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EPILOGUE

Epilogue: The Reflection Wall and the Work of Becoming

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EDITORIAL NOTE
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Each morning of the Educational Justice Symposium began in the same way. Before a single presentation, participants were invited to stand at the Reflection Wall and write: how they were feeling, what they were thinking, and what they hoped the day might change. It looked like a small gesture. It was designed to be something larger. The Wall asked everyone in the room to move beyond the roles of audience and presenter, and to consider honestly how what they heard in Rockhampton would reach into their professional lives and their personal ones.

That purpose came from a conviction I hold about leadership: that it begins with identity. A gathering of scholars and practitioners can easily become an exchange of credentials, in which people present their work and keep themselves out of view. The Wall was meant to interrupt that habit. It offered a place to be authentic, to collaborate fully, and to support one another in the efforts each person had come to share. Identity was the starting point because the changes this community cares about, in classrooms, in institutions and in the towns and cities around them, are carried out by people, and people sustain such work only when they are able to bring all of themselves to it.

The articles in this edition show why that matters. They describe students who feel they must become less themselves in order to belong, educators who carry the emotional labour of mediating between institutions and the students they serve, staff whose wellbeing depends on the conditions in

which they work, and a community that has begun to imagine a safe place for its young people. In each, the question is not only what is known but who is doing the knowing, and who is given room to say so. Reflection is how we keep that question in view. It turns a conference from a series of sessions into a shared experience that participants can take home and act on.

The Wall was a new practice for us, and it worked. Participants wrote throughout the three days, and what they wrote gave the programme a second voice alongside the formal sessions: a record of lived experience, of hopes for the future, and of the connections being formed between academia and community. We will carry it forward. Reflection will shape how we convene in future, in the Symposium and in other conferences, so that each gathering captures lived experience and future goals, strengthens the link between the university and the community it serves, and keeps student development at the centre. Student development is the main purpose of educators, and the test of whether we are serving students well. Above all, we want to keep making room for authenticity, in spaces where people can voice their views, and learn from one another.

I am grateful to everyone who wrote on the Wall, to the presenters who allowed their ideas to be met with feeling as well as analysis, and to the colleagues who made the Symposium possible. The Symposium has ended, but the reflection it began has not. I invite readers to put this edition down for a moment and ask the questions the Wall asked of us: how do I feel, what am I thinking, and what will I change?

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