Model, including appropriate programs to support staff in conducting a trauma-informed school.

Worawa has a full time Wellbeing Coordinator. This is significant as this appointment is evidence of the College’s commitment to conducting itself as a trauma-informed school. Christine is available to speak with individuals and groups as required. Her ability to hold productive conversations with students is valued by all staff members, and it is these conversations that assist the girls to develop strategies to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner. Her availability full time is valued as all teachers comment that a full time on site service was not available in their previous schools. They also value her quick response when needed. Christine’s description of some of the approaches she takes with the girls attests to her ability to approach them in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner. Assisting the girls to deal with conflict is a major part of her role and the principles of ‘Restorative Practice’ inform this. All staff members receive appropriate professional development for their role in a trauma informed school. The relevant programs, ‘Restorative Practice’, ‘Resilience Training’ and ‘Yarning Up On Trauma’, are described in the previous Section.

3.7 Student Relationships

The openness and mature discussion of the students is notable. They are very open about the importance of and the manner in which they develop respectful, responsible, relationships; their action is an enabling factor. They have a clear memory of and acknowledge their shortcomings and the assistance of particular staff members and students in overcoming these. They are able to cite their need and the manner in which they addressed that need; they further demonstrate empowerment by acknowledging the fact that they have changed. They give substance to the fact that “individuals are vehicles of power, not its points of application” (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p. 89). Further substance to this statement is also given through the leadership exercised by the students and understood by them, to be their responsibility. Traits of giftedness in leadership, as described by Chandler (2011) are evident in their actions.

All students cite friends as being very important to them and all say they have found significant friends. Some say these friends will remain so throughout their lives. There are many instances in the data where individual students acknowledge the difficulties they faced in relating to other students, when they first came to Worawa. They all describe the pathway they adopted and a number acknowledged that success led them to being role models for other girls. Initial homesickness is acknowledged as well as surprise at and pride in, their own perseverance. They are very proud of the fact that they are completing the year, in two cases, three and four years at Worawa. They are satisfied that they have learned how to manage conflict and can assist others to do so. All of this is expressed using the terminology of the ‘4R’s’; hence attesting to the significance of the Values. All students speak both in interview and publically,

about the supportive nature of the College and the concept of a ‘home away from home’ is evident in many of their statements.

3.8 Partnerships

Partnerships both local, regional and international are an enabling factor in the development of respectful, responsible relationships beyond the confines of the College. The data demonstrate the value and complexity of these relationships.

All Worawa College students are involved in local sporting competitions and the College hosts sporting competitions. These competitions, as well as developing relationships with local schools, develop very positive relationships with members of the Victoria Police, as they attend and are an integral part of sporting competitions at the College. Worawa girls also had the opportunity to umpire ‘Auskick’ at ‘Dreamtime At The G’. At weekends the girls are taken shopping at a local shopping centre; this develops skills to operate in a city setting and enables them to meet the local people.

The Worawa Partner Schools Program involves schools working together for social, cultural or sporting exchange around key dates on the Worawa Cultural Calendar. Partner schools identify an area of focus, they wish to undertake with Worawa. This provides the foundation for shared learning experiences. These could be for cultural and social exchange, art, music, environmental science, Aboriginal technology or sport. Partner schools include Trinity Grammar School, Presbyterian Ladies College, Scotch College, Melbourne Grammar School, Shelford Girls’ Grammar, Mount Evelyn Christian School, Healesville High School, Methodist Ladies College, Melbourne Girls Grammar School, Yarra Valley Grammar School, Tintern Schools, Genazzano, FCJ College.

Both schools value the partnership with Scotch College. The partnership consists of regular visits between the two schools, during which time students are involved in various curriculum-based projects. The aim of each project is to devise tasks that will facilitate two-way learning between students. The data describes this project in some detail and attests to the benefits for both schools. Worawa College is committed to developing partnerships, which are two-way, benefitting both parties.

In 2011 Worawa held a Debutante Ball, where girls from Worawa made their debut partnered by boys from Scotch College and Luther College in Melbourne. In 2014, in Debutante Dreaming, boys from Mt Evelyn Christian College and Melbourne Grammar School partnered the girls. ‘Sapphires’ (2013), was an in-school production based on the play and musical of the same name. Selected students and teachers from Worawa and students from Scotch College took part in the production.

The data also gives accounts of the value of partnerships with the Wilin Centre and The Malthouse Theatre. Both these partnerships enable the Worawa students to visit significant places and meet significant people in the Melbourne Performing Arts community.

International partnerships are also avenues for the girls to learn about and share their culture with other First Nations people and to develop respectful responsible relationships with them. The data outline the benefits of this, as partnerships with First Nations schools enable Worawa Aboriginal College to connect with communities that have similar experiences and who honour traditional beliefs and Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Partnerships have been established with schools in Hawai'i and New Zealand.

Overall the data attest to the development of respectful, responsible relationships on a personal, familial, school community, local and wider community and international level. These relationships engender a sense of belonging to the Worawa and wider and global communities. They are empowering because the students realising these relationships are possible have acquired the skills and confidence to develop them in a responsible and respectful manner.

4. Connectedness and Empowerment Through Rigorous Learning

The members of the Worawa Aboriginal College Community are connected through the implementation of and participation in a rigorous learning program with high expectations for students and opportunities for their participation. They are empowered by the participation and achievement of the students.

As most of the students do not have a background of high or even moderate levels of learning expectation and achievement in formal education settings, the challenge for the College is to develop in the students belief in themselves as learners. Once this belief is initiated, the task is to assist them to maintain the 'productive struggles' (Allen, 2012) in their learning. According to Allen (*ibid*) a 'destructive' struggle leads to frustration, makes learning goals feel hazy and out of reach and so feels fruitless. It leaves students feeling abandoned and on their own, thus creating a sense of inadequacy. On the contrary a 'productive' struggle leads to understanding, makes learning goals feel attainable and the effort seem worthwhile. It yields results and leads students to feelings of empowerment and efficacy and so creates a sense of hope. Rigour at Worawa is characterised by the 'productive struggle'. The data describe the understanding of Rigour by the staff and students of the College Community and the achievement of the students through the application of this Worawa Value. All teachers responded positively to the concept of 'productive struggle' and discussed it in the context of student learning in their Learning Areas. The following are the factors that enable the implementation of, participation and learning in a rigorous program.

Enabling Factors

4.1 Vision of Hyllus Maris

The commitment to the vision of Hyllus Maris, Founder of Worawa, enables a program of learning underpinned by the enactivist definition of learning, where:

Learning is a complex, co-emergent process of holistic development enabled through the construction of meaning, taking place within a community that is dynamic and robust in adapting to changing circumstances.

As stated previously, Hyllus Maris' vision was that the Worawa curriculum "should be based on the best elements of both traditional Aboriginal and current Australian education, aiming to produce an Aboriginal person versed in his/her traditions and proud of his/her identity, who has the tools and necessary qualifications to contribute effectively to the Australian community". This is a significant enabling factor in the development and implementation of the learning program.

4.2 Worawa Education Model

The Worawa Education Model in itself is an enabling factor in the development and implementation of the learning program, which is characterised by a commitment to holistic, and personalised learning. The Model has a distinctive and unique profile based on an integrated Education, Culture, Wellbeing model, which embraces the concept of "two-way" learning, where Aboriginal culture and mainstream Australian culture are of equal value and combine in a Model of Learning. This involves the Learning and Teaching Program addressing the Key Learning Areas of mainstream curriculum whilst taking into account Aboriginal culture, values, spiritual beliefs and learning styles.

At Worawa the curriculum is organised in Learning Centres, each Centre having dedicated teachers and a designated learning space. Each girl, when she enters the College following initial base-line data assessments made by staff develops learning goals in each subject. As a result of these assessments and goals each girl experiences personalised learning, which is a means to track and reinforce individual growth and development. Personalised learning, which has been advocated by eminent educationalists over a long period of time is evident in the Dalton Curriculum Model (Parkhurst, 1922) on which the Worawa model is based. Individual digital portfolios is one element of a comprehensive student progress and participation record, established against a range of educational and social criteria, utilised to monitor and assist student progress.

The Australian Curriculum frames the Worawa College Learning Centre Programs. The College curriculum plan calls for Learning Centres for Languages, Mathematics, Science and Environment, The Arts, Culture, Pathways and Health and Physical Education. Information Technology is available across all Learning Areas and the focus of specific projects. The curriculum design is on a four-year cycle. This enables the following features:

1. Suitability for Personalised Learning Programs
2. Coverage of all curriculum areas for a given student
3. Flexibility of timetabling in response to different possible enrolment patterns
4. Accommodation of students who enter part way through a term or year.

The Worawa curriculum strongly emphasises foundation studies in literacy and numeracy while providing a breadth and depth of learning experiences across all Learning Areas. The College is very aware of the need to plan and provide rich, varied transitional pathways for girls once they complete Year 10. The focus is to build the self esteem of the students, so that they have the personal confidence, motivation and discipline, the organisational skills, the academic skills and the practical skills to be successful in pursuing VCE, and VET or VCAL in mainstream educational settings. Worawa helps to prepare young women for the social and work contexts that they will face when they leave school.

4.2.1 Holistic Learning in the Context of a Growth Mindset

The commitment of the College to holistic learning in the context of a growth mindset is an enabling factor. All staff members believe all students are able to learn. From the commencement of the College, learning has been holistic and based on Maslow's (1943), 'Hierarchy of Needs':

1. Physiological
2. Safety
3. Love: affection and belongingness
4. Esteem
5. Self-actualisation.

The learning and teaching program has been designed to educate the whole person across all domains of their development, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, cultural and academic. The evidence attests to the achievement of this. Personalised learning in all areas complements the holistic approach. The data attest to the understanding of the need for a growth mindset, by all adults connected to the College. Gary Thomas, a former member of the Board of Directors expresses this and the concept of growth mindset is constantly evident in Kathryn's conversation, discussion and professional learning focus, as Head of Learning and Teaching. It is significant that all teachers operate in this context. It is also significant that all staff members articulate their commitment to valuing what each girl brings to the school as the basis for further learning.

4.3 School Organisation

The organisation of the school is an enabling factor in the implementation of a program of rigorous learning. Kim, Head of Boarding organises all arrangements in the boarding house. These arrangements ensure a healthy lifestyle for all students and a focus on the wellbeing of each girl. As leader of the Residential Program, Kim has implemented many changes during 2013 and 2014. There is evidence that she and her team maintain a structured, yet caring environment in which the personal needs of students are catered for. All staff members maintain that the routine in the boarding houses has improved student learning in both the boarding houses and the academic program. Kim oversees the nutritional requirements of the girls, implementing the 'Worawa Healthy Eating Plan', developed in partnership with the Deakin University, Centre for Health through Action on Social Exclusion

(CHASE), School of Health and Social Development. Trips at the weekend for sporting competitions and other activities are also under Kim's jurisdiction. Kim's daily handover ensures productive communication with the academic staff members about any issues that occur overnight. The Boarding Schools Association of Australia acknowledged Kim's leadership, when, in 2014, she won the 'Premier Leadership Award'.

Kathryn, Deputy Principal and Head of Learning and Teaching organises the academic program and understands the need for specific structures for this purpose. All staff members value the changes Kathryn brought to the organisation of the school day. These include class timetables, meeting timetables and rosters; the class timetables are colour-coded. These timetables and rosters enable all to be cognisant of the responsibilities of staff and students; responsibilities that are adhered to. All in the academic program value Kathryn's leadership, as she articulates her vision and expectations very clearly and is regarded as a 'team player'. Relationships for her are fundamental. Through these structures and those that support the residential program it is evident that staff are connected through a common focus and empowered to act confidently in their implementation of their specific learning programs and other duties.

4.4 Professional Learning

The professional learning program is an enabling factor in the implementation of the rigorous learning program that connects and empowers the staff at Worawa as it maintains focus on student learning and introduces current educational approaches as well as augmenting staff understanding of existing approaches. Kathryn is responsible for the in-school professional learning program. The focus of this program is the development of a growth mindset. The program is rigorous, emanates from student assessment data, both baseline and ongoing, and includes reflective practice.

All teachers work together as part of a teaching Professional Learning Community (PLC) and meet as a Professional Learning team (PLT) every morning. The purpose of this meeting is to be up-dated on student wellbeing, daily events and learning expectations. They also meet for a staff meeting once a week, at 8.00am on Wednesday, where the emphasis is on student learning and teaching improvement.

An annual Learning and Teaching Improvement Plan is developed and this provides a framework/approach for all Learning Centres. Each Learning Centre Professional Learning Team also meets once a week, during a scheduled time, to discuss student data, progress, curriculum and programs. They moderate assessments and support each other to develop strategies to differentiate and personalise the curriculum. Teachers value this approach as it enables a growth mindset.

'Restorative Practice', 'Yarning Up On Trauma' and 'Resilience Training' are programs in which the staff members receive training for their role in this trauma informed school. All academic staff undertook the 'Stronger Smarter On line Program' in 2013.

4.5 Culture Program

The Culture program is a factor enabling rigorous learning. The previous Section describes Aboriginal Studies at Worawa. Aunty Zeta, who teaches modules in the Cultural Program is strong in her belief that Culture and Language is fundamental if Aboriginal people are to be proudly connected to their heritage. Her role as an Elder and her extensive involvement with Aboriginal organisations, through which she has developed materials to connect and empower many Aboriginal people so they are proud of their culture, equips her well to work with the Worawa students. In the program, cultural identity is affirmed and presented in the context of the many Aboriginal cultural groups in Australia. Participation in cultural events is also part of the curriculum and the program articulates many way of achieving this. The girls in their interviews speak about their learning from and enjoyment in participating in these activities and events. Aboriginal history is presented in an informative and empowering manner; the girls comment positively about their learning here. Teachers involved in the program also speak positively about its impact and the possibilities for the future, which include incorporating a political and legal focus into the program.

4.6 Health and Wellbeing Programs

The previous Section contains significant evidence of the parents' appreciation of the Wellbeing Program at Worawa. They cite this as a major reason for sending their daughters and granddaughters to Worawa. The inclusion of health and wellbeing as major foci in the curriculum at Worawa is an enabling factor in the empowerment of students to act confidently in directing their own lives, through rigorous learning in these areas.

Worawa has a well-structured approach to physical health, coordinated by a committee of college personnel and external professionals. Joylene, the school nurse, who is on-site full time is very attentive to the physical needs of the students and is also very aware of operating in a culturally appropriate manner. She articulates the understanding that the girls are at Worawa to attend school and she has implemented structures to enable delivery of health services with the least disruption to the girls' study schedules. The previous Section identifies the full range of health services available to the students. Both Joylene and Christine, the Wellbeing Coordinator are very aware of cultural and family aspects that impact upon the physical and mental health of the girls and the data demonstrate their many sensitive ways of approaching these. The College has sought professional input into providing sound nutrition for the girls. Joylene and all staff members value this. Kim, Head of Boarding implements the nutritional plan, through the relevant staff members.

Christine is the full time Wellbeing Coordinator is available to speak with individuals and groups as required. Christine also coordinates the wellbeing programs available to the students. Her experience is evident as she describes the implementation of the programs, 'Tree of Life' and the 'Sexual Assault Program for Secondary Schools'. Christine makes necessary modifications to ensure these

programs are appropriate for the particular cohort. Learning in Joylene and Christine's areas is rigorous and takes place informally through discussion and formally through the available programs. Both believe that relationship building is fundamental to learning in the wellbeing area. They articulate the ways they know a student is learning. Both Joylene and Christine say they learn from the girls and this attitude was prevalent throughout their interviews. All teachers value Joylene and Christine's work and say that learning cannot happen unless students are physically healthy and wellbeing is in place.

4.7 Health and Physical Education Program

The Health and Physical Education program is an enabling factor as it provides rigorous learning both practical and theoretical in the area of physical development. Students are connected and empowered to act confidently through their learning and enjoyment of their learning. The teachers' abilities to personalise the learning is significant. Education in the Learning Centre 'Health and Physical Education' complements that provided by medical and wellbeing personnel. The data describe a rigorous program of physical activity, nutritional understanding and fitness training conducted from a personalised learning perspective. Meagan and Shauna demonstrate sensitivity to individual learning styles as well as cultural aspects of learning. Their focus is to offer healthy lifestyle choices to their students and they articulate the strategies they use to extend their vision beyond the school campus to the home environment. Involving all students in sporting activities is their ongoing focus and they believe in matching sports to students' strengths and encouraging participation in a particular sport that may suit the individual. Meagan has specific strategies that emanate from an understanding that many sporting situations are confronting, if teachers only cater for those who are extremely proficient. Students who are proficient are well provided for in sporting competitions. Worawa teams participate in a wide variety of local sporting competitions and the relationship with the AFL is significant in developing sporting skills. Meagan also coordinated the 'Deadly Sista Girlz Program', facilitated by the Wirrpanda Foundation. Both students and parents value the 'Health and Physical Education' program.

4.8 Pathways to Womanhood Program

The 'Pathways to Womanhood' program is an enabling factor in the implementation of rigorous learning with a focus on personal and social development. The program connects and empowers participants by developing self-care, self-awareness and a sense of identity as well as self-efficacy, social competence and leadership. Each year, older students are invited to undertake this program.

The program supports students in their final transition year in a variety of ways, through a series of modules, significant because they lead the young women through a pathway of developmental activities, nurturing self-esteem, pride in Aboriginal identity and developing confidence and the ability to 'walk in both worlds', connecting to leadership roles within the school and wider community. The Program culminates in a major event each year. To date these events have been the Anniversary Event to mark the first ever Aboriginal Debutante Ball (2011), The

‘Stylin’ Up with Worawa’ Fashion Parade (2012), the ‘Sapphires’ Production (2013) and ‘Debutante Dreaming’ (2014).

The leadership of Aunty Lois demonstrated through the conception of and consequent inclusion of this rigorous program of personal and social development in the curriculum is significant. Her ability to map a program, identifying all essential components and to allocate responsibility among the staff members ensures the success of the program. The breadth of her experience in the Aboriginal and broader communities, means she understands the benefits of such a program for the students. The leadership of Kim, Head of Boarding and the leadership in their various roles, by all staff members involved is also significant. Their leadership and commitment is revealed in the interviews with staff members involved in the events.

This program connects and empowers students in many ways. The data demonstrate that being part of this program is a hallmark of students’ immersion in their final year at Worawa. It carries many extra responsibilities in the boarding house and this involves personal and leadership responsibilities. Dinners are part of the program, where students socialise and speak publically; the improvement in the ability of girls to speak publically during their time at Worawa is articulated in the data. Rigorous public performances, in the presence of the Elders, are annual events. ‘Debutante Dreaming’ remembers the first Yorta Yorta Debutant Ball in 1947, and is a fusion of traditional Aboriginal ceremonial practice and Western tradition; it was at this function that Andrea was empowered to tell her extraordinary learning journey to the assembled audience. The ‘Sapphires’ production enabled the students to learn about and ‘live’ the historical era and undergo a rigorous rehearsal regime, and ‘Stylin’ Up With Worawa’ saw the students art work translated to fabric and made into garments. A rigorous rehearsal process was also required to mount a fashion parade where the students were models and assisted in all other aspects of the production. This culminated with an award, at the ‘Deadly Awards’ ceremony. A student describes in detail, the rigour involved in rehearsal for the ‘Sapphires’ production and her ultimate pride and enjoyment in the relationships she built during that time and her learning from the experience.

4.9 The Arts

Performing and Visual Arts classes are part of the core curriculum and are an enabling factor in the implementation of a rigorous learning program, as they connect students to their culture and empower them as they gain confidence through achieving in these areas (Davis et al., 2001). Drama and traditional and contemporary dance are part of performing arts; media arts and music are electives. The data demonstrate the work in these learning areas is rigorous and personalised. There is evidence of growth in student learning in visual art classes. All students respect each other’s visual artwork and this is reflected in the attitude of students as they work in the art room. Selected student work is displayed and sold in the public art gallery on site and an exhibition of student work went to Rotterdam, The Netherlands, in June 2014. While giftedness in art is identified and supported, much of the student work has developed to a high standard, during their time at Worawa. Two students describe the rigour necessary to take part in the preparation of artwork to be exhibited in The

Netherlands. They also describe the pride and enjoyment in their learning in visual arts and their aspirations for future learning in this area.

4.10 The Language Program

Worawa Aboriginal College acknowledges the richness and diversity of student languages and the importance of cultural pride and strength that comes from valuing languages in the academic program. A significant number of Aboriginal languages are represented in the cohort of 2014. The Language program is an enabling factor in the implementation of a rigorous learning program because through personalised learning it connects students to their own culture and language as well as mainstream English. It also improves the ability of the students to communicate and enhance their literacy skills and so empowers them as they gain confidence through the acquisition of additional skills. Personalised learning and students groups are developed according to the achievement level and needs of the students. Within the Language Learning Centre, students work together in their first language to enhance English literacy. Selected students have the opportunity to be part of a first language literacy program and develop reading and writing skills in their languages. Worawa College believes first language literacy assists in the development of Standard English literacy. Students who have no previous experience speaking an Aboriginal language say they value hearing languages spoken and learning some words in language.

High expectations are evident in the approach to teaching English at Worawa. Knowledge about each student as a person, as well as relevant assessment data enables scaffolding and differentiation of learning so each girl experiences growth. Thus relationships are believed to be fundamental to learning, a belief expressed by all teachers. There is a wide range of student achievement and material used is culturally, as well as developmentally appropriate. This enables meaningful participation in English classes. Assessment for and of learning is explicit. Students in their interviews identified appreciation of the learning material and attributed their improvement in English to their present teacher. Data includes a set of letters written to Aunty Lois by the girls, as part of English class at the beginning of 2014. These letters outline their reasons for returning to Worawa in 2014 and their aspirations for the future.

4.11 The Mathematics Program

The Mathematics program is an enabling factor in the implementation of a rigorous learning program. Through personalised learning, the program enhances the students' mathematical skills. They are empowered as they gain confidence through achievement and the acquisition of additional skills through the Value Added Program which includes core mathematical skills and preparation for participation in post-compulsory years of schooling mathematics courses. The online program 'Mathletics' empowers students through achievement and encourages through its 'tangible rewards' approach.

High expectations are evident the approach to teaching Mathematics at Worawa. Reluctance to attend mathematics classes is no longer the case. Enthusiasm at the introduction of the 'Mathletics' program by the coordinator new to the school in

2014 prompted this change, as did the re-organisation of lesson structures to strengthen personalised learning. Parents also note student interest especially with the acquisition of certificates by the students for 'Mathletics'. Worawa College won an award for participation in the 'Mathletics' program. The development of differentiated units of work is progressing. Students in their letters to Aunty Lois expressed the wish to improve in Mathematics and in their interviews reported improvement during 2014.

4.12 The Science Program

The Science program is an enabling factor for student learning as it employs a hands on approach, through which students learn effectively. While in recent years, a number of teachers have been responsible for Science education at Worawa, there is evidence of student engagement and learning through specific projects and relevant curriculum. Students describe the hands on approach to learning in Science. In 2014 a number of teachers taught Science. Each developed a section of the curriculum effectively, according to some student feedback and observers. A consistent approach was not evident. Consequently a major consideration in semester two, 2014 was the plan to search widely and employ a suitable person, who would commit to the position. At the conclusion of the data generation period such a person has been employed and is spending time on site in preparation for 2015. The research team has every reason to believe the appointment will result in rigorous, meaningful curriculum for the students.

4.13 Technology Across the Curriculum

The College has a variety of relevant technological devices and technology is taught across the curriculum. It is a significant enabling factor in learning. In the previous Section students describe specific learning through technology in projects and the teachers identify ways in which students learn using a variety of technological tools. The digital portfolio is especially significant for recording and reporting student progress. The Technology Enriched Curriculum Project (TECP), a cross-sectoral project in conjunction with the Department of Employment, Education and Childhood Development and the Catholic Education Office provides evidence of technology as enabling significant learning at Worawa.

4.14 Transitions and Pathways

On completion of their studies at Worawa girls transition to further academic studies, VET/VCAL studies or the world of work. During their final year of studies they are provided with the opportunity to participate in work experience and they undertake classes to help them prepare for future experiences, including interviews, development of a Curriculum Vitae (CV), subject and course selection. Staff members work with the students and their families to prepare an appropriate pathway for each girl. The College conducts Careers and Pathways classes as well as the students' work experience program.

Of the 10 students who exited the College in 2014, eight planned to go on to VCE and other Year 11 & 12 courses in Melbourne and the Northern Territory, whilst two, supported by their families, have opted to return to the College and repeat Year 10 next year. The College has begun discussions with partner organisations and providers, re the possibilities for offering a Worawa-specific and unique work place skills course in 2015, to further extend the skills and possibilities already open to them through current College programs.

From 2015 the College will employ a Careers and Transitions Coordinator to undertake this important work. This takes into account the aspiration of parents and families articulated in the College's annual Community Forum, to assist students in identifying employment pathways. This position will coordinate the careers and pathways classes as well as the students work experience program.

Worawa Aboriginal College offers realistic pathways to continued education or the world of work through the opportunity to study certificate courses. These courses challenge and extend girls whilst providing potential pathways to further studies and eventual employment. They not only provide rigorous learning but connect the students beyond Worawa and empower them to act confidently as they choose future pathways. The previous Section identifies the wide range of courses undertaken between 2008 and 2014 and the links and partnerships with several external agencies through the Outer Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network and Aboriginal community organisations. In addition, Creative arts programs delivered in the curriculum have vocational education components that highlight VET training and future employment opportunities.

4.15 Breadth of Educational Opportunity For The Individual

Connectedness, empowerment and learning are enhanced through the breadth of educational opportunity given to the girls as students at Worawa. This is obvious in the data. As an example data from one particular student demonstrate her explicit change in attitude during her time at Worawa and her appreciation of Restorative Practice in assisting her to manage conflict in a more positive manner. Through this she improved relationships with her peers and made many friends. Her increased knowledge and understanding of her own and others' cultural backgrounds led her to value both her own culture and the languages of other Aboriginal groups. During her time at Worawa she developed significant leadership skills and acknowledged her role in assisting the younger girls to adopt the Values of Relationship, Responsibility, Respect and Rigour. This student took part in the Pathways to Womanhood Program, taking a lead role in the 'Sapphires' production and as a debutante in Debutante Dreaming. She was a member of the choir and developed as a visual artist so much so that one of her paintings was exhibited in The Netherlands. This student states that she had never painted before coming to Worawa and that her initial endeavours were less than good. She reports great improvement in English and some improvement in Mathematics. This student went to visit the schools in Hawai'i. She also demonstrated the ability to speak confidently and to be analytical in her interview. The award won by this student at the conclusion of 2014 provides evidence that Worawa staff members corroborated the material expressed in her interviews and letter to Aunty Lois.

4.16 The Leadership Team

The members of the Leadership Team significantly influence the creation and maintenance of the program of rigorous learning described in the data. Through this they demonstrate their ability to create “an agreed sense of direction through a vision” (MacNeill, Cavanagh & Silcox, 2005, p. 6), commit to the growth of people and community (Crippen, 2005) and appreciate the implications for the trajectory of a learner’s life (Zoller, Normore & Harrison, 2013) in order to enable learners to be transformed into more fully human individuals (Duignan & Bezzina, 2004). Aunty Lois also demonstrates the ability to be an outstanding Aboriginal leader, where leadership:

*is given when you have proven you can deal with responsibility
and you understand that responsibility.*

(Burney, 2007).

Aunty Lois, Executive Director and Principal, Kathryn, Deputy Principal, Head of Learning and Teaching and Kim, Head of Boarding are all committed to the principles that underpin the vision and operation of Worawa Aboriginal College. While their thoughts are philosophically aligned, they operate differently from each other in the field. They meet often to discuss college matters. Observers, privy to any of these discussions note that they each bring a relevant perspective contributing to a positive outcome. Observers note that together they have enhanced the operation of the College, the result of which is an educational facility where the dream of Hyllus Maris to develop young women proud of their Aboriginal identity, who can contribute successfully in two worlds is being realised. While all sectors of the Worawa College community and other significant stakeholders acknowledge this, the focus of the team is always on continual improvement and they work tirelessly in this endeavour. Their difference, rather than being in any way problematic is a significant strength.

5. Multiple Consonant Voices

It is especially significant that in all sections of the data the research team find multiple consonant voices. These voices are discovered in written and visual material. The written material is on the Worawa Aboriginal College website, in prepared publications, either promotional or resulting from research and in student writing. The visual material takes the form of videos on the College website. The voices are also found in the interviews and conversations and discussions held with Elders, members of the Board of Directors, staff members, parents and grandparents and students of the Worawa Aboriginal College Community. There is no dissonance in the views expressed. Given the breadth and depth of data collected and generated this surprised the members of the research team. This may be because the whole community demands that the girls receive a two-way education in a cultural context and is therefore involved in the process, an essential element for successful two-way learning, according to Hooley (2009).

It is clear that all adult members of the Worawa College Community are committed to the nurturing and celebrating of Aboriginal culture in a contemporary context. Through this, they have a strong sense of belonging to this community and so are empowered to be the community that is dynamic and robust and adapting to changing circumstances.

It is also clear that in their time at Worawa, all the students have augmented their existing knowledge of their Aboriginal culture and have valued and enjoyed this nurturing and celebration in a culturally safe environment. During this time, they have also developed a deep empowering understanding of and commitment to the Worawa Values of Relationship, Responsibility, Respect and Rigour. The students have developed a sense of belonging to the Worawa College Community by experiencing a wide range of respectful, responsible relationships, in the context of meaningful learning, in a two-way program that is rigorous, holistic and personalised. Through all of this, they have gained the confidence and ability to direct their own lives and continue their growth as strong, proud Aboriginal young women, who, whatever the future holds, can walk successfully in two worlds. They have also developed leadership qualities that assist others to ponder deeply on their actions in the context of the Worawa Values.

6. Key Enabling Factors

From the Enabling Factors, identified in the previous sections, four Key Enabling Factors emerge. These are:

1. The continual articulation of Vision and significant Values by all members of Worawa Aboriginal College Community
2. Commitment of all members of the Worawa Aboriginal College Community to developing proud young Aboriginal women through rigorous two-way education in a culturally appropriate and safe environment.
3. Strong committed Aboriginal Leadership, with the ability to implement a rigorous two-way, holistic education model, appropriate for the students.
4. The successful implementation of a rigorous two-way model of holistic learning, personalised for each student, giving her the knowledge and skills and confidence to walk in two worlds.

Discussion of Findings

Key Enabling Factor One

The first Key Enabling Factor emerging from the Findings of the project is:

The continual articulation of Vision and significant Values by all members of Worawa Aboriginal College Community.

'Power with' and Power₁

The continual articulation of the Vision of Hyllus Maris, which is also the vision of Worawa Aboriginal College by all members of the Worawa community connects and empowers. Hyllus Maris was very able to walk in both worlds because she was and still is recognised by both worlds. The Aboriginal community recognises Hyllus Maris as a visionary and her legacy is described as “the pragmatic pursuit of an Aboriginal ontology and epistemology” (personal communication, Gary Thomas, former member of Worawa Board of Directors and Aboriginal Academic, 2015). This legacy is “embodied in Worawa” (Thomas, *ibid*). Her poem ‘Spiritual Song of the Aborigine is a recognised anthem of Aboriginal spirituality, totemic belief and connection to the Land and is the Worawa school poem. Hyllus Maris was an accomplished poet, singer and writer. She collaborated to write and produce the four-part SBS multi national award winning television series, Women of the Sun, addressing Aboriginal women’s experiences across 200 years of colonialism. Mainstream Australia also recognises Hyllus Maris as a model of womanhood; she is

listed in the Victorian Honour Roll for Women (2001), Who's Who and in Canberra, a street is named in her honour. Melbourne Girls Secondary College identifies her among the notable women from Victoria. Hyllus Maris' own story and as well as her articulation of a vision for the education of Aboriginal people:

“to produce an Aboriginal person versed in his/her traditions and proud of his/her identity, who has the tools and necessary qualifications to contribute effectively to the Australian community”

inspires all members of the Worawa Aboriginal College Community. Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls (1983) at the opening of Worawa Aboriginal College expanded on this vision for Aboriginal education, when he spoke of the need for Aboriginal students to be sustained and advanced in both ancient and contemporary cultures. He said:

Aboriginal children must be educated in the way of our people. They must learn their history, about their great ancestors, the language and the law. It's time for them to know and understand themselves. They must also be educated in the ways of the society in which they live, in the very best of what it has to offer, so they can truly be part, not only of Australia's past, but also its present and future.

The vision of Hyllus Maris also enables substance to be given to the words of Professor Mick Dodson when he says “the empowerment of Aboriginal people” means that they “can take responsibility for their own situation and then act to change it” (Dodson, 1995, p. 143). It does so by providing the foundation for an emancipatory approach to education at Worawa.

The vision of Hyllus Maris implies a situation of ‘power with’ (Macy, 1983) and Power₁ (Sarra, 2011) in the education model she advocated. ‘Power with’, according to Macy, is devoid of domination or “power over” and so power relations are equal. The gestures of one of the Worawa grandparents, when describing the union of Aboriginal culture and European culture in education, denote equal relations in her mind (<https://vimeo.com/83886067>). Sarra (*ibid*) describes Power₁ in terms of transformation and agency; agency enables interaction, which generates new possibilities and capacities. New possibilities and capacities are part of the development of all members of the Worawa community through their relationship with the College. Everyone including Elders, members of the Board of Directors, staff members, parents, grandparents, students and through them their communities, shares in the possibilities and all develop further capacity inspired by the vision of Hyllus Maris. Sarra (*ibid*) says agency is necessary to eradicate “relations of exploitation and domination” (p. 42).

All members of the Worawa community are connected and empowered through the constant reminder of the vision of Hyllus Maris. Through the vision for the College, their sense of belonging to Worawa has an historical dimension and they are empowered to act in the present, through the words of this very significant figure in the Aboriginal community.

Balance

The vision of Hyllus Maris provides a balanced approach to the education of Aboriginal people. Palmer (1998) places education in an ecological paradigm by decrying the western attachment to a fragmented approach to learning, understanding reality as “an endless series of *either-ors*” (italics in original) (p. 62). He says, “truth is found not by splitting the world into either-ors but by embracing it as *both-and*” (italics in original) (p. 63). Education as envisaged by Hyllus Maris, embraces *both* the best of Aboriginal *and* the best of current Australian education. In doing so she values both and declares by this that they are not mutually exclusive but part of the same entity and that it is possible and desirable for Aboriginal people to walk successfully in two worlds.

Empowerment to walk in two worlds

Hyllus Maris wished that Aboriginal People have the best education to enable them “to contribute effectively to the Australian community”. Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls noted the historical and future as well as the contemporary implications by saying that through education Aboriginal people, “can truly be part, not only of Australia’s past, but also its present and future” (Opening of Worawa Aboriginal College, 1983). The values that constitute ‘The Worawa Way’ are significant in enabling the ability to walk successfully in both worlds as envisaged by these two luminaries in Aboriginal education.

The abundant evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of having few, well-articulated and well-understood values, that are continually referred to in a relevant manner. The values of Relationship, Responsibility, Respect and Rigour that constitute ‘The Worawa Way’ are integral to education at Worawa Aboriginal College. The values emanate from two worlds, as the values of Relationship, Responsibility and Respect are traditional Aboriginal values that powerfully inform community actions. The Worawa Aboriginal College Community has added Rigour. In ‘The Worawa Way’ Relationship is described as ‘Ways of being’, Responsibility as ‘Ways of knowing’, Respect as ‘Ways of valuing’ and Rigour, as ‘Ways of doing’. The four Values described in this manner enable an approach to holistic learning and a curriculum that avoids the temptation to be reductionist in nature, processes and outcomes. Values enabling such curricula form the Four Pillars of Education described as foundational by the International Commission on Education in the Twenty-First Century in its report to UNESCO (Delores et al., 1996). In this model to Know, to Do, to Live Together and to Be are the values described by Nan-Zhao (2006) as enabling an approach to holistic learning.

The data have demonstrated the power of the Values Relationship, Responsibility, Respect and Rigour in motivating action in all sections of the Worawa community. They contribute to establishing and maintaining a sense of belonging because they provide a common language and value system for all people at Worawa.

They empower and sustain the community as living by the Values enables all to act confidently to direct their own lives, in the context of community. These values are not discrete entities. They are interrelated and interdependent.

The traditional Aboriginal concept of power is understood in relation to all of nature, including community. It is therefore ecological in nature as all elements of nature are interrelated and interdependent (Moreton- Robinson, 2003; Fryer-Smith, 2008; Hooley, 2009; McClellan & Tanner, 2011). Macy's understanding of 'power with' emanates from a worldview that does not see physical life as disconnected, separate entities but as entities that are interrelated ontologically. As Macy (1983) puts it:

What had appeared before as separate entities dissolve into flows, and are seen to be patterns in these flows- patterns that sustain each other by means of their relationships and exchanges. Atoms, cells, plants, people, societies... .. All are dynamic patterns, or open systems within systems. They influence each other so deeply that it is hard to decide where one leaves off and the other begins. (Macy, p. 119)

The locus of power changes with Johanna Macy's (*ibid*) description of power emanating from a worldview that understands everything as interconnected. It is this concept of power that is supported by the Worawa Values, power that is mutual and synergistic. Part of this interdependent process described by Macy is to "engage and enhance their own and each other's capacities" (p. 31) and it is evident that the Values, commonly referred to at Worawa as the '4R's', engage the adults and students in enhancing their own and each other's capacities. Respectful responsible relationships are fundamental at Worawa and they connect the people at Worawa in a very meaningful manner. They also enable the power that is seen by Foucault to circulate through an organisation, where "individuals are vehicles of power, not its points of application" (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p. 89).

The Values are particularly significant for the students as according to Erikson's Psychosocial Stages (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), the focus of young people between puberty and 18 is to "create a set of personal values and goals by which to live, represented as a coherent identity" (p. 61). It is essential that these values be created in community, as community is the basis of Aboriginal culture (Moreton-Robinson, 2003; Fryer-Smith, 2008; Hooley, 2009; McClellan & Tanner, 2011). Values underpinning community is also an element of mainstream Australian culture. Palmer (1998) arguing from a western perspective is adamant that the "community is the essential form of reality, the matrix of all being" (p. 97). It is the values of Relationship, Responsibility, Respect and Rigour that sustain the Worawa community in their daily operation as an educational institution. It is also understood by the students, that these Values will continue to sustain them in life beyond Worawa and therefore benefit not only the individual who lives by them, but also the community in which they reside.

Key Enabling Factor Two

The second Key Enabling Factor emerging from the Findings of the project is:

The commitment of all members of the Worawa Aboriginal College Community to developing proud young Aboriginal women through rigorous two-way education in a culturally appropriate and safe environment.

Inspired by the vision of Hyllus Maris, the Worawa Aboriginal College Community is totally committed to rigorous two-way education in a culturally appropriate and safe environment. This is clear in the exemplars and data generated by the Elders, staff parents and grandparents. The students, as they live according to ‘The Worawa Way’, value rigorous two-way education in a culturally appropriate and safe environment.

Rigorous two-way education

Worawa Aboriginal College operates within a two-way cultural model, where Aboriginal culture and mainstream Australian culture, combine in ‘The Worawa Way’ and the Worawa Education Model. This is congruent with the pedagogical design appropriate for Indigenous students (Hooley, 2009), as learning at Worawa is framed according to Aboriginal and mainstream Australian cultural constructs. ‘Two-way inquiry learning’ (Hooley, 2002; Hooley *op cit*) is an epistemological approach based on Dewey’s approach to inquiry and learning which is dynamic in that it is concerned with the continuing understanding of life as experienced by real people and therefore has social and community connections. At Worawa, all sectors of the Aboriginal community are involved in the operation of the College. Reflection is part of their ongoing involvement. Similar to Hooley’s model learning at Worawa is holistic, linked to the Land and the real lives of students and personalised for each. Learning from both cultures Aboriginal and mainstream Australian, combine to form “the basis of new understandings” (Hooley, *op cit*, p. 82). This design ensures cultural inclusivity as both Indigenous and non- indigenous epistemologies are integral to the learning and neither is understood as superior or inferior.

The writing of Tyson Yunkaporta has profoundly influenced the Worawa Education Model, specifically in the articulation of Ways of Knowing, Being, Valuing and Doing in the ‘The Worawa Way’. Yunkaporta (2009) identifies eight ways of learning when accessing knowledge of country, language, people and relationships. These are Story, Map, Silence, Signs, Land, Shape, Backtracking, Home- world. In order to learn, Indigenous people share stories, learn maps, understand non- verbal language, decipher symbols and images, come to know the land and its stories, through circular logic involving balanced rather than oppositional thinking, through deconstructing and re-constructing and through community links. These pedagogical strategies engage Aboriginal learners.

At Worawa rigour is ensured through the involvement of the Aboriginal community in the Aboriginal cultural elements of the curriculum and through the use of the ACARA Australian Curriculum to frame mainstream curriculum. These two foci do not operate discretely, as the cultural elements provide “two-way connections

with the regular curriculum” (Hooley, *op cit* p. 82). The Elders, parents and grandparents through their interest in and suggestions for student learning, exhibit an organic relationship with the College. Through this, knowledge from mainstream curriculum and Aboriginal knowledges combine in a rigorous relevant learning program. According to Hooley (*op cit*) truth rather than being the property of a single culture is then recognised as multi-faceted and develops through robust discussion of different viewpoints within a democratic scenario.

The two-way model acknowledges the contact zone (Sarra, 2011), the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007), inter-subjectivity (Langton, 1993), the Aboriginal cultural matrix (Narogin, 1990) and the third space (Janz & Sumner, 2013). These terms demonstrate the understanding that Aboriginal people function in a position bounded at the extremes by an Aboriginal worldview and a western scientific worldview. Mandawuy Yunipingu (1999) in recalling his “experience of becoming an educated, literate person, in and across two cultures, Yolngu and Balanda”, refers to this skill as “‘double power’ the power to operate in and negotiate between two cultures” (p. 1). He speaks of the fusion of the two cultures, not to oppose each other but to work together. As a younger person he realised that Aboriginal people had to acknowledge Western ideas and accept the positive and reject the negative. Achieving this would enable Aboriginal people to maintain control of their destiny. Models of schooling such as that at Worawa enable the continued pursuit of an Aboriginal ontology and epistemology (Gary Thomas, *op cit*).

Culturally appropriate and safe environment

Worawa is located on culturally and historically significant land of great natural beauty. The website describes the significance of the site:

*The Leaders of Coranderrk Aboriginal Station rest in the cemetery at the end of Barak Lane (near Worawa) and there is a strong spiritual attachment that guides us in our thinking and existence
The cultural landscape of Worawa provides a central focus for Aboriginal knowledge, cultural practice and protocol for both the Worawa community and visitors.*

All members of the Worawa community acclaim the property on which the College is situated, as a most appropriate cultural environment. They value its beauty and connections to the past even though some connections evoke sad and painful memories. Despite these, they understand Coranderrk to be a place where the students can learn and be connected to all that is fundamental to their Aboriginal culture. There is significant evidence of this in the data

Empowerment in an Aboriginal context is possible only in a culturally safe environment (Bin-Sallik, 2003; Williams, 1999). Williams (*ibid* p. 15) defines cultural safety as:

An environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about

shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together.

Worawa students demonstrate shared respect, overtime they develop shared meaning and shared knowledge. They learn from and enjoy the experience of learning together. Worawa values the personal identity of each girl as they are allowed to be who they are, rather than what somebody else wants them to be.

A culturally safe site is also described as enabling by the National Curriculum Framework, India, (2005):

“An enabling learning environment is one where children feel secure, where there is an absence of fear, and which is governed by relationships of equality and equity”.

The data demonstrate that cultural safety is a hallmark of Worawa. At the College there is respect for culture, knowledge, experience, and obligations, so people, treated with dignity and without fear, are able to operate in a culturally appropriate manner. These according to Bin-Sallik (*op cit*) are generic principles for the establishment of cultural safety. She maintains also that “the people most able or equipped to provide a culturally safe atmosphere are people from the same culture” (p. 3). She argues that this “goes back to the basic premise that people need to do it for themselves rather than someone doing it for them, becoming active rather than passive citizens” (p. 7). The active commitment of Worawa Aboriginal College to cultural safety reflects these principles and supports these arguments.

Culturally appropriate programs and approaches are also evident at Worawa and these, according to Bin-Sallik (*op cit*) and Louth (2012) are fundamental to enhancement of personal empowerment, as they are evident in an environment that is culturally safe.

Parent and Grandparent Involvement

All learners require motivation to learn (Meece, Anderman & Anderman, 2006; Blackburn, 2012) and this is no less true of Indigenous learners. There needs to be a demand in an Indigenous community for education (Pearson 2004) and this demand must come from the whole community not only those who are school age (Hooley *op cit*). The parents and grandparents in the Worawa community are committed and able to articulate their aspirations for the education of their daughters and granddaughters and the College demonstrates willingness to hear them. Aunty Lois and all staff members understand this to be fundamental to all aspects of college life. This reflects Hooleys (*op cit*) notion that whole school decision-making, by the inclusion of students, teachers, families and community members in the process, ensures all actions in the school reflect the democratic nature of society. This approach renders education relevant in the moment and so education becomes a process of living and not a preparation for future living (Dewey, 1897). Engagement of parents is also understood to be particularly necessary in challenging learning environments if students are to achieve success in their learning. Through the engagement of parents and families there is improvement in attendance, behaviour,

the quality of school programs and academic performance (Leithwood and Steinbach, 2003).

Whilst research widely acknowledges the fundamental importance of parents in education (Schools Council, National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1993; Cumming, 1996; MindMatters, 2000; the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Victoria, 2008; Finn 2009; Hare, 2010;), involvement of parents as partners in education has been varied and successful to a limited degree (Finn, 2009; Spry & Graham, 2009). Spry and Graham (*ibid*) identify three levels of parent-school partnerships in Victorian education: 'Silent', 'Managed' and 'Activist'. The activist relationship is reciprocal, where parents are engaged and concerned with the education outcomes for all children in the school. They are also concerned with the learning environment and seek continual improvement. In this relationship they are part of decision making and supportive of school personnel.

The passion with which the parents and grandparents articulate their aspirations for their daughters and granddaughters and the effect of their education at Worawa, is reflected in many sections of the data. Whilst they speak predominantly about their own, it is evident they are interested in the education of all students. They discuss the needs of their families and communities very openly with Worawa staff members and make suggestions for further learning programs at the College. Their wishes are always considered by Worawa personnel and as far as possible incorporated into the curriculum. They indicate strongly their support for the College and college personnel. Consequently this reciprocal parent- school relationship at Worawa can be described as 'activist' according to the definition of this by Spry & Graham (*ibid*). Their thoughts are significant not only in answering the research questions, but they also provide a previously unheard dimension of 'Parent Voice'.

The data in this project demonstrate the significant involvement of parents and grandparents, who are able to convincingly and passionately articulate their support for the education program at Worawa and the learning that it engenders, the achievements and needs of their daughters and granddaughters, their appreciation of the staff members and their enjoyment of meeting with people from other communities at Worawa events. All of this enables the conclusion in this case that, parents whose voices are heard:

- Understand more fully their importance in the education of their child
- Have increasing confidence in articulating the achievements of their children
- Are more willing to contribute suggestions for future direction in learning
- Discuss learning at home
- Have the confidence to honestly address the needs of their children
- Openly support the efforts of the school in providing meaningful learning for their children.

Further research in other settings is required to further substantiate this conclusion.

Key Enabling Factor Three

The third Key Enabling Factor emerging from the Findings of the project is:

Strong committed Aboriginal Leadership, with the ability to implement a rigorous two-way, holistic education model, appropriate for the students.

Executive Director, Principal

Aboriginal leadership is based on traditional values, community relatedness, knowledge, laws, and extended family relations. Cultural knowledge and reputation, personal qualities, strong relationships with family and the ability to look after others, the land and its resources as well as an understanding of related systems of knowledge and law are the requirements of a leader. A clear understanding of responsibility is paramount:

Leadership in an Aboriginal cultural context is not given or measured by how much media you get or if you earn big money. True Aboriginal leadership does not come from high-level appointments or board membership. It doesn't come from and cannot be given by white constructs. Leadership is earned; it is given when you have proven you can deal with responsibility and you understand that responsibility.

The ability to motivate people is also important:

Leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. Leadership is about providing guidance and direction. It doesn't always have to be done from the front; and it's not an easy thing to achieve. A leader is someone who has the style, personal qualities, values, skills, experience and knowledge to 'mould consensus' and mobilise other people to get things done together.

(<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/governance/toolkit/4-1-indigenous-leadership>)

The Board of Directors, the majority of whom are Aboriginal, appoint the Principal of Worawa Aboriginal College. Aunty Lois Peeler AM, a Yorta Yorta woman, combines the roles of the resident Elder, Executive Director and Principal of the College. She is firm in her resolve to continue the dream of Hyllus Maris by leading a school, the aim of which is to develop young women proud of their Aboriginal identity, who can contribute successfully in two worlds. Her understanding of this responsibility is clear to all sectors of the Worawa Aboriginal College Community and so she creates “an agreed sense of direction through a vision” (MacNeill, Cavanagh & Silcox, 2005, p. 6) The data demonstrate Aunty Lois' ability to communicate this vision to parents, grandparents, staff and students; the Elders and Members of the Board of Directors acknowledge this and have confidence in her ability to inspire all through her continual communication of the vision. Aunty Lois' extensive involvement in Aboriginal cultural, social and political life and her success in areas in mainstream Australia, render her well able to implement a rigorous two-way education model.

Through the implementation of the Worawa Model Aunty Lois demonstrates a commitment to the growth of people and community, a trait of Servant Leadership (Crippen, 2005). As discussed previously she enables parent voice to be strong and heeded at Worawa. A sense of community is enhanced through this and it is significant in that it ensures the development of structures that “enable Indigenous families, children ... to participate as respected equals in the learning process” (Hooley, 2009, p. 127). The growth of each student is important to Aunty Lois. She is personally involved in their growth; the students acknowledge this in different ways in their interviews, ranging from her significance as an Elder to her conversations that alter student behaviour.

In providing learning opportunities and experiences that have personal meaning Aunty Lois appreciates the implications for the trajectory of a learner’s life (Zoller, Normore & Harrison, 2013). These learning opportunities and experiences are part of an holistic learning model that reflects Maslow’s (1943) ‘Hierarchy of Needs’. She understands the importance of both the wellbeing and academic programs and ensures the College bases these on current practice and research, from an Aboriginal perspective as well as that of mainstream Australian education. Aunty Lois conceived the ‘Pathways to Womanhood’ and ‘Partnerships’ programs. In these programs the girls enhance their personal and social development and build relationships with local, regional and international communities. In order to develop the residential, wellbeing and academic programs rigorously, Aunty Lois has appointed Kim as Head of Boarding and Kathryn as Deputy Principal, Head of Learning and Teaching. Both of these appointees are skilled practitioners, who have worked, very successfully in Aboriginal communities. Both have significant ability to organise their sections of the College extremely efficiently and effectively for student learning. Their organisation and their ability to build team, ensure the smooth productive operation of the College.

Aunty Lois has also walked extensively in the mainstream Australian world. Assisted by previous experience in Government positions and a career in the performing arts and fashion, Aunty Lois demonstrates the ability to work within the parameters of Australian and Victorian Government policy. This modeling is an essential aspect of rigorous two-way learning. It is evident that overall, Aunty Lois:

is someone who has the style, personal qualities, values, skills, experience and knowledge to ‘mould consensus’ and mobilise other people to get things done together.

(<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/governance/toolkit/4-1-indigenous-leadership>)

Succession planning is to the forefront in Aunty Lois’ thinking, in her role as Executive Director. The desirability of succession planning is an integral part of Aboriginal leadership, evident in communities over many years. Lack of succession planning can mean the stagnation of progress. Sterritt, (2012) says, speaking in a Canadian First Nations Peoples context, that when charismatic leaders who have been amazingly successful, retire or relinquish their leadership, there is a danger that the community falls apart.

In 2014 it is evident that the person in the role of Executive Director and Principal has the cultural knowledge and reputation, personal qualities, strong

relationships with family and the ability to look after others, the land and its resources as well as being cognisant of related systems of knowledge and law, all of which are pre-requisites for Aboriginal Leadership. The person in this role also has a clear understanding of her responsibilities in implementing a rigorous two-way education model, delivering “the best elements of both traditional Aboriginal and current Australian education” (Hyllus Maris, 1983), in an appropriate manner for the students.

Capacity

It is clear that the Worawa Aboriginal College Community has the capacity to establish and sustain a school committed to developing proud young Aboriginal women through rigorous two-way education in a culturally appropriate and safe environment. Hounslow (2002) says community capacity involves developing, implementing and sustaining actions that enable the specific community to control the physical, social, economic and cultural elements of its environment. Community capacity, according to these criteria is evident at Worawa. Worawa Aboriginal College is an Aboriginal initiative, Aboriginal owned and operated and developed from the experiences of Aboriginal people themselves.

The term ‘capacity building’ was introduced into Australian Government policy concerning Indigenous Australians in 1996, in the context of the reduction of Indigenous dependency on welfare and the encouragement of local participation in partnerships (Tsey, McCalman, Bainbridge & Brown, 2012). To use the term ‘capacity building’ in relation to any community implies capacity is non-existent. This is deficit terminology. Current government documents prefer the term ‘capacity-strengthening’, as it acknowledges existing capacity (Tsey et al, *ibid*). The terminology while acknowledging capacity retains its deficit connotation. Ahmet (2001) reminded Australia that Aboriginal people have always had capacity and that this should be restored to them:

I talk about restoring, rather than building capacity in our people... we [have] had 40 to 60,000 years of survival and capacity! The problem is our capacity has been eroded and diminished. ... I caution about the concept of “capacity building”,the new buzzword of Aboriginal policy and social policy generally... the concept of “capacity building” [is] the idea that Aboriginal people are innately deficient, or incapable, or ...lacking ... there is a danger of fostering a hidden bureaucratic racism and prejudice against our people... our people do have skills, knowledge and experience! And our people are not imbeciles. We are fully- fledged human beings who are quite capable of looking after our own children and fighting for their future. So when we talk about capacity building – keep this in mind.

Hunt & Smith (2007) acknowledges that Capacities are culture specific. This often will be problematic for productive partnerships, particularly as Hunt & Smith (*ibid*) found that “at least half the so-called ‘Indigenous governance problem’ actually lies in government’s own capacity” (p.29). They also found that where the Indigenous people drove the agenda and made decisions about their future direction, existing capacity was called upon and “latent capacity appeared to be mobilised. Local

leadership re-emerged and people demonstrated capacities not previously evident.” (p. 29-30). This corroborates Ahmet’s (*op cit*) call to, “restore capacity in our people is to let us be responsible for our own future”. The ability to accomplish this is evident at Worawa Aboriginal College.

Whilst this project is a single case study, it nevertheless contributes to the voices advocating the desirability of Aboriginal people governing their own schools in a culturally appropriate manner. This case study demonstrates the capacity of the Worawa Aboriginal College Board of Directors and in particular, the Resident Elder, Executive Director, Principal to conduct rigorous two-way education in a culturally appropriate and safe environment. Here there are legitimacy, leadership, power, resources and accountability that, according to Dodson (2002) are the hallmarks of good governance.

Key Enabling Factor Four

The fourth Key Enabling Factor emerging from the Findings of the project is:

The successful implementation of a rigorous two-way model of holistic learning, personalised for each student, giving her the knowledge and skills and confidence to walk in two worlds.

Rigorous Personalised Learning

Rigour in education is applied to pedagogical approaches that encourage students to think critically, creatively, and more flexibly (Allen, 2012), expect students to learn at high levels (Blackburn, 2008) or a curriculum that is focused, coherent and appropriately challenging (Schmidt, 2010). The curriculum at Worawa, organised through the Learning Centres and Wellbeing Program is coherent and appropriately challenging, as it is based on current well-researched approaches including the Australian Curriculum (ACARA). Pam Russell, a recognised expert in education was co-opted for the development of the Worawa Education Model and curriculum for each of the five Learning Centres. The resultant collaboration is a significant example of ‘Walking Together’ bringing together mainstream Australian education and Aboriginal knowledge systems, through Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working in partnership to provide rigorous two-way personalised learning. Personalised learning rather than focusing on different content for each student focuses on personalising learning according to the level of skill demonstrated by each student.

Allen (*ibid*), reporting a conversation with Robyn Jackson, articulates four steps in rigorous learning. Learners need to:

1. Know how to create their own meaning from their learning
2. Organise information so they create mental models,
3. Integrate individual skills into whole sets of processes, and then
4. Apply what they have learned to new or novel situations.

Through this process they are able to think critically, creatively and more flexibly.

Induction into the Worawa Education Model for new staff members includes the pedagogical understanding that staff need to clarify for students WHAT they are learning, WHY they are learning, HOW they learn, and to then ask the question, WHAT NOW in relation to significance and future learning. This reflects Jackson's four steps in rigorous learning, enables independent learning and assists in the learner avoiding "learned helplessness" (Allen *op cit* p. 4). High expectations are evident through the gathering of assessment data and personalising and scaffolding learning for each student. Learning and assessment therefore are not separate entities but complex intertwined processes. There is a clear understanding at Worawa that assessment only exists to enable learning (Baker, 2003). There is also the prevalent belief that all students are able to learn.

Formative assessment or assessment for learning (Earl, 2003) understood by Hargreaves (2006) to be an essential component of personalised learning is identified as fundamental by each staff member and understood to be integral to this process as each teacher collects evidence of individual student understanding and leads them to learn further (Allen *op cit*; Earl, 2003; Black & Wiliam, 1998). Assessment derived from the Latin *assidere*, meaning 'to sit with' (Earl, *op cit*), is evident at Worawa as students and staff discuss their learning, each having a growth mindset. Masters (2013) and Hattie (2013a) following Dweck (2006), highlight the necessity of the teacher having a 'growth mindset'. Dweck (*ibid*) argues that it is a person's mindset that creates the mental model from which they operate. All staff members work with the conviction that learning is ongoing and that all students are capable of further learning, a significant factor in assessment that has the learner as its focus (Chappuis, 2014; Earl, *op cit*; Black & Wiliam, *op cit*). This means that at any point in time the learning narrative of a student can be described in terms of student progress over a period of time. The Worawa digital portfolio contributes significantly to this.

Robyn Jackson in her interview, recorded in Allen (*op cit*) describes the concept of productive and destructive struggles. As noted previously the discussions with academic and the wellbeing staff provided a clear coherent understanding that they develop learning experiences enabling productive struggles for their students, struggles that lead to understanding, by making learning goals feel attainable and the effort seem worthwhile. Their testimony and that of the students demonstrate that in many and varied scenarios, these struggles yield results and lead students to feelings of empowerment and efficacy, so creating a sense of hope. None of the students interviewed described a destructive struggle in their learning. Any frustration in learning was understood by the ultimate outcome, to be productive. These positive struggles reflect resilience building, through the consistent application of learning conditions, which challenge students but also support them in their struggle. The ability to achieve in this way has been described in the resilience literature as "the ability to bounce back, recover from, or adjust to misfortune or change" (Burns, 1996, p. 94), and also in terms of bungy jumping (Fuller, 1998).

Engagement in productive struggles is achieved through personalised culturally relevant learning, as rigour applies to the 'how' of teaching rather than the 'what'. Hargreaves (2006) says that to enable personalised learning students must

“co-construct with others all aspects of education” (p. 10). The girls in their interviews spoke openly of working with staff members in all facets of their learning. Co-construction involves discussions between students and staff at Worawa, some of which flow easily and others that sometimes require delicate negotiation.

Learning requires the recognition that in every classroom there are individual learners who require the “setting of personal stretch targets” (Chappius, *op cit* p. 3). All girls at Worawa set personal learning goals; they all spoke in their interviews about their satisfaction and sometimes surprise at their achievements. The ability to use the metacognitive skill of self assessment described by Brookhart (2010) as the “essence of learning – the continuous process of assessing one’s own mastery of content and skills, and discerning and pursuing next steps to move forward toward a goal” (p. 1), is evident in the students discussion of their learning.

Relevance of Indigenous Knowledges

As mentioned previously, Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls (1983) spoke of the need for Aboriginal students to be sustained and advanced in both ancient and contemporary cultures. He said:

Aboriginal children must be educated in the way of our people. They must learn their history, about their great ancestors, the language and the law. It’s time for them to know and understand themselves. They must also be educated in the ways of the society in which they live, in the very best of what it has to offer, so they can truly be part, not only of Australia’s past, but also its present and future.

These aspirations were translated into a model of schooling in 1983 by Hyllus Maris, Aboriginal visionary and the founder of Worawa Aboriginal College, when she, at the opening of Worawa Aboriginal College in 1983:

The Worawa curriculum should be based on the best elements of both traditional Aboriginal and current Australian education, aiming to produce an Aboriginal person versed in his/her traditions and proud of his/her identity, who has the tools and necessary qualifications to contribute effectively to the Australian community.

Aboriginal knowledges are an integral component of rigorous two-way learning at Worawa Aboriginal College. Not only in the cultural curriculum is it axiomatic that Aboriginal knowledges are paramount but this is also true in the elements that emanate from the mainstream Australian curriculum. At Worawa, Aboriginal epistemology is imbedded in all learning, as students learn from the land, story, art, song, dance and from the Elders; all staff members Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal understand this to be important. This enables those at Worawa and connected to Worawa, to make use of aspects of their practice in the light of other practices “in the interest of evolving new and more appropriate practice in changing times” Nakata & Langton (2005, p. 3). Nakata and Langton stress dialogue and conversation is essential in attaining this as “the two traditions move forward together in a somewhat

problematic tension” (p. 4). At Worawa, the two traditions were accepted by the Founder Hyllus Maris, and are currently accepted by all members of the Worawa community. Here the two traditions move forward with little tension, because of the acceptance of each by the other. Any tensions that arise are lessened through mutual respect. The purpose of Worawa is to develop proud young Aboriginal women who can walk in two worlds. To do this they must understand both of these worlds. As Sarra (2011) notes, only Aboriginal people can walk in the Aboriginal world and the mainstream Australian world. In this context they walk a unique pathway. Hyllus Maris’ pursuit of an Aboriginal ontology will be furthered, when in their future lives, these young women articulate their relationship with both worlds.

The curriculum at Worawa with its emphasis on Aboriginal knowledges empowers the students, as they enhance their pride in their culture by nurturing and celebrating this in all aspects of learning. New information is always being developed and absorbed into cultural knowledge so Aboriginal knowledge is not static (Andrews *ibid*). The maintenance of the principles of Aboriginal knowledge, holism in education and Aboriginal Ways of Knowing and relating these to selected Disciplines utilising Aboriginal and mainstream Australia’s modes of inquiry and expressions of understanding will produce new knowledge and new avenues for how knowledge is acquired. Worawa is in a unique position to be at the forefront of the development of new knowledge as it continues Hyllus Maris’ “pragmatic pursuit of Aboriginal ontology and epistemology” (Gary Thomas, *op cit*)

The Language Program

The ability to walk in two worlds is highlighted by Mandawuy Yunipingu (*op cit*) when he refers to being an educated, literate person across two cultures as “‘double power’... the power to operate in and negotiate between two cultures” (p. 1). He is adamant that literacy in first language is as important as literacy in English. This enables an Aboriginal person to fuse two cultures together.

Aboriginal Languages are valued at Worawa Aboriginal College. Students who speak an Aboriginal language are encouraged to use it. A pre-dominantly English speaking audience at a Worawa function will hear Aboriginal presenters, parents, staff and students address them at the opening of their speech in their own languages and the students singing a song, ‘Burra Ferra’ in the language of the Yorta Yorta people. Worawa maintains that literacy in first language supports the acquisition of English. This conviction is supported in the literature.

The understanding that emphasis on Aboriginal languages rather than detracting from the acquisition of Standard English assists this is supported by Purdie (2009), who notes that, “well-designed bilingual programs are academically effective and do not hold back students’ acquisition of English” (p. 3). Brian Devlin from Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory also supports this view and identifies flaws in the Northern Territory Government’s decision to ban the use of Aboriginal languages in schools in morning classes. Devlin’s (2011) and Purdie’s (*op cit*) opinions are also supported by the research described in the ‘Menzies Report’ (Silburn, Nutton, McKenzie & Landrigan, 2011). The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Study Design, *Indigenous Languages of Victoria: Revival and*

Reclamation (VCCA, 2103) initiated by a request for such a study from Worawa Aboriginal College supports the revival and reclamation of Aboriginal languages. Initiatives of the founder of Worawa Hyllus Maris and her family acknowledge the richness and diversity of student languages and the importance of cultural pride and strength that comes from valuing languages in the academic program.

The benefits of bilingualism are articulated by Grimes (2009) who claims that extensive research both within and without Australia demonstrates overwhelmingly that bilingualism enables the comprehension of multiple perspectives, which are beyond the comprehension of monolingual people. People who speak more than one language have more options when participating in all levels of social and economic activities. They are more employable and will advance more quickly. Overall they “tend to ‘succeed’ in both worlds” (p. 4). Grimes using the research conducted by the World Bank (2006) lists the outcomes when the learner’s first language is used initially followed by instruction in the national language. These include better learning, better acquisition of literacy skills and higher academic achievement, greater retention in school, increased social mobility; they also include the ability for teachers to use more effective teaching methods.

Building on the work of Grimes (*op cit*), Graham and Gale (2011), both distinguished educators in bilingual programs in Australia argue that such a model contributes to the empowerment of children and enables them to be proud of their own culture and language. The Language Program at Worawa enables maintenance of existing Aboriginal languages and a bilingual education for students whose first language is Aboriginal, through which pride in their culture, their ability to learn English and their future employment prospects are significantly enhanced. The language program is therefore a significant contributor to rigorous two-way learning.

Holistic Education

Holistic education has always been a hallmark of Indigenous culture as the Indigenous person sees the earth and the universe as infused with meaning (Mahmoudi et al., 2012) and integral to the meaning of their lives as an interconnected whole. In accordance with this understanding, Aboriginal education has always occurred as an integrated whole, where people develop in the context of the universe. From a global perspective, holistic education, rather than being a method or technique is a paradigm, in that its basic assumptions and principles can be applied in a wide range of pedagogical practices (Miller, 1992). Worawa curriculum embodies the goals of holistic education

Full Human Development

Full human development is a goal of holistic education (De Souza, 2003; Forbes, 2003; Miller, J. 2007; Neves, 2009; Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi & Liaghatdar, 2012). ‘Wholeness’, ‘interconnectedness’ and ‘dynamic’ are words used to describe holistic education (Neves, 2009). Hare (2010) writing from the perspective of the International Baccalaureate, refers to intellectual, emotional, social, physical, creative or intuitive, aesthetic and spiritual potentials, all to be developed in an

holistic model. This obviates any reductionist approach, as all aspects of human development are the focus of learning.

The focus on physical health and wellbeing at Worawa ensures students are able to learn. This focus recognises the fact that many Aboriginal people have poor health, particularly when compared to the overall Australian statistics (Australian Indigenous Health *Infonet*, 2012) and they are often subject to domestic and family violence (Arabena, 2012) and poor physical health which inhibits learning and educational achievement (Harrison, 2011). Poor physical health and lack of physical activity is also identified as a contributing factor to low self-esteem in middle school students (Tremblay, Imlay & Willms, 2000). The data from the project demonstrate in detail the structured approach to the Health, Wellbeing and Health and Physical Activity programs and their effectiveness in improving the health and wellbeing of students and in increasing their engagement in physical activity.

The enhancing of resiliency in students is a significant focus at Worawa. Resiliency was primarily concerned with the social and emotional wellbeing of children across the world born into high risk conditions (Burns, 1996). Currently it is recognised that all people need to develop resilience (Henderson, 2013; Truebridge & Bernard, 2013). Worawa acknowledges the backgrounds of those of their students, whose families have experienced one or more of the recognised ‘major stress events’ common to generations of disadvantaged Indigenous communities. They recognise Van der Kolk’s, (2007) demonstrated links with persistent physical health problems, intergenerational transference of negative attitudes, troubled behaviour and historical trauma across family and communal systems. He also argues that childhood trauma violates a child’s sense of safety and trust and reduces their sense of worth, increases their levels of emotional distress, shame and grief and increases the proportion of destructive behaviours evident in their daily lives. Recognition of Van der Kolk’s work at Worawa informs the implementation of a broad, relevant Wellbeing program. The data attests to its breadth and depth.

The emphasis on the development of respectful, responsible relationships at Worawa, reflects the ‘caring relationships’ identified as one of the three broad categories that elicit and foster resiliency in children (Bernard, 1991; 1997; Resnick, Harris & Blum, 1993; Henderson, 2013). The development of these relationships, recorded in the data, provides evidence of a significant protective factor. Protective factors are “those factors that buffer against the stresses of everyday life that might otherwise result in adverse physical, social or psychological outcomes for youth” (Resnick, Harris & Blum, 1993 p. 3). These relationships also create connectedness at Worawa. Connectedness is defined as “[a] person’s sense of belonging with others. A sense of connectedness can be with family, school or community” (Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 2000, p. 123). The data describe the girls’ understanding of the importance of friends in the context of respectful responsible relationships with all people at the College. Worawa is described as “a home away from home”. In research with Aboriginal people, with the focus on Aboriginal girls, ‘Aboriginal Girls Circle: enhancing connectedness and promoting resilience for Aboriginal girls’ (Dobia et al., 2014) found that school connectedness is strongly related to “taking part in cultural events, learning cultural stories and protocols, being involved with community and Elders and taking pride in one’s culture” (*ibid* p. 4). This is also true of Worawa students, evident from the data generated in this project.

Connectedness is a basic need if we are to create socially competent people. A socially competent person is resilient because of the ability to problem solve. They are also resilient because they have a sense of identity, self efficacy and task mastery and can demonstrate adaptive distancing from negative messages and conditions; through this they exhibit a sense of purpose and belief in a bright future (Bernard, 1991). The students in their interviews demonstrate the enhancement of their sense of identity and their pride in this, particularly when discussing their cultural immersion at Worawa. Task mastery and problem-solving are evident in their description of their productive struggles, as they participate in all areas of their holistic learning environment. Their aspirations both spoken and written reveal their confidence in a bright future as they continue life beyond Worawa. This supports Bernard's (1997) belief that relationships, beliefs and opportunities for participation empower (Bernard, 1997).

For Bernard, the process of connectedness, that is, linking children to adults, to interests and ultimately to life in order to build a sense of belonging, is essential to produce a socially competent person. The data from this project demonstrates that at Worawa, students are linked to adults, through the building and enhancing of respectful responsible relationships. They are supported in this by all staff members and in a particular, focused manner by the wellbeing staff. Students at Worawa are connected to interests through involvement in sports and the arts and to life through the Cultural and Language programs, and the Pathways to Womanhood and Partnerships programs, which take the girls beyond the classroom to develop or enhance personal and social competence to a significant level.

Personal Progression

Personal progression is fundamental in an holistic model (Hare, 2010) and so student learning is central. Learning requires opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution, another broad category fostering resilience (Bernard, 1991; 1997; Resnick, Harris & Blum, 1993; Henderson, 2013). According to the National Curriculum Framework, India (2005), holistic education is emancipatory as it enables democratic participation and so is "a means of empowering the weak and the marginalised" (p. 84). Contemporary approaches that advocate student participation as an essential component of learning concur with Freire's (1973) articulation that educators are agents of change and participation involves being with the educatees so they are also agents of change. Worawa Aboriginal College seeks to empower their students to be agents of change by enabling the girls educated to return to their communities and take employment there. Aunty Lois refers to education at Worawa as providing the "ripple effect". She explains that as the girls return to their communities, these communities will be empowered to implement relevant change, the ultimate goal of which is empowerment of Aboriginal people.

Shor (1992) notes that children commence life as motivated learners, participating in their own learning and having great curiosity. Palmer (1998) laments student motivation being terminated by attendance at school. Experiences in previous school settings led many of the Worawa students interviewed to leave school or be school refusers. The girls speak simply but eloquently about this and the personal

progress they have made at Worawa in all areas of learning. This progression is corroborated by staff members and in certain cases by the student's public performance. Personal progression is celebrated at Worawa, no matter the degree. This too is evident in the data. Personal progression to levels of excellence at an international level is evident in visual art. Personal progression to role modeling for other girls is evident in all those interviewed. This demonstrates leadership skills, a trait of giftedness in Aboriginal communities, according to Chandler (2011). Personal progression is documented in the data. Learning described by the girls in their interviews and by their teachers indicate a "reflexive, discursive learning environment" (Hooley, 2009, p. 2) at Worawa in that there is a clear understanding of the purpose of their learning, which is relevant to the student's personal lives in the context of their communities. Problem-solving both on a personal and societal level is evident in order that students are able to understand their world more deeply. Hooley (*ibid*) maintains that this renders education congruent with and epistemologically relevant for life in a democratic society.

Mastery of a broad range of skills is evident in student learning at Worawa. Mastery of skills as an object of a learning goal rather than the narrow achievement of a performance goal leads to student persistence (Azzam, 2014). The latter is linked to grades often at the expense of learning in the complex manner that is required for mastery. It is mastery of skills that lead to personal progress as these may be transferred to other learning situations. The persistence of students in 'productive struggles' (Allen, 2012) in all areas of learning provides evidence of their efforts in the mastery of skills. Assessment is also integral to personal progression and to assist in the mastery of skills, assessment must be a "recursive process" (Brookhart, 2010, p. 1). This highlights the feedback given to students, which is the most powerful way to improve student learning (Black & Wiliam, 2001; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Brookhart *op cit*). Brookhart alerts teachers to be aware of the affect their manner of giving feedback may have on students and also to be aware of the characteristics of their students that may affect the reception of feedback. All teachers at Worawa spoke of the importance of the manner of giving feedback to students and demonstrated their awareness of the appropriate protocols in Aboriginal culture. They are also aware that for some students the protocols are paramount and for others, they are not. Feedback is given in many ways. The effectiveness of feedback is once again demonstrated in student perseverance in 'productive struggles', with results ranging from creditable to outstanding.

Surrounding Context and Environment

Surrounding context and environment are included in the vision for holistic education (Miller, J., 2004).

The property of Coranderrk, on which Worawa is situated is naturally beautiful and historically relevant. As the data describes learning in this place is culturally significant. Through the Land, the girls come into relationship with the people who walked there many years ago and they learn to care for the land. As well as being culturally significant, the site reflects the Queensland Government Department of Education and the Arts (2009) design requirement for school grounds, which states two key objectives that reflect a holistic understanding of learning. The

first is “[t]o provide a conducive environment which supports intellectual, physical, artistic and social development of students, thus improving the learning outcomes for all key learning areas” (p. 2) and the second is [t]o provide a landscape setting which creates a ‘Sense of Place’, enhances the natural environment and instills a lifelong regard for nature” (p. 2). Worawa also complies with the four guiding principles, which are “Inclusiveness, Context and Character, Natural Environment and Flexibility and Change” (p. 3). The principle of Inclusiveness recognises that the school grounds are for all and therefore the design should reflect the cultures of all members of the school community so all feel comfortable there. There should also be access for all, “regardless of any disability” (p. 4) with the inclusion of seating and meeting spaces. The entire space must be safe and secure. Communication and participation for large and small groups is part of the plan, as is providing, “suitable spaces for self expression and observation” (p. 7). High quality landscape settings are also part of the design. These are to aid active play, cognitive and psychosocial development and the development of motor skills. Spaces for formal sport activities and performances are included, as well as those for controlled risk taking and quiet play and contemplation. Students are encouraged to take part in the design of the grounds and express the school’s image in the grounds. Biodiversity is encouraged in the choice of plants and the retention of natural ecosystems is encouraged. The plants should provide shade and reduce the amount of sealed area. This plan supports the development of an enabling holistic learning environment by including the outdoors in the learning environment. This has always been the learning environment of Aboriginal people, as they understand the importance of the relationship with the land. The natural environment continues to be a powerfully significant learning environment at Worawa.

The National Curriculum Framework, India (*op cit*) also understands the physical environment to be a place that promotes respectful, productive relationships because “[l]earning takes place within a web of social relationships as teachers and pupils interact both formally and informally” (p. 78). This is the essence of a learning community and the operation of a learning community in the grounds at Worawa is evident to observers, as they see groups of girls either playing a game together or simply conversing. They also notice girls conversing with various staff members. This mostly informal interaction is significant in the development and enhancement of respectful responsible relationships.

Dialogue with Self and Teacher

Holistic education empowers students to “think differently, to think creatively and reflect on their own values” (Hare, 2010, p. 4). Groome (1998) contends that dialogue begins with one’s self, and “At bedrock it is a conversation with our own biographies, with our own stories and visions” (p. 189). At Worawa the curriculum enables the students to access the mega-narrative of their Aboriginality. They learn about and reflect on their own heritage and the heritage of others. Relational learning regardless of the girls’ upbringing facilitates the sharing of Aboriginal realities. Students are very forthcoming in speaking about the many aspects of their learning in relation to their own heritage and the heritage of others. Narratives involving Aboriginal personalities and events are also part of the dialogue as the girls absorb the actions of selected people as well as their significance for all Aboriginal people and mainstream Australia. According to Shor, (1992) true dialogue develops critical

consciousness, which “allows people to make broad connections between individual experience and social issues, between single issues and the larger social system” (p. 127). Pride in their culture is enhanced through making these connections in their learning. New knowledge is possible through commitment to this “reflexive, discursive learning environment that corrodes the iron cage of social determinism and builds new prospects for imagination and investigation” (Hooley, 2009, p. 26).

Dialogue with their own individual story is portrayed in the expression of student hopes for life after Worawa. Evident in each, is the desire to work in an area that benefits their people, either directly in community to promote efficacy and wellbeing or from a wider concern for justice. Reflection on their own values is evident as each girl speaks of developing and enhancing respectful, responsible relationships as well as her learning in each area of the curriculum. Personal responsibility is recognised and described in detail. The students have developed reflective skills that enable them to have a conversation with their own biographies, stories and visions and from this conversation, think differently and creatively. Reflection is a significant component of learning if education, which means, “to draw out (*e-ducare*)” (italics in original) (Groome, *op cit* p. 200) is to be achieved. Dialogue with both mega and micro narratives, ensures education is the process of “drawing out” rather than the process of being ‘poured in’ decried by Dewey (1916). Sarra (2011) comments that “[s]adly for many Aboriginal people it seems that *successful, hardworking and Aboriginal* (italics in original) are mutually exclusive terms. The evidence from this project demonstrates these epithets are inclusive terms when applied to the Worawa students.

The design of the holistic curriculum at Worawa encouraging dialogue, reflects Palmer’s (1998) ‘Paradoxical Pedagogical Design’. He sees this as a solution to the fragmentation of “reality into an endless series of *either-ors*” (italics in original) (p. 62). His solution is in paradoxical pedagogical design, in which he says, the paradox is a lens through which teaching may be viewed so the design may include *both---and-----*. Palmer understands paradox as the combining of two profound truths, even though each describes the opposite of the other. He gives a number of examples of *both---and-----*, one of which is “Honour the “little” stories of the students and the “big” stories of the disciplines and tradition” (p.74). Honouring of both these “little” and “big” stories is evident at Worawa. Palmer’s understanding of reality including *both---and-----*, is congruent with the Aboriginal understanding of reality in which all is interrelated and interdependent.

Dialogue between teacher and learner is relevant, but this dialogue must be truly democratic (Hooley, *op cit*). Reporting and observation of dialogue between staff members and students at Worawa reveal their democratic nature. Dialogue for Freire (1973), is an encounter between people, involving communication and inter communication and founded on love of the world and people. The purpose of Worawa, to develop proud young Aboriginal women who can walk in two worlds, informs the manner of personal communication between staff and students. Staff members understand the importance of the nature of personal encounters with students, regarding them as young women rather than children. The Worawa values of Relationship, Responsibility and Respect further inform their *modus operandi*. Students then become the empowered individuals that Fullan (1991) says are the only vehicles of improved education. According to Hooley (*op cit*) democratic dialogue

and democratic discursive environments promote reciprocal teacher, student relationships and are essential when establishing a learning environment including Aboriginal students. The ability to take part in democratic dialogue is evident in the student interviews. A member of the academic staff conducted these in a conversational manner. The student voice at Worawa is powerful both in these interviews and in speeches and written material.

Unfortunately many schools understand listening to student voice as yet another area to be addressed in an already over crowded curriculum and timetable (MacBeath, 2004; Ruddock, 2004). When this is the case, listening to student voice, more likely than not becomes tokenistic as it is not treated as fundamental in the teaching and learning partnership (Dutson-Steinfeld, 2004). There is also the very real danger of listening to but not hearing student voice (Crane, 2004). There are well-documented examples of genuine consultation with students in the areas of behaviour management, the compilation of disciplinary rules and regulations and the organisation of the school, usually within the context of membership of the School Council (Trafford, 2004). While these instances are successful and commendable, there are two areas that are problematic. One, there is a very real danger that only strident or articulate voices may be heard, thus causing many other students to feel disenfranchised (Ruddock, *op cit*) and secondly, student voice is not often heard in relation to student learning (Zyngier, 2004b, Hamilton, 2005; Hattie, 2013a). The first problem reinforces already imbalanced power relations in the schools and, while students must understand democracy does not mean every one is heard equally, schools are not justified in merely maintaining the dominant culture in this way (Crane, *op cit*; Gilbert, 2012).

In the light of this, it is significant that the students at Worawa speak about their learning meaningfully and in some cases eloquently. They are encouraged to do this by the staff members. They provide an example of Ruddock's (*op cit*) conviction that when student voice is really heeded, students feel respected, understand their views make an impact, have greater control over their learning, in that they are able to articulate their learning and devise methods of improvement and generally feel more positive about school. According to Ruddock (*op cit*) there is also significant evidence that because of a powerful student voice at Worawa, teachers have an enhanced opinion and understanding of student capabilities and change practice in accord with their increased understanding of their students. Because of this, the relationship between the learner and teacher is in dynamic interaction (Groome, 1998). The research team in accord with Hamilton (*op cit*) finds the experience of listening to student voice uplifting. This experience reinforces hers, Zyngier's (2004b) and Mitra and Frick's (2004) understanding of the ability of students to communicate succinctly and accurately when engaged in dialogue that is truly meaningful for them.

Complex, Reciprocal, Interactive Learning

Learning in a holistic Aboriginal context is a complex, reciprocal, interactive process. The learning theory that best supports student learning as a complex, reciprocal and interactive process in an Aboriginal learning community, is enactivism. Enactivism, by its very nature, values learning in all domains of human existence. It is "effective action, that is operating effectively, in the domain of existence of living beings" (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p. 29).

Enactivism emphasises knowing rather than knowledge and changes the emphasis from the identifiable entities of individual and society to that of a system. Enactivism develops the concept of the complexity of learning beyond the social to the ecosystem, where the entire system is affected by the cognitive development of each individual. Cognition is broadened in its definition, to include, not only rational thinking but all forms of learning, both conscious and unconscious (Caine & Caine, 1991) and formulated and unformulated (Begg, 2000). This complexity has implications for teachers as learner growth must be the basis from which to operate since learning refers to transformations that expand the learner's potential range of actions, which in turn affects the entire web of being. The teacher is co-learner and facilitator as collective action is not for individual sense making, but as a location for shared meanings and understandings (Davis & Sumara, 1997). Enactivism is a theory of learning, enabling educators to clearly articulate learning as it occurs within an ecosystem acknowledging that "[e]very moment of life is a learning event, a creative participation in the complex choreography of existence" (Davis & Sumara, 2000, p.178). This understanding of learning enables the "pragmatic pursuit of an Aboriginal ontology and epistemology" (Gary Thomas *op cit*).

The implementation of the holistic learning program at Worawa demonstrates the belief that learning is a complex co-emergent process of holistic development enabled through the construction of meaning, taking place within a community that is dynamic and robust in adapting to changing circumstances, and so reflects an enactivist understanding of learning. While enactivism remains unarticulated as a theory of learning at Worawa, the understanding of learning expressed by teachers in discussion is largely enactivist.

The Worawa community is a community of truth, as defined by Palmer (*op cit*) when he says, "[g]ood teachers are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subject and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves" (p. 11). They are able to "join self, subject and students in the fabric of life". This goes far beyond the realm of teaching technique as teacher, subject and student must be "woven into the fabric of community that learning and living require" (p. 11).

The ability to weave a world for themselves in the fabric of life (Palmer *ibid*) is reflected in the vision of Hyllus Maris when she said that the goal of Worawa is "to produce an Aboriginal person versed in his/her traditions and proud of his/her identity, who has the tools and necessary qualifications to contribute effectively to the Australian community". The data from this project give us every reason to believe that Hyllus Maris would be very proud to see Worawa, an Aboriginal initiative, Aboriginal owned and operated, developed from the experiences of Aboriginal people themselves, as it is today. Worawa Aboriginal College is a community that is dynamic and robust in adapting to changing circumstances. This community guided by the vision of Hyllus Maris is a powerful example of Aboriginal owners and operators, working in partnership with non-Aboriginal people to develop proud young Aboriginal women, who are able to walk in two worlds. Through this, all support the emergence of Aboriginal aspiration for education in the twenty-first century.

7. Significance of the Project

7.1 Significance for Worawa Aboriginal College

Walking together to make a difference: A case study of Worawa Aboriginal College is especially significant for the Worawa Aboriginal College Community, because the research project depicts a rich picture of Worawa Aboriginal College as it operates in 2014. This picture affirms the College, as it demonstrates in all areas, the contemporary realisation of the vision of Hyllus Maris by providing “the best elements of both traditional Aboriginal and current Australian education, aiming to produce an Aboriginal person versed in his/her traditions and proud of his/her identity, who has the tools and necessary qualifications to contribute effectively to the Australian community”. Through this, education at Worawa Aboriginal College continues “the pragmatic pursuit of an Aboriginal ontology and epistemology” (personal communication, Gary Thomas, former member of Worawa Board of Directors and Aboriginal Academic, 2015).

The project is also significant for Worawa Aboriginal College as it answers the research question: What factors do students and adults at Worawa Aboriginal College understand as assisting the nurturing of a strong sense of cultural identity through connectedness, empowerment and learning in their life at school? In achieving this, the project identifies significant ‘Enabling Factors’ as well as four ‘Key Enabling Factors’. These factors are significant for the continuing narrative of Worawa. These factors will assist the Worawa Aboriginal College Community to continue to be dynamic, robust and adapt to the ever changing circumstances of life in general and life in a secondary boarding school, in particular.

Parent, grandparent and student voices are very strong in the data generated through this project. Student voice is particularly strong and able to articulate the ability to nurture and celebrate culture at Worawa, to develop or enhance respectful responsible relationships and to learn through engaging in meaningful productive struggles. Their ability to converse in the context of the Worawa Values is impressive and attests to the impact of these on their lives.

Significant too, is the fact that the project demonstrates Worawa Aboriginal College, an Aboriginal initiative, Aboriginal owned and operated and developed from the experiences of Aboriginal people is led in its day to day operation by an Aboriginal Elder, who demonstrates the capacity to implement a rigorous two-way holistic learning program. The project affirms the College Community in their quest for an education model that enables the best of Aboriginal and mainstream Australian learning. Hooley (*op cit*) when addressing the complexity of providing relevant education for Aboriginal students, says that “[i]t is doubtful whether there is a single model of schooling that can be defined as having successfully achieved the complex learning and cultural outcomes desired by Indigenous communities throughout Australia” (p. 81). Perhaps Worawa Aboriginal College may be cited in future writing as having, in its context, attained this difficult to achieve outcome.

There is a further research question that goes beyond the immediate context of Worawa Aboriginal College:

To what extent are the findings/ explanations from this project, applicable to the wider Australian education community both Aboriginal and mainstream and to the global First Nations education community?

7.2 Significance for Aboriginal Communities within Australia

The findings of the project are also significant for Aboriginal Learning Communities within Australia as they demonstrate the benefits of holistic learning, addressing Maslow's (1943) 'Hierarchy of Needs', in a two-way cultural context, through the interest and involvement of all members of the community. The learning theory of Enactivism, that supports this model, is contrary to the behaviourist theory, driving the now prevalent narrow test-driven approach to Standard English Literacy and Numeracy. This project has the potential to empower Aboriginal communities in Australia in their quest for government approval and funding for such a model, which will enable the full potential of their children to be achieved and their languages remain extant and flourish. They are the only people who can walk in two worlds (Sarra, 2011). Significant for Aboriginal communities, is the fact that Worawa Aboriginal College an Aboriginal initiative, Aboriginal owned and operated and developed from the experiences of Aboriginal people is led in its day to day operation by an Aboriginal Elder. This provides for them, further evidence of the effectiveness of Aboriginal leadership in education and the possibility, through the educative process, of defining a contemporary Aboriginal ontology and epistemology.

7.3 Significance for Mainstream Education within Australia

The findings of the project are also significant for mainstream Australian education, as it is ultimately about learning, learning that encompasses the whole person and learning that is relevant for the 21st century. Life experience and not academic excellence alone is the concern of holistic education (Miller, 2005; Hare, 2010). It would be of benefit to every child in Australia if those responsible, structured rigorous personalised learning for each child according to an understanding of the 'Hierarchy of Needs' (Maslow, 1943), acknowledging that unless the lower levels are attained, students can not address the higher levels.

In recent years, education in Australian Government systems, while paying lip service to a broad holistic education, through the development of curriculum frameworks enabling this, only value standardised tests and their resultant scores. Holistic education, as described in this project presents a challenge for education systems, including the mainstream education systems in Australia that have "an obsessive focus on standards and testing" and so reflect "a materialist and consumerist culture" (Mahmoudi et al. *op cit* p. 179). From this perspective, the purpose of education is understood as a training place for participation in paid work rather than as a preparation for life in all its dimensions. This project is significant in that it presents a view of education related to life, life as it is lived in the present as well as a preparation for the future.

Significant also for Australian Government education systems and universities is the fact that Worawa Aboriginal College is an Aboriginal initiative, Aboriginal

owned and operated and developed from the experiences of Aboriginal people. The principal of the College is an Aboriginal Elder, who undoubtedly possesses the capacity to lead the implementation of a rigorous two-way holistic learning program. Developing policy and procedures that 'restore capacity' (Ahmet, 2001) and thus enable effective Aboriginal leadership of schools should be a priority for these institutions. The Australian Government should also consider that two-way education not only benefits Aboriginal Australians, but benefits all Australians as it not only ensures the continuation of the oldest living culture in the world but renders this culture increasingly relevant for contemporary living in Australia as we seek to better understand our history and learn how to prevent further degradation of our planet. Contemporary living would also be enhanced as harmonious relations engendered by a spirit of Reconciliation flow from this approach.

This project addresses the middle years of schooling, which has been a strong focus since 1993. Major projects, such as the Middle Years Research and Development Project (MYRAD) (Russell, McKay, & Jane, 2001; 2003) have highlighted the need for learning that is relational and rigorous. Low achievement of Aboriginal students (Boulden, 2006; Sarra *op cit*) in mainstream schools has been a constant agenda item for education plans since 1988. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Plan (MYCEETYA 2010-2014) attests to the contemporary relevance of this focus. This project demonstrating relational rigorous learning that delivers a broad range of outcomes is relevant not only for Aboriginal students in mainstream schools. A study such as this, demonstrates a broad deep approach to learning in a relational context, an approach that benefits all students in all schools (Russell, McKay, & Jane, 2001; 2003).

7.4 Significance for First Nation Communities Worldwide

The project is also significant for First Nations communities worldwide as it affirms their commitment to holism in education. This is a long held premise of First Nations communities. In this and in other ways providers and researchers of education within First Nations people discover that there are very many similarities in these groups from different parts of the world (Hooley & Levinson, 2013). The project also demonstrates the value of total community involvement in education and Indigenous leadership in education. The development of an extended sense of belonging to a global community in the Australian students may be replicated in other countries, where this has not occurred already. This project affirms those schools already forging international connections and will encourage others to do so.

7.5 Significance for Researchers in an Aboriginal Context

Researchers in an Aboriginal context will also find the project significant. The Project's methodology is inspired by Hooley (2009). Hooley recommends that, when researching in Aboriginal contexts, the participatory research team be composed solely of Indigenous researchers with non-Indigenous people in the role of critical friends. Aunty Lois Peeler, Executive Director and Principal led the research team. The other members were Kathryn Gale, Deputy Principal, Head of Learning and Teaching, Kim Walters, Head of Boarding, Pam Russell, Chairperson of the Worawa

Academic Reference Group and Mauricette (Mauri) Hamilton, Member of the Worawa Academic Reference Group. The members of the research team acknowledge the departure from Hooley's recommended structure, by the inclusion of non-Aboriginal people in the research team. The chosen structure was affirmed by the ability of the team to generate a breadth of significant data through the inclusion of these specific people. Relevance to Aboriginal people in general and those involved with Worawa in particular is assured by the inclusion of Aunty Lois Peeler in the research team. In addition, three Aboriginal academics were critical friends of the project. They are Associate Professor Gary Thomas, Dr Shannon Faulkhead and Dr Kaye Price. Dr Neil Hooley author and senior lecturer at Victoria University accepted the role of External Advisor.

Data was generated through interview in the following manner:

Aunty Lois Peeler: Some parents

Kathryn Gale: Students in relation to the academic program and residential programs

Pam Russell: Elders and Board members

Pam Russell and Mauri Hamilton: Staff in relation to the academic program and residential program

Mark Thompson: co-opted to gather data from parents.

The decision of the team members to designate Aunty Lois and Mark Thompson, a Yorta Yorta man and a former Worawa student, to interview the parents was vindicated by the quality of the data obtained from the parents in this way. In the videos, they appear relaxed and willing to communicate their thoughts, and afterwards were pleased at the publication of their videos on the College website. Similarly, the decision for Kathryn Gale to interview the students enabled the interview to remain conversational and yet elicit relevant data. It also decreased interview time for the students. MacBeath (2004) notes the importance of addressing students in the voice of an adult as the response will more than likely be in the mode of the adult, rather than that of a child. Kathryn's ability to speak with the students using the voice of an adult was significant in eliciting thoughtful responses, often demonstrating maturity beyond their chronological age. The quality of the data in these interviews could only be obtained if the students had confidence in the integrity of the interviewer. This reinforces the necessity of the employment of suitable interviewers in order to obtain the optimum level of data. This is a requirement in any qualitative research, where the aim is to develop a rich picture of the research context.

The composition of the research team enabled the collation and close analysis where necessary of an extensive a list of exemplars already in existence at the College. These include the digital recordings of events and productions, the Debutante Ball (2011), 'Stylin' Up With Worawa' (2012), 'Sapphires' (2013), 'Debutante Dreaming' (2014) and the Worawa Promotional material (2013) and 'Learning in and through the Arts' (2013). Newsletters promulgated each term and material on record from the Awards Ceremony (2013), were also included. The College facebook page is constantly updated with relevant material and there is student material in the public art gallery at the College. Whilst these exemplars are available on the College website, the knowledge of specific details of their compilation by Aunty Lois, Kathryn and Kim, enabled the efficient collation of the most relevant material. Checking findings or explanations through the utilisation of multiple methods was

accomplished internally by the use of exemplars, publications, observation, student quantitative data and interviews and conversations as multiple avenues of data generation by a team of people. Thus the team operated “using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (Stake, 2000, p. 443).

Personal and group reflection and theorising, a feature of the research design enabled views to be expressed, reflected upon, changed or developed. The team members kept personal reflections throughout the process and shared thoughts in discussions. In these discussions Pam and Mauri added their thoughts to those of Aunty Lois, Kathryn and Kim, who work full time at Worawa. Pam’s deep knowledge of the Worawa Model of Learning added an external perspective to the deep knowledge expressed by Aunty Lois, Kathryn and Kim. Mauri constantly questioned any seeming anomalies that arose from descriptions of concepts or programs described on the website or in publications, in relation to the descriptions of same, or emanating from the interviews. As each draft of the data was presented further rigorous discussion ensued enabling a deeper personal and collective understanding of the evolving story. This enabled the “process of transformative consciousness” (Hooley, 2009, p. 149) as the experiences and reflection of these experiences led to new and deeper thinking. Hooley (*ibid*) sees this as generating practitioner knowledge that “would be seen as an additional task in academic research but an essential component of participatory research” (p. 150). It is also significant that the composition of the team and the respect of each of the team members for each other, guarded against pontificating by any one member, a possibility warned against by Hooley. The two-way respect, which he says includes respect for culture, local knowledge and community scholarship was evident throughout the process and attested to by its successful conclusion. The data was then used to weave a story, the story of Worawa Aboriginal College, as an aid to internalising as well as linking material. This involved looking backward and forward and inward and outward (Hooley, *ibid*). All members of the research team had the ability to look backward, forward, inward and outward in varying degrees. In all the “looking” each team member brought unique perspectives, the intersections of which are significant.

Discussion of exemplars and generated data and theorising its meaning with a critical friend enables further, deeper thinking from alternative perspectives. This was evident during the course of the project. The team found, as Hooley (*op cit*) comments, that this discussion and theorising rather than being problematic was important for democratic meaning making. Collaborating with critical friends brought into focus points of agreement and also views that conflicted. This enabled robust discussion leading to “critical questioning for self-understanding” (Hooley, *op cit*, p. 185), thus providing a critique of the narrative itself and uncovered “possible insights for follow-up consideration and theorising” (*op cit*, p. 185). Discussion with critical friends also clarified aspects of the research that were thought to be problematic. The broad constitution of the research team as recommended by Hooley (*op cit*) is instrumental in providing a balanced analysis and this also renders the input of critical friends especially relevant.

Questions for reflection enabled the members of the research team to reflect deeply and compare views. This process was instrumental in exposing bias and enabled further relevant elucidating discussion. The questions are:

1. What was surprising by what happened, what we found?
2. Was our methodology appropriate, what other approaches could have been used?
3. Did we collect appropriate data; what other data would have been useful?
4. Were we rigorous enough in analysing data, looking for different explanations?
5. How did the project challenge our own thinking, do we understand differently now?

As the collating and analysing of generated data progressed answers to these questions emerged.

1. What was surprising by what happened, what we found?

The three team members who are part of the Worawa staff group were affirmed by the continual reference to the Worawa Values of Relationship, Respect, Responsibility and Rigour, by all stakeholders. They were also affirmed by the multiple consonant voices that emerged from the research and the strength of student and parent voices. The two team members external to the College were surprised by the continual reference to the Worawa Values of Relationship, Respect, Responsibility and Rigour, by all stakeholders, the multiple consonant voices that emerged from the research and the strength of student and parent voices. Their surprise emanated from their involvement in similar projects in other education settings, where the values espoused by the school community were explicit but not part of the day-to-day conversation of students and staff in the manner evident at Worawa. In these settings student voice related to organisational issues rather than student learning and parent voices were either 'silent' or 'managed' according to the definition of these terms by Spry and Graham (2009).

2. Was our methodology appropriate, what other approaches could have been used?

All team members agreed that the methodology was appropriate as it facilitated the generation of the optimum level of data. Each team member had particular strengths and these were recognised by all. These strengths enabled rigorous, productive discussion resulting in a thorough analysis from different perspectives. This also enabled a reflexive approach as team members returned many times to their interpretation of the data in order to clarify understanding. All team members agreed that the breadth and depth of generated data could not have been attained by any other methods. They also agreed on reflection that in generating data, they as a team operated according to the Worawa Values of Relationship, Respect, Responsibility and Rigour.

3. Did we collect appropriate data; what other data would have been useful?

The team was very satisfied with both the data collected and generated. All members agreed that no additional data was necessary but there was the suggestion to document further ethnographical data. Due to constraints of time and relevant personnel this suggestion was not adopted.

4. Were we rigorous enough in analysing data, looking for different explanations?

Lengthy discussions and email exchanges lead to a constant re-visiting of thoughts, conclusions and overall findings. These exchanges ensured validity and clarity of material. The roles of the various team members adopted in discussions and exchanges described in previous sections attest to this.

5. How did the project challenge our own thinking, do we understand differently now?

All team members have a more in-depth understanding of the four Key Enabling Factors, which emerged from the data. Before the project all acknowledged the importance of the Founder's Vision and Values of the Worawa integrated model. The continual reference to the Values of The Worawa Way by all participants increased the team members' understanding of the interpretation of these by different groups of participants. The involvement of the total Worawa Aboriginal College Community, Elders, Board of Directors, Parents and Staff in the provision and successful implementation of a two-way model of learning enabled or reinforced team members understanding of the importance of an Aboriginal initiated, owned and operated school. The holistic model of learning, valued either explicitly or implicitly by all participants reinforced existing beliefs concerning the value of such a model in some members of the team and renewed these beliefs in others. For the team members external to the College, there came a deeper understanding of all aspects of College life, especially the in-depth approach to two-way learning that addresses the needs of real students in real time. The significance of the influence of an Aboriginal leader and a knowledgeable and committed Executive Team, all of whom have experienced two-way enculturation was evident to these team members as they explored the totality of the holistic model in detail. Through the input of critical friends and an external advisor, all team members were led to reflect more deeply on the nature of Aboriginal culture in contemporary society and to contemplate the "pragmatic pursuit of an Aboriginal ontology and epistemology, a pursuit which is embodied in Worawa Aboriginal College" (Thomas, *op cit*).

The fact that the researchers in this project experienced both roles of researcher and participant allowed a deeper understanding of each role in relation to the other and so exposed possible ways of redistributing power between researchers and participants (Strier, 2007; Hooley, *op cit*). Thus there was a re-balancing of power in the researcher-participant relationship. This relationship enabled a cultural interpretation through closely exploring multiple sources of data and providing an "insiders' point of view" (Hoey, 2013). As Hoey also notes meaning was emergent, rather than imposed. The Key Enabling Factors attest to this. This dual role enabled new knowledge and understanding and reflected the constructionist viewpoint that researcher and participants co-construct knowledge and so are both equal parts of the final product.

Epistemology addresses the nature of knowledge and provides the philosophical basis for how knowledge is acquired (Crotty, 1998). 'Bricolage', is a complex approach that allows multiple epistemologies and political dimensions.

(Berry (2004a). The relatively new term derived its meaning from the French practice of producing crafted articles from whatever materials happen to be readily available; no materials are pre-ordered for this practice. The project's use of data from many existing exemplars, as well as data from interviews and existing written material, identifies research from the perspective of 'Bricolage'; no exemplars were excluded and these and the material included as examples in appendices were taken from the usual procedures in the College. 'Bricolage' also relates to the many-layered interactive processes in this research, the research team's recognition of the effect of power in the development of knowledge and their understanding that the result of any research is a specific representation of the context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1999). Thus it relates to phenomenological, historical and critical hermeneutical theoretical perspectives.

The research was conducted from the inside out, a criterion that van Manen (1990) says is essential for phenomenological research as it renders researchers as participants. Only from this perspective can research construct new knowledge. Aunty Lois, Kathryn and Kim were participant observers (van Manen, 1990) and Pam and Mauri were close observers (van Manen, *ibid*). Researching from the inside out assists the understanding of knowledge as a social construct and hence the relevance of a hermeneutic-historical perspective. The hermeneutic-historical perspective required interactive and discursive methods to enable open, collaborative views of knowledge and the ongoing discussion of data and possible findings (Hooley, *op cit*). This was particularly relevant for the research team as the level of knowledge and immersion in the history of Worawa varied widely. Often Aunty Lois clarified misconceptions for team members; she also identified relevant literature to guide discussions. Many discursive conversations were part of the process as all team members, often in the company of critical friends discussed the nature and significance of the data. Sometimes these conversations were verbal, at others via electronic media. The reflexivity essential for complex research (Hooley, *op cit*) was evident here. Whilst the various interactions and conversations were time-consuming these enabled the data to form an "iterative spiral" (Creswell, 1998, p. 53) that addressed the complexity of the research. The iterative spiral began with the vision of Hyllus Maris translated into reality with the opening of Worawa Aboriginal College in 1983. It continues to the present day and the narrative is further articulated through this project. The project, 'Walking together to make a difference' provides a rich picture of Worawa Aboriginal College in 2014 through answering the research question, "What factors do students and adults at Worawa Aboriginal College understand as assisting the nurturing of a strong sense of cultural identity through connectedness, empowerment and learning in their life at school?"

The research is also critical hermeneutical as the goal is emancipatory (Kincheloe, 2001). It is concerned with justice and reconciliation and "the significance of key political issues such as morality, identity, community and consciousness" (Hooley, *op cit*, p. 146). This research reveals the "power dynamics within social and cultural contexts" (Kincheloe and McLaren p. 286) and analyses "competing power interests between groups and individuals" (p. 281). The focus of "Walking together to make a difference" demonstrates a marked interest in freedom from oppressive regimes. From this perspective the findings are significant in the call to "restore capacity" to Aboriginal people in the context of contemporary rigorous two-way education.

This project demonstrates for all researchers in an Aboriginal context, the importance of the inclusion of Aboriginal people as subjects in research rather than as objects only (Rigney, 2001; Martin, 2003). As a modified version of Hooley’s (*op cit*) model, it is critical and emancipatory as Aboriginal Australians are able to project a strong vibrant voice and through this Aboriginal knowledges are valued. The methodology is also significant because it is Indigenist (Rigney, 1999) and consequently:

focuses on the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations and struggles of Indigenous Australians. It is Indigenous Australians who are the primary subjects of Indigenist research. Indigenist research is research which gives voice to Indigenous people (ibid p. 637).

This methodology enhances the ability to “walk together” as Aboriginal Australians and non-Aboriginal Australians collaborate in a process, through which they learn from each other and forge a respectful responsible relationship that engenders new knowledge, ideas and practices in the context of Ways of Knowing, Being, Valuing and Doing. Consequently this affirms the choice of a methodology underpinned by the fusion of western academic and Indigenous research philosophies depicted in Figure 6.1. This methodology enables the “pragmatic pursuit of an Aboriginal ontology and epistemology” (Thomas, *op cit*) in the context of an ethically and culturally appropriate methodology.

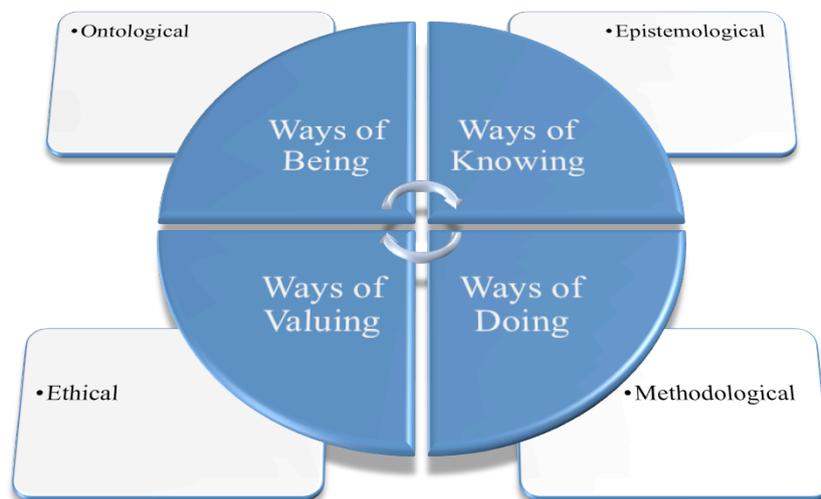


Figure 6.1 *Relationship of Elements of the Research Framework*