

Frustrations and difficulties exist in all collaborations and processes working with participatory community involvement.

But when non-Indigenous designers and architects establish collaborations with First Peoples, we must consider and be aware of:

- Histories of conflict
- Being ignored
- Undervalued, or not acknowledge
- Cultural erasure, and appropriation
- Being made to feel invisible
- Silenced
- Intergenerational traumas, and systemic epistemological violence

And as such, non-Indigenous architects and designers must be aware that ‘business-as-usual’ methods of practice can be culturally insensitive.

Without being properly educated, non-Indigenous architects and designers can unknowingly continue colonial damage.

But ‘unknowing’ doesn’t excuse ‘best intentions’. It doesn’t qualify as ‘we tried our best’.

Non-Indigenous architects and designers cannot walk into these collaborations without educating themselves and their staff.

They cannot expect First People to teach them.

This is shared history. Non-Indigenous peoples have a responsibility to be aware and be educated.

ZENA CUMPSTON is a Barkindji woman

“we’re not leading. we’re leaned on.”

**zena cumpston**  
CONVERSATION ON CAMMERAYGAL AND WURUNDJERI COUNTRY , 05.03.20

DANIÈLE HROMEK is a Budawang woman of the Yuin Nation

“they need Aboriginal people to be leading that process or otherwise it’s just - unfortunately it’s just stealing and appropriating other peoples’ knowledge, which they’re really good at. But they have to stop doing that. They have to allow Indigenous people to lead those processes. Non-Indigenous people need to let it go, and not be the ‘ones who master everything all the time’, because they’re not of these things.”

**danièle hromek**  
CONVERSATION ON GADIGAL COUNTRY, 26.02.20

ESSAY 2:  
Collaboration and humility in being led by First Peoples  
*compiled by alicia bell*

CONVERSATIONS WITH:

ZENA CUMPSTON  
DANIÈLE HROMEK  
TIMMAH BALL  
KERRY SMITH

Timmah Ball is of Ballardong Noongar descent

“just as those of us invited to engage with universities and design firms are left out of these critical decision-making processes as we struggle to understand what being ‘included’ actually means...our participation wasn’t about destabilizing a colonial profession by imagining and implementing an Indigenous design movement; we were there to make the industry’s overwhelming whiteness appear momentarily diverse.”

**timmah ball**  
FROM: BALL, ‘ON THE INSIDE “OUT”: THE ARCHITECTURE OF INCLUSION IN THE DIVERSITY ECONOMY’, 2019:3

TIMMAH BALL is of Ballardong Noongar descent

IN A DESIGN INDUSTRY QUICK TO APPEAR DIVERSE, ABORIGINAL VOICES WERE CARELESSLY SELECTED BY WHITE INSTITUTIONS EAGER TO PERFORM PROGRESSIVENESS WHILE REMAINING IGNORANT OF THE INAPPROPRIATENESS, AND WHITENESS, OF THEIR CHOICES.

**timmah ball**  
FROM: BALL, ‘ON THE INSIDE “OUT”: THE ARCHITECTURE OF INCLUSION IN THE DIVERSITY ECONOMY’, 2019:4

THINK FOR YOURSELF:

which is more important: expressing your personal voice through design? or being drawn into rich collaborations?

which voices need to be heard in Australian practice? which voices aren’t being heard? why?

how can you see collaborations with First Peoples as opportunities shift your point of view?

what does intentional kindness look like? what does humility look like? what does accepting a position of learning (and not leading) look like?

how can you be self-aware and humble when conflict arises?

how can you feel creatively fulfilled in creating greater equality and culturally safe work?

what aspects of your work draw pride?

Being intentional and considering these questions before starting collaborations can help build a framework for navigating culturally turbulent spaces.

Be aware that confusion and conflict may arise, and prepare yourself to adopt a learning posture. Don’t be blind to cultural differences, or pretend it doesn’t exist.

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**timmah ball**  
FROM: BALL, ‘ON THE INSIDE “OUT”: THE ARCHITECTURE OF INCLUSION IN THE DIVERSITY ECONOMY’, 2019:3

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YOU PAY AN ENGINEER FOR HIS EXPERTISE SO WHY WOULDN'T YOU PAY AN INDIGENOUS PERSON FOR THEIR CULTURAL EXPERTISE?

**danièle hromek**  
CONVERSATION ON GADIGAL COUNTRY, 26.02.20

KERRY SMITH is a proud Wiradjuri woman

“it was just so good to be part of this process. when we sat down to start, the other Aboriginal guy said, “the very first thing before we do anything else, we’ll bring the Elders in and they’ll tell us...” then we can start designing that space so it was culturally appropriate.”

**kerry smith**  
FROM: BALL, ‘ON THE INSIDE “OUT”: THE ARCHITECTURE OF INCLUSION IN THE DIVERSITY ECONOMY’, 2019:3

Kerry spoke excitedly and passionately about the Indigenous gardens she had been involved with NSW Health.

In these projects, hospital gardens were created with Indigenous partnership. Indigenous knowledge and cultural care was embedded in these gardens to create beautiful spaces for everyone to use.

She spoke about how these gardens create culturally safe spaces for healing while also being safe for kids and thus, providing opportunities for educating future generations.

With Indigenous leadership in design projects, spaces are created which embody respectful ways of co-existing and celebrate the culture and knowledge of First Peoples.

For this project:

I’m not sure First People gained anything from working with me. Kerry told me she loved sharing and telling people who were genuinely interested in her and her family’s history. Perhaps for this project, sharing stories is all that First Peoples’ ‘get’.

This project aims to challenge non-Indigenous people to think and reflect. Hopefully with genuine discussion and engagement, we can all gain from this project - First Peoples included. I hope so.

WHAT DO FIRST PEOPLES GET FROM WORKING WITH YOU?