

Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

Primary SDG	10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES
Broad theme	Indigenous coaches
Research	Training up a new generation of Indigenous coaches
Impact region	Indigenous Australia
Faculty	Arts and Social Sciences
School/Institute	Social Sciences
Academic	Dr Nick Apoifis
Project partners	Western Sydney University, Macquarie University
	Netball NSW and Netball Australia
	Gilbert & Tobin – seed funding of \$50,000
Related SDGs	4: Quality Education
	5: Gender Equality

Elevator pitch

In collaboration with WSU and Macquarie University, UNSW is providing coaching accreditation and health training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, increasing the number of Indigenous coaches and empowering them to be leaders and positively impact the lives of athletes and members of the community.

The Challenge: Very few Indigenous coaches despite the large number of Indigenous players

There are many players with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in Australian sport but very few coaching at elite and community levels. One of the reasons for this is a type of covert racism: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are believed to have the physical capacity to play but not the mental acuity to coach or be a leader. A similar disparity is observed around the world where Indigenous populations are present, and the evidence is supported by post colonial literature. Change is happening but slowly.

UNSW's solution: Train Indigenous people to become coaches

Teaming up with Western Sydney University and Macquarie University, Nick and his research partners conducted a multi-language literature review and found only a tiny amount of academic on Indigenous coaches. They decided to interview Indigenous Australian coaches to find out their stories and experiences in sport, and to better understand the reasons for the lack of Indigenous coaches at the elite level.

Nick and his partners approached 29 male and female coaches in sports such as boxing, netball, cricket, rugby league and union, AFL, and softball, at community, semi-professional and elite levels. Indigenous coaches told stories of racism and described a fear of the establishment, alongside stories of resilience, success and strength. Many coaches expressed a desire to receive training and sporting accreditation, preferably from

fellow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders sensitive to the challenges their people face in modern day sport. Nick and his team are publishing a book featuring these interviews in June 2018.

Having identified a need for a coaching program, Nick and his team started Coaching Unlimited. Under the program one and two-day workshops are held to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants with coaching accreditation and health promotion skills around suicide prevention, nutrition and mental health. Participants are encouraged to share their knowledge with athletes, coaching networks and the local communities in which they live and work. The program initially targets community level coaches as these coaches can have a profound impact on the lives of players and community members.

Netball NSW and Netball Australia are the first participants in Coaching Unlimited. Workshops for netball coaches have been held in Homebush and Mount Druitt. Athletics Australia was very keen to participate but due to capacity and funding constraints Nick was unable to offer them entry. Instead he encouraged them to copy the program and run it themselves, which they are now doing. The governing bodies for rugby league and rugby union have also expressed interest. For next steps, Nick is interested in applying for around \$20,000 in funding to research if the health skills part of the program is relevant and effective, and ways it could be improved.

The Impact: Increase number of Indigenous coaches and empower them to shape lives

The program is increasing the number of Indigenous coaches at the community level and giving them the tools they need to further their careers, become a role model, and give back to their communities. Increasing the number of community-level coaches will eventually result in an increase in the number of elite-level coaches with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

The health promotion part of the program is equipping coaches to identify mental health and nutritional issues among athletes and intervene if necessary with clinically proven techniques. After undertaking the program, one netball coach identified a player as suicidal and, thanks to Coaching Unlimited, responded in an appropriate and sensitive manner.

Increasing the number of Indigenous coaches at the community and elite levels raises the profile of the Indigenous community, and it goes some way to helping reduce the socioeconomic gaps faced by Indigenous Australians and minimise racism in sport and life.

Researcher

Nicholas Apoifis is a Lecturer in International Relations at UNSW. He works with the application and development of settler colonial theories, social movement theories and radical qualitative research practices. His 2017 manuscript *Anarchy in Athens* is based on unprecedented access to the world's most militant anarchist movement. His work with Coaching Unlimited is inspired by a desire to reduce the socioeconomic gap facing Indigenous communities in Australia, celebrate stories of resilience, restore justice and eradicate racism.

Ben Falkenmire 05.12.17