

## Chapter 4

# Indigenous Knowledges: A Strategy for First Nations Peoples Engagement in Higher Education

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### I Introduction

This chapter will consider the position of First Peoples' engagement with higher education from the perspective of the embracing of Indigenous knowledge. This necessarily involves the taking of a wider view, to look through the lens of the administration of justice, and in so doing to attempt to develop more sophisticated and effective practices of inclusion. The authors argue for improving the methodological approach of including Indigenous knowledge so as to more effectively resolve matters that come before the law, as well as addressing historic and ongoing colonial injustice.

They will explore methodologies for social inclusion within the legal order, framed within the context of inclusion in higher education. Critiques have led to programs for inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and experience. Similarly, commitments to social justice have led to acceptance of the need for reform to formal law, administration and education. However, beyond inclusion of First Peoples<sup>1</sup> in governance projects, there has been no attention to developing appropriate methodology. This oversight has meant Indigenous knowledges are misrepresented or co-opted even while being included. Judith Butler asks: 'How do we understand those sets of conditions and dispositions that account for the "state we are in" (which could, after all, be a state of mind) from the "state" we are in when and if we hold rights of citizenship or when the state functions as the provisional domicile for our work?'<sup>2</sup> For First Peoples, these questions have a particular theoretical resonance and practical implication. How do First Peoples express and retain an Indigenous identity within the state? Many First Peoples assert that we

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1 Throughout this chapter we use Indigenous Peoples, Aboriginal Peoples, and First Peoples interchangeably.

2 Judith Butler, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-state?* (Seagull Books, 2007).

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