

The AIPEP team and the AIPEP symposium presenters. From left is Distinguished Professor Yin Paradies (Deakin University), Ash Paxton (Weenthunga Health Network), Belle Selkirk (AIPEP), Jordan Gibbs (University of Melbourne), Associate Professor Graham Gee (University of Melbourne), Katrina Newnham (AIPEP), Jody Kamminga (AIPEP), Madelyne Hudson-Buhagiar (University of Melbourne) and Brooklyn Whitmore (master of clinical psychology student). *Pictures: supplied.*

From listening to action



Belle Selkirk

This month, psychology educators, students, practitioners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from across the country came together for the inaugural Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (AIPEP) Community of Practice (CoP) Member Symposium.

The theme of the symposium, Anti-Racism in psychology education, could not be more timely.

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, discussions about racism are not abstract or theoretical. It is every-day lived experience.

Racism affects belonging, safety, wellbeing, health, educational opportunities and access to services.

It can occur through individual interactions, but it can also be embedded within systems, policies and institutions that were not designed with our peoples, knowledges or aspirations in mind.

Recently, the Australian Human Rights Commission released its Respect at Uni report, examining antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism and the experiences of First Nations peoples across Australian universities.

Drawing on the experiences of staff and students nationwide, the report highlights the ongoing reality of racism within higher education and the need for institutions to take a more proactive and systemic approach to creating safe, inclusive learning environments.

For many of us, these findings are not surprising.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and leaders have long spoken about experiences of exclusion, the burden of cultural labour, deficit-focused teaching, and curricula that overlook or marginalise Indigenous knowledges.

While progress has been made, there is still significant work to do to ensure universities are places where our students can learn, grow and succeed without compromising their culture and identity.

This is one reason why the AIPEP CoP member symposium into antiracism in psychology was important and necessary.

The symposium began with a warm welcome from Professor Pat Dudgeon AM and Deakin University's Associate Dean Indigenous Engagement, Brent Ryan, setting the tone for a day grounded in respect, learning and collective action.

More than 60 psychology educators from across Australia joined the symposium, attending both in person and online to yarn, learn and reflect together.

Throughout the day, presenters shared powerful insights into what it takes to address racism in psychology learning environments.

Distinguished Professor Yin Paradies (Wakaya) encouraged us to challenge racism in the places where we live, work and learn. Associate Professor Graham Gee (Aboriginal-Chinese), Madelyne Hudson-Buhagiar (Wiradjuri) and Jordan Gibbs (Lutruwita) inspired us with their relational, community-focused, place-based approach to curriculum reform at Melbourne University. Ashley Paxton (Waywurru) from Weenthunga Health Network challenged us to think deeply about how we can work together towards justice and collective liberation. Finally, Brooklyn Whitmore (Darug Boorooberongal) shared the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, reminding us how truth-telling, deep listening and committed action are essential if we are serious about creating lasting change.

Importantly, the symposium sought to put its values into practice. A dedicated Mob-only wellbeing room provided a culturally-safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates to connect, rest, reflect, or simply take a moment away from the day's discussions.

Throughout the event, a visual scribe captured key messages, ideas and reflections through graphic recording, creating a living visual story of the conversations and collective wisdom shared across the day.

To finish the day, AIPEP CoP members came together to reflect on what they had learned and identify practical actions they could take within their own teaching, leadership and institutional contexts. The emphasis is not simply on understanding problems, but on collectively identifying pathways forward.

By the close of the symposium, participants left with new insights and a powerful visual reminder of the shared commitment to building a more culturally-safe and anti-racist future. This focus on listening in action is especially important.



Distinguished Professor Yin Paradies, from Deakin University, delivering his speech on challenging racism, at the 2026 AIPEP symposium.

Across Australia, we are seeing increasing recognition of Indigenous knowledges, stronger expectations around cultural safety, and growing commitment to anti-racist practice within education and health professions. These developments have not occurred by chance. They have been driven by decades of advocacy, leadership, truth-telling and persistence from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and allies.

Anti-racism is not a destination. It is an ongoing practice of learning, listening, reflecting and acting. It requires us to remain open to challenge and committed to building better relationships with one another.

Ultimately, this is what the AIPEP symposium was about. It is about creating spaces where difficult conversations can occur with honesty and respect. It is about privileging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and knowledges. And it is about imagining a future where psychology education, and the institutions supporting it, contribute to healing, equity and collective wellbeing for all.

That is a future worth working towards.

Belle Selkirk is a Noongar woman living on Wadandi boodja. She is a clinical psychologist and a research fellow with the AIPEP. She has led innovative projects in Indigenous psychology including the *Listening More* suite of resources, and the *Psychology: From Inquiry to Understanding university* textbook. She has extensive experience in providing culturally-informed therapy with a particular focus on Indigenous psychology, social and emotional wellbeing, and cultural safety in psychological practice. In 2024, Belle was awarded the excellence in cultural responsiveness award by Indigenous Allied Health Australia.

AIPEP is an Aboriginal-led national initiative that seeks to transform psychology education and practice through the embedding of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing into psychology. Building on decades of leadership and advocacy by Prof Dudgeon AM and many others, AIPEP works with universities, professional bodies and accreditation agencies to help create meaningful change across the discipline.

AIPEP would like to acknowledge the University of Western Australia, Deakin University, AIPEP-APAC Cultural Safety Project for supporting this event.

If you would like to learn more about AIPEP join the mailing list here via indigenouspsyched.org.au/connect/#network

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