

**Michelle Ockers:**

My guest today on Learning Uncut is Peter McKenzie from UnitingCare Queensland. Welcome to the podcast, Peter.

**Peter McKenzie:**

Thank you, Michelle.

**Michelle Ockers:**

And let's kick off by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which I sit today, as well as yourself, Peter, in different parts of Australia. I wish to pay respect to all the traditional custodians of the Brinja Yuin Nation, where I am today, I'd like to acknowledge their connections to land, to waterways, to community, and also with deep respect to acknowledge their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who may be listening to this podcast at any time into the future.

**Peter McKenzie:**

Thanks, Michelle. And I'd also like to extend that acknowledgement to the lands that I am sitting on today, where I live and I work, which is the Turrbal and Yuggera people. And I'd like to pay my respects to the elders past, present and emerging, because they hold the hopes and the dreams of the futures for Aboriginal people and the continuing of the culture of the oldest living culture in this world.

**Michelle Ockers:**

So thank you for joining me in that acknowledgement of country, Peter. And that is a practice which we've just had a short discussion on. Listeners, I'm going to continue that practice. It is a practice that many in Australia, for those outside of Australia, it's going to seem a little less familiar perhaps, Peter, but I think it's a very important part of reconciliation in Australia that we do continually acknowledge the traditional custodians of land during our work. And this is really pertinent to our conversation today about a fantastic body of work that UnitingCare Queensland has done with cultural awareness in regard to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Would you like to introduce us to UnitingCare Queensland, Peter?

**Peter McKenzie:**

Absolutely, Michelle. So UnitingCare Queensland is the second largest employer within Queensland. And we are a health and community services organisation. We do aged care, disability support, healthcare, crisis support for people in our communities. And we are a proud organisation that also has an Aboriginal-run part of the organisation that looks after Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from Queensland all the way through to the Torres Strait Islands. We have multiple brands as part of our organisation. So some of the common brands will be Bluecare. We also do Lifeline Crisis Support, just to name a couple. And we have some hospitals, private hospitals that are part of our organisation. We are 17,000 employees strong. And as plus with those 17,000 employees, we have over 7,000

volunteers that help make a meaningful difference to the people we serve. And so I think, you know, that's one of the most important things is that we want to make sure that we provide the best support to those people that we serve. And that's our mission.

***Michelle Ockers:***

And I know it will come up in terms of just the geography and for listeners outside of Australia, just go and take a look at a map sometimes to understand how, just how big Australia is and how vast an area Queensland covers. And a lot of your workforce and the service provision is done in regional and remote communities as well. Isn't it, Peter?

***Peter McKenzie:***

That's correct. We have over 460 locations where we provide this support. And we have, that's up to 430,000 individuals and families that we support.

***Michelle Ockers:***

Yeah. It's a massive contribution to the health and wellbeing of the people of Queensland. One of your mission practices is walking together with First Peoples. What does that mean and why is it important to UnitingCare?

***Peter McKenzie:***

Well, so everyone in Australia should be on a journey for reconciliation and UnitingCare Queensland absolutely supports that journey. It is a way of telling the truth and acknowledging the past and also the way we can move forward to the future. With our mission practices, there are eight of those, and one in particular, as you mentioned, is walking with First Peoples. So that helps ingrain the types of things that we want to achieve and the way we work with First Nations people.

***Michelle Ockers:***

And of course, you mentioned there, there's this long-term commitment that the organization has had to reconciliation. You have something called a Reconciliation Action Plan. And in fact, you're well into your fourth iteration, your fourth Reconciliation Action Plan, or RAP, and looking at shaping your fifth, I believe. And they each last around three years, is it? A Reconciliation Action Plan?

***Peter McKenzie:***

That's correct. So yes, we are definitely in the process of shaping our fifth one. And that's part of that journey. We have a specific team within the organisation that looks at reconciliation initiatives, and that's our First Nations partnership team. And they really look at the initiatives that can help make those meaningful differences to our First Nations people in our communities, but also to our employees. So we put a lot of initiatives in place to make sure that those things that go into the strategies of the Reconciliation Action Plan are really tangible.

***Michelle Ockers:***

And of course, as part of your reconciliation action plan for some time, you've had in place education programs around cultural sensitivity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander peoples and building cultural awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This is, you know, what we're talking about today is the evolution of your approach to the program around this body of work, that objective. How old or how long have you been educating around this space in the organization?

***Peter McKenzie:***

So we've been doing it since around about 2018, where we started a process of bringing in face-to-face training. Now, the complexities with that is that we can't get across to every single employee across the organization just due to the geography of that. But we did have a really talented facilitator, made the workshops really engaging, and there was great feedback in that. And it really allowed people to really deep dive into Aboriginal culture. And I think the most important thing is that it wasn't just an awareness program, it was about creating that appreciation of the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, going right back to before colonization. And then, you know, what has happened in time and how the self-determination and the future. So that's a really important program. And we've had to make some changes to be able to get that course out to a broader audience. And so that was what created the necessity for an online course to help bring that particular course to more people. It was never going to be something that we would take away because there's always going to be face-to-face learning, engaging with an individual who is a subject matter expert from First Nations communities to be able to hear those stories. And so even though we have created online courses to help support that, we've done other initiatives as well to try and help our people connect into communities and really foster that relationship.

***Michelle Ockers:***

So it's one of a suite of initiatives to ultimately support the organisation to ensure that your services are more culturally sensitive, safe and accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. So, you were already thinking of moving away from or supplementing the instructor-led approach pre-COVID, right? It wasn't COVID that lead you to go, oh, we need to get this into some sort of scalable online format, was it?

***Peter McKenzie:***

We definitely, so our strategy partner manager at the time had already been thinking of ways to, you know, get it out to our broader audience. But obviously once COVID came around in 2020, it escalated our need for that because we were unable to do a face-to-face delivery. And, you know, a lot of our delivery across other programs were going into virtual and that was okay. It could lend itself to those sort of things. But really, it's that conversation that happens in a room that is going to be missing from a virtual situation. So we need to find a way to tell the same story in an online method, and so e-learning became the next way to present that.

***Michelle Ockers:***

Yeah, and I know we are going to talk about this more, but the idea of ensuring that you're using story and tapping directly into story from First Nations peoples as part of this is really important. So I imagine that finding a way to create that opportunity to hear directly from First Nations people was also a design consideration here.

**Peter McKenzie:**

Yeah, and our manager of reconciliation at the time, he very much was right for that. He said, we need to tell the story. And he said straight up, he said, look, we need to go out to the community and we need to get their stories so that we can bring that visual media to life. And so therefore, that helped us create that connection in the learning in that we could hear a story about a piece of content rather than just deliver a piece of content and then hope that our learners would connect to that.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah. Stories make things a lot more memorable, right?

**Peter McKenzie:**

Absolutely. And if you tell it right, you tell the truth and therefore you don't hide behind anything. It's what it really is.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah. So can you outline the design of the e-learning program for us?

**Peter McKenzie:**

Absolutely. We ended up having to kick the process off with a workshop where we took together multiple members of our reconciliation team and sort of broader members of our organisation that are First Nations people to represent a voice to talk about what are the stories we want to tell. So we did an initial workshop and that workshop kicked off in about August 2020. And in that process, we used a person-centred design approach, which is all about understanding what do we want our learner to know, but then what do we want them to feel after learning that piece of information? Is there something we need them to think about? And then, ideally, what do we want them to do with that information? And so we started at like any good workshop, and started saying, well, what kind of topics do we need to do here? And in the early spaces, we were able to identify that, well, we want to talk about history and there are elements of history that we need to talk about. There obviously is the element of history prior to colonization. But then there is that immediate impact of the first 100 to 200 years, and then the ongoing self-determination of First Nations people. So we knew from there that we could structure a course around content and topics of what we want them to know. And then we then had to say, well, then what do we want them to feel and think about that kind of information? And it was really great because the team would say, look, we want them to feel empathy. And that was so important. We don't want shame, but we want empathy. We want people to understand and really connect to that story. So we used that, and then we were able to then work out what our other three modules were. So we ended up with a second module that we would develop, which was modern day impacts. And that really was taking the story of colonization and saying what has been the long-lasting effects of those things? So we were able to explore topics around intergenerational trauma, the types of things that happen due to government policies like the stolen generations, but we also looked at then what does self-determination look like in these times and days and what is happening to try and help foster and support that. Then we really wanted to focus in on, well, you know what, we have the oldest living culture in Australia. So let's make sure that our people understand all the things that go together to make that culture so important. And, you know, it's a hard, hard story

to tell because there's so many pieces to the puzzle. So we had to be, you know, fairly measured in what we would use and what we wouldn't use, but what people would come across more often. And then the final stage of that was actually looking at, well, you know about culture, you know about the history and the struggles of First Nations people, how do you make our environments culturally safe? And so we had to then look at topics that covered those concepts. And that actually was quite a tough one because it's not something that I could just go and Google or research because it really wasn't being done in many other countries. New Zealand has done some pieces in that space that I had found, but I wasn't seeing it in a lot of other areas.

***Michelle Ockers:***

Yeah, yeah. And I think it's very interesting to look at the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand and the actions that are embedded in legislation and the initiatives that are underway in New Zealand around the Maori culture and integrating Maori culture. And I will pop a link in the show notes to an episode I did about how one organisation, Waka Kotahi, New Zealand Transport Agency has integrated Maori culture into their learning strategy and the way that their learning and development team works. It's really interesting. But of course, there's the historical context, which is very different in Australia. So you can't just lift and shift from other countries either, right? You do really need to understand for anyone who's working in the indigenous culture space in their own country, your own country's history. Which is where you started with the foundational unit, that first unit, right?

***Peter McKenzie:***

Exactly, that's right. Each country has its own history of colonisation and the impacts are going to be in some areas the same, but in other areas will be different.

***Michelle Ockers:***

Yeah. Yeah. It's really interesting to feel and think domains. You know, when we when we design learning, we're pretty good at figuring out what people need to know. In a lot of cases, we figure out what they need to do. But adding the feel and think are really critical to bridging the knowing doing gap right?

***Peter McKenzie:***

Absolutely. And it really was where we anchored the learning because we had to make sure that we connected on an emotional level.

***Michelle Ockers:***

Yeah, absolutely. Was there anything that was surprising to you that came out of that design process? Anything unexpected?

***Peter McKenzie:***

I think the thing for us was trying to find the right stories to tell. We had a lot of subject matter that came out of that conversations in that workshop. As I said, we started that in August. We didn't actually hit the road on the development until around about December of that year. because we needed to be able to say, well, we've got all these topics and all this content, go away and come back to us with what that looks like. And so when that started coming into us, it's like, wow, there's a

lot of information here and there's a lot of information there. And then how do we actually piece that together? You know, our team, we were only a team of three in the design space. We had an e-learning developer, an instructional designer, and myself as the lead project. And then we obviously had our content owners and subject matter experts who were, you know, partnering us with this to be able to provide us the content, provide us the information that we needed. And so we had to look through it and go, how do we make all this connect? You know, and especially if we looked at the stuff in, in the history space, you know, how do we, do we just put a timeline and people click through a timeline? Well, that's pretty boring. So it really, then we had to sit down because it was four different modules. We then had to then work out how do we connect this piece of content from here to here, to here, to here. So that was probably one of the biggest challenges. And in the first place is actually trying to make sense of the content that we got.

**Michelle Ockers:**

And when you're designing learning, like at some point you need to draw some lines in the sand or make some decisions that carry right through. Were there any kind of critical sort of key decisions you made about design that shaped how you approached the design of all four modules?

**Peter McKenzie:**

Visual design was really important. So we were lucky that our e-learning developer is also a graphic designer and were able to create their own personalized imagery. We obviously needed to use our Reconciliation Action Plan artwork that we had to help support those pieces of work. So we utilize those types of things to try and create those themes. We also wanted to make them different, but the same. So as a learner, you start with module one. When you move into module two, it looks and feels the same, but maybe there's a slight difference in the colour or the way the theming is. so that we created a journey and we and we did think about how colour impacts emotions so that we would see how we could use those colours throughout the course so we had to make a lot of design decisions in that space. You know I'm so blessed to have had that graphic designer and they still work with me today. She does amazing work and what I love about it is that we can go to her and give her an idea and we might go, oh, here's a couple of screenshots from things that we saw and then she comes back and goes, does this look like what you're looking for? And we're like, yes, that's exactly what we're looking for. So she's very talented. It's great to have that kind of team, have the team to be able to do that.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah, and are you in a position where you could share via the show notes some examples of some of the graphics so people can take a look?

**Peter McKenzie:**

Yeah, I could supply that to you.

**Michelle Ockers:**

OK, so I encourage people to go and take a look at that. So you said one of the challenges you had with that first unit was it was it was about history, but you didn't

just want to present a boring old timeline. How did you go about conveying information, in essence, about the history?

**Peter McKenzie:**

Yes. Essentially, we broke it into three parts. The first part is we had to understand the ongoing 65,000 years of culture within this country. And we then went, well, the next part is that colonization part, and then the next part was that self-determination. We brought it into three different stages. The research that we did on top of what the content that was given to us was so important because I know that you know as I said we had this content we just didn't know how to present it so we started watching movies and videos and different things to help us try to see those stories that were written being presented by other media sources. So that was really important for us to help us build what that looks like. We then utilize just sort of themes. So as you start that first piece, we just kind of explain, this is what it looks like. But when we then did get into colonisation eras, we had to timeline it, but we didn't just do it as a, you know, click this element of the timeline. We demonstrated the changes of Australia. So we started off with an image of the multiple nations that there are within this country. And there are many, right?

**Michelle Ockers:**

There are many, many. It's interesting to get a map. There are maps available online that show you that.

**Peter McKenzie:**

And so our graphic designer, she drew that map for us in our graphic design. And then we were able to then show how the effects of colonization changed that map. And so we utilized those visuals to help bring the timeline in that area to life. And then we then started, as we got into more 19th and 20th century, we were able to utilize more images which helped us build those pieces and connect with those. So we used images to help tell the story rather than just a, you know, here's a timeline, click on the 19th century, click on the 20th century. We also utilize very short video segments that explain the piece of information that you're about to get into. So that way it created a bit of curiosity and allowed the learner to go, Oh, okay, well, I've heard of these things before. I can now click on these items that brings them to life.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah. So what was the most challenging part of the research then? Was there anything that was particularly difficult to get to get hold of, to find information on, to get your head around?

**Peter McKenzie:**

Yeah, it's a funny story, this one, and I, well, I feel it's a funny story. It's probably, it's not something that, you know, people will laugh out loud, but it's, I sort of thought to myself, well, you know what, I'm going to go to the library and just go and have a look to see what's in there to see how, you know, help build on this information. And I found a book that was History of Australia and I went, great, this is perfect. And I got the book and I took it home and I opened it up and there was about 15 pages of Indigenous pre-colonisation history, and then a thousand pages of colonisation. And that was the moment that I went, right, this is what I'm here to do. I need to fill out

that first bit. That 15 pages is bigger than 15 pages. And so I remember going to one of our debrief meetings with our broader project team. And I bought the book and I said, right, this is how it's going to work. Okay. We've got all this stuff here. We know we've got all these things, this 15 pages. I need to make this 15 pages, something that's really something that people can connect to.

***Michelle Ockers:***

Yeah, I remember as a, you know, a child at school in Australia studying Australian history. And I know things have changed a lot through, you know, watching my own daughter's education. But we were given very little education about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, their history. You know, so there's many people my age still in the workforce. So there's big gaps in what we know. And a lot of people are curious, are interested in knowing more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture. And it's not necessarily easy to figure out where to best start to learn.

***Peter McKenzie:***

That's right. That's exactly right, because the culture still is alive today. So it's not it's not as though that that was lost. The problem is it's just not as strong as it could be because of the effects of colonization.

***Michelle Ockers:***

Yeah. Let's talk about story. And of course, story is important in so many ways when we're thinking about reconciliation and walking together through sharing stories as one vehicle to do that. And my understanding, correct me if this is a misunderstanding, is that story was a critical part of how the Aboriginal people kept their culture alive and learned. So story is critical in the way you've approached the content and you use personal story quite a lot. Do you want to talk to me a bit more about the place of story in this program and how you've gone about utilizing story?

***Peter McKenzie:***

Absolutely. So we actually looked at it from a couple of different angles. So in most learning pieces, there's going to be a voiceover of some form. And so we actually utilized a First Nations person to present the stories in First Persons. So, that narration. And then we, you know, if we needed then something that was more just sort of informational, we would just use our standard informational voice, which was our instructional designer. We're a very small team, very light budget, so we utilize multiple members of our team to do things, even family members to help. So that was one method. So we made sure that we always had a First Nations voice throughout our voiceovers and telling it from a First Person's point of view. From there, then from the second, third and fourth module, we then looked at those pieces of content and interviewed First Nations people to tell their lived history in those spaces. And we had multiple individuals of multiple age brackets with their lived experiences. And so we're able to get, even though we might have asked the question, tell us what connection the country is to you, they could give us their version of what that is, where they were from, for the lands they were from. We had people that represented Aboriginal communities and Torres Strait Islander communities. And so it really helped get that connection in the learning. So if we did ask the question around, you know, what does cultural safety mean to you? we got



to hear it rather than just something on a screen that said, well, cultural safety is about dot point one, dot point two, dot point three.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Which is pretty dull, right? And it's just going to pass right through people.

**Peter McKenzie:**

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. So we really, we didn't want to do that. And then the other part of the storytelling. So apart from the videos and that video production, we actually use an external organization to do that. And we used an Aboriginal run organisation here in Brisbane to help us do the videos. They provided us with the raw files. And then we then did all the editings to get their stories into the course. So that was a big piece of work and hats off to my instructional designer for that. She had to listen to an hour of each person's story, each interview piece and go, where are the pieces of gold in here? And, you know, and like, so we would ask questions, you know, tell us about the first time that you noticed racism. And the stories were just so powerful because, you know, I remember one of them, he talked about when he first faced racism and that he would never want to see, you know, children of today to continually just face that same racism and his hopes and dreams is for that to not to continue. And just hearing those words is way better than just saying, hey, did you know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the effects of racism in Australia? But then we could tell that, we could actually show what that looked like and the emotion on faces.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Story is so much more powerful than assertion.

**Peter McKenzie:**

Yeah, that's right. And then there was one other method that we did in storytelling, which is again, so how do we get the learner who is not a First Nations person to actually connect to this content? And so we actually designed some activities that put themselves into the shoes of a family of First Nations and so we had an activity that said well you know here's a timeline and this timeline indicates events that have occurred that have you know created trauma and so forth in communities around Australia and put a marker here where you were born and put one where your mother and father were born and then put one here where your grandparents were born and count up all the different types of policies and things that have happened throughout Australia that impacted First Nations people and actually see what that would maybe look like for you if these things were happening to your parents and your grandparents. That was actually received really well. I remember someone saying to me, I had never even thought about the impact of grandparents. I think about this person is impacted by that, but there are always generations and those generations are impacted. And so it just helped them connect to the story.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah. Lovely. How did you identify and address cultural sensitivity of the content and all the stories?

**Peter McKenzie:**

We have built an amazing relationship with our content owner and subject matter experts, and they invited us to be curious. And, you know, we didn't understand a lot of things and we had to ask. And they had said that it was okay to ask. And that was the most respectful thing, not just to assume. And so, yes, absolutely, there were times where, you know, I remember myself and the lead instructional designer, we would have these really in-depth conversations. And like deep, real thought provoking conversations. And we were just trying to design this training and we would spend an hour and a half just talking about this content and what it meant to us or what it might mean to somebody else. And then we had to go, well, you know what, we need to kind of just validate this. Is this the kind of story that this needs to tell? And so we would be able to go and sit and talk and yarn, as First Nations people would call it, and be given the right direction and the permission to be able to then put that into text or into the screen. And we did have to write, we had the content, we had to re-script it as it was coming from a First Nations person. So we always had to double check that that was being scripted correctly. But not only that, we also, during the review processes of these courses, we invited a larger group of reviewers and they definitely brought in their feedback around topics that were culturally sensitive and how we were presenting them.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Yep, yep. And I believe your review process, you had a lot of people you invited to participate in the review process. It can be hard to gather, walk through all of that input from different stakeholders. You can get different points of view from different people on the same review, but I believe you tackled this in a way that you found very effective. Do you want to tell us about your review process?

**Peter McKenzie:**

Yeah, absolutely. You hit the nail on the head. You know, still today, whenever we are putting pieces of work together, we do struggle with the review process because, you know, I'm going to send it off to this person, I'm going to send it off to this person, I'm going to send it to this person. And we know what that does is it makes the development process longer. And we actually got into a really good sprint that after we developed the first course, we delivered a course every two months. And these were 30 minute courses. So they were designed to three review processes. And so we were very tight in how we were able to actually deliver these.

**Michelle Ockers:**

How long did it take you to develop the first one?

**Peter McKenzie:**

The first one took us five months. But that, that was, that was not just whole and solely the first one where obviously we're looking at, here's the first one and then all the other ones.

**Michelle Ockers:**

You're mapping everything out, you were researching.

**Peter McKenzie:**

Yeah, that's right. So we probably didn't, we probably didn't start developing the first one itself until probably three months before we delivered it. But, yeah, it was definitely the first couple of months was that research process and how we mapped it out. But as you asked, the question was about our review process. So what I invented was what I call a review party. So it wasn't party hats and sausage rolls. We were still having to do everything online because we were looking at COVID situations. So what we did, is we invited a number of people to review the course and provide their feedback and comments about whether or not they thought that we were on the right track. And then I brought them all together on an online review party where we sat down and went through the comments and discussed it as a team and made decisions. So because sometimes you'd have five people say something about one piece of content, And it might be said slightly different, and we would then agree as a group of what would be the way to actually say that. And, you know, we had some really great conversations. Each member had different past experience and lived experience, so they brought that to the room, and we were able to then use that to process to go, right, we've captured all the comments, we've actually agreed on what needs to be changed. And from there, we're able to rapidly go in and make the modifications to the course, and then go into final stages for approval. I think if we did it differently, and we sent it out and waited for the comments to come back, and then we would have to then try and pick through them and work out what does this person mean and have to then go back to them and ask them, what do you mean by this? This just allowed us to sit together and just have an honest conversation about what's working, what's not working, and what do we need to fix.

**Michelle Ockers:**

How many review points did you have as you developed each module? Was it just a one, a single review point, or were there some earlier review points, even if they involved fewer people?

**Peter McKenzie:**

Yeah, so for us, our first was always the storyboard, and that went to our subject matter expert. For her, that was interesting for her because she obviously had not done much work in e-learning development. So to show her a storyboard didn't mean much to her, but we just had to say to her, just check that the words mean something, right? And then we would then go and prototype draft version one. Draft version one allowed for a couple of people to have a look at it, provide some feedback. We would then take that version and fix it. And then we would then go to review party. Review party then extended it out to a broader group where we had more people to provide better insight. We also did a peer review. So my team did have a couple of other members in the team that were not doing the work on this space. And so what we wanted to do, and I've continued to do this since the program, is that every time a team member is developing a piece of work, once they get to a certain stage, everyone on the team provides feedback. And so that allows, you know, like they might see something slightly different to the way we see it. And it's always that fresh eyes and having an instructional designer or e-learning designer with fresh eyes come in and go, hey, you know what you could do here? You could do this. And that might make that navigation easier. So that peer review

was really important for us, but not even that, it helps develop other members of the team because they can see what's happening. And it's that collaboration. Then the final, then we would then put final production. So after all that, we would put final production, all the navigation pieces would be locked. The voiceover would be finally recorded and added, and then it would go to an approval stage where it would be ready to publish.

**Michelle Ockers:**

There's like multiple review points, but you still managed to get the job done in two months. How much of that time do you think was spent in review?

**Peter McKenzie:**

Probably half. So, you know, we would develop that storyboard. It would go for that. We'd give them about three or four days and if we needed to, we'd sit with them and take them through it. And so that way we were sitting and going through, especially if we had a design concept and went, you know, this is what we think would work. Do you reckon that will work? And then they go, well, let's see what it looks like when you've developed it. And so we'd go away and do it. And they go, oh, that's exactly how we would expect it to work. So that was great. But yeah, half the time would be in the review process, making changes, making tweaks to it to make sure that we got that final stage. And another valuable element of our team is that our e-learning developer is originally from Taiwan, so she has no past stories of Aboriginal people. And therefore, we could actually ask her, does this make sense to you? You have no idea, you've moved to this country, you have no understanding of any of this history. If we make this statement, does that mean something to you? And she was able to say, no, I have no idea what that means. And that was good as well to be able to really deep dive into those conversations. Because it's, you know, even since then, as part of my team, you can sometimes see a look at, look at me going, I have no idea what that person has said, because they might have said something that was Australian colloquialism. And so it's like, oh, okay, so it's really important to get the insights of other nationalities as well. So we can really make sure that we get that the right piece.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Well, particularly as Australia is a country that is home to people from many, many, many different nations. So that's reflective of the fact that, you know, part of your audience are going to be people who are immigrants and didn't weren't born in Australia. So perhaps don't have as much context.

**Peter McKenzie:**

Yeah, absolutely. And we're seeing that in our feedback. I've actually just pulled out some of the feedback that we had the other day. And I've got this piece here that says, "so many things I've learned in this module about the history of Australia. I actually moved to Australia from the UK a few years ago for various disturbing facts, but always good to know and understand the people around us. Many people have suffered, but it's up to us as a nation to love and respect all equally. Love this module." So it's such a fascinating response to our learning.

**Michelle Ockers:**

It is. It's a wonderful response to your learning. And I think I don't want to generalize too much, but I think I have noticed in my work over the past several years and when I'm at industry events and the topic of First Nations comes up, that there's a general thirst to understand more and a concern about getting it wrong and offending or upsetting someone. Hence the value of these sorts of programs and the work that you've done in this space. And I believe congratulations are in order. Tell us a little bit about the award that the program received in 2023 from the Australian Institute of Training and Development.

**Peter McKenzie:**

Yes, we're very stoked to be able to have received that national recognition. You know, we wanted to put it out there to the universe just because we're obviously quite proud of it and so we won best diversity inclusion program. It was the category where this course best fit because we're able to demonstrate how through this learning we're able to have people understand, you know, our cultures, how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's culture is important to this country and it's important that we respect that and so to receive that was just an amazing honour. You know, we were up against some really great teams and, you know, we were a very low budget organisation. We were not-for-profit. It was just the three of us, you know, utilising our own voices, even our family members' voices for voiceovers, doing all our own video production and so forth. And so it was great to actually be recognised for that. against those other multinational companies. So yeah, look, we're hoping that, you know, it will continue the stories and it will get more people interested in what they could learn from having a cultural program like this in their organization. You know, ideally for us, it would be great to be able to see this available broader to UnitingCare because we know that you know, we've developed great content and we know that this is such an important topic for every company in this country and even in schools. So don't forget, you know, the fostering ground of the next generation. So we should get those stories in the schools as well and make sure that we pay enough attention. And yeah, exactly as you said earlier on, you know, when I grew up, I was from a regional town in Queensland. The only thing that I think I remember was I was in Scouts and we had someone from the First Nations come to us and show us spears and boomerangs and stuff like that. We didn't really get anything else to help understand it any further.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah, yeah. I think our school system has come a long way in that regard, but it would be interesting. Have you actually started exploring how might you make the program more broadly available outside of the organization, or is that just more of a bit of a sparkle, a twinkle in your eye at the moment, something you've got an aspiration to do that you're yet to lean into?

**Peter McKenzie:**

It's an aspiration that we're yet to really lean into. But, you know, that doesn't stop us from having a conversation about what that might look like.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Absolutely. Absolutely. Please look back to me and let me know if that does go ahead. I would love to help spread the word about that, Peter. Really important to just to this country generally, I think. And so, on reflection, if you look back over the work that you and the team did as you moved away from instructor led program to create these modules, is there anything that you and the team had to either embrace or let go of as you worked on this project?

**Peter McKenzie:**

It was definitely an emotional journey. You know, it wasn't just a content about how to be safe around electricity. It wasn't, you know, it's that sort of just compliancy type of learning. So, we had to check our biases, that was important. Because otherwise, you know, we get something given to us and we go, oh, that can't be right. So we had to just make sure that what was there was what we had to work with and to make sure that we gave it what it needs to be given. And I think the other thing was, like I think I said right at the beginning, there were so many stories to tell, and it was 'which are the right stories that will tell the story that we want people to connect to?'. As I said, it wasn't about creating shame, it was about creating empathy. And yeah, look, it was such an amazing journey, but it was a tough journey. And I know that when we hit the last module and we got just that sense of relief that we had developed what we had set out to do, and we were so proud of it, we just knew that we had done something that was going to really make a massive impact.

**Michelle Ockers:**

You've had incredible feedback from the people in your organization. It was because it was set up as essential learning, wasn't it?

**Peter McKenzie:**

That's correct. When we first released it, we actually just soft launched. So we just as the modules were available, like the first one came out during reconciliation week. So again, we are an organization where reconciliation is important. So we do celebrate reconciliation events. And we're able to then go, hey, by the way, here's a little module that's been created internally, feel free to go and do it. And we actually had lots of people go and just do it. They weren't told that they had to do it. So that just showed the appetite in that space. But what we did then is we took it to the executive leadership team to say, this is really important learning and it's really important for our reconciliation action plan and strategy. It's part of our mission. We really think that rather than just making it something that it's an optional piece of learning that people can do, is that we actually put it in their learning plans from the day they start. And so it became part of everybody's orientation as well as all of the existing employees to ensure that they were understanding what all employees were getting. We also did have other arms of the organization that already had a fairly good cultural learning program in place. So we're able to take that one and replace it with this one. So we had an enterprise approach to cultural appreciation learning. And so, yes, it was approved to go to all of the organization. Each module is 30 minutes. So that's two hours worth of learning. So it's extremely massive investment for us as an organization, but it's such an important one. And we know that it has impacted our people and will continue to impact. You know, when we look at the first 12 months, we had 12,000 people in the organization that had completed all four

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modules. And we continually see, you know, as new people come on, you know, we're looking around about 7,000 program completions. Remembering that's four modules, we're looking to almost up to 30,000 unique instances of the learning occurring. So it is massive.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

And it will be interesting over time, I know it is still a little too early to be able to look at shifts in the provision of culturally sensitive, safe and accessible services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. And that this is by no means the only initiative, that there's plenty that you are undertaking through your reconciliation action plans. But it'd be interesting over time to track shifts in that area as well for the organisation, Peter. So final question, what tips do you have for others who might like to get started to do more with increasing cultural appreciation for Indigenous peoples or any other part of their workforce or customer base? So cultural appreciation generally, what tips do you have up for others who would like to do more with that area in their organisation?

#### **Peter McKenzie:**

The importance of that collaboration and consultation with First Nations people. It's their story to tell. You're the vehicle to tell that story in whatever method that is going to be delivered. Also, it's important and it's okay to be curious. I think that was one of the most important things. We were accepted and able to come in and ask those questions where we just didn't understand or didn't quite connect to. And so it was great to have a team working. So it's about having the right people that will be able you can actually trust that if you don't understand, it's OK. You know, that psychological safety really around the topic is really important.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much, Peter, for sharing your work and the work of the team and your insights with us today.

#### **Peter McKenzie:**

It's been a pleasure.



Learning Uncut are learning and development consultants that help Learning and Development leaders and their teams become a strategic enabler so that their businesses can thrive. We work in evidence-informed ways to drive tangible outcomes and business impact and are strong believers in the power of collaboration and community. We specialise in helping to build or refresh organisational learning strategy, update their L&D Operating Model, enable skills development, and conduct learning evaluation. We also offer workshops to shift learning mindset and practices for both L&D teams and the broader workforce – as well as speaking at public and internal events.

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### About your host, Michelle Ockers



Michelle is the co-founder and Chief Learning Strategy at Learning Uncut. She is an experienced, pragmatic organisational learning strategist, L&D capability builder and modern workplace learning practitioner. She also delivers keynotes, workshops and webinars for learning and broader professional or workforce groups at both public and in-house events.

Michelle received the following prestigious industry awards in 2019:

- Australian Institute of Training and Development Dr Alastair Rylatt Award for L&D *Professional of the Year – for outstanding contribution to the practice of learning and development*
- Internet Time Alliance Jay Cross Memorial Award – *for outstanding contribution to the field of informal learning*



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