

From Skilling for New Futures to Empowering Individuals and Communities

Ivana Milojević

Metafuture

Australia

Sohail Inayatullah

UNESCO Chair in Futures Studies

Australia

Abstract

Using the six pillars approach to Futures Studies, this report presents findings from a two day foresight workshop focused on Aboriginal workforce futures. The workshop was held in Australia. The scenarios developed were: (1) “We could die out”, (2) “Struggling snail”, (3) “Our numbers and powers are increasing”, (4) “People first, governed by Tjukulpa?,” and, (5) “Uber BabaKiueria”. The main desired narrative shift was from the “Mainstream way the only show in town” to “Aboriginal people are the solution to their own destiny.”

Introduction

The Aboriginal Workforce Strategy Futures Workshop was well attended by the Aboriginal workforce community. Over 80 participants from 40 organisations and agencies across the health and human services sector were represented. There was representation from the wide range of service providers across the sector that include Aboriginal community controlled organisations, Aboriginal peaks, primary and tertiary health providers, not for profit social service providers, education, emergency services and government. The meeting was held from in 2016 in an Australian city.

The session was facilitated by Professors Sohail Inayatullah and Ivana Milojević, along with a small group of co-facilitators.

Groups divided themselves into 10 tables and, using the six pillars Futures Studies approach developed by Inayatullah and Milojević, articulated alternative workforce futures, visions, and strategies.

Futures Studies and the Process

Futures Studies - or alternatively referred to as transformative strategic foresight - is the understanding of alternative (possible, probable, and preferred) futures and the worldviews and myths that underlie them. While there are numerous approaches to Futures Studies, we use the six pillars approach (Inayatullah, 2008). This approach is linear and sequential with the goal to map the future, anticipate emerging issues, understand deeper patterns, dive deeper into core narratives, create alternative scenarios, and conclude with a vision and strategic pathways to realize the vision.

However, prior to engaging in the formal six pillars process, participants went through a questioning process so as to enhance their futures literacy - to expand and deepen their understanding of futures. In the questioning approach, participants articulate a key research question/issue, for example, the nature of the workforce in 2035. They then explore the issue through the following questions: (1) What is the history of the issue?, (2) What is the current forecast as it relates to the question?, (3) What are the assumptions behind the issue?, (4) What are the alternative futures?, (5) What is the preferred future?, (6) How did you get there?, and (7) What is the supporting metaphor for the preferred future? The questioning is then followed by the application of a number of methods, for example, the futures triangle and causal layered analysis.

The process is intended to move the group from developing alternative futures, a preferred future, and strategic pathways forward. On the first day, each table wrestled with critical questions. These included:

- What does an Aboriginal community controlled organization look like in 2035?
- What does an employer of choice look like for Aboriginal peoples in 2035?
- What does self-determination look like in 2035?
- How does an organisation/system best support Aboriginal employees or the community in 2035 - what does the system look like?
- How can we bring about training in person centred care for the Aboriginal health and human services future workforce of 2035?
- How do we continue to value and grow strong Aboriginal leaders by 2035?
- How do we create generational and cultural well being for Aboriginal society by 2035?
- What does the future health workforce journey look like for Aboriginal people?
- What are the employment and career pathways for Aboriginal workers to learn and work in culturally safe environments in 2035?
- What are the self governance systems and workforce philosophies that we need to optimize by 2035 for holistic life and cultural wellbeing for First Nations Peoples?

Over the two days, a textured and highly nuanced discussion followed, the general outcomes of which are summarised in the next section.

Participant's Input

Current problems and used futures

Whilst futures thinking is inherent in Aboriginal culture (argued, an Aboriginal futurist), a set of barriers to foresight (and change) currently exists. To start with: "New hope is being overwhelmed by past knowing". This "pain of the past" manifests in multiple ways. First, as a denial of invasion and colonisation and how it continues to impact individuals and organisations, or specific issues such as decisions around child welfare. Social injustice of the past often creates the inability to recognise the impacts of overt and covert racism on decision making and who has a say in deciding about present and futures directions: "We are always playing catch up and the Aboriginal people

do not have a real say in the decision making”. Examples of this include policy dictates such as the Australian Northern Territory Intervention and forced closures of Aboriginal communities. Some of this external barrier – “being bound by legislation and political stalwarts” - is internalised, wherein people limit themselves “with their own views”, and do not think “broadly enough”. They are then, for example, “scared to go to the best case scenarios” or are in advance thinking “things cannot be done” or that certain policies and plans are “too ambitious”. Self-imposed barriers thus also impact on individuals and organisations. Other barriers of foresight include:

- “change fatigue”;
- dealing with symptoms not causes of issues;
- organisations saying they want diversity, but not following through with it or being able to cope with diversity;
- organisations and government not addressing “on the ground issues” and/or resorting to piecemeal strategies to deeply rooted problems.

Acknowledging and minimising barriers to foresight is important as they may reinforce “used futures”. The term *used future* refers to outdated stories; stories about *the future* most commonly created by others in the past (Inayatullah, 2015). The used future is based on assumptions that are no longer current, as the nature of reality have been significantly challenged by economic, ecological, technological, demographic and cultural changes, to name but a few. Or, in other words, the concept of the used future refers to people being busy planning for a future based on assumptions that are no longer valid. As a consequence, strategies based on the used future over time become increasingly unproductive, even hurtful to the individual and barriers to change for organizations. Participants identified numerous used futures related to workforce futures in general or the critical questions they previously selected. Examples of used futures included:

- Outdated *medical model*. It is expected that the current medical model will “Close the Gap” and yet if general practitioners remain as the gatekeepers and holders of knowledge, other knowledge and resources held by citizens and by health and wellbeing service providers will remain unutilised. Many mainstream health providers do not understand the Aboriginal culture and community well. Therefore, on one hand, more Aboriginal doctors are needed, as is a more adequate training of the general practitioners in remote communities to understand the Aboriginal culture and community better. And, on the other hand, Aboriginal health workers could certainly play a more prominent role in terms of prevention and adequate health management of communities. However, a fantasy of higher proportions of Aboriginal workers without putting in place supports, including new ideas, to achieve this, is another example of used future. Excessive reliance on medical model prevents alternative options such as Nungkari Aboriginal model of health and well-being in Australia. Instead of the dominance of the medical model, what is required is to develop an *empowerment model* where measurements of ill-health are replaced by the measurements of the positive outcomes of care, culturally appropriate treatment and prevention.
- Outdated *welfare* and *justice models*. Dominant western frameworks and the rules about everything, including welfare and justice, prevent Aboriginal peoples’ ideas from being implemented. “We know what is best for you” and “welfare model” are used futures which keep Aboriginal people oppressed. The alternative is an *economic empowerment model* where power for decision making is placed with the person and their family. Prevention here is the key, rather than the used future of piecemeal solutions (i.e. breakfast programs at schools) or the used future of not addressing core issues of problems (i.e. as with child removal practices). Putting people in prisons is another example of used future; it is punitive and not restorative to the community. Furthermore, it has detrimental long-term

health and community impact. So instead of increasing amounts of prisons and the amount of incarceration, *justice reinvestment* and tackling the *root causes* of issues are needed.

There is as well a general lack of collaboration between services, for example, a “closed shop” as to who is invited to training, which makes it hard to provide opportunities to collaborate. Yet another example of a used future is for Aboriginal workers to be over-consulted and yet no change based on their recommendation is implemented. The obvious solution to tackling all this is by creating collaborative, inclusive, innovative, flexible, community-based and culturally safe working environments.

Connecting past, present and future is crucial for groups and individuals to be able to move forward and towards better futures. Utilising a variety of methods from the six pillars approach to futures studies participants (1) outlined historical timeline – key events influencing the present and what they saw as most likely futures; (2) followed by a discussion about alternative futures (scenarios); and (3) finalised with a discussion about preferred futures and how to get there. Parallel to this, participants also (1) highlighted what they saw as the most pressing concerns and problems in their organisations and communities; (2) analysed root causes of those problems and barriers to positive change; (3) clearly identified their preferred futures; and finally (4) proposed a whole set of solutions, policies and strategies seen as more likely to bring those preferred futures about.

History of the present

Several main periods were identified:

- **Beginning of time and creations of dreaming.** During this period, Aboriginal people defined themselves and their wellbeing way of life. They were governed by own lore, elders and tribes, and used their own languages and law. During this time, Aboriginal people had meaningful work, kith and kin relationships, jobs, education and self-determination.
- **Invasion and genocide** beginning in 1788 in Australia. The myth of *Terra Nullius* was used in order to destroy culture, identity and the relationship with the land, family and community of Aboriginal people. Successive legislation and government policies then controlled the options of Aboriginal people. Policies were made without Aboriginal peoples’ input who were treated as slaves – told where to live, where to work (i.e. moved to the missions, then out as servants, needed permissions to work, get married or move between boundaries). Payments in sugar, alcohol and tobacco contributed to the abuse of those substances. Violence and exclusion created the system which until today disempowers the Aboriginal peoples leading to inequality, depression and generational trauma.
- Early to mid-1990s were marked by the **assimilation** policies, government control, discrimination, institutionalisation, removal of children/stolen generation and continuing cultural genocide (loss of languages and cultural practices). Exclusion of Aboriginal people from the Western/White society led to low literacy, lack of adequate access to educational and work pathways, and unemployment and trauma through racism. It has also built mistrust towards “others” as well as towards government agencies (and vice versa).
- Mid to late 1990s started the **early stages of recognition and self-determination**. Key events include: Activities of the Aboriginal Advancement League in the 1950s and 1960s; Freedom ride in 1965; The first Aboriginal man in Australia – Charles Perkins - graduating from university in 1966; Australian referendum of 1967 and constitutional alterations relating to Aboriginal people; 1970s first Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), 1972 Tent Embassy; 1973 establishment of Victorian Aboriginal Health Service; 1980s first training programs for apprenticeships for Aboriginal children; The first Aboriginal Education Policies; 1986 Institute of Koorie Education; 1980s and 1990s

Aboriginal Support Units for tertiary education and further education; Mabo 1992, Native Title and Land Rights; Keating's 1992 Redfern Speech, National Sorry Day since 1998, The Motion of Reconciliation, 1997 Bringing Them Home report; and the work of ATSIC.

- Early 2000s to today – continuation of the fight for **full recognition, self-determination**, empowerment and improved life and health outcomes. Key efforts and events include: Reconciliation Action Plans; Employment and Career Development plans, Aboriginal Health Strategies (i.e. Koolin Balit 2012-2022); National Apology in 2008, and Recognise/Constitutional Change/Treaty campaigns.

Alternative Futures

At any given time there is a range of alternative futures which are possible, some of which are more or less plausible, probable or preferable. They are significantly influenced, but not fully bound by the past. That is, there are multiple options for the future and different paths and choices in the present that could be taken. Participants described many features of various alternative futures which are here loosely organised within the five broad scenarios: (1) Collapse/Worst Case Scenario; (2) Status Quo/More of the Same Scenario; (3) Reformed/Some Improvement Scenario; (4) Best Case/Preferred Scenario; and (5) Outlier/Surprise Future Based on a Disruptive Emerging Issue. As before, participants identified numerous alternative options related to broader social issues, workforce futures in general or the critical and more specific questions they previously selected.

(1) Collapse/Worst Case Scenario - "We Would Die Out"

In this future scenario things go from bad to worse. Assimilation and legal non-recognition continue. People who do not "fit the box", i.e. what mainstream society dictates, are left behind. This includes Aboriginal people being left out of the mainstream job training for the health and human service workforce. Resources continue to dwindle and they are not sufficient to reach people. Politically, the "wrong people are elected into power". Purchase of locations of Aboriginal significance by foreign buyers makes it extremely difficult to recover these lands in the future. Disenfranchised groups – those in the low socio-economic strata – grow. There is higher unemployment and a lack of housing. Violence increases. Rates of diseases, substance abuse, and mental health issues also increase. Interaction with justice systems worsen and the imprisonment rates and the number of children in care grow.

Educational outcomes deteriorate and the number of school dropouts increase. The impact of climate change is felt by everyone, but especially by those in rural areas. In the end "We would die out", there would be a "Demographic Death of Aboriginal people."

(2) Status Quo/More of the Same Scenario – "Struggling Snail"

In this scenario, nothing much changes. We get the "same old, same old", and "struggling snail". In fact, "these conversations have all been had before".

Aboriginal people continue to be marginalised, disadvantaged in their own country. Inequality and racism still prevail. There is a greater divide between haves and have nots. Pay equality and discrimination are not addressed. There are increased rates of poverty, racism, family violence, crime, and use of alcohol and other drugs. The majority of the Aboriginal community is part of the manual workforce or unemployed. There are high levels of imprisonment and poor health outcomes. The social and economic gap persists, there are increased discrepancies in health, life expectancy and educational rates. The education system does not change, parents cannot help their children, there is increased bullying and increased helplessness. The growth of super-cities further limits the number of people living "on country". The population growth of Aboriginal peoples does not keep up with the overall rates of population's growth. Demographic shifts influence Aboriginal peoples becoming even more of a minority group.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are tokenistic, consulted as an afterthought. Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) still find it difficult to obtain and secure funding. They exist in an increasingly competitive environments. ACCOs are competing against other ACCOs and non-Aboriginal organisations. Funding is mostly given to the gatekeepers, e.g. general practitioners and hospitals. This leads to poorer Aboriginal health and contributes to less Aboriginal people participating in education and workforce. Services are not keeping up with needs, especially justice, early years, health, and family services. There is a disproportionate number of people in out of home care. Aboriginal organisations are overwhelmed, and mainstream services are not adequate. ACCOs further diminish and the mainstream service provision for Aboriginal people increases. There are fewer Aboriginal organisations overall and a number of larger, one-stop Aboriginal organisations. Fewer Aboriginal staff in human services means higher demand on them to do extra work; this causes their burnout. In sum, the workforce is not able to cope with the demand.

(3) Reformed Improvement Scenario – “Our Numbers and Power are Increasing”

Over years there is an incremental improvement of educational, health and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people. There are more Aboriginal people in higher paid positions, for example, more Aboriginal People in CEO positions. There are more Aboriginal graduates, more opportunities and new employment career pathways for them. The greater level of success of reconciliation will reduce racism and the disintegration of society. Social media is effective as the new mechanism for advocacy. Self-determination is more successful and there is a lower reliance on government funding. Aboriginal birth rates are up and the Aboriginal population is increasing. Many young people are involved in tertiary study. Due to improved education and health amongst future generations, Aboriginal peoples are in the workforce because of increasing numbers, and ACCOs acquire multiple sources of funding; there is an increase in social enterprise and economic independence. There are more Aboriginal allied health workers, Aboriginal healing centres and community hubs. As well, there are stronger partnerships between ACCHOs and mainstream health services.

(4) Best Case/Preferred Scenario – “Governed by Tjukulpa”

By 2035 there is no need to have conversations about the treaty, racism, marginalisation, and cultural safety – all these issues have been addressed. Aboriginal culture is embedded in Australian culture. There is a Treaty and Sovereignty for all First Nations, which is governed by Tjukulpa (Lore of the Land). Through self-determination, Aboriginal people are supported to be at their best. They are fully integrated and have a respected cultural identity rather than a label. There is also a strong integration of all Aboriginal people within their communities and beyond. Some features of this scenario include:

- Identity is regenerated and diverse;
- Aboriginal communities have reconnected;
- Gaps in education, health and life outcomes are closed;
- Aboriginal people exhibit well being and live long;
- Education is accessible and affordable;
- Health information and care are physically and virtually accessible; and,
- Digital infrastructure connectivity is universally accessible for all Aboriginal people.

In this future, ACCOs are successfully run and recognised. They are consulted and have the influence on legislative decision making which affects how their organisations are run. ACCOs are

self-owned and they have their own enterprise and franchise. They remain the employer of choice for Aboriginal people – and thus retain their reason for being. At the same time, other organisations value and promote the Aboriginal workforce as an asset to their organisation. Good partnerships between organisations – e.g. aged care, palliative care and community health services - exist. Housing, employment, family relationships, health, and well-being are addressed simultaneously. The collaborative approach has become the norm. Institutions are transformed: they are people-centred and provide needs-based care. There are whole of life services, 24 - 7 services, and continuity in effective programs, policy and funding. There is a faster integration of research and best practice models into health care delivery and treatments. Different work choices, multiple career options and opportunities for mobility across organisations and career pathways exist. Organisations provide growth opportunities and support employees moving on or having different life experiences. The workforce is culturally competent. Preventative health care is mainstream and infrastructure, policy and legislation support this. The mainstream aged care model integrates social and family connections. Program planning approaches to creating services and programs start with the community and the clients’ needs. Finally, there is a greater use of outdoor spaces in health care including in hospitals – creation of green spaces, sun lounges, community gardens and via bringing of the outside into the inside.

This is a people centred society – people first! Employers have greater responsibilities than just giving someone a job – they understand and value the role of family and community. Employment and health care are more holistic. Organisations provide a one stop shop with regards to services and delivery. There are ongoing training opportunities and workplace exchange. In sum, person-centred care measurements and reporting are fully integrated into policy and funding.

(5) Outlier/Surprise Future Based on a Disruptive Emerging Issue - “UBER BabaKiueria”

In this future, BabaKiueria (Barbecue Area)/Code Black scenario sees reversal in power and empowerment of Aboriginal nation. The world is upside down compared to today: Aboriginals are in power, there is the Aboriginal prime minister and the Aboriginal passport/identity. States are completely run by self-determination and everyone pays a land tax. This means “Acknowledgement in Practice“, and “Walking the Talk“. Aboriginal history/perspectives/knowing is systematised and culturally valued. Society incorporates Aboriginal knowing and being into mainstream practices and decision making.

Aboriginal citizens create a new future from outside the system and create new rules. They redefine/transform societal activities in line with a new life well-lived. Instead of reforming “taxi services“, they (metaphorically) invent Aboriginal UBER services for the mainstream society. Metrics of a life well-lived are reinvented. What is valued is a reconnection with nature and connection to the country, cultural connection, family relationships, life satisfaction, economic freedom, and freedom from aches and pains of modern life’s expectations. There is fully funded retirement and universal basic income. People look after their own, others and environmental well-being. Service systems are providing services that respond to the full range of needs. The culture of service delivery changes to being respectful, engaging and caring. The service system is societal – what we see is societal custodianship and not system custodianship. Life in this future is indeed very different! The scenarios are summarised below.

Table 1. *Five Alternative Futures*

COLLAPSE	STATUS QUO	REFORMED	BEST CASE	OUTLIER
Violence, unemployment, and substance abuse. School dropout rates increase. Rural areas continue to decline. Increased prison population.	Marginalized and disadvantaged. Aboriginal organisations overwhelmed. Not focused on jobs of the future.	More graduates, more Aboriginal people in higher paid positions, with clear career pathways.	Gaps in education, health and life outcomes is closed through greater full self-determination. Culturally safe and legally protected. Aboriginal organisations are the employers of choice. Health is prevention based. Different work choices, multiple career options and opportunities for mobility.	Reversal in power with Aborigines in power. Aboriginal Prime Minister and Aboriginal passport and identity. Society changes with a focus on community, country, cultural connection, and family relationships. Fully funded retirement and universal basic income.
“We would die out”	“Struggling snail”	“Our numbers and powers are increasing?”	“People first - governed by Tjukulpa?”	“UBER BABAKiueria”

Getting to the Preferred Future

But how to get to this preferred future? A rich tapestry of strategies, actions and policies were developed by the participants – as a means of getting closer to their preferred futures. Presented in the form of lists, these strategies can be broadly summarized as follows:

(1) *Educational and cognitive strategies/changes*

Education, research and mind-set/worldview shift are critical strategic pathways (Milojević, 2011). Curriculum changes to make sure an accurate rendering of history is taught, i.e. the historical perspective of the Aboriginal people in the history of Australia. Incorporation of Aboriginal knowledge as a priority as there are wider benefits of Koori knowledge to *all* education. Development of a critical mass of staff to achieve Aboriginal people teaching Aboriginal knowledge and students. Development of accessible, flexible and life-long learning pathways. Redesign of training and support to include real training, simulated training and supported work environments. Funding for full, life-long education for Aboriginal people from preschool to mature age. The environment in which teaching takes place changes to enable flexibility around times and places for classes. Training done through Advancement League is adapted to community – verbal learning and assessment for those with literacy needs. Utilisation of new technologies. Development of the application that downloads Aboriginal knowing, i.e.

- knowledge placed on digital platforms;
- mobile phone applications showing who the traditional owners of the land are wherever you go;

- translation of indigenous languages on Google Translate;
- building of the digital repository of indigenous knowledge so that it can be shared (in ever increasingly futuristic ways); and,
- digital means developed for information sharing about successful models and strategies.

However, face-to-face human interaction remains. Outreach and culturally appropriate methods, ongoing positive relationships and so on, are especially crucial when dealing with children who have experienced trauma. Many of those children will not be able to use applications (i.e. due to ADHD or FASD) and need human interaction; or “intuition not algorithms”.

Development of short courses such as workshops which won’t add a long-term education burden on attendees or add to the high dropout rates at universities.

A focus on mentoring, advocating and networking – across age-based, cultural and sectoral diversity is a crucial strategy. Futures thinking - scenario planning on the workforce - needs to be expanded to include all the key stakeholders. Mapping statewide job development initiatives that are promoting jobs for Aboriginal people. Research to see where the jobs of the future especially in the areas of health and human services will be. And the integration of these findings into workforce planning for Aboriginal people by 2020.

(2) Cultural strategies/changes

A cultural shift is needed and should be supported. This includes anti-racism campaigns in the workplace and keeping the long-term vision in mind during meetings. Further: evaluation of cultural training programs in terms of how they impact attitudes and behaviour and not just knowledge. Instead of focusing on mediocrity focusing on excellence; instead of focusing on vocation focusing on wellbeing. Engaging community via various activities, e.g. sports. The creation of the multicultural calendar inclusive of all people - a calendar of events and education/training available on government websites. Further, a First Nation Peoples website with the customs and traditions linked to the multicultural calendar. There needs to be a link to the Australian section of the First Nation Peoples website available to people applying for a visa to visit or migrate to Australia. As well the form in which the information is given needs to be culturally appropriate, i.e., inclusive of health information with Aboriginal artwork and design. Establishments of physical and digital spaces where stories of current successes in self-determination are shared.

(3) Legislative strategies/changes

First and foremost, constitutional Recognition, a national Treaty as well as a State treaty with Aboriginal First Peoples. Treaties are significant because they provide safeguards, i.e. when rights are recognised people can move forward. The second main legislative strategy is about increasing the number of Aboriginal people in positions of power and political influence. An example of this is supporting the election of an Aboriginal Prime Minister. The third main strategy is to improve existing legal documents, for example, to explicitly build cultural safety and competency requirements into the Equal Opportunity Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Acts. The fourth major strategy is to build alternative governance structures: i.e. establish and register an Aboriginal party, elect Aboriginal representatives in each state, create the council of elders elected by the representative of the tribes – the council running the state, overseeing and distributing the land taxes.

(4) Organisational strategies/changes

Strengthening of partnerships between services in order to ensure a mobile, diverse and flexible workforce. All participants owning the future of Aboriginal employment – having the dedication to go out into their organisations to help move futures thinking into action. Creation of an Aboriginal

Committee of the Future inclusive of all Aboriginal organisations which helps develop a future where an Aboriginal workforce is valued and sought after by all employers. Customised foresight sessions for Aboriginal organisations and the continuous development of futures thinking in Aboriginal organisations. The development of a ten-year strategic vision and annual strategic reviews. These would “recognise the jobs of the future, support and develop new entrants into the workforce, and build relationships with professional job-readiness programmes”.

Within organisations there are actions individuals can do and those that are organisations can do. They are summarised as follows:

What I can do. Lead by example. Be responsible for my actions. Have the courage to continue the path that my ancestors have set out. Network and collect ideas. Build interagency groups. Engage with Aboriginal employees, employers, and work bodies. Focus on one-on-one support and navigation. Provide mentoring. Work on partnerships, connection, anti-racism and cultural awareness. Ask communities what they need. Continue the story started today. Be proactive in own community. Self-educate. Be active in decision-making.

What we can do. Collaborate with others. Formalise a state level interagency jobs board that has commitment and accountability. Take something away from this workshop and share with communities. Empower workforces and direct organisations to be person-centered and adaptable. Make people understand the differences between current choices. Spread the word to a systemic change. Strengthen relationships. Follow up on the report coming out of today to ensure the input and messages are accurate. Implement an Aboriginal employment strategy in organisations. Build a pool of Aboriginal people who have the range of skills and qualifications in all roles at all levels that can be drawn on for recruitment to all types of roles.

And finally, all can “continue to look towards futures with pride and positivity”.

Narrative strategies/changes

Participants investigated the needed shifts in metaphors and narratives. As per the Causal layered analysis methodology (Inayatullah and Milojevic, 2015) a foundational aspect of the Six Pillars approach to Futures Studies, the best and the most successful strategies include simultaneous intervention at four levels: (1) empirical data to measure the new desired futures; (2) systemic changes including legislation, new technologies and platforms, economic shifts, (3), mindset/worldview changes and (4) new metaphors. Most of the changes needed at the first three levels have been presented earlier in this report. More specific narrative and metaphorical shifts which are needed to support preferred futures are summarised in the table below:

Table 2. *Narrative Strategies*

Old and unhelpful stories and metaphors	New and helpful stories and metaphors
A brick wall with people on one side and puzzle pieces on the other and each person is trying to jump over (hitting their head) and grab a piece	The wall is down and all the jigsaw puzzle bits fit together and create a representation of the Aboriginal Nations
This is what you need	How can we support you/what do you need?
Admit one	Gathering Place – organizations of choice are open, accepting and like a family
From the top	From the ground up - developed by and for Aboriginal people, based on Aboriginal culture and inclusive of all culture
When the Earth is sick, we are sick	Growing strong, resilient trunks that reach into green futures which generate wide-ranging and prosperous services, utilising renewable, bio-diverse and organic properties
Heavy lifting with a big backpack	Assets to share – share the load.
White is right, blacks up the back	We are warriors; creators of our own destiny
Dole bludgers	We are a competitive, skilled workforce
Barren landscape, crow - death	Booming ecosystem, rainbow bird – adaptable and flourishing
In the desert, the waterhole is making animals sick and the kangaroos are tied up so they can't move to share their stories	Gathering of all animals around the waterhole that supplies fresh water; they dance and share stories about the past but also about a common future
On your own	Many drops fill a flowing river
Ticking a box	Putting first people first
British people settled on unclaimed land; the land was not owned by anyone	Land cannot be claimed as it belongs to Mother Earth Mother Earth has rights of personhood Humans are allowed to share and use the land while living peacefully together
The untold story; being told the story	Creating our own story; building our own story
Lip service	Right time, right care, right place, real people
Strategies on the bookshelf	
Token people	
Told how to be black	Knowledge of Aboriginal people at the forefront of decision-making
Short term pilots	Long-term evidence-based/proven strategies
Mainstream way the only show in town	Aboriginal people are the solution to their own destiny

Conclusion

There were a number of significant conclusions that emerged from the workforce.

First, that traditional models of employment are likely to be challenged by the increased roboticization of the workforce, digital technologies and demographic changes (Inayatullah, 2017). Indeed, some analysts argue that 50% of current jobs in Australia are likely to disappear in the next 15 years (Foundation for Young Australians, 2016). Furthermore, current jobs that high schools, the TAFE (community college) system, and tertiary education are preparing students for may not exist by the time they graduate. Finally, new jobs are likely to be created in the fields of ageing, health care, artificial intelligence, genomics, and brain sciences as well as in the ‘softer’ areas of health prevention.

Second, to navigate this emerging future, adaptability and agility are crucial. An Australian Aboriginal futurist argued that Aboriginal peoples had demonstrated remarkable adaptability and resilience over the last 60,000 years. Thus, not only could they survive, they could thrive. In her words: “Futures thinking and preparing for the future is essentially about adaptability and flexible thinking. That is a natural strength of Aboriginal peoples. We have had the adaptive capacity for 60,000 years. It is what has enabled us to survive as long as we have. And therefore, futures thinking is a natural part of who we are.”

However, to do so, the third point was crucial. Aboriginal groups needed to partner with each other, anticipate the changing workforce and then train and educate for the emerging jobs, critically moving from specialization to generalization. Argued a CEO of an Aboriginal Cooperative: “We move from a present where we focus on specialization where Aboriginal people struggle for recognition to a point of time in the future where we have generalist workforce where we are able to leverage relationship and partnerships across multiple complex systems to achieve measurable results.”

But what might be some means to support partnerships? This was the fourth point: participants focused on the need to develop app-based platforms that could create and support partnerships.

The fifth main point, however, was that new technologies should not, must not, create a wedge between human touch, the human heart. It was caring that was a crucial critical success factor in workforce planning. Furthermore, the person could not be divorced from the land, as the land gave strength to Aboriginal peoples. This was the main point of one participant: “Humans are what is to be retained in human services.” In the age of robotics and new technologies, the human dimension of work was even more important. It was thus human relationship - this community building that had helped Aboriginal culture endure over the tens of thousands of years.

Sixth, jobs and health care needed to be person based in an ecological and community context. Current health systems, for example, hospitals, stress rules and regulations based on the isolated individual. For Aboriginal peoples, hospitals needed to be redesigned to, for example, ensure that families could visit, when they wished to, not just during official hours and in numbers appropriate to the Aboriginal cultural context. They also needed to be designed with Aboriginal cultural safety in mind, i.e. hospital administrators needed to demonstrate cultural intelligence. Moreover, Aboriginal projects needed to be designed by Aboriginal peoples. As one group suggested, Aboriginal People managing Aboriginal projects within their context means:

- Truly independent and managed by an Aboriginal CEO
- More autonomous, for example, wherein an Aboriginal recruitment team does all the recruitment process i.e. the hiring and the firing
- The workplace is culturally intelligent

Moreover, the broader workplace would need to have:

- Aboriginal roles that work with Aboriginal people which have selection criteria as understanding of Aboriginal Culture
- Recruitment to these roles needs to have an Aboriginal person / community member on the recruitment panel

Seventh, the challenge to the workforce needed to deal not just with the tsunami of ageing but with the reality that Aboriginal demographics differ from the rest of Australia, as they were dramatically younger. If young males and females could not find jobs or adapt to jobless growth or to the portfolio career or train for multiple careers, then suicide, violence and other social costs would increase.

Eighth, a long-term approach had to be taken; one that focused on future generations. Said, one medical leader: “The importance of focusing on the future is not a future that we might see come to fruition, but a future that comes to fruition for those who come after us. When we think about the future, we need to think of the long term. We need to think of the future as one where the benefits may be reaped by generations to come.”

Ninth, thus, far more than workforce planning was required. Indeed, strategies suggested focused on power. For the Aboriginal workforce to adapt and thrive, governance change is required. Participants imagined a future where not just 20-30 percent of political representatives were Aboriginal but that the Prime Minister was Aboriginal herself. This is critical in that greater political representation would lead to Aboriginal youth seeing that they mattered, that they could make a difference. If the changes in power relations do not occur, then we would see a continuation of the “Great Australian Silence,” of direct, structural and epistemological violence towards indigenous peoples.

Tenth, the changes required are not just systemic but narrative based. Narrative or stories frame what individuals can see, what they think is important. Many alternative stories were articulated by the various tables. Some of these included the shift from “strategies on the shelf,” to “no lip service.” And: instead of the tortoise and the hare, the echidna and the emu i.e., Aboriginal perspectives may be behind now, but they can take their time and arrive at the goal. What was needed was a shift from “fairy tales” of the past to “stories that matter.” The world wherein instead of being “told the story”, Aboriginal peoples “tell their own story.”

Clearly participants of the Aboriginal Workforce Futures workshop told their work/life story over the two day process. They told the story about their past, present and desired futures. And, they suggested strategic pathways of getting to the preferred future. It is now for each individual person who participated, as well as the organisations that were involved, to ensure the songlines bring the new futures into life.

Correspondence

Dr. Ivana Milojević
Metafuture, Australia
www.metafuture.org
E-mail: ivana@metafuture.org

Sohail Inayatullah
Professor, Tamkang University
UNESCO Chair in Futures Studies
Email: sinayatullah@gmail.com

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