Indigenous philosophy is Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. The philosophy is a holistic rather than compartmentalised approach that has been passed down through Law and the Dreaming for generations supported and taught by Elders.

This philosophy is informed through Indigenous epistemologies (Knowledge and its application), ontologies (being as informed through Law, Dreaming and relationships) and axiologies (Cultural protocols and ethics informed through law and the Dreaming) that have developed directly through living, observation, experimentation and working with the natural world and its ecosystems to sustain and maintain balance.

For the National Centre for Cultural Competence (NCCC) to grow and thrive at the University of Sydney we need to recognise the First Peoples of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands, and their Protocols, Values and Principles.

**Principles and Values**

- **Spirit and Integrity**
  - This is the most important value that joins all our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ values together. The first part, Spirit, is about the on-going connection (continuity) between our past, current and future generations. The second part, Integrity, is about the respectful and honourable behaviours that hold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and cultures together.
  - The NCCC will honour spirit and integrity through its recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and how its staff will work together with the community of First Nations people and the learning community of the university.

- **Past, present and future**
  - An important holistic continuum that informs an Indigenous worldview. The past is as important and relevant as the present, and continues to inform law, protocols and praxis. The present was yesterday’s future and so the continuum of past, present and future have critically informed living the Law.
  - An honouring of time, as a continuum between past, present and future, forms the basis of the NCCC’s holistic philosophy.

- **Respect**
  - “Respect, in the Indigenous sense, means to listen and to hear and value what we have to say about ourselves and our experiences, even if what we have to say challenges your ways of knowing.” (Professor Sherwood, Director, National Centre for Cultural Competence, University of Sydney).
  - Respect is the fundamental, overarching driver and shaper of
our work.

The NCCC will take on Indigenous respect and will challenge ourselves through its application.

Listening

Listening is an active process and method. Listening from an Indigenous perspective requires a person to sit and observe the person speaking, allowing their story or narrative to unwind orally without interruption. This act demands respect of the speaker through a disciplined openness of the person ‘listener’ who is being provided with privileged information.

The NCCC will value listening as a crucial skill and show others how to do this.

Openness

We listen actively and mindfully. We acknowledge all peoples, respecting, acknowledging and welcoming diversity of world views, cultures and stand points.

The NCCC will be open and flexible in its thinking.

Reciprocity

It is a way of doing that supports the notion of balance. Relationships define obligations, relationships are multidimensional and to be sustained they must be balanced. The balance is critical to the continuity of the relationship be it with country, people or animal. The reciprocal process is laid down through law and Dreaming and as such continues to be dynamic in status and accountability.

The NCCC will develop relationships, assume balance in these and become reciprocal in this Indigenous way.

Self-reflection and Accountability

We need to practice and model critical thinking and reflective practice. We need to be accountable for our own sense of self and place, and how we work with others.

We strive for self-awareness by constantly reflecting on what we think, say and do. We enrich our knowledge of others by better knowing ourselves and relating often with diverse populations.

Concepts of accountability and responsibility lie at the heart of community and kinship.

We acknowledge the work and contributions of others. We comply with rules, laws and standards set down by community and the University.

The NCCC will practice and model critical thinking and reflective practice so as to know sense of self and place and how to work with others.

The NCCC will strive for self-awareness by constantly reflecting on what is thought, said and done and will enrich our knowledge of others by better knowing ourselves and
relating often with diverse populations.

The NCCC will be responsible and comply with rules, laws and standards set down by community and the University. It will acknowledge the work and contribution of others.

Sharing

Our Centre’s focus is on mentoring and modelling cultural safety. We aim to do this through a supporting and collaborative environment in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, diverse populations, teaching and learning, and research towards the building of a culturally competent University of Sydney.

The NCCC will share its work and thinking with others, will model cultural safety and develop a supportive and collaborative environment for all, and particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The NCCC respectfully acknowledges the wisdom and work which has informed these Principles and Values. In particular the publications, “Do No Harm: decolonising Aboriginal health research”, Juanita Sherwood, 2010 and "Keeping research on track. A guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about health research ethics”, Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council.