

Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai

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the degree of

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under the supervision of
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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Giovanni Raniera De Santolo declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Design (research), in the Design Architecture Building at the University of Technology Sydney. This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Abstract

Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai is a study aimed at understanding the cultural significance of water for Indigenous peoples. Water is life and holds an integral role in the ecologies of nature. Using an Indigenous storytelling approach, this creative research blends film, story, projection and design to create a new immersive sensory experience that raises consciousness of the sacred nature of water and our environment. To explore this, I look at the relational aspect of water, trees and their cultural and historic connections to Indigenous peoples. This draws upon my two cultural heritages, Aboriginal and Māori, as a basis for the work and reflects upon the commonalities between these two Indigenous worldviews. Both knowledge systems share a reverence for water not only as a source of life but continuously integral to the wellbeing of society. Through Indigenous storytelling methodology, design-led research, film design and lighting practices, this study illuminates the cultural significance of water. *Two Waters* uses cinematic practices, storytelling, space, sound design and projection to create and exercise a form of immersive video design for exhibition and exegesis.

There is a need to expand contemporary visual stories to understand and pose solutions that highlight Indigenous viewpoints and our connection to the environment. We face global environmental challenges and Indigenous practices of sustainability offer hope. Showcasing these Indigenous practices of sustainability to wider audiences is essential in raising awareness of water and the environmentally stressful impacts of globalisation. The *Two Waters* concept breaks down nation-state boundaries to reveal the commonalities of two Indigenous knowledge systems and the challenges faced by these ancient societies in protecting water.

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Introduction

This design research shares my experience of applying Indigenous practices when developing a creative multimedia project with Indigenous knowledge holders from both my Aboriginal and Māori communities. This exegesis documents the practice research and the creative project. Many of the quotations spread throughout this paper are extracts from interviews conducted with Elders Nancy Yukuwa McDinny (Garrwa and Yanyuwa), Gadrian Hoosan (Garrwa and Yanyuwa) and Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri) talking about the cultural significance of water, trees and the importance of protecting our environment for future generations. These extracts help to reinforce the themes of this work through a primary account of how truly significant these concepts are to our peoples.

As a whole, I hope that this work and the processes involved will stimulate insight into the benefits of applying Indigenous knowledge towards creative practices in design research fields. Bringing these creative elements together helps to reveal the commonalities of two Indigenous knowledge systems and the challenges faced by these ancient societies in protecting water. Being a descendant of the oldest and youngest cultures in the world, I felt an urge to explore the unique perspectives of these two ancestries. This exegesis and body of creative work is conceived as an invitation to others to share my experiences and journey in revitalising and growing my understanding of water and its significance.

Standpoint

This research looked at the cultural significance of water for Indigenous peoples in a time when climate change and extractive industries threaten the environment. Water has profound and deep-rooted connections to Indigenous cultures and histories. I seek to offer understandings of water that are Indigenous inspired while linking them to specific places. As a descendent of Garrwa and Barunggam peoples (Aboriginal) and Tapu Ika, Te Arawa and Te Aupouri, Ngati Kuri (Māori), I explore the premise of this work through these Indigenous perspectives. Both worldviews share a reverence for water as a source of life integral to the wellbeing of society. However, my intention is not only to explore these concepts but to revitalise and expand on the Indigenous knowledge and understandings shared through this research process. As climate crisis develops further into irreversible change to our environment, implementing Indigenous theory and practice is critical; now, more than ever, we need to challenge the western status quo in terms of land and water management and shift urgently the way we treat and live in our environment.

Indigenous Storywork design is a vibrant new allied theory and methodological framework that is being used across the world in academic and community research projects (Archibald et al., 2019). I hope readers and fellow creatives can learn something new from my experiences as I apply Indigenous storytelling methodologies to my practice. The Indigenous methodologies used inform the fundamental nature of working with Indigenous community members and ensuring the process aligned with their intent. Providing a deeper understanding of collaborative and holistic approaches when working with Indigenous

participants in a research context. In analysing the research process, I could document the transformation and shifts of my own film and storytelling practice. By sharing the insights gained from this research, I hope to evoke a greater understanding that Indigenous perspectives of water offer important knowledge and solutions for alleviating and combating climate crisis. New design research has an important part to play here by exploring and critiquing the "just transition" from fossil fuels to renewable energies and doing so while respecting and honouring Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination (J. De Santolo, 2018, p. 180).

This research journey included a creative component inspired by the cultural connections Indigenous people have with Country and my interest in immersive media experiences that began with my studies in high school. My creative major project in my multimedia HSC explored the cultural significance of Māori ta moko (tattooing) through an interactive iBook format for the iPad. The iBook concept included video interviews with my ta moko (Māori tattoo) artist Turumakina Duley from Arts Elemental (Duley, 2021) and involved consultations with my Elder, Vanessa Fisher, on incorporating Aboriginal and Māori designs. The interview footage was edited and sectioned to their relevant chapters, all including accompanying cultural design descriptions and historical contexts. The interviewing, its creative process and video documentation from this project introduced me to the world of filmmaking and led me to the Australian Television & Radio School. Once I completed my foundation diploma (2016) and Bachelor's degree in screen production (2018), I explored various roles in many film productions. From first assistant directing and camera assistant roles to video editing and film producing, I was able to refine my filmmaking capabilities to suit any production. After producing my second feature film, *Reflections in the Dust* (Sullivan, 2018), and experiencing the film festival circuit (53rd Karlovy Vary, 2018), I wanted to explore alternative exciting and engaging mediums while incorporating my own perspective, passion and cultural heritage.

My concept idea began when I asked the question: what cultural work is happening with my homelands and how can I connect with it more? As I was not living on my traditional lands, I wondered how I could learn and share some of this work in a meaningful way. Bringing the concept of "Country" to a video platform or space here on Gadigal lands in Sydney was an exciting challenge. There were many aspects to consider in order to provide an authentic immersive video representation of this cultural work. The aim is to give audiences an engaging immersive experience using my filmmaking skillset alongside contemporary media technologies in an installation space. This included the combined use of projection, video, sound and spatial design and, most importantly, story. The key intention was to emphasise the importance and power of Indigenous storytelling, Indigenous practice, and our traditional relationship to native lands.

Overview of Research Project

This creative research project is made up of a thesis and the documentation of a creative project. There are three chapters in the thesis, as follows:

Chapter One provides the contextual nature of *Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai*. It begins with a literature review of Indigenous methodologies and how the methods selected fed into my

practice, followed by a research and project proposal to initiate the *Two Waters* research journey.

Chapter Two introduces the creative research approach. This process began with conversations with Indigenous Elders around water and water trees, which highlighted the key themes and intentions for the project. As the creative research journey progressed, I describe the *Two Waters* project's development and production, including the various components and steps taken to achieve the final prototype, which in turn led to the exhibit itself, showcasing the *Two Waters* installation for viewing and documentation.

Chapter Three provides an overall reflection on the *Two Waters* creative research journey. The chapter explores feedback from Elders on the exhibit and the creative process, input that was important to the research outcomes and to a reflexive discussion around Indigenous methodologies. Reflection also offered a way to scaffold enactment of the creative practice, which then revealed transformations in my film practice in a decolonised research context.

Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai - Exhibit Documentation

The link below takes you to the *Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai* exhibit. This is the final work showcased at the UTS: DAB Gallery.

Link: <https://vimeo.com/561175688>

Password: Giovanni2021

The additional links below relate to specific milestones in the development of the creative project. Each link is revealed and discussed as this thesis unfolds.

The edited compilation of all the interviews into one video.

Link: <https://vimeo.com/639806494>

Password: Interviews2021

The first round of overlay video edits with raw dialogue and no sound design.

Link: <https://vimeo.com/513676128>

Password: Creativeproject2021

The raw underwater footage that was captured with underwater composed sounds.

Link: <https://vimeo.com/639855061>

Password: Underwater2021

The final visual and audio sound design lock off for the feature video.

Link: <https://vimeo.com/521306743>

Password: Giovannilockoff2021

Chapter One

Water is a dreaming, even the bush is a dreaming from those two animals. You know? Old people used to carry water. You know because water is very important, it keeps you alive. Without water we'll die.

- Nancy Yukuwal McDinny (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

Introduction

Stories and the act of storytelling have always played a significant role for Indigenous peoples in passing on knowledge, culture and teachings (Lee, 2015). I recall from childhood listening to the Māori creation stories of Ranginui, the sky father, and Papatuanuku, the earth mother, and how they were forced from their embrace by their children, thus creating the world. And of the demi-god Maui's adventures, hooking the great fish that we now know as Aotearoa New Zealand and his iconic challenge with sun. Later in life, our Garrwa teachings with Elders yarn about dreaming stories, language and their references to the land in Gulf Country, NT. These stories gave life to my imagination and understanding of the world, all the while encompassing me with the cultural teachings and values embedded within them. For Indigenous peoples, sharing stories is a way of life, a way of understanding and a way for us to connect. To connect with each other, our lands and our histories. On my first trip to Borroloola, we joined a protest with all four clan groups coming together against the continuing impacts of mining on the main river system there, Narwinbi or McArthur River. In those experiences and histories are stories of survival and resistance. For Larissa Behrendt, story is at the heart of asserting Indigenous self-determination: "Storytelling not only challenges or decolonizes institutions, it is a way of reasserting Indigenous voice, perspective and experience. Storytelling is an act of sovereignty that reinforces Indigenous identity, values, and worldview." (Behrendt et al., 2019, p. 175)

Provocation: how am I going to find an engaging and innovative platform that would resonate with Indigenous worldviews?

Innovative technologies are on the rise and as a result there are now more alternative methods of portraying story compared to the traditional oral or written forms. Contemporary artists and their stories are now given more freedom to critically challenge and engage audiences from different perspectives using these new technologies (Parrtjima, 2021; J. De Santolo, 2019; Reihana, 2012, p. 31). Ranging from television to cinema, to now deep virtual augmented realities, large-scale digital spectacles and immersive installation spaces (Destination NSW, 2021; Pipilotti Rist, 2018), they present infinitely diverse ways in which we can captivate and impact audiences today. Many Indigenous artists are now using these contemporary platforms and I share examples throughout this research. As a filmmaker, I have been inspired by many creatives using these new technologies, and they provide exciting opportunities for discussion and experimentation in storytelling.

Indigenous knowledge is relational, and we have a unique relationship to the natural world through our genealogies (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 3). Even though I grew up in cities and in two colonial nation-states, I have always maintained a special relationship with the oceans and rivers from my childhood. After undertaking this study, I acknowledge the profound importance of water in my identity and the shared experiences for my peoples on both sides of the Tasman Sea. For Aboriginal peoples having language, story, dreaming and ceremony activates and personifies our connection to the land. Like many across Australia, my Garrwa family from Borroloola are still fighting to protect these rights (Hoosan, 2018; Cavadini & Strachan, 1981; J. De Santolo, 2019). This ties in with Indigenous worldviews having been either obscured or heavily appropriated in the western world. There is a clear need to educate and decolonise western frames of thinking when working with Indigenous knowledge and understanding (Smith, 2012; Mita, 2018). As an Indigenous man, I find these are important aspects of my life. Learning of the historic systematic oppression of Indigenous peoples and values motivates the need for change. I believe storytelling can be a positive contribution to the change we all strive for.

The foundation of Indigenous sustainability practices were, first, caring for and protecting the land and waters that have helped us thrive. Colonisation, systematic oppression and globalisation are just some hurdles that are deeply embedded in our histories and are issues that we face today. Many of my family in the Gulf Country of the Northern Territory are facing the impact of contaminated river systems and water sources (J. De Santolo, 2019). The impact of Indigenous storytellers and practitioners in my family paved the way with their work. Landmark films and movements such as the *Two Laws* documentary (Cavadini & Strachan, 1981), *Warburdar Bununu* (J. De Santolo, 2019) and the climate strikes and fracking marches led by Dad Gadrian Hoosan from Borroloola tell stories of resilience (Fryer, 2019; Hoosan, 2018). This is also juxtaposed by another relation, prominent female Māori activist and filmmaker Merata Mita. These Indigenous storytellers are seen as pioneers in and contributors to decolonising the arts in both Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and many other regions within the global community. Staying grounded in our cultural roots, decolonising the screen and one's responsibility as an Indigenous filmmaker are my key inspirations drawn from these works. I live and breathe between two worlds and being able to represent two cultures is a huge honour and a consistent theme throughout this work. These Indigenous storytellers have influenced much of my practice and enthusiasm to follow in their footsteps, advocating for positive change through story, design research and film.

As Aboriginal Māori, I felt it was important to share some context of our cultural standpoint in the natural world. Although there are various ways to explore this, I wanted to show a way in which we introduce ourselves both as individuals and a community (Archibald, 2008). A way we ground ourselves is shared by how we describe ourselves as Indigenous/tangata whenua (people of the land) (Walker-Morrison 2014; Seed-Pihama 2019).

It helps us because no one from outside of this country will tell us who we are and that we don't belong to this country because all that proof and evidence is in the land. Everything that we got. The stories, the songs, the land and all the dreaming that connects us to the land. And all the animals the people are connected to.

- Gadrian Hoosan (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

We describe ourselves as tangata whenua (people of the land). When we introduce ourselves in official settings, we begin with the name of our waka (canoe), which is one of the fleets of vessels that carried our ancestors on routes across the Pacific from Hawaiki to Aotearoa New Zealand, before contact with the western world. We also share the name of our iwi (tribe/s), hapu (sub-tribe group/s) and details of our whakapapa (ancestry). But before we name people, we name our maunga and awa or moana, the mountain and river or lake that like each hapu to a specific place. Maintaining our geographical roots, our tūrangawaewae or “place to stand”.

- Deborah Walker-Morrison (2014)

I would like to share one of my Pepeha or identity chants as an example:

Grandma’s side, Te Puke, Bay of Plenty
*Ko Te Arawa toku waka
Ko Rangioru toku maunga
Ko Kaituna toku awa
Ko Te Arawa toku iwi
Ko Tapuika toku hapu
Ko Giovanni Raniera De Santolo toku ingoa*

*Te Arawa is my canoe
Rangioru is my mountain
Kaituna is my river
Te Arawa is my tribe
Tapuika is my sub-tribe
Giovanni Raniera De Santolo is my name*

Indigenous Methodologies

To help me navigate this research into cultural connections to water, I used aspects of decolonising methodological approaches provided by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Smith, 2021) and more localised creative applications offered through the work of my father, Jason De Santolo, in our homelands as a researcher, activist and filmmaker. This commitment allowed me to look at my role as an "insider researcher" with communities and stay true to the lessons taught by our predecessors to revitalise, promote and express stories through a decolonising lens (Smith, 2012). Indigenous storytelling and knowledge sharing have been told through song, dance and ceremony for thousands of years. With multimedia and technologies now more mainstream, there are many questions surrounding how to safeguard the authenticity, respectful representation and self-representation of cultural stories. I drew upon Smith's formative work, experiences and fundamental understandings of being an Indigenous researcher to guide me in how to conduct myself when researching in the community and ensure the intent of the work aligned with the community.

Before moving forward in this journey, it is important to understand the historical context of the research and the researcher. Identifying the western definition of "research" and its

conflicted historical association in Indigenous spheres provides perspective and acknowledgement of past transgressions we as "insider researchers" (a researcher from within the community) do not wish to repeat. Smith introduces the conversation with the definition of "research" from what she herself terms a colonised perspective, identifying "research as a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interest and ways of resisting of the "other" (Smith, 2012, p. 2). Through my work I intend to contribute respectfully, align the intent of the project with Elders' aspirations and move forward in collaborating meaningfully with communities.

Before any form of research can be conducted within an Indigenous community, there are critical Indigenous protocol and ethics questions that need to be addressed. How is the chain of title determined? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who designed its questions and framed its scope? How will its results be disseminated? (Smith, 2012). These were all important questions I considered when framing my own research approach and as part of the unpacking of various project goals to strategically address limitations in my existing film practice. Linda Smith's questions offered key insight to the creative research approach when using Indigenous practice in my proposed study and its accompanying projects. The ability to think deeply and ask yourself questions is important, as they have the ability to help you and the project in sustaining its intent.

Provocation: How can Indigenous storytelling, video, sound, projection and design thinking combine to communicate the unique inter-relational nature of water from an Indigenous world view?

It is important to be clear about the research and knowledge sharing practice. Smith specifies use of the term "knowledge sharing" rather than "sharing information". Conducting forms of "community research" has been key to the use of decolonising methodologies and research approaches by other Indigenous land practitioners, such as cultural fire leader Uncle Victor Steffensen (Steffensen, 2020). During my time participating in workshops like the National Indigenous Fire Workshop 2019, Dhungala, I was privileged to witness Indigenous knowledge in action on Country. It was powerful to see Victor Steffenson and local Yorta Yorta Elders enacting knowledge sharing around the important cultural fire practice and using video as a teaching and documentation tool. The partnership of the Firesticks Project with Jacqueline Gothe's visual communication and emerging practice was landmark in terms of its engagement with Indigenous knowledge systems and ideas around tracing and communicating shared traditional knowledge (Gothe, 2017). Right now, it is critically important to protect and empower Indigenous culture and world views rather than to negate it completely using modern science as the contemporary western answer for all knowledge (Smith, 2012).

During my time studying Smith's work I came upon this statement:

An Aborigine friend also made the comment that we "sing the land into existence". For Māori there are several ways of identifying one's Indigenous "community". One commonly used way is to introduce yourself by naming the mountain, the river, the tribal ancestor, the tribe and the family. Through this form of introduction, you locate yourself

in a set of identities which has been framed geographically, politically and genealogically. (Smith, 2012, p. 126)

The statement resonates with me quite personally from first-hand experience in talking with my Elders and family, Gadrian Hoosan and cousin Scott McDinny. As custodians of songs for our people, I acknowledge their strength and wisdom in taking up this important role. Being conscious of applying this form of identifying one's self in more formal circumstances throughout this research journey is important when moving forward creatively and communally. As a descendant of two cultures, I hope this work inspires further discussion on Indigenous methodology and culture in film and communication fields relating to immersive installation and design. Despite the limitations of a research Master's, I can still articulate my own understanding around a set of protocols for engagement with storytelling and design, and how we should navigate knowledge sharing and representation respectfully, whether we be Indigenous or non-Indigenous.

Indigenous Storytelling Methodologies

Indigenous storytelling has traditionally been practiced through song, dance and painting for thousands of years all over the world. Across the world there are similar themes, cultural codes and worldviews. I wanted to draw on both of my cultural worldviews during this creative research journey to bring a unique approach and perspective to contemporary understandings of water. I chose the storytelling methodologies of Indigenous Storywork, Yarnbar Jarngkurr (talk~story) and Pūrākau because they promote and exercise traditional applications of narrative and collaborative processes to revitalise our culture and decolonise western methods (Archibald, 2008; J. De Santolo, 2018; Lee, 2009). Before I introduce my aligned approach, I feel that it is important to pay homage to the foundational work that has paved the way for Indigenous Storywork.

Indigenous Storywork

If we lose these stories, we will do a disservice to our ancestors – those who gave us the responsibility to keep our culture alive. (Hanna & Henry, 1995).

Indigenous Storywork has become one of the key foundation stones for Indigenous storytelling practices as a theory and methodology today. A Canadian First Nations Stó:lō and coast Salish woman, Archibald navigated the role of storyteller to better understand the complex nuances of the meaning-making process involved in using Indigenous stories for research and/or educational purposes. It is clear that this work stems from an Indigenous standpoint with the intention of further benefiting the Indigenous community. Thus, it exercises a form of decolonising practice that sits outside the academy from which this thesis emerges (Smith, 2012). Archibald shares the history behind her work, from being a beginner storyteller to sharing the process, experiences and perspective of her research journey. An incredibly relatable path, I found it inspiring in its resonance with my journey and the generosity of her work. The term "Storywork" as a methodology is coined to us and the

importance of storytelling is showcased with the Trickster Coyote mythos, providing poetic exemplars throughout her work (Archibald, 2008).

The core influences Archibald presents revolve around her key Storywork principles: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness and synergy (Archibald, 2019, p. 1). Archibald also quotes Chief Khot-La-Cha discussing Indigenous relationships to nature's resources, the importance of spirituality and the holistic benefits of cultural knowledge. She speaks of Indigenous people's reverence for nature, particularly for water, and of the connections Indigenous people have to the land, spirituality, culture and language.

There is a fine balance between sustaining our cultural stories and sharing our contemporary experiences: how do we continue this storytelling lineage and at the same time create contemporary stories for future generations to learn from? I understand that we can apply the same principles and themes from old stories to a specific context and circumstance, but the challenge remains in trying to blend ancient cultural stories with new media for different audiences. I understand that with the right procedures, process of protocol and permissions from Elders and the community, this is acceptable. However, this complexity is important for me as an Indigenous film practitioner who is sharing predominantly contemporary stories of experience. During this research I consistently applied and critically reflected on how Storywork principles and themes informed my work. I described my experiences applying these key principles at each stage and where necessary shared these experiences for others to critique, challenge or learn from.

Archibald's research journey and experiences offer very important details about the transformative process and growth that she underwent as she immersed herself in Indigenous knowledge systems and protocols. Archibald's starting point was wanting to learn and earn her role as a storyteller and understanding the power stories hold, to become story ready. As I followed her through her written experiences, it helped me gauge, better prepare and articulate my own research journey to become story ready to share *Two Waters*. My connection to this particular methodology comes from my two Indigenous cultural perspectives while growing up and living in a western-dominated context. My need to rediscover, relive and contribute to both the Indigenous and wider communities was the driver of this research.

Methods

Now it's very important for me to look after country, that why we fighting today. To the mining company like you know? Fracking. They are destroying the land. That's why it's getting hot, the sun is killing us. You know, we keep telling them don't damage all the rivers, don't damage the water. Because water is really good for us. You know? It's got a lot of dreaming, on the site, the sea and along the coast. That's where we got to protect it.

- Nancy Yukuwal McDinny (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

Yarnbar Jarngkurr (talk~story)

Jason De Santolo explores and advocates for the renewal of ancient Indigenous song traditions as a way of asserting self-determination and shielding homelands from extractive practices like mining. He compares and contrasts the various media formats for storytelling and investigates how decolonising methodologies can impact the status quo in western spheres (J. De Santolo, 2018). De Santolo highlights the social impact of contemporary western colonisation and influence on Indigenous peoples, and emphasises the importance of revitalising language and tradition. These elements play a key role in justifying the pursuit of Indigenous self-determination and autonomy. De Santolo's creative doctorate infused Indigenous story research with video practice through two Garrwa video projects, termed songlines by the Ngabaya and Darrbarrwarra. The Ngabaya walaba (public songline) explores the creative process of video practice in media spaces and the collaborative protocols necessary to achieve and validate authenticity, while Darrbarrwarra (good warriors fighting for the land) addresses the decolonising practices through western mediums, self-determination and self-representation. The thesis revealed and manifested the decolonising research methodology called "Yarnbar Jarngkurr" (talk~story) mentioned earlier. Jason De Santolo's research journey was complemented with personal perspective and experience, giving a critical reflection on the necessity of Indigenous self-determination, sustainability, visual sovereignty and cultural revitalisation.

Song traditions have guided J. De Santolo's research. The first video is led by Elders and The Sandridge Band from Borroloola using the Ngabaya walaba (public songline). This is an ancient songline revering "*creation stories, land and the importance of original laws and conduct*" (J. De Santolo, 2019, p. 28). Darrbarrwarra is a collaborative effort with Scott McDinny and the Elders and the researcher as composers alongside the production partnership with Koori hip-hop artist Nooky. A music video production with a combination of influences from Garrwa liberational oral testimonies and Koori hip-hop nuances, these songlines give context to the importance of conceptualisation, collaboration, protocol and enacting original laws for Indigenous peoples in a research context.

In Jason De Santolo's study, the renewal of the Ngabaya songline took place through video practice and created its own "songline" logic as part of the Yarnbar Jarngkurr methodology. In this study I focus on talking and listening from Yarnbar Jarngkurr. Focusing on one aspect of Jason's work, Yarnbar allows a localised, tribally-based engagement with a songline logic. This offers a framework for shifting and reorienting the video and projection mapping practices engaged with in this study. Aligning intent with collaborators and contributors is

critical and, in this case, it demanded following the intention of the Elders' knowledge sharing. A key component in the first half of this creative research journey was yarning (J. De Santolo, 2018). De Santolo talks about the art of listening when undertaking a creative collaborative process with Elders and knowledge holders. I enacted this process when working with the Elders and during the interviews.

Pūrākau

Pūrākau is a methodology for decolonising Māori narratives and is also a traditional teaching method in our culture. The definition of Pūrākau is "the root of the tree" ("Pū" means "origin" and "Rakau" means "tree") (Waretini-Karena, 2014) and it resonates with the themes of my work. More commonly known as a term of reference for Māori myths and legends, Pūrākau was developed by Jenny Lee-Morgan to revitalise Māori theory and methodology. The term "Ako" is understood as a process for learning and teaching, as a Māori form of pedagogy, where the potential of re-presenting traditional and contemporary stories for teaching purposes is its key premise. Māori creation stories such as "Maui and the Giant Fish" provide forms of guidance and platforms for our cultural understanding of the world around us (Lee, 2009).

The way in which knowledge was transmitted was through the process of ako. Given that knowledge was primarily to benefit the collective, ako in traditional Māori society was inclusive, co-operative, reciprocal and obligatory. (Lee, 2005, pp. 5-6)

Lee introduced the concept of the Indigenous bricoleur (Lee, 2009), that is, combining various components from a set of practices to create a new methodological approach. I see resonances of the Indigenous bricoleur in my project, drawing on my film practice and using new projection technologies and methodologies as possible solutions to a specific goal. In this research, various practice components needed to be addressed and combined to create an immersive experience. Alongside the technical hurdles, the Indigenous methodologies were in place to keep the "new" practice grounded, guided by protocol and actioned with liberational intent. This is explored further in Chapter Two.

Contemporary Indigenous researchers are starting to draw on traditional narratives in "re-presented" fashion to help express their stories and research (Lee, 2009, p. 3), reformatting not only our own stories but the platform of choice as well. Film, television and digital art exhibition are new ventures Indigenous peoples are now navigating in order to satisfy the audience and context, in this case environmental impacts on our lands. Lee explains that Pūrākau can also be used to "re-present" the story that belongs to the storyteller. These were important considerations when moving forward in my own creative journey, in the presentation of Indigenous knowledge and contemporary experiences. Tailoring the key Pūrākau methodology to my film and research practice was part of the process of conceptualising the creative methodology as well as the emphasis on rakau/trees.

Despite the style of the story, a Pūrākau approach should provoke and engage the audience to bring their own meanings and "readings" of the story, these stories should

stimulate reflective thinking. Subsequently, Pūrākau was inherently pedagogical. (Lee, 2005, p. 12)

In asking my Māori Rangatira (tribal Elder) and cultural advisor to share stories of water, I aimed to provide an educational backdrop to our cultures along the premise of my work. My approach was to mobilise design thinking and video practice as a way to harness story rather than explain the importance of water and trees. The topics of water and trees are also interconnected with the struggles our people have in protecting our lands and waters. This is a lived reality for many Indigenous communities locally and internationally. Indigenous cultural resurgences around the world are successfully tackling major global concerns with our living ecologies, climate change, invasive pollution and mineral extraction (Corntassel, 2012). A recent report by the Indigenous Environmental Network details the effectiveness of this work:

Indigenous resistance has stopped or delayed greenhouse gas pollution equivalent to at least one-quarter of annual U.S. and Canadian emissions. (Indigenous Environmental Network, 2021, p. 3)

Scope of Study and Practice

I conducted a series of semi-formal video interviews alongside audio recorded “yarns” with Garrwa and Māori Elders and knowledge holders. The discussions consisted of stories of water, water trees, the context of water in our communities, story and the importance of protecting the lands and water. This shared knowledge informs and partially frames the creative work. Video recordings and note taking of water and trees were set in various environments on Gadigal lands Sydney and Aotearoa New Zealand. This process helped to explore design concepts inspired by the recorded work. I also experimented with water designs and video with projection mapping software, all of which are discussed later in this thesis.

Pre-Research Consultation

The consultation stage is an important step before working with or undertaking research in Indigenous communities. Seeking out relevant Elders, community members and knowledge holders and discussing the work you wish to undertake is common practice in the Indigenous research paradigm. My experience of this stage is something I feel it important to highlight and share. Respecting Indigenous participants cultural connections, standpoint and intrinsic value was key to this process. For an Indigenous insider researcher (Smith, 1999, p. 2) and collaborator, it is important to be transparent in relation to participants throughout the research and creative process (Create NSW, 2021; Australia Council for the Arts, 2007). For this creative research project, this included discussing project goals, data management and the intentions of the final work. Further to this, during the project I maintained a dialogue with participants when recording, using and sharing the research data. Providing drafts for feedback during these open discussions was also important as it ensured a greater level of engagement and creative input than in the traditional researcher–subject relationship. Copies of the raw data and final works were also provided to them. There should also be options for contributors to state how they wish to be acknowledged and credited. Taking these simple steps helped me to garner the right approval and permissions to begin the “*Two Waters*” work. Transparency around the intention and outcomes of the work is critical to establishing a trusting relationship between all parties involved (AIATSIS, 2020). Whether you already have an existing relationship with participants or not, you need to clarify the whole scope of the project and outcomes and the level of engagement that is asked of them. A good framework that I used as a base for my approach was defined by six core values — spirit and integrity, cultural continuity, equity, reciprocity, respect and responsibility (NHMRC, 2018). This provides important guidelines for Indigenous and non-Indigenous practitioners to collaborate ethically with Indigenous participants.

My project methodology used two frameworks. The first was the decolonising methodology (Smith, 2012; J. De Santolo, 2018) and the Indigenous Storywork (Archibald 2008). This provided a foundational approach to conducting research with Indigenous individuals and communities. The researcher needs to understand the whole scope of the project and the outcome needs to align with the community and collaborators alike. The method of “talking and yarning” introduced by Jason De Santolo in his video *Towards understanding the renewal*

of ancient song traditions through Garrwa (2018) guides the conversational approach to the research. As the researcher, you are adhering to the knowledge of the collaborator and need to apply forms of listening (J. De Santolo, 2018; Gothe, 2015). Being able to conduct yourself as an ally and student, acknowledging the information and the participants involved holistically, is in itself a form of respect.

What did I ask participants?

As a filmmaker drawing on my own interviewing experiences, I felt this was an interesting challenge due to the relationships I had with my participants. My first instinct for this was to visualise how I was going to best approach each participant's interview. I understood that each person treats sharing knowledge in formal contexts very differently. I wanted to make this as comfortable and fluid an experience for my participants as I could. I felt that as long as I identified each participant's contextual standpoint as knowledge holder, curating the conversation accordingly would result in better outcomes. One set of questions would not suit everyone. As a result, I decided to use some baseline questions as a template that I could adjust according to the direction of the subject matter each interviewee was comfortable with (Archibald, 2008). Here is the template I decided to work with that I sent to participants alongside the invitation letter, participation information sheet (PIS) and consent form:

Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai

By: Giovanni De Santolo

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Before the interview begins there needs to be a discussion outlining the thematic that I'm exploring to the interviewees. This includes personal, traditional and contemporary perspectives on cultural connections water and trees. There will be three broad elements that I'll be exploring:

- The cultural resurgence of Indigenous knowledge and water protectors in climate crisis
- Interrelational connections to water and trees (this includes stories, traditional and historical knowledge).
- How Indigenous stories around water can be shared through design projection and story driven research.

ELDERS AND KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS AND EXPERT PARTICIPANTS

Questions:

Please introduce yourself, your cultural affiliations and occupation.

Intro: *As you know I'm doing a study exploring the significance of water in a more cultural lens for Indigenous peoples.*

1. What comes to mind when you think about the importance of water and its relationship to trees?
Especially with our contemporary stakes around ongoing colonisation, globalization and water sources that are either being privatized, mismanaged or contaminated.
2. Why do you think there is a cultural resurgence of Indigenous knowledge and water protectors?
 - a. *Could be a story;*
 - b. *A place or;*
 - c. *A memory.*
3. What are the first thoughts when you think about the relationship of water to native trees?
Would you be able to share any stories about water and trees?
What did you learn from this story? Why was it so important for you?

Any final words you would like to add?

Screenshot

Figure 1. 1: Interview questions shared with participants.

The questions were informed by the Indigenous literature mentioned in this chapter, inspired by the decolonising framework of Storywork's principles and set according to the premise of the project (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 1). Once my first draft questions were created, I consulted my supervisors and made adjustments according to their feedback. Starting the interview with the participant introducing themselves and their story was a key component, beginning with something familiar and providing grounded context for the viewer/s.

In terms of the flow of the interview, it was important to let the participants share knowledge in their own time. During the yarning session themselves, I had a notebook on hand to document key points and follow the Elders sharing their thoughts. If there was something relevant to the research topics, I noted them down and highlighted the point in time as a reference for the next question, to ensure that the conversation did not veer far from the core themes. Understanding these methods was critical in keeping the flow and rhythm going. In this context with the camera and recording equipment, the main goal was to keep everyone

comfortable. Overall, this approach allowed room for a more positive, organic and authentic experience.

The Importance of Trees and Water

Like old people used to tell us don't cut down that tree [quotes old elders in language]. They used to tell us, "Don't break that tree. We'll get burn from up here [points up at sky]. And I got shocked, how did they know. Because they were carry it [knowledge] for thousands of years. You're not allowed to cut tree down because you'll get burned. When I studied at school, you know you get that, the ozone layer getting no good. And I said how did the old people know this? When they told us not to [the trees]. Because I was only a kid when they telling me. [This is referring to the ozone layer]

- Nancy Yukuwal McDinny (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

Story of native trees and water

This project explored not only the importance of water, but trees as well. The creative work incorporated two tree species from both nation-states, one from Australia and the other from Aotearoa New Zealand. The thought process behind this decision was that I wanted separate representations of both my cultures using culturally significant trees. I felt that this concept would strengthen the individuality of each of my stories and also share the same themes that links everything together, full circle, similar to Indigenous conceptual world views with the cycle of life and interrelatedness.

But before we could begin exploring these trees, we had to refer back to the pre-research consultation stage. It was important to work in sync with the protocols that I have talked about earlier and seek out my Elders for guidance. I reached out to my Garrwa Elders Nana Nancy Yukuwal McDinny and Grandfather Stewart Hoosan about which tree I should be referring to. The *Naja* (better known as the Paperbark tree) was selected for me as a native tree in Australia. This would be a representation of trees in Australia for my creative work. The chosen tree species from Aotearoa New Zealand was the Kauri tree, renowned for its size, stature, quality and cultural significance as Whakaruruhau – the great protector of the forest. Dating back thousands of years, the Kauri timber was known to be used for waka (canoes) and its connection to our creation stories. Due to the dieback disease afflicting it, the Kauri is now considered a threatened species (Morton, 2018). The Kauri tree is a *taonga* (treasure) for all of Māori culture and to be able to share its significance through this project was an honour. Now that I had a tree from each of my homelands, I could move forward with my design draft. To figure this out I needed once again to seek out my Elders and knowledge holders for their experience and understandings. Before our meetings I would begin by asking myself fundamental questions and filter out anything that felt out of place.

Questions like:

- What are the uses of the Paperbark/Kauri tree?
- What stories can I draw out from Elders from these trees?
- What are their historical contexts to our cultures in regard to water?

After various stages of revision and feedback from supervisors, it was thought best to keep it simple with open-ended questions so the participants sharing the knowledge could decide what was most appropriate in that moment. This intentional decision was important because I felt the need to refer back to the Indigenous practice of “yarning”, applying the respectful role of student and to listen (J. De Santolo, 2018). The final outcomes of this can be seen in my interview questions template and throughout this paper.

Creative Precedent Investigation

My passion and curiosity with film and media have taken me on many creative journeys. The ability to shoot, edit and produce video content has given me the tools and experience to explore different avenues surrounding storytelling. During my studies in film theory at the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS), I came across some fascinating work in the field of projection, immersive installation and large-scale multimedia. The use of screen and projection has been used in various formats by different artists depending on the context of their work, ranging from dynamic art installations (Reihana, 2016; Rist, 2018) and immersive spaces (TeamLab 2001), to large-scale multi-project presentations (Destination NSW, 2021). The use of projection and the ability to present stories in the most unique and innovative of ways excited me as it promised infinite possibilities. I asked myself, how can story, video, sound, projection and spatial design enhance immersive experiences? How can immersive experiences shift perceptions of water and trees from two different worldviews and contexts? By what means can innovative storytelling help us relate to water in more meaningful ways? It was also important to create a level of engagement that was appealing to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences alike. Creative practices need critical engagement in order to grow and innovate and blending projection with film and spatial design holds exciting potential for all audiences. Bringing together two perspectives of water and trees was important for envisioning the wellbeing of future generations as well as maintaining meaningful connections for my families in Aotearoa New Zealand and Gulf Country, Northern Territory. The first important step I wanted to address was how to depict and immerse the stories within a set space, in a culturally respectful, accurate and appropriate manner. These examples would influence my creative vision and considerations when preparing my major project.

The combination of space, image, sound and projection shifts dimensions and perspectives when re-presenting a story or theme. Art installations such as *Sip My Ocean* (Rist, 2018) creates avenues for abstract video and projection in various formats, providing new sensory experiences for audiences. These immersive environments explore the relationships between nature, the body and technology (Rist, 2018). The various layers of complementary technologies combined with manipulated spaces evoke new meaning and, when done correctly, establish a feeling or mood. Rist showcased her *Sip my Ocean* exhibit by exploring projection positioning, atmospheric sound and furniture placement to achieve the desired effect of deep immersion. This could be reflected in my own creative project. Being conscious of where each element is placed in the set space is important to the experience. I considered how my projections (screens) were placed and how particular placement of the sound equipment achieved a level of ambience for the audience.

TeamLab Borderless (Japan) provide similar immersive experiences to Rist. Based in the MORI Building Digital Art Museum in Tokyo, they mount permanent interactive immersive exhibitions. Combining innovative interactive technologies with manipulated spaces and vibrant colour palettes, the creative collective from TeamLab curate immersive experiences like no other.

TeamLab aims to explore a new relationship between humans and nature, and between oneself and the world through art. Digital technology has allowed art to liberate itself from the physical and transcend boundaries. TeamLab sees no boundary between humans and nature, and between oneself and the world; one is in the other and the other in one. Everything exists in a long, fragile yet miraculous, borderless continuity of life. (TeamLab, 2001)

TeamLab incorporates landscape as a character, similar to our Indigenous views of Country. Their use of colour seems drawn from cultural references such as the native Japanese Sakura flowers. The premise of having interactive exhibitions invites the community to be a part of the art presented, setting a level of holistic engagement many other artists and collectives strive to achieve. TeamLab are my favourite inspiration and prime example of the possibilities for creative design, use of projection and spatial installation. As new and innovative technologies become more accessible, why should we not incorporate our own Indigenous worldviews to new forms of media such as this?

A prominent Australian company called AGB Events (AGB Events, 2020) has set the standard for many immersive experience events within Australia, supporting and developing feature events such as Vivid Sydney and Parrtjma Festival in Light, the Indigenous light festival based in Alice Springs. Events such as Parrtjma Festival and Vivid Festival Sydney (Destination NSW, 2021) were fantastic platforms for innovating new and provoking ways to engage audiences. Having compilations of various different light architecture and projection exhibitions and shows hosted all across Australia and on Country, AGB invites local and international artists to participate in projects that are presented at during various times in the year. The Parrtjma light festival has set the standard for me personally for its deep involvement with local Indigenous collaboration with artists, stories, exhibitions and their curation with audiences. The level of engagement between the audiences and the immersive exhibition are what I aim to achieve on my own, to tell story in a set space similar to the various components used that are similar to the examples shown here, using video, space, sound and projection combined to create an immersive experience of my own on a smaller scale, with the guidance of my Elders.

The Adelaide Fringe Festival is another entity that has commissioned a great set of installations through the event called Yabarra – Gathering of Light festival. Combining Indigenous story, projections and design to create an immersive experience for audiences. An inspirational quote provided by their cultural producer Karl Telder describes beautifully the cultural significance and intention behind the work, resonating with my own standpoint and intended outcomes:

Yabarra is a gathering to bring together ways of understanding through light. Story, sound, song and illumination combine to share knowledge of the past, present and future, in the now. Seasons follow light, they inform patterns of behavior through land, sea and sky country. All sacred ecologies are bound to these laws of nature. Yabarra holds deep wisdom. Yabarra's creators, the Mullawirrameyunna clan group of the Kurna Nation invite you to share in the spirit of place. Yabarra holds a message for all generations. (Telder, 2019).

My creative intention was to develop an intimate thought-provoking space inspired by the examples presented above. Although all these industry projects do communicate these ideas and themes in their own way, I felt there was still something missing. I believed that what separated my creative project from the examples shared above would be the use of story and voice. The voice of my Indigenous Elders will be a guiding force behind the story and projected visual environment, establishing an Indigenous narrative and invoking our cultural lens in a unique and engaging way for audiences to experience. I hope these creative examples can shed light on the impact and potential these contemporary creative spheres present as an alternative form of sharing our worldviews with express intent.

Lisa's groundbreaking work, *In Pursuit of Venus*, drew on Indigenous worldviews and colonial discourses through a re-presentation of the scenic wallpaper, *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* (*The Native Peoples of the Pacific Ocean*), 1804-5. In order to re-imagine this painting in her decolonised vision, Reihana incorporated aspects of immersive design and multi-channel panoramic video to achieve the desired outcome of reclamation (Reihana, 2015). What inspired me most about Reihana's work was her intent and creative approach. Reihana's aim to decolonise and reclaim this westernised depiction of Pacifica peoples aligns with my own intent and practice. There are many instances where western or other entities have re-presented Indigenous stories in their own image. This research aims to use Indigenous practice to guide the research and creative process to ensure it aligns with our Indigenous communities' goals and intentions (Smith, 2021, p. 137).

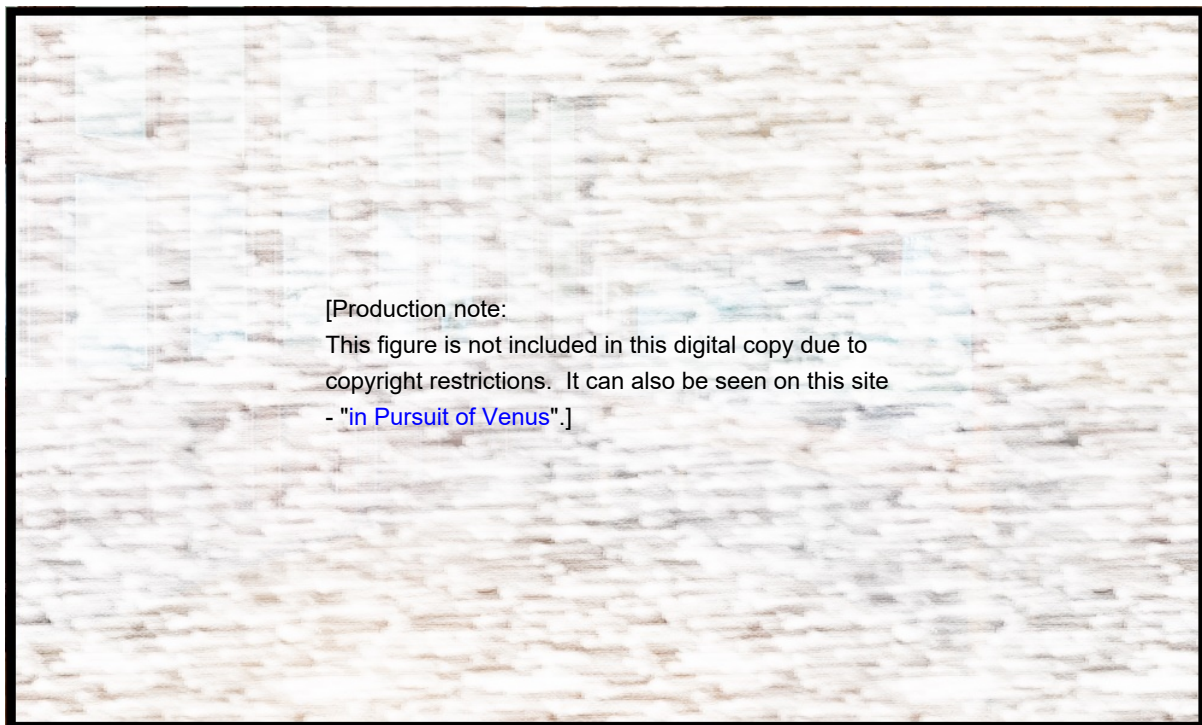


Figure 1. 2: Lisa Reihana's *Pursuit of Venus* [infected], project prototype set within a vitrine (Reihana, 2012).

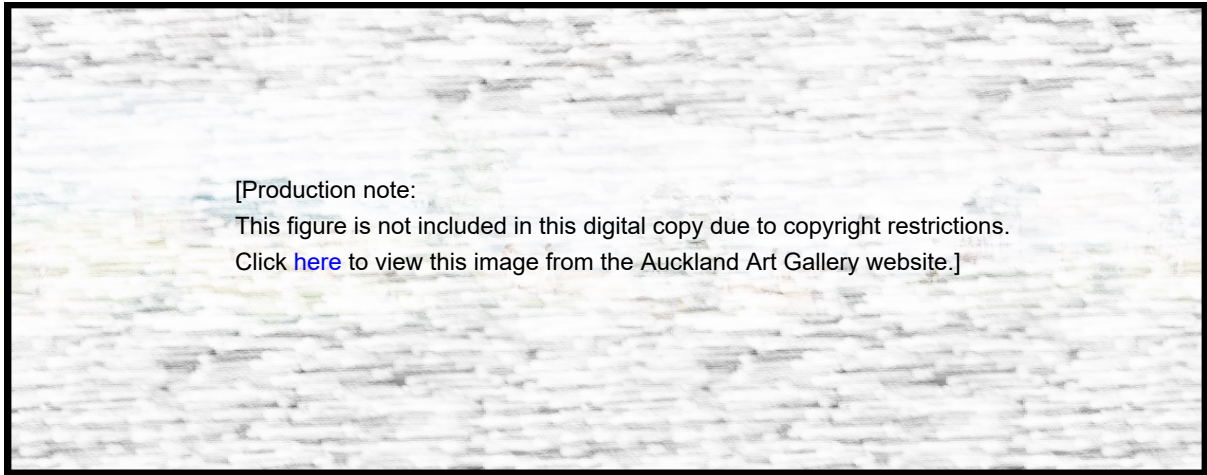


Figure 1. 3: Lisa 's Pursuit of Venus [infected] project exhibited at the Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand (Reihana, 2015).

I also looked towards Reihana's decision to start with a prototype before initiating and expanding a larger scale version (Reihana, 2012). I believed that thinking about this creative project as a proof of concept rather than a full-scale piece was a sensible decision. This approach reduced potential pressure and allowed room to explore and experiment. There were many factors to be conscious of when approaching this project in terms of scale. In order to understand these concepts of combining Indigenous story, voice, space and projection, trial and error was expected and encouraged. As the creative journey unfolded, the guidance of my Elders, supervisors and collaborators would play a pivotal role in enabling this project to achieve its intended message through immersive Indigenous storytelling.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shared the scope and nature of the work in the research. Covid-19 shifted the scope and plans for the research phase of the study. These uncertainties were overcome by following the government's health and safety guidelines as well as taking opportunities when presented. This included the challenge of conducting the interviews in Aotearoa New Zealand during lockdown. The interviews were significant in these times and contributed to achieving successful outcomes for the creative project. The yarning, consultation and interviews took place with the guidance of Elders and knowledge holders, reflecting the Indigenous Storywork principles of reverence, respect and responsibility. There was emphasis on maintaining ethical practices and protocols which was reinforced through the interview process. The creative work focused on the principle of interrelatedness which Jo Ann Archibald has discussed in relation to Indigenous video work. Interrelatedness is a concept that exists deeply in storytelling around the importance of water and in essence reflects the interrelation principles that are deeply embedded within our cultures and stories. In exploring immersive experiences, I began to realise the limitations of traditional film making as a platform. Experimenting with Storywork, I aimed to extend the frame and achieve a more immersive shared experience. The components of this immersive experience were video, projection, sound and spatial design. Immersive spatial installations as a platform can

provide infinite possibilities, an engaging way for our Indigenous connections of story, place and water to resonate for audiences.

Chapter Two

Introduction

This chapter has two intentions. The first is to describe the process and outcomes of the interviews and my reflections. The second is to share the creative design process of the *Two Waters* project. As a person with two Indigenous heritages, my intention is to share a deeper understanding of the rich connections we have to water. Through the sure guidance of Elders during this research, I hoped to gain some cultural insight. This perspective was learned through the interviews and reflected upon as I progressed. The creative process was guided by an Indigenous decolonising framework, and at key stages of the production I would return to the Elders for feedback and approval. Overall, through Indigenous storytelling methodology and design-driven literature, this chapter discusses my research and the creative design processes for the *Two Waters* creative project.

The first, interviews, section is a discussion on the processes of engaging with Elders and knowledge holders from Borroloola, NT, and Aotearoa New Zealand. It consists of three interviews and a reflection. The interviews with Elders provided the foundation for this whole project. Without their participation there would be no project, no community alignment and no stories to tell. Much of this is driven by the Indigenous storytelling practices explored in Chapter One and will be reflected on throughout this chapter. The outcomes of all our yarns helped to guide and inform the creative research journey in a cyclical way.

The second section describes the practice and experimental creative process, beginning with a formal proposal to better gauge the general scope of the project, and the writing of a draft script using the transcriptions. There is discussion of the reiteration process and feedback of scripts with supervisors and Elders for approval. Once approval was achieved, a draft was conceptualised to reveal the inspiration and intent behind specific creative decisions. This informed the timeline, resources and pre-production variables involved with production planning, namely, the audio-visual components of the spatial design drafts required for the exhibition space. Reflecting on the importance and benefits of collaborating with community members such as Elders was a significant part of these outcomes, as discussed in Chapter Three.

Section One: Interviews and Reflection

Now it's very important for me to look after country, that why we fighting today. To the mining company like you know. Fracking. They are destroying the land. That's why it's getting hot, the sun is killing us. You know, we keep telling them don't damage all the rivers, don't damage the water. Because water is really good for us. You know? It's got a lot of dreaming, on the site, the sea and along the coast. That's where we got to protect it.

- Nancy Yukuwal McDinny (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

At the production and fieldwork stage of this research, Covid-19 took centre stage around the world. I completed my research ethics application and planned my timelines for the interviews set in the project proposal. The ethics application helped me prepare my research process and provided insight into the variables when navigating my approach. The first set of interviews were conducted in March 2020, before the lockdowns in Sydney, with my Elders and family from Borroloola, Nana Nancy Yukuwal McDinny and my father's kinship brother, Dad Gadrian Hoosan. They were (and are) both leaders in our region and in the broader movement for Indigenous climate justice. The last interview, with Patau, also in March 2020, was more complicated. I had to make the important decision to move out of my home and take the last flight to Aotearoa New Zealand, which was dangerous as there was much ambiguity around the lockdowns and when we could enter New Zealand or return to Australia. Once I landed in Auckland, the lockdowns were in place. When the lockdowns were lifted, I drove five hours north to Ahipara, near the tip of the North Island and where Patau was located. A massive shout out to my Nana Esta Proctor for hosting me in Ahipara, working with me and introducing me to Patau.

The Indigenous knowledge sharing sessions with my Elders were documented with video and audio recordings. Leading up to all the interviews, I always referred back to my initial abstract of the *Two Waters* project, the participant information sheet (PIS), the recording equipment, data storage back-ups and the general questions. This was a last-minute checklist to help ensure that I was prepared before meeting them and gave me confidence and allowed me to focus on being more present with the interviewee and what they have to say. The raw edited assemblage of all the interview footage is presented in Section Two.

Interviews

Nancy Yukuwal McDinny and Gadrian Hoosan (*Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elders*)



Figure 2. 1: Nancey Yukuwal McDinny (l) & Gadrian Hoosan (r).

Nana Nancy and Gadrian were fortunately visiting Sydney from Borroloola when we organised our interviews. We had a good catch up and talked about the project's aspirations. It was nice to get them familiar with the intention of the work once again. Most of the family were in the room and took the audience's seat in the lounge area. My father Jason, Nana Nancy Yukuwal McDinny, Pop Stewart Hoosan and Dad Gadrian Hoosan were all present as I set up the recording equipment and assured them that we could talk about anything as long as they were comfortable. Their positive energy and humour were heart-warming and infectious. This helped a great deal as they knew I was actually quite nervous. Once we got the yarning session started, everyone in the space immediately became more present. And I listened. We had much to talk about and at first I wasn't sure where to start but with the first big question: "Why is water so important? What's the cultural importance of water?"

Yeah, well that's a Dreamtime story, maybe one day you'll have a look at this whole documentary made in 1988, you'll see that the Dreamtime story about the fire and the water when the crow from the Mambaliya clan and the chicken from the Wuyaliya clan they had a big fight. And the crow was sitting at one place called Black Rock in Borroloola and the chicken hawk was at the plain sitting in there. They had this big fight because the crow wanted the fire because he wanted to eat his food cooked and the chicken hawk wanted the crow water because he was thirsty. So they had a big fight. And the crow chucked all the fire all over the chicken hawk and the chicken have

that fire off out in the plain. That's a Dreamtime story to it. That's why water is so important because it's got story in our ancient culture that goes way, way back since creation time. Yijan we call it. Dreamtime.

- Gadrian Hoosan (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

This was something that was immediately written in my notes as important. A story both Nana Nancy and Dad Gadrian would both discuss in our yarns about water. The Dreamtime story of water and fire in the Gulf region. This was going to be interesting in terms of figuring how to properly re-present stories such as these in this creative project. Part of the challenge was to navigate how the Elders and myself were to reframe such stories in an authentic manner. Part of the framework from Chapter One highlights critical engagement with Indigenous participants and knowledge holders. Indigenous Storywork's principles and the Yarnbar or talking methodology used in previous film studies helped guide this process. As I progressed when engaging with these principles, I hoped to share insights and reflect on the holistic benefits learned. Showcasing that when initiated with the correct intent and application, Indigenous methods can lead to highly successful outcomes for all. Allowing everyone to be story ready was critical to in the process of the study and in my preparation (Archibald, 2019, p. 1).

You have to look after the trees. This is why we getting all this, um, what they call it now? Hot from the sun. Yeah, land getting dry because you know, it's come from the beginning of the Dreaming that people are not allowed to cut down the trees. You have to look after it. Water is good for us to drink, it'll keep you alive. Without water, we all die, and you get burn. Like old people used to tell us, 'Don't cut down that tree' [quotes old elders in language] They used to tell us don't break that tree. We'll get burn from up here [points up at sky]. And I got shocked, how did they know. Because they were carry it [knowledge] for thousands of years. You're not allowed to cut tree down because you'll get burned. When I studied at school, you know you get that, the ozone layer getting no good. And I said how did the old people know this? When they told us not to [the trees].

- Nancy Yukuwal McDinny (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

Our Ancestors from ages past knew about the ozone before we did! The importance of trees and protecting the land are evident. Nana Nancy provided a historical and cultural insight into why we revere and protect the land. Nana Nancy reflected on her childhood and the current adversities faced by homelands from mining companies. Contaminating our water through fracking and polluting the land. These are real world stakes affecting real people's lives. This is wrong and a way to support our communities is to shed a light on these issues. To raise awareness and shift perspectives of the status quo. The public need to understand Indigenous rights to sovereignty and self-determination. This can be achieved through education and community action.

We don't want mining to come you know? Not destroying the country, they're destroying it already. You know? Water? But we are saving the four rivers from Borrooloola this way now [motioning her hand south], the Borrooloola River is already infected. These other rivers this way we are not going to let no one near, that why we

are protesting every time Borroloola and going to Darwin—for water. We need water. How can you live without water?

- Nancy Yukuwal McDinny (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

Well, if there's no water in this country, I know I'm just going to have to bring this up. There's a big mining company that are trying to get around the country in the Gulf drilling for oil and gas. I know they're going to pump a lot of water and use it for all that drilling around in the Gulf region, if they take that away [water], then the tree will die too. And you know all the animal will die. Everything will just go dead. The same way if you knock all the trees down. In both ways. That's why it's important that we got to stand up and look after the land the same way we've been looking after it since creation time. We have to keep that country healthy and rich all the time. You know? I know there's a lot of mining companies that go in there and look at the land, but they look at it as resource you know, to make money. But we look at the land and as spiritual connection. An identity of who we are, of that country. We don't look at it the other way. And that's why we stand up and fight really hard for it. But you know, in the eyes of the arrogant, we stand in their way.

- Gadrian Hoosan (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

Both Dad Gadrian and Nana Nancy talked about the Naja (paperbark) tree as well, describing its uses and applications. This was fascinating and gave new perspective. Reflecting on this, I then wanted to do the same thing for my viewers with my creative work. Share a new (or maybe ancient) perspective of the Naja tree. The re-presentation of our trees is discussed later in this chapter. As the Elders and I continued our conversation, we dived into more cultural knowledge and the importance of language. This helped me to understand the true value of revitalisation of culture and practice. If we lose our language, there is much more at stake. Similar to water. If we lose all the water, then everything will be affected. This was a powerful insight into the true adversity many Indigenous peoples face as a community.

Yijan is like creation. You know? Like we believe that Yijan is our creation because the language in the Country from the four different language groups in Borroloola, Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Gudanji, Marra people, we all live in Borroloola. The Yijan is the one who gave us the language. Yijan gave us the land, the water and everything in that Country in the Gulf region came from the Yijan. If we lose all that [the role of Yijan and our culture], we got nothing. I mean if we lose all that water, everything. Like what I'm saying, you know. For climate change and that, you know. I know we got a lot of mine affecting the land and damaging the land and it's going to take all that away from us. And the important thing is that we know it's going to affect everyone. Doesn't matter who lives in this country but it's going to affect everybody, everybody is going to get affected by it. The only people that can stop this is people like us, who have been looking after this land for thousands and thousands of years. Since creation time you know. We are the only hope I reckon in this country. You know? A lot of people that don't—a lot of them big mining company that come up to us and say oh we got expert here. We got—you know—somebody here, we got scientist here, we got someone here from the

environment [another scientist] here, that can look after it. But we know more about it than them. They're not here for the environment, to look after the environment. They're not here because they're the top scientist and they know what they are doing. They're here for money. We don't do it that way. We don't stand for that money; we stand for that land because that land is going to last forever then that money. We are not going to eat money; we are going to eat what's coming from the land. You know? And that's why it's important.

- Gadrian Hoosan (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

When we finished our yarning session there was much to reflect on and review. This set a strong standard moving forward and the experience was profound. The Elders had inspired me and this whole project to strive for bigger goals, to better represent our Indigenous worldviews, protect our culture and heal the environment for future generations. To my amazing Elders Nana Nancy and Gadrian Hoosan, thank you. Thank you for your positive guidance, incredible love and endless support.

Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri)



Figure 2. 2: Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri).

Hi Kia Ora, my name is Patau Tepania. Originally from Ahipara although I, ah, have whakapapa links to the northern iwi Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri. And also the east coast, ah, Ngati Kahu. Yes, I have my links- and Ngati Whatua just to the south on the west coast and Nga Puhi. So, throughout the Te Heku- what we're known as the iwi. Five iwi all together. Kia ora-kia ora.

Growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand had grounded me in my roots and cultural heritage on my Māori side. I was keen to learn more. Reflecting on my interviews with my Elders back in Sydney, much was learned, and the experience gave me renewed confidence. Patau Tepania known to be, as told by our marae (sacred communal home/place), as one of the main tangata kaitiaki (guardians) for our local area. This guardianship entails protecting and supervising our local resources, whenua (lands), and wahi tapu (sacred places). This is Patau's day-to-day obligation and responsibility handed down to him from his tupuna (ancestors). Following their footsteps and the pathway left for us for the benefit of all. Patau arrived early in the morning on the day of the interview. He was warm and welcoming. We had some tea and refreshed ourselves on the topics we would be discussing. Once all was clear and the recording devices were set up, we both got comfortable and our korero (talk) began.

There's a lot of other things that are happening here but, um, a lot of it is based around people actually understanding why we as Maori are trying to protect those resources, what people don't understand is us as kaitiaki – guardians–of these resources is hugely important to us. Protecting those resources, protecting a lot of the other elements that have a part to play in the survival of all these resources. Water is hugely important to-

well the whole life system really. The whole life cycle. Water is life. Without water there's nothing...

- Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri)

Many of the themes Patau shared were thematically aligned with what my Elders shared, the most important being protecting our environment, our role as Māori and the cycles of connections between us and the land intertwined. Identifying and acknowledging these understandings is critical to posing solutions of sustainability. Setting an example for future generations and following the path our ancestors have paved for us.

It's –it's all based around kaitiaki tanga, and kaitiaki tanga for us here, it's about– it's like– what you call it–it's like a cycle. It's–it's a life cycle, I suppose an example which I've used–it's like a length of chain. Now, on a length of chain there's many, many [he gestures with his hands] links along that chain. If one link falls out of that chain, or one link is destroyed, then that's compromised the whole strength of the chain. If one link is damaged. And one of those links is us as people. And that's what we've been trying to manage, that life cycle, that chain, that length of chain is easily compromised with the system, that industry today. And that compromise goes wider, it's not just the beach, it involves the coast as well. Part of that chain–that length of chain–is the environment. You know the environment– it involves– even it involves the sun. It involves the rain. Those are parts of those links on the chain. The little streams that run from the land to the sea that feed into the water. The wind and rain that creates the waves and all that. The moon. All those are parts, are links to that chain. And if any one of those things are compromised then it's a downward spiral for life. For us.

- Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri)

This highlights how we are just a small part of a bigger picture (or chain). Having audiences understand this premise would be a key theme in my creative project and the research as a whole. Patau also described how a large portion of his work was community driven and the active taken by tangata whenua [people of the land] was inspiring. This included revitalisation of language and reintroducing Māori names back to their rightful places. How we are now shifting the status quo by recognising Indigenous practice and re-educating the public on Māori sovereignty. Looking further into European culture versus Māori culture and the historical context of colonisation and how our generation are fighting back, all with the goal of universal sustainability. An important note was Patau's perspective on the Kauri tree, water and how it unites us all. Reframing how I saw water and our oceans. Rather than the oceans separating us, they connect us.

The Kauri tree, especially the Kauri here. When I was a young fella, I used to do a lot of hunting up in the forest here, native forest. There were particular trees I used to go visit. There's a row, I've always called it the kings and queens because there is actually a row of huge, huge kauri trees that go down this ridge line and I used to spend a lot of time up there. Because of this Kauri dieback, I'd like to go see how they are actually so... but, yes, they're huge part of Maoridom and they play a huge part in the whole life cycle that we are all a part of. Someone say that they have a whakapapa link back to the whales you know? That was hugely interesting, I didn't realise as well. But yes, no it's- it's funny

how everything has a link, like you know you were talking about the oceans, the water and all that. Water ties us back to Australia, to your Indigenous people. And ah- you know our oceans meet. That's our links to each other you know. It's all linking each other to everything. And that's something some people don't consider or don't realise that we're linked in some way and when you spoke about water- the first thing that came to mind was we're linked anyway, through the oceans. And I think we just got to step outside of where we are now and actually jump into a whole different work and think wow you know, yes, we are a part of a bigger picture and we are hugely involved with that.

- Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri)

We ended up losing track of time and ended up talking for several hours. Much of what was said complemented all of what my Elders shared in our yarning sessions. Before Patau left, we talked of the project moving forward and my process in returning to him for feedback at key milestones. Patau accepted. I provided him with his copy of the footage on a hard drive before leaving Ahipara. Patau was incredibly patient, open-minded and positive throughout our korero together. Thank you, Patau, for sharing your wonderful insight and perspective of the Māori world with us.

Reflection on Interviews and Research Methods

The experience gained from conducting the interviews grounded me. Reflecting on the research work as a whole, there were two core components that contributed to the success of the process and outcomes. The application of all the Storywork methodologies gave me the tools to navigate protocol and to disseminate cultural knowledge appropriately. The initial action of putting Storywork's principles (Archibald, 2019, p. 1), Yarnbar Jungkurr (J. De Santolo, 2018) and Pūrākau (Lee, 2009) into practice was quite challenging. I had much self-doubt in my own capacity but through careful guidance from my Elders and supervisors I was able to grasp the notion of Storywork's true intent to help guide and revitalise Indigenous culture and practice. This was reflected in Storywork's key principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness and synergy (Archibald, 2019, p. 1). Respecting my research participants (Elders). Being responsible with the knowledge shared. Ensuring that the project provides or gives back to the community. Revering the cultural protocols and practice holistically. Understanding the interrelatedness of community, values and stories being shared. Synergising myself and the project with the communities. Actioning these principles consistently and methodically throughout this research was critical to the overall learning outcomes.

The method of Yarnbar (talking) has an emphasis on active listening. Being mindful when receiving feedback and input allows for fluid communication pathways between collaborators. Reframing and shifting where advised. Allowing the nature of the curator and knowledge holder to take hold and reorientate the story according to the cultural parameters of the chosen platform. When reframing my own story using the shared knowledge of the Elders, my first step was to reframe a draft, then seek feedback and apply what was learned.

Being consistent in this reiteration process was critical until the final draft is complete. Showing a level of transparency, honesty and responsibility involved seeking permissions before making it public. This practice is also recognised in *Tracing Country: Visual communication design and choreography* (Gothe, 2015, p. 83). Recognising the nature of the formal questioning and the contexts in which they are presented was articulated in this way:

What struck me was my use of the question as an interrogative probe. Although the questioning was in a generous spirit, I recognized the relationship between the act of questioning and the creation of a place for listening. This place for listening is what underpins the Indigenous-led video methodology established initially in the Traditional Knowledge Recording Project (2002-2006 approx) and continued in Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways (2006-ongoing). This recording process creates a respectful listening that allows the speaker a space of empowerment and cultural voice.

- Dr. Jacqueline Gothe

This was reflected in my own interviewing experience. The interview questions developed for my Elders were used as a template to help guide the line of topics during our discussion. Although during my first formal interview with Nana Nancy, when asking the questions by following a questions guide seemed not genuine in relation to the actual intention of our yarning session. The feeling seemed so disconnected and forceful when reading from a set of questions and asking: "What is the cultural significance of water?". My use of question was similar to the interrogative probe concept Gothe discusses above. To cater to this, I shifted the conversation about water and returned when it was an appropriate time to ask.

Much of the knowledge, stories and experiences shared in my interviews provided incredible insight into the power of storytelling and its ability to pass on knowledge. Pūrākau describes story as a form of pedagogy (Lee-Morgan et al., 2019, p. 159). The stories shared taught me much of my cultural history, philosophy and tradition, allowing me to think about these stories long after they have been told. These are all critical to one's identity. Decolonising my identity through renewed experienced allowed for a transformation of practice. Activating self-determination, self-representation in the research process allowed forms of cultural revitalisation to manifest in the creative outcomes. Strengthening the Indigenous methodological approach in the research framework laid a foundation for production of the immersive video design.

Section Two: Creative Project *Two Waters*

In my experience of the producing process, it is important to reiterate the core elements and contextual nature behind each component when framing the project proposal. My immersive multi-screen installation concept was to give audiences a sensory glimpse into the cultural significance of water and trees through an Indigenous lens. The intention was for audiences to experience the importance of such yarns (discussions). How do you recreate such experiences and achieve the essence and nuances of Indigenous inter-connected relationships to Country? My solution was to use a medium that would immerse audiences

within a set space, a multi-screen audio-visual installation. What would this space encompass? Stylised video of water footage and “water trees”, respective to their regions, selected to me by my Elders. In this case, the selected trees were the Naja (Paperbark) native to Australia and the Kauri, native to Aotearoa New Zealand. The aim was to use large-scale projection to give a sense of grandeur and scope. The use of multiple projectors would help in providing context and varying juxtaposition between the stories, water and trees. This allowed imitation of the notion that we were listening to the shared knowledge “on Country” and seeking to activate sensory forms of Indigenous cultural practice and revitalisation.

Creative Pre-Production

This section describes the initial planning stage of the creative process. The creative process began with a formal proposal to inform participants and collaborators involved about the general scope of the project. The next task was to write the draft scripts for the *Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai* storylines. Three stories were presented. Every story was formed from the interview with each Elder. In using the transcriptions from the interviews, I was able to guide the stories in the video and audio development phase. As I progressed, I constantly returned to my supervisors and Elders for feedback. A core part of this process was transparency throughout the creative process with all participants involved. Communicating the inspiration and intent behind specific creative decisions involved such a range of considerations, such as highlighting key timelines, resources and production variables to achieve the completed project. Allowing all collaborators to trust in the process and my creative intentions meant that as the project developed, Elders had a part in the Indigenous video design process.

It is important to note that the interviews provided the foundation for the whole project. Each interviewee’s storyline informed the narrative and scope of the creative piece, including the visual, audio and spatial components. Once the interviews were completed, transcribed and backed up, I reviewed and highlighted key content relevant to the project concept. Using the knowledge shared in the interviews as a base to drive a linear story and a proposal as a guide allows for consistency. The stories were presented in this sequence: first Nancy Yukuwal McDinny, then Gadrian Hoosan and finally Patau Tepania, the same order in which I conducted the interviews.

For the Nancy and Gadrian cultural connection, adversity and hope were key expressions for our homelands in Australia. Although they discussed similar themes, stories and perspectives, they had two clear and distinctive messages. Understanding their two definitive viewpoints and distinguishing clearly between them was the ultimate goal. The first step was to find which topics in our interviews overlapped and the next step was to decide in which direction they had synergy with one another. For example, they both discussed the dreaming stories and told them quite similarly. This obstacle was interesting because who should be the one to tell it in this piece? My solution was to review their discussions as a whole. Nana Nancy talked more about her experiences with water and trees through story. Dad Gadrian shared his perspective on the adversity our lands faced regarding water and trees. Both shared solutions based on Indigenous cultural practice and knowledge of water and trees. With these thoughts in mind, I felt Nancy’s experiences provided a personal introduction, as the first storyline showcased. As a result, I thought it a good idea to have her mention the dreaming

story of the chicken hawk and the crow and have Gadrian elaborate further. This reflected Garrwa protocol and law – that Elders are held with high esteem and are to speak first.

After establishing the key quotes from the first two interviews, I was able to use this process as a template for Patau's storyline and to identify the most significant points from our discussion related to the *Two Waters* premise. These were points that would support his own cultural standpoint and our role as Indigenous peoples and to pose solutions to our current climate crisis. We talked at length, and the challenge was to filter all this information into a comprehensive story. Having a strong grasp of what Patau intended with our talk, I highlighted the key points that best represented the three themes mentioned above. This stage of the story development was quite fluid as the three storytellers and their viewpoints contrasted subtly with one another. Everyone had distinct individual standpoints but collective intentions to protect our cultures and environment.

I identified the key themes by revising the premise of our interviews alongside the transcriptions. As I reviewed the transcriptions, there were connecting ideas among all the interviewees and their stories. There were stories of conflict, mining and fracking in Gulf Country, NT, and the overtaking of resources along the Aotearoa coastline. There were stories of trees, the different practical uses of the Naja's bark and the cultural significance the tree holds, the Kauri tree's adversity during the dieback disease and its history within our culture, dating back to the mythology of our creation stories. There were stories of water being life, being sacred, connecting us all and how all these stories pose solutions to sustaining our environment. From this point, I highlighted all the relevant quotes for the story scripts. Once the key story quotes were extracted from the transcriptions, the next stage was to restructure and fine edit each story. To avoid deviating from the original proposal and provide myself with a clear linear storyline, I wrote a story template as a guide:

- Introduction: Who are we?
- Body: What are the threats faced today?
- Conclusion: What are the solutions or strategies we can use?

In addition to these questions, each paragraph was given a label according to its theme, such as **water**, **trees**, **conflict** and **solution** (see Appendix A). This was to avoid confusion during the written structuring and when we needed to extract dialogue in the video editing phase, making the post-production process clear and time efficient. To reiterate my story making process from the interviews, here is a simple guide:

- Analyse the transcriptions, first by identifying key themes from all interviews.
- Draw connecting themes across the three interviews.
- Rewrite three overarching themes inspired from the connecting themes. Extract the related quotes from each interview related to the core themes.
- Keep all interviews in separate documents to avoid confusion.
- Rearrange and edit the quotes in each interviewee's new page.
- Develop them into new succinct stories.

I then formed the three new stories into a new document and saved the original drafts. I provided a clear script for the video assembling phase in post-production. Before beginning

any project, a good exercise I use when starting the creative work is to write up an outline, which is also for technical collaborators who will be helping me along the way. In the initial proposal, I consulted my supervisors and we decided to compress each interview to between 5 and 8 minutes each. This seemed to be the most appropriate choice and led to the combined time of around 18 minutes. I realised that it was important to understand and position myself as an audience member to best gauge the optimal experience for viewers. The proposal below is what was used:

"Title: *Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai*

Log line: Guided by Elders, the *Two Waters* project provides a glimpse into the cultural significance of water from two Indigenous standpoints. Exploring the similarities and posing solutions Indigenous knowledge can offer in a time of climate crisis.

Format: Multi-screen immersive installation (proof of concept)

Platform requirements:

- Minimum two plain connected walls
- Minimum two projectors
- Atmospheric sound design accompaniment
- Seating for audiences

Characters: Nancy Yukuwal McDinny, Gadrian Hoosan & Patau Tepania

Length: 18 minutes

Synopsis: There will be three stories told by three Indigenous knowledge holders. This will be a showcase of knowledge sharing sessions with Elders from two nation-states. Two from Borroloola NT, Australia and one from Ahipara Aotearoa New Zealand. Each sharing and re-presenting their respective homelands and community standpoint. The intention is for audiences to experience and understand our Indigenous connections to the environment through shared reflections on water. This conceptual audio-visual installation aims to immerse audiences by encapsulating them with accompanied large-scale multi-projected imagery and sound design. The video and sound will be drawn from the storyteller's respective regions. Providing place native to the subject matter in hopes that spectators receive the notion that they are listening with sensory presence 'on country'."

Creative Development

As the general script was in the final stages of completion, the next phase was to draft some ideas on how to visually re-present the stories. Initially the concept was to film on homelands (and waters), as this best embodied the participants, their stories and the Indigenous methodology cited throughout this research journey. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 this was not possible and I ended up asking for permission to shoot on Gadigal lands. Being conscious of this fact, much of the final product is intended as a proof of concept of our approach, as if we had access to original locations and resources. The goal was to focus on the creative directorial vision with these factors in mind.

In order to give a sense of how the visual and spatial components progressed, I share here my original concept and how it evolved into the contemporary piece it is today. For my Stage One project proposal, the idea was to showcase a proof-of-concept small model scale of an immersive installation. Similar to the current idea now, but the presentation was to be set on a vitrine (or tabletop, as in Reihana's work). The difference in this version of my creative project was an implementation of projection mapping and 3D-printed model trees using recyclable components. The idea was to use project video imagery and map it onto the surface of the trees and anywhere else relevant. As my video and projection experiments progressed, it became more evident that this proposal was too ambitious and the 3D modelling was scrapped. There was still the interest in projecting trees onto surfaces and tested the idea of constructing life-sized trees, however. Here are some examples:

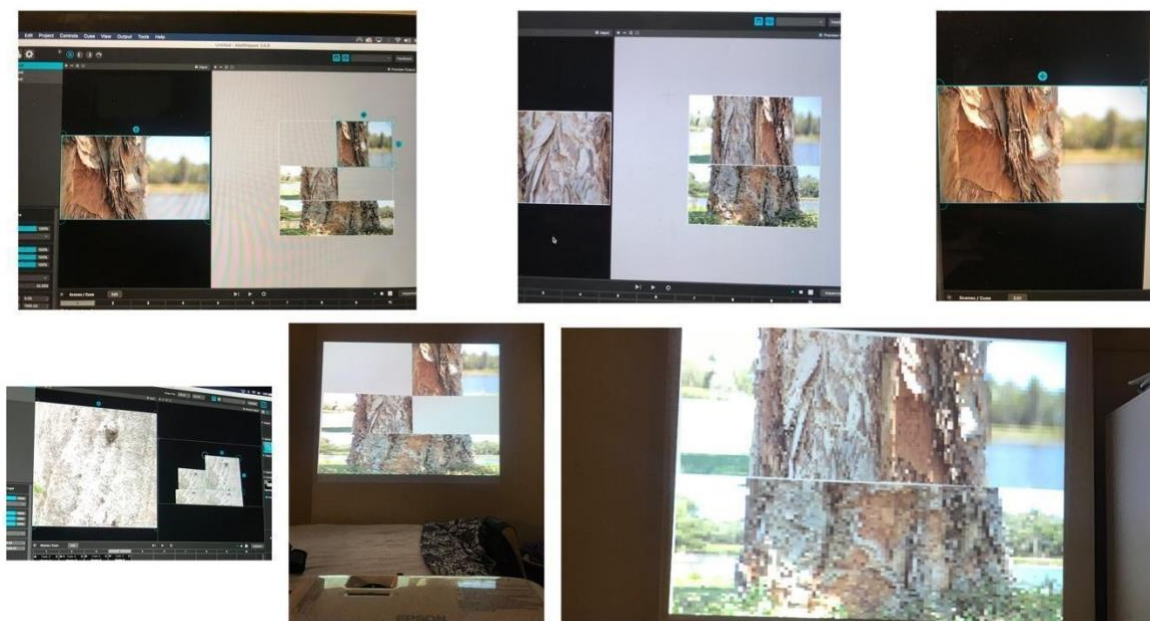


Figure 2. 3: Photos and screenshots of projection mapping experiments.

The idea was to film extreme close-up frames of tree limbs and project them abstractly with mapping software across a large surface. My first round of footage was of the Naja (Paperbark) tree for technical tests and later when travelling to Aotearoa New Zealand, the Kauri tree. This small decision set the compositional template for the visual footage later on; at this point in the timeline, there was no access to Aotearoa should a reshoot of the Kauri tree be required, so the project had to make do with the current footage. Although the tests were fun and insightful, the prototype did not feel as if it was achieving its intended task. Engagement and immersion did not seem present. In addition, the production and overall idea were complex and there was limited time to fully explore projection mapping, which in turn began to make the presentation of the stories complicated and unachievable. It needed to be simplified. What should be changed within the parameters of this proposed installation? Ultimately the technical mapping element of the project had to be scrapped, so what was to be done with the footage? That was the question. I pondered and reviewed the extreme

close-up shots of the trees. There was so much detail and intricacies in the Naja and Kauri tree I had not noticed previously. Maybe others would feel the same way?

At this stage of the creative process, there was a loss of confidence and momentum. There was a book called *The Art of Projection* (Douglas, 2009) that shared the use of projection by talented artists within different contexts. Some examples of projection in uniquely designed spaces were fascinating. The various forms of spatial design paved the way to my own ideas and influenced my next round of fresh concept development and storyboarding. The solution was to adjust the physical space in which I placed my audience and take advantage of the obvious attribute projection available, filling a surface with an image.

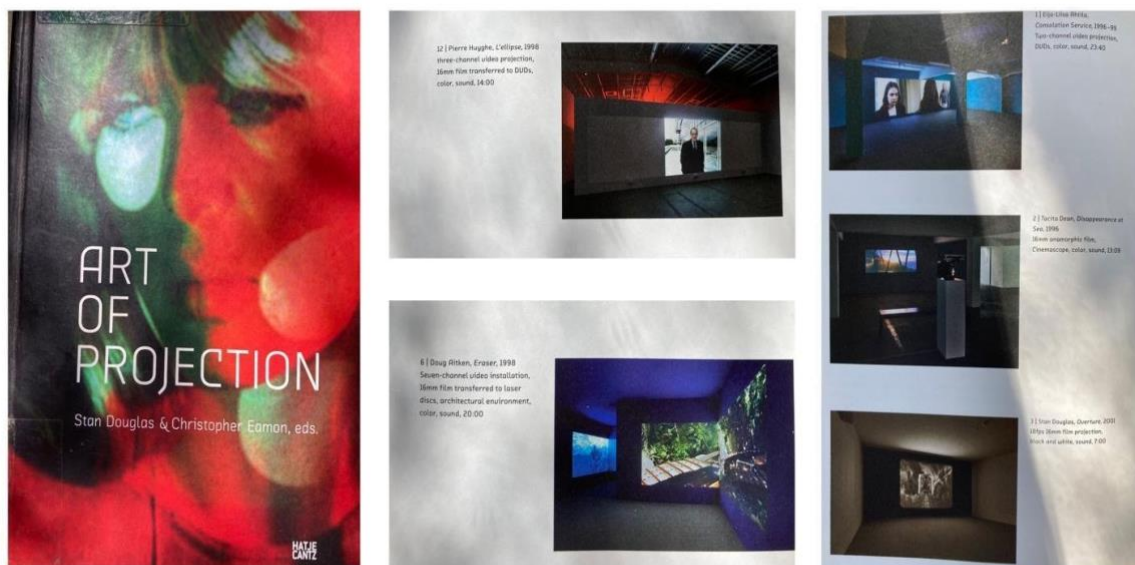
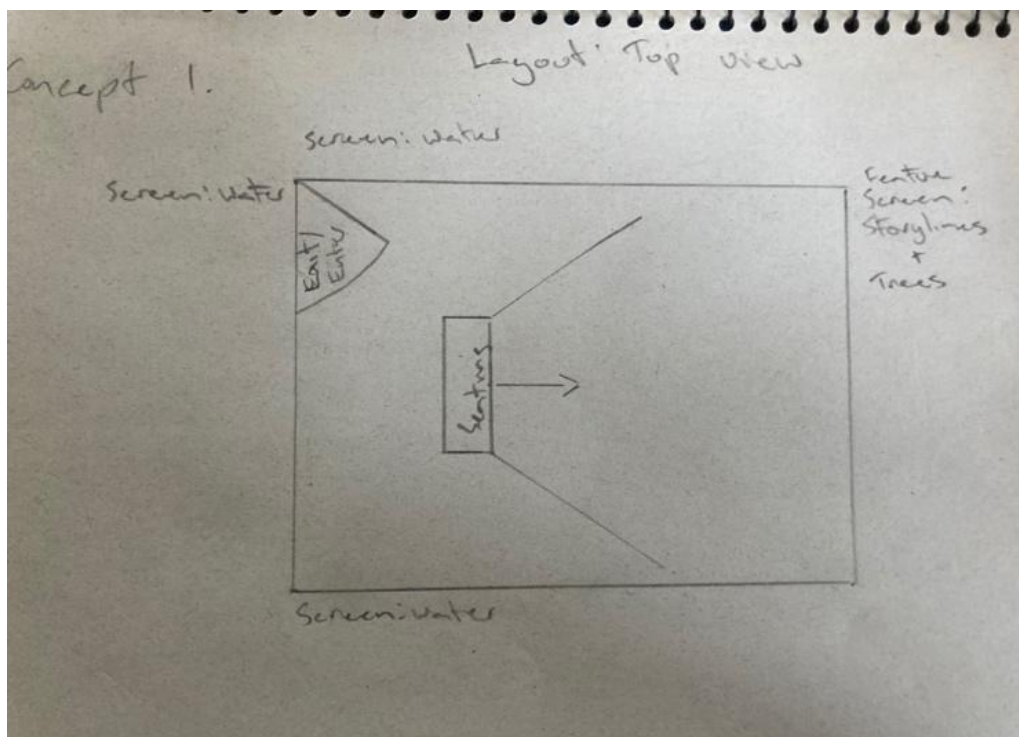


Figure 2. 4: *Art of Projection* book inspiration.

The first round of drafts considered how to present the stories in a unique and engaging manner. The drafts examined placing audience members in the centre and having the visuals shift as one story began and other ended. However, this seemed to be counter-intuitive to my original principle of simplicity. I then used exercises from *Design. Think. Make. Break. Repeat: A Handbook of Methods* (Tomitsch et al., 2018), which guided some of my conclusions at this phase. The most impactful contributor from this resource was the "The 5 Whys" technique as it could be used in many contexts. The method is described as an aid to uncover a potential root cause of any surface level problem (p. 18) by repeatedly asking "why" to gain deeper insight into the given problem. The problem I faced at this point was how to effectively present these intimate stories in an engaging way. The goal was interactive intimacy between storyteller and audience member. *Why did this situation exist?* It is known to be difficult to keep audiences entertained for a set amount of time. *Why?* Engagement between the viewer

and the subject matter varies from platform to platform, especially in installation. *Why?* Installation incorporates different modes of communication to the senses depending on the format and length of the product being shared. *Why?* Unlike film, television and social media, the installation concept for *Two Waters* required people to be physically in its space to achieve the intended goal of immersion. The possibility of people losing interest due to the length of time or lack of engagement was high. *Why?* Because there is an ingredient missing from the project design that lacked meaningful connection to the subject matter. There needed to be more wholesale reflection on the presentation of place when juxtaposing the stories with sound or video. There was something between the two that needed to be assured. Sound was being ignored as the drafts were being formed. This again told me to simplify the concept ideas once again but with all components in consideration. Drawing on inspirations from *The Art of Projection* (Douglas & Eamon, 2009), some key sketch ideas were formed. These drafts offered flexibility depending on the installation space:



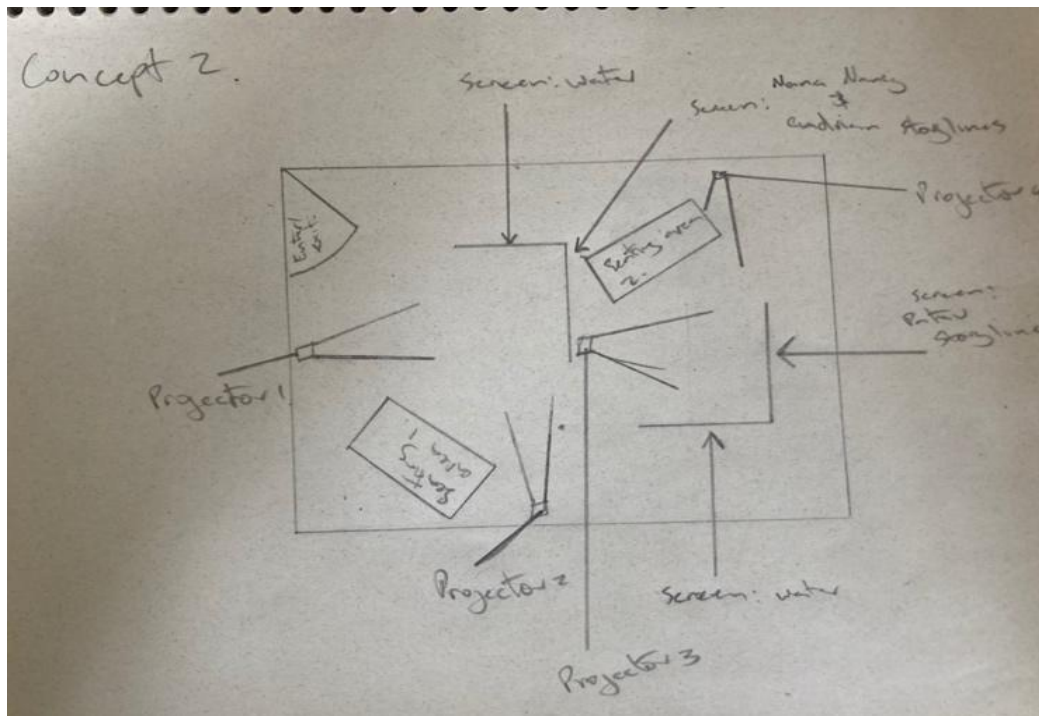


Figure 2. 5: Two concept layouts for the installation space of the creative project

Both designs were flexible and were mainly a point of reference. Concept 1 was the optimal choice in my creative vision. Concept 2 split the piece into two sections in a set space, as a backup in case there was no available or optimal installation studio. Having these designs completed and locked in then indicated what needed to be addressed in the next phase of the production.

Two Waters Production

This section shares my creative process of the *Two Waters* production. I discuss the application of my current skill sets and how I integrated elements of the storytelling methodological practices with the overall creative process.

Considering the Covid-19 pandemic, there was limited ability to travel and no optimal conditions for the filming aspects of the project. Initially I needed to film much of the work "on Country" or in place of origin, but the constraints of the pandemic and limited time meant I had to film much of the work locally on Gadigal lands. I sought permissions from Gadigal Elder Aunty Ronda Dixon and am grateful this was positively received. Much of what is discussed in this section showcases my process and application of various skills, eventually achieving a new methodological approach (Lee, 2009) that put into action in *Two Waters* my conceptual understanding of Lee-Morgan's methodology of Indigenous bricoleur.

The first step was to gather the re-edited interviews into three separate fluid stories, for which Adobe Premier Pro was the program of choice. As a video editor, my standard practice was to create new sequences and assemble the footage according to the script, and this I did here, beginning with Nana Nancy, then Dad Gadrian and Patau. All the footage was assembled

on the timelines and the fine editing began, referring always to the story script that had been developed, while addressing all the variables such as pacing and removing unnecessary wording or "um"s. It was a big milestone and huge relief when all three storylines were complete and locked in.



Figure 2. 6: Screenshots of the edited assemblages from each storyline in Adobe Premier Pro.

The edited assemblages of the interviews compiled into one video, which was the foundation for the stories presented in the final showcase, can be accessed through this link:

<https://vimeo.com/639806494>

Password: Interviews2021

It was important to go back to my Elders and supervisors for feedback. Uploading the video edits privately online to Vimeo and sending private links via email was the optimal choice as the Elders were based outside of Sydney, Nancy and Gadrian in the Northern Territory and Patau in Aotearoa New Zealand. They were contacted by either call or text. Gadrian and Nancy gave me their blessing to move forward with minimal comments other than them being happy with the outcome. The same outcome followed from Patau over the phone. All were informed that there would be consistent updates as the project developed and when milestones were reached, I would follow up for feedback. Referring back to Elders and being transparent throughout this creative endeavour was critical to the fruition of this project, as this is core practice when navigating Indigenous knowledge and collaborative protocol (J. De Santolo, 2018).

The next phase was to start addressing the visual overlay component of the project. With the stories now locked into place, I could start to identify the key visuals relevant to what was being shared, namely water and trees, Gulf Country, NT, and Aotearoa New Zealand. How was I going to showcase these themes visually in my video installation platform? Especially water? Reflecting on the stories from my Elders once more provided the most appropriate answer at the time. Some powerful quotes stood out for me and inspired me. A quote from Patau particularly resonated with me:

I didn't realise as well. But yes, no, it's- it's funny how everything has a link, like you know you were talking about the oceans, the water and all that. Water ties us back to Australia, to your Indigenous people. And ah- you know our oceans meet. That's our links to each other you know. It's all linking each other to everything. And that's something some people don't consider or don't realise that we're linked in some way and when you spoke about water- the first thing that came to mind was we're linked anyway, through the oceans.

- Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri)

An idea came about. The phrase "Our oceans meet" said by Patau in our interview inspired me. I revisited my storyboard and thought of surrounding my audience with water. Maybe even adding subtitles over the water and having a feature wall. Keeping in mind that I wanted to showcase the beauty of both Gulf Country, NT, (Garrwa and Barunggam) and Aotearoa New Zealand with water. Although I could not access Country for the filming, I could conceptualise this through the chosen trees as representatives of each region and have them juxtaposed with the water footage.

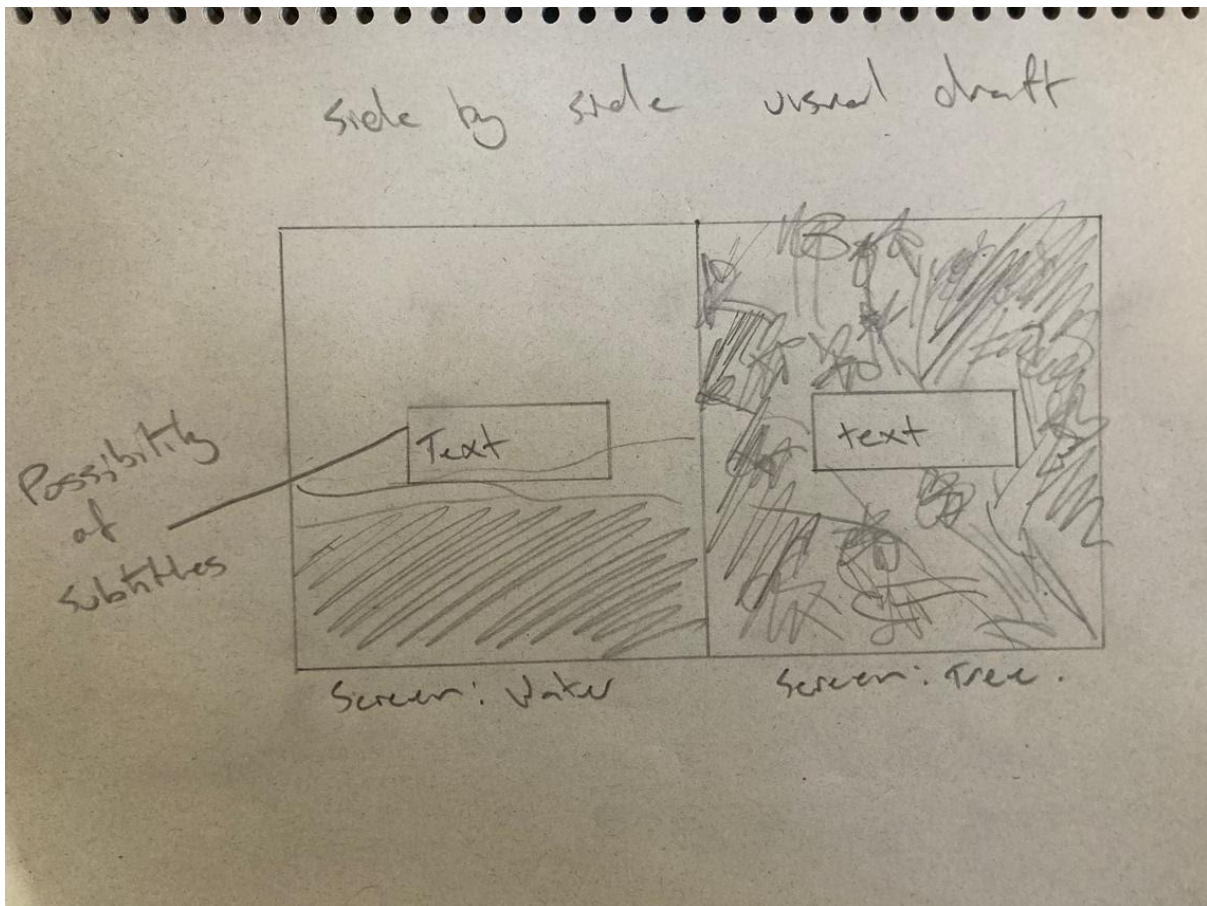


Figure 2. 7: Visual of both screens side by side.

Kauri Tree

The first ingredient for the video component was organising and conducting the recording and documentation of the chosen water trees, the Naja and the Kauri. In terms of film pre-production and shot listing for the tree recordings, there was clear emphasis on close-ups and abstract composition. The goal was to share Indigenous perspective and Indigenous stories and intimacy was key to giving insight into the relationship we have to the land. Highlighting details of Mother Nature, big or small, would, I believed, complement the three storylines. *Projections in the Forest* (Mawad T., Schoor F., 2014) achieved similar concepts around nature and intimacy for audiences. Their specific use of close-ups with projections interwoven on tree leaves, wild fungi and wildlife did justice to the magical essence nature holds. Much of my creative direction visually was inspired by 3hund's use of composition in their frames.



Figure 2. 8: Screenshots from *Projections in the Forest* by 3hund (left to middle). Screenshots of my Kauri tree footage for compositional comparison (r).

During my time in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2020, I was able to gather some Kauri tree test footage. Most Kauri trees in Aotearoa are protected in reserves to combat the spread of dieback disease, which is caused by a microscopic fungus-like organism called *Phytophthora Agathidicida* (PA). It is water- and soil-based, infecting the Kauri at its roots, damaging the tissue and effectively cutting off the nutrient and water supply throughout the tree. There is currently no solution or treatment to fight the disease but containing the disease and reducing its spread to other regions can help minimise its impact (Waipara, 2013; Keep Kauri Standing, 2016). Atkinson Park in Titirangi, Auckland, was the reserve selected for the shoot, one of the benefits of reserves like these being the cleaning stations at the entrance and exit.



Figure 2. 9: Cleaning station at Atkinson Park, Titirangi, Auckland, New Zealand (2019). <https://cutt.ly/BW8nSl6>

There were many baby Kauri in the surrounding area and adult Kauri in the protected region. Sadly, there were some trees visibly afflicted with the disease.



Figure 2. 10: Raw video footage of Kauri tree trunk base exposing the dieback disease.

Naja (Paperbark) Tree

To provide an aesthetic balance and consistency in terms of reframing, colour tone and palette with the rest of the footage was important to the final polished product. With the Kauri tree footage complete, this was a reference point for the next rounds of filming, this time with the Naja trees. Fortunately for me, there was quite a sizeable Naja cluster in Centennial Park, where I was able to collaborate with friend, fellow AFTRS alumnus and film production colleague Lucca Barrone-Peters. His expertise and experience with lighting and camera work as a director of photography gave keen insight into many of the proposed ideas for the shoot. Lucca's assistance allowed me to concentrate on the creative direction instead of the technical details such as live daylight and continuity. Before any filming could begin, we paid our respects to and received permission to film from local Gadigal Elder Aunty Rhonda Dixon-Grovenor. We were grateful for Aunty Rhonda's permission and support, which we did not take lightly.

We organised two rough shoot days. Day One was for clear, bright and dry weather, Day Two for wet, flat and humid weather. The creative intention behind these two shoot days was to contrast the Naja Tree in different states, wet and dry, for both storylines, which seemed the most sensible creative course of action, since both the tree and the Elders were from the same lands but had different perspectives.

Day One had beautiful clear sunny skies, which allowed us to focus on the crisp and dry details of the Naja tree and illuminated the layered intricacies through extreme close-ups and mid-shots. When projected, the final product would give an almost grand, architectural dimension to the tree. This was discovered during my trial runs with some quick test footage and then confirmed with my home projector, where I was testing whether projection mapping could be a usable component of the piece. Through this phase of trial and error, I could experiment with some of the storyboarding concept ideas as well as select and/or discard various shots. For example, the wide shots took away from the grandeur that certain aesthetic close-ups and extreme close-ups provided.

Day Two was about a week later as we had to wait for wet and stormy weather, when we returned to the same location and shot the same trees. This time there were puddles and mini lake-like pools surrounding many of the Naja trees. The overcast cloud gave flat tones to the overall colour palette and transformed the environment such that one would not notice that we were filming in the same location as on the sunlit day unless told otherwise. These wet conditions significantly shifted the look and feel of the Paperbark itself. As we started filming, I also noticed the reflections enabled by the pools at the base of some trunks and, once we completed the general shot-list, improvised with some wide and mid-shots. The water added a new element to the set visually and to capture this was essential to separating the two storytellers visually.

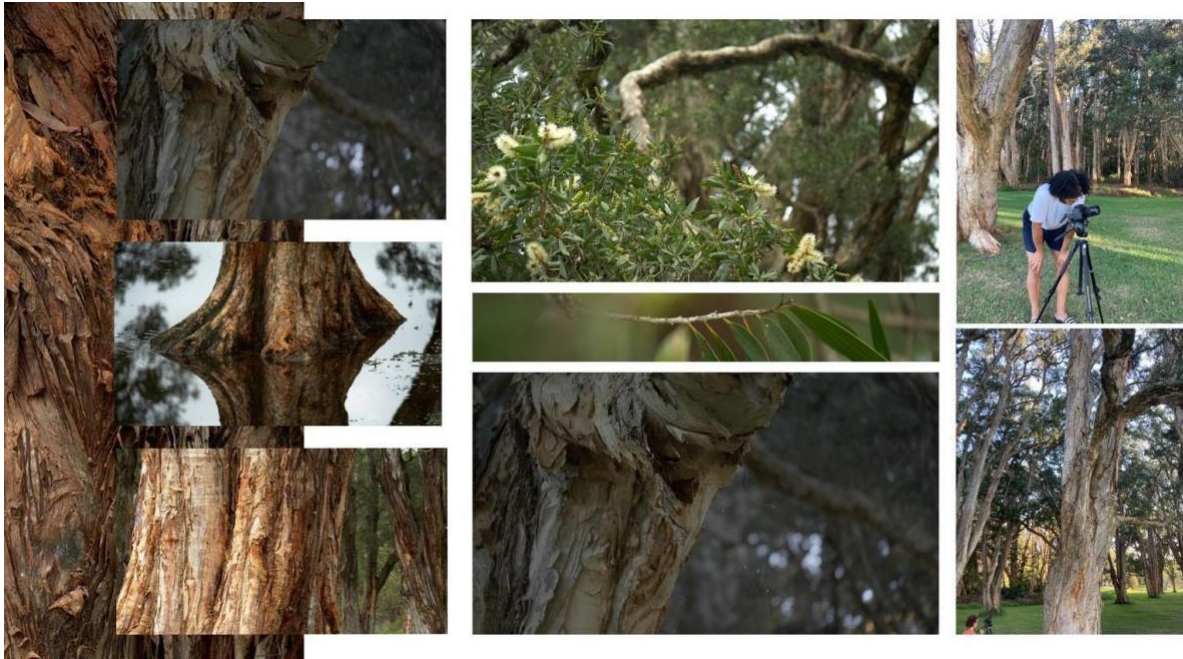


Figure 2. 11: The final images from the Naja tree filming (left and middle). Giovanni De Santolo (top right) and Lucca Barone-Peters (bottom right) filming at Centennial Park, Gadigal lands, Sydney.

Warburdar / Wai / Water

The second visual component needed was the water footage to reflect the subject matter and showcase its form. Initially the filming was intended to be done in both the freshwater rivers of Aotearoa New Zealand and water Country in Garrwa Country in the Northern Territory. I was inspired by the abstract video in Pipilotti Rist's *Sip my Ocean* (Rist, 2016) immersive installations. Rist's use of underwater footage in her multi-video installation exhibition gave great insight on the potential use of juxtaposition between two different frames, one screen being water and the other, tree. Since I had never worked with water or underwater footage before, I was somewhat uncertain how it would synergise with the tree content. During a brainstorming session, I realised that I did not want the visuals to be too overwhelming or complicated. Multiple screens can sometimes be difficult for viewers in terms of what to focus on, resulting in loss of immersion so all the components needed to complement one another. In addition, there were limits to the time and resources allocated to this project. Being realistic about these factors throughout the project reminded me not to be overly ambitious.

Although gathering random water footage could be used and fine-tuned in the post-production phase, simplifying the shoot before filming was always the initial goal. The shot-list was developed around how the water could accompany the trees' stories in a fluid manner. As a result, the idea of having different levels of first-person perspective in water seemed reasonable considering the resources at hand and would allow more room for experimentation in the edit. In order for this to work, the best approach was to have various film takes and then improvise if we had time left over. The original story for the water was rather simple. I visualised the footage beginning above water in a floating fashion and as the stories were being told over time, we were taken further underwater. For this stage, I was able to collaborate with another good friend, fellow AFTRS alumnus and film director, Mark

Halliday, who had a wealth of experience with underwater video and photography. I explained to him my project concept and intentions and he with great enthusiasm understood what I was after. We went to a cliff swimming spot located in Bronte with his camera and homemade underwater kit. I was initially concerned for the safety of his gear, but he reassured me the duct-tape he was applying to the lid of the contraption was just to ensure that any unexpected physical contact would not nudge it loose. Before he jumped into the water, we reconvened over the shot-list ideas and other alternative film takes we could use for the piece. For the technical file format settings in the camera, we recorded everything using the Sony FS5 at 50 frames, the picture profile was S-log for post-production colour grading and the ratio was 1920 x 1080 HD. Shooting in 4k would be overkill as we did not have the SanDisk cards to hold that amount of data. Fifty (50) frames were used to shift the footage speed by 50 per cent in the edit, adding the slow-motion effect and extending the clip time.



Figure 2. 12: Mark Halliday inspecting his homemade underwater camera housing before diving into the water. Location: Bronte beach, Gadigal lands, Sydney.

Mark was in the water for about 40 minutes and once we were done, we went back to his place to review and data wrangle the footage. As the filming was complete, I thought it would help to put together a simple mood board. This helped to gauge the progress and colour palette and get a sense of the visual direction in which the project was heading. Most of the resulting footage ended up in the final edit of the project. A special thank you to Mark and Lucca for helping me without a second thought.

Some of the raw underwater footage that was captured, including underwater composed sounds, all of which is discussed in the Sound Design section, and can be accessed via this link:

<https://vimeo.com/639855061>

Password: Underwater2021

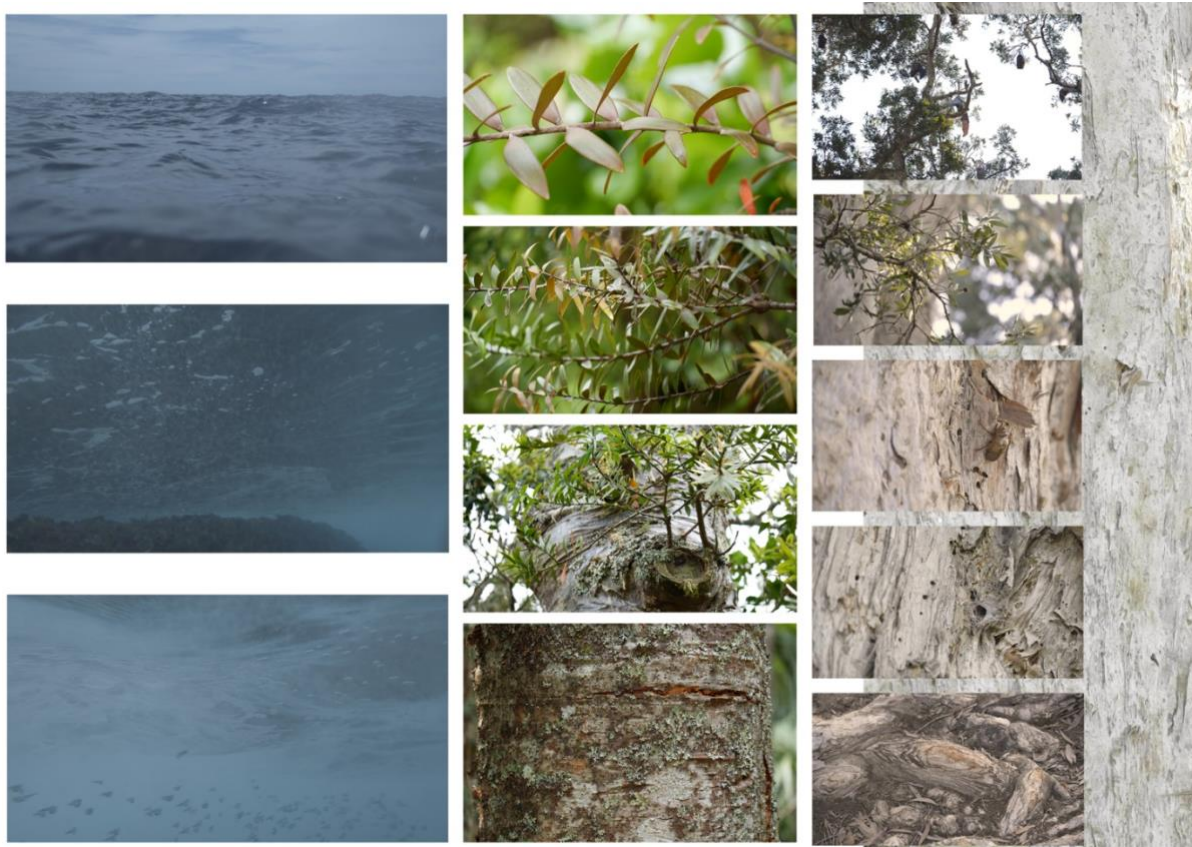


Figure 2. 13: A compilation of key screenshots from all the footage.

Video Overlay Editing

This stage of the work was where all the magic happened. Now that I had all the video overlay to accompany the stories, the next phase was to revisit, experiment and sync them together. To reiterate, fine edit and lock off the visual accompaniment was important in order for the project to move forward with the sound design. Back on Premier Pro once again, I returned to the stories of all three Elders to refresh the sense of feeling and context. From there, a general assemblage of all the tree footage was placed over the respective storylines. As there was an excess of footage, it was time to rearrange and fine cut according to the pacing and feel of each story. Once the first round of overlay editing was complete, I uploaded a copy onto Vimeo for the Elders and supervisors for their feedback. This was an important part of the design process as the Elders had final approval before I could move forward.

The first round of overlay video to give a sense of the progress made since the interview assemblage can be accessed via this link:

Link: <https://vimeo.com/513676128>

Password: Creativeproject2021

Please read the description in the link for more information.

While I was waiting for feedback, my next task was to edit the underwater footage. The first step was bringing together all the water footage onto a new timeline for revision. The question arose: how was the water going to complement the storylines and their visual accompaniment?

To help with this, I played some of the water footage and the storylines together side by side. This brought a realisation that the water did not have to be static the whole time as I originally intended. There was some great fluid footage that could be used. Like the trees, water should be able share its own story. After much experimentation and reflection on my part, the underwater concept evolved from being purely underwater looking into the infinite ocean (in three different static shots) to having a life of its own. The original concept on my storyboard was to have the first-person perspective of us floating on the water at the beginning and as the stories unfolded, we would be taken further and further under water so that at the end of all three stories, we were completely engulfed underwater. I felt that engagement was lacking with the original concept and there was all this other additional footage I wanted to use. So I shifted the idea of above and below water to the beginning and end of the timeline and incorporated the freehand moving shots into specific points in the timeline. Once a clean edit was complete, I uploaded it for feedback once again.

The feedback from everyone was positive. Dad Gadrian provided me with his approval over the phone, saying he was happy with the current trajectory of the project. Nana Nancy agreed with him. There was little feedback and I asked particular questions about subjects in the frames, such as the local bats seen in the foreground of some shots and if they were of any concern. They were not. Patau and I communicated via text at this stage of the work as it was the cheapest alternative to international calls. He, too, was pleased with the outcomes. I then asked them how they wished to be credited and added these credits accordingly. All

participants were happy with the outcomes and that was the most important part. Here are some screenshots of all my timelining:



Figure 2. 14: Examples of all story timelines with overlay added in Adobe Premier Pro.



Figure 2. 15: Examples of the water footage assembled in a timeline from Adobe Premier Pro. The overlay synced for the storylines (left). The overlay for the credits at the end of the video (right).

Sound Design

The general approach was to treat this project as a dialogue-driven story with some environmental effects. My intention was to ground our stories and present the feeling of

being "on Country". I believed any type of music or soundtrack would most likely shift this piece in a different direction. The same concept would apply to the water footage as well. Although there were to be two separate tracks, the sound direction leaned towards realism rather than fiction. For this piece, my close friend, another fellow AFTRS alumnus, Alexander Gastrell, offered to collaborate with me. He is an excellent sound designer with whom I have collaborated on many occasions, including many Indigenous-led projects earlier in my career. During our introductory discussions about this project, we had an open dialogue of ideas in which to approach and experiment with sound. Gastrell's initial line of questioning and advice helped greatly to develop my understanding of sound production and how I should best navigate our next steps. Questions included how many tracks we needed, how many audio sources would be present on location, did we want music or just an atmospheric track, how would we make each region distinct from the other, how would we make New Zealand distinct to Australia, did we want any variations in sound, any particular effects, such as wind, rain or wildlife. Did the sounds have to be authentic? What type of pacing were we trying to achieve?

We noted that we first required two tracks, one for the feature video and the other for the supporting water video, adding up to two sources for the installation space. As mentioned earlier, music was not intended to be incorporated into this project so the approach was to be atmospheric, natural and raw. Due to the distinctive nature of both Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, I believe people would experience the difference between both worlds when presented with sounds from each region. Native wildlife such as the calls of the Tui bird unique to Aotearoa was the choice for the Kauri tree footage, the Australian equivalent being the Kookaburra for the Naja tree.

Starting with the foundational sounds such as ambience, wind, rain or river as a base (or the technical term in the sound post-production industry of "atmos beds"), we added layers of sound textures on top of the beds. As we explored textural ideas and options, we returned to the premise of water, to experiment with various forms of water that best represented their regions. This could be reflected in the use of streams, rain, droplets, or river and ocean sounds throughout the project. In Nana Nancy's clip, there were small ponds and water, so we added droplet sounds and layers of moving water to their respective shots. Because of the humidity of the day, we included layers of insects as well. For Gadrian, the Naja tree footage was dry, crisp and windy. There were many shots with tree motion from heavy winds, so effects such as leaves rustling and various wind sounds were the predominant creative choice in this clip. All Naja tree clips had plenty of native wildlife sounds, the predominant sound being the Kookaburra. As for Patau's clip, the lush deep greens of the Kauri leaf and simple static shots allowed us room to play a little more. Placing distant river sounds and distinctive native cues worked wonders, finally placing the Tui sounds at key points. Pacing is important in sound as well. We therefore resisted the urge to flood all shots with every sound, as we wanted the effects to flow with the dialogue rather than overwhelm. Applying particular sounds where relevant and most impactful, such as the Tui call at the very end of the Kauri clip, gave audiences something to contemplate once the story is complete.

The process with the underwater footage was quite simple, namely, to replicate the sound effects of being under, in-between and above water (refer to the underwater footage clip presented earlier).

By using a combination of texturally different ocean recordings and combining these with post-production processing and filtering techniques, I was able to create an underwater ocean environment.

- Alex Gastrell

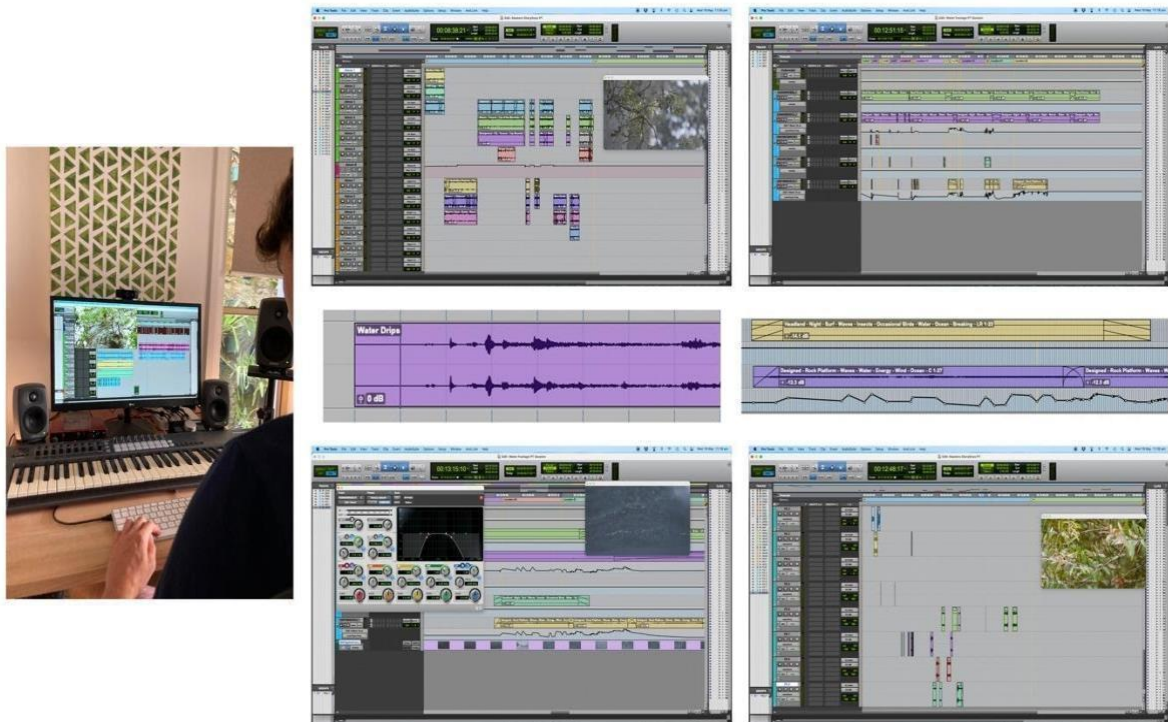


Figure 2. 16: Some screen grabs of our sound designing sessions. Alex at his workstation (left). Program used: Avid Pro Tools

The link to the final visual and audio lock off for the feature video is:

<https://vimeo.com/521306743>

Password: Giovannilockoff2021

All the sound design and placement down to the smallest detail was intentional. This stage of the project was fun and thought-provoking. Developing a fundamental understanding and appreciation of sound as a whole was a rewarding outcome from this process. Without Gastrell's expertise, insight and familiarity with my direction, this portion of the creative project would not be as close to my intended vision as I would have hoped for.

The Exhibition Space

The *Two Waters* project was originally proposed as a multi-screen immersive installation spanning four walls and the floor and accompanied by surround sound. Understanding the

time, cost and logistics of this scale for a Master's project, I reframed the project as a proof of concept for this immersive experience, thus providing supervisors and audiences with a taste of a much larger project should it receive funding. A large part of this creative work was the use of size and scale in a set space with projection, projection being a fundamental part of the creative expression in *Two Waters*. Projection allows for visual expansion and this, in turn, can transform our stories of water and trees into life size bodies, contextualising the scope of our Indigenous stories with our cultural connections to our lands and waters. We emphasise our relationship to the land and to be able to bring this worldview to a flexible platform such as installation paves the way to further innovation and exploration around contemporary Indigenous storytelling with “Country”. Bringing the concept of “on Country” storytelling and learning to more accessible spaces. The *Two Waters* creative journey shares an ethical process with which to bring Elders’ knowledge and story to the public in the right way while actioning Yarnbar and cultural revitalisation for fellow Indigenous people like myself (J. De Santolo, 2018).

Due to some uncertainty about the exhibit location at the early stage of the creative process, I drafted a few conceptual designs that would work using two screens. These were inspired by many different sources, the most influential being *The Art of Projection* (Douglas, & Eamon, 2009), *Installation Art* (Oliveira et al., 1994) and *In Pursuit of Venus [infected]* (Reihana, 2015). All the works created by these artists showcased unique and dynamic ways of navigating spatial design with audio-visual accompaniment, with the positioning of each projection/screen, sound and audience member critical to optimising the intended experience. The next phase to consider was how the footage would be presented after the editing phase. There are many different ways in which video can be manipulated during the editing process. Figure 2.17 shows a brainstorming session with a post-production animator friend, Keanu Hoi, about the various options for re-presenting the water footage using a four-screen set up. This gave me great insight into creating specific effects, ultimately helping me to gauge the amount of time, technical resources and general scope needed in the post-production edit and shifting much of my creative decisions with these factors in mind.

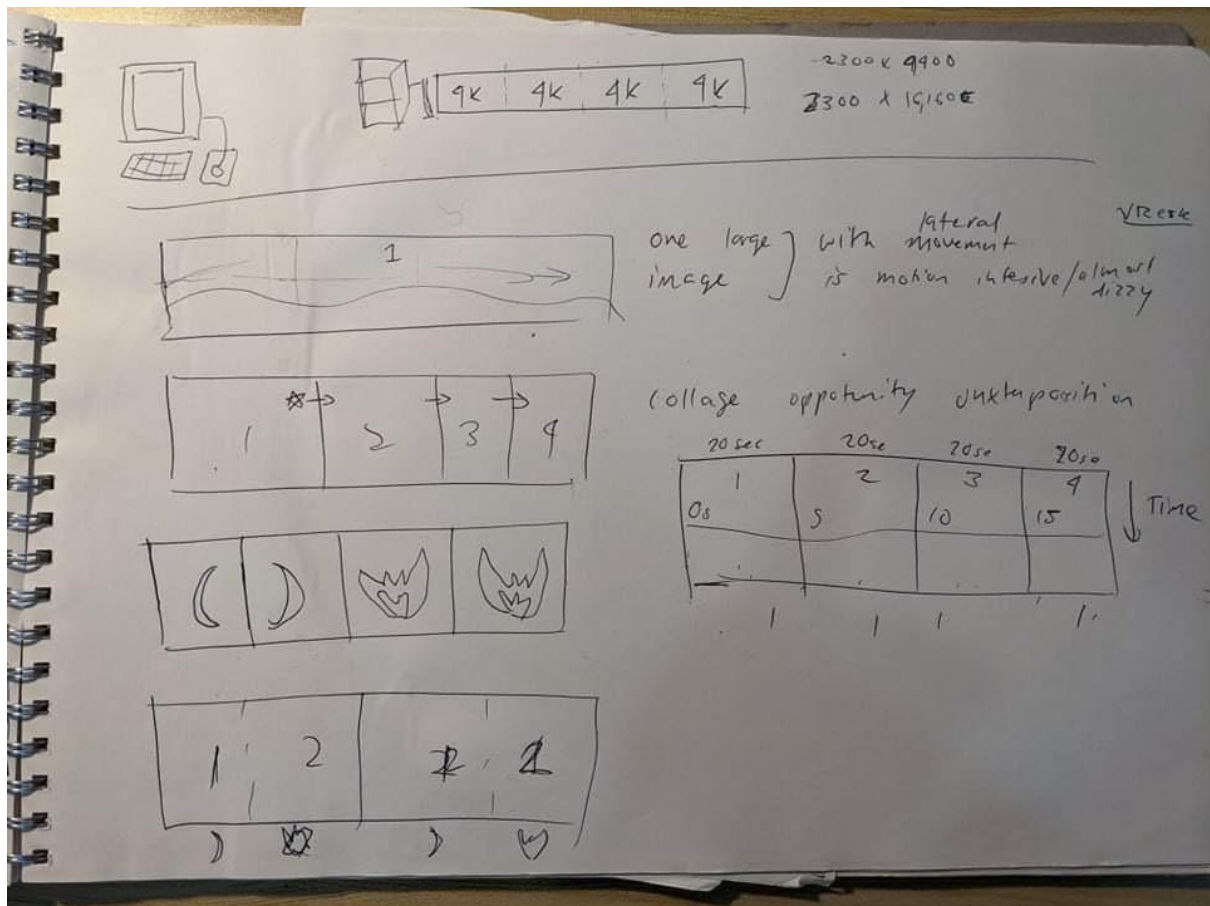


Figure 2. 17: Picture in my sketch book from our technical brainstorming session. Troubleshooting how much rendering power needed for each 4k projector (above). The rest of the page consists of different multi-screen effects options we could use.

This diagram showed the various technical effects that could be achieved depending on the hardware available. If the footage is in 4K resolution and the projections were thrown in 4K resolution, the computer needed to be able to handle such rendering and output. Calibration and synchronisation had to be considered as well. This gave me critical insights as there were many technical elements in this project that I had not been aware of until then, and so a significant turning point for me. In light of all this new information I reframed the presentation of this project as a proof of concept.

As this project was time-and resource-sensitive, there were limited options to test and showcase the work. There were many factors for the installation space that needed to be considered. Access to plain canvas walls, power supply options for all equipment, room lighting control and optimal space for the projectors to fill the walls were just some. Availability of places that fit these criteria for a reasonable amount of time and for general access was also challenging to secure. Fortunately, the team at the UTS Design Gallery let me use their space for a few days, initially for prototype testing but then they gave me some more additional time to showcase to supervisors and friends. Now that a location was locked in,

the next step was to revise the draft designs for this new space. Preparation leading up to the installation date was helpful in minimising risk and mistakes along the way.

Install & Exhibit

The installation space was the UTS Art Gallery in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building (DAB) and with its ample wall space, throw distance room for the projectors and optimal power supply to support all the equipment, it suited the prototype testing and final exhibit. The first important step was to scout the set space to gauge the layout. Arriving at the Gallery the day before the installation, getting a sense of the space and cross referencing with my pre-production plans helped me to prepare for any unexpected setbacks. With only two projectors, limited time and limited technical support, the project had been reduced, as mentioned previously, from a large 4-screen installation to a smaller-scale proof of concept. As I reviewed the space and understood where the screens and audio would be presenting, I set markers with gaffer tape and allocated the relevant equipment to their stations. Fortunately, due to previous experiments and testing with projectors, I was quickly able to assemble and calibrate the whole set up, conducting run-throughs to ensure that there were no missed issues and that adjustments could be made.

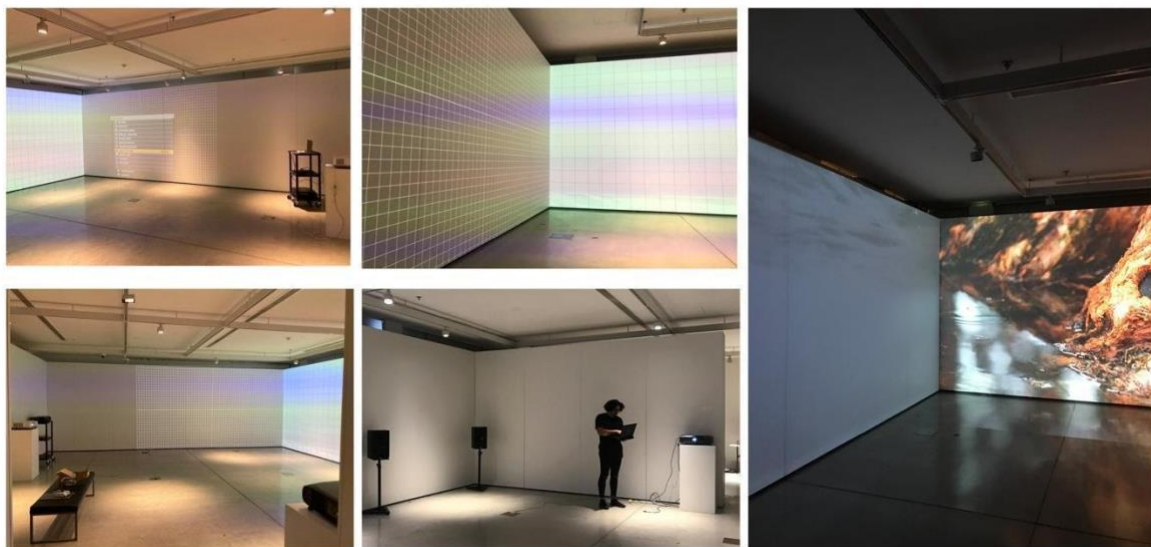


Figure 2. 18: Setting up in the UTS Design Gallery. Calibrating the projectors with the walls surface area (left to middle). The first tests with the video (right).

Once all was ready, I sent out verbal and written invitations to supervisors, close colleagues and family to experience the final product. For the Elders involved, there would be formal documentation for them to access online privately on Vimeo. Their feedback is discussed in Chapter Three. The comments and feedback received from the live exhibit were overwhelmingly positive and supportive. It was particularly interesting listening to the diverse experiences of the audiences. Some felt the trees themselves as large architectural structures. Others resonated with the calm ambience and the voices of the storytellers. Being more

present and immersed in the stories. Expressing the experience was as if they were truly present with the storytellers and the trees. All understood the premise of what was shared and appreciated the subtle nature of its call to action. Being my first installation project, this was a powerful moment for me, especially as I was the one to set up, calibrate and test everything on my own. Starting as a proof of concept all the way to project completion, this was an epic undertaking for me. To have these Indigenous stories shown and received in this manner felt like an overwhelming success.



Figure 2. 19: Photos of exhibition with audience members (left to middle). Mark pointing at his underwater footage being projected (right).



Figure 2. 20: The Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai title card



Well the stories are really that water is very important to us. The dream time story, the chicken hawk and crow fought for fire and water. This is how we believe they were fighting, because chwell the stories are really that water is very important to us. The dream time story, the chicken hawk and crow fought for fire and water. This is how we believe they were fighting, because chicken hawk used to ask the crow could you give me water? I'm thirsty. The crow when then ask well you give me meat, beef, because I am hungry. He said no. So this is how we take telling the story now. Oral people like us, we think about the story from those two animals, because the chicken hawk, was a werili person and the crow, a mumbaly. Water is a dreaming, even the bush is a dreaming from those two animals. You know? Old people used to carry water. You know because water is very important, it keeps you alive. Without water we'll die. icken hawk used to ask the crow could you give me water? I'm thirsty. The crow when then ask well you give me meat, beef, because I am hungry. He said no. So this is how we take telling the story now. Oral people like us, we think about the story from those two animals, because the chicken hawk, was a werili person and the crow, a mumbaly. Water is a dreaming, even the bush is a dreaming from those two animals. You know?

- Elder Nancy McDinny

Figure 2. 21: Key moments from Nancy Yukuwal McDinny's storyline part 1.



When the old people sit down in the shade. That's where the stories - that where we did it that journey east first. The old people when they were alive. You get song to tell the story. How its important the land is for us. The water, the sea, they protect it for thousands of years. Never throw rubbish anywhere. Didn't burn it at certain times. Certain times they burn it, on the right time. When the rain used to finish. Sometimes they burn the grass, the grass still green. It's burn underneath, can't go long way. This is how the old people used to do. During the first storm. Because you will have to maybe wait two or three weeks for the rain to come to pour and set in. They'd burn it before that monsoon. All the old people used to burn it, when the monsoon would come, they would just look for food now. Bush taka. That's how the old people used to do.

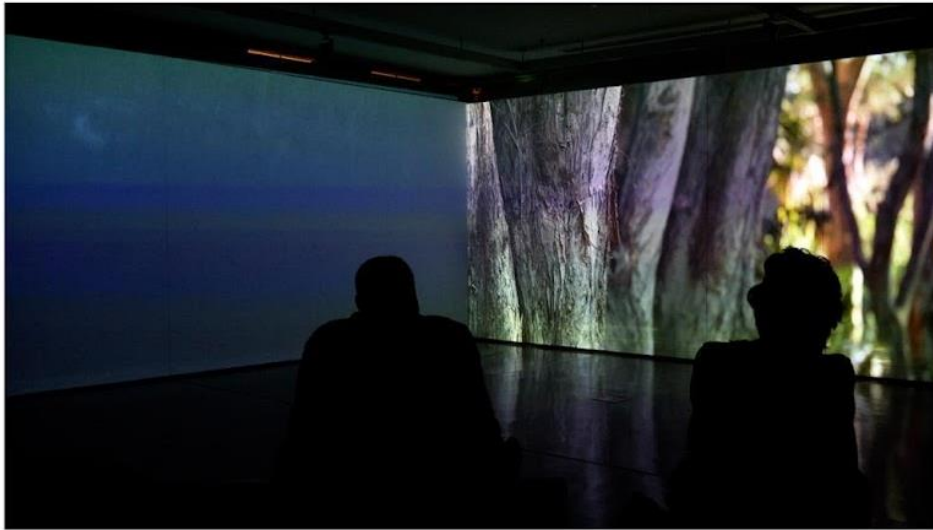
- Elder Nancy McDinny

Figure 2. 22: Key moments from Nancy Yukuwal McDinny's storyline part 2.



My mum from the Mumbulia clan and Mumbulia clan represents the water. Weyari clan represents the fire. You know? And water to us is important and for me for my mother's side, like I am a Gungai and that's my responsibility to stand up and fight for my mother country. Fight to protect the water in that land, because water is life you know. Water bring life back to the land and water is important for the wellbeing of us, the plants, the animal and for everyone that lives in this country.
- Elder Gadrian Hoosan

Figure 2. 23: Key moments from Gadrian Hoosan's storyline part 1.



Well, if there's no water in this country, I know I'm just going to have to bring this up. There's a big mining company that are trying to get around the country in the gulf drilling for oil and gas. I know they're going to pump a lot of water and use it for all that drilling around in the gulf region, if they take that away [water], then the tree will die too. And you know all the animal will die. Everything will just go dead. The same way if you knock all the trees down. In both ways. That's why it's important that we got to stand up and look after the land the same way we've been looking after it since creation time. We have to keep that country healthy and rich all the time. You know? I know there's a lot of mining companies that go in there and look at the land, but they look at it as resource you know, to make money. But we look at the land and as spiritual connection. An identity of who we are, of that country. We don't look at it the other way. And that's why we stand up and fight really hard for it. But you know, in the eyes of the arrogant, we stand in their way.

- Elder Gadrian Hoosan

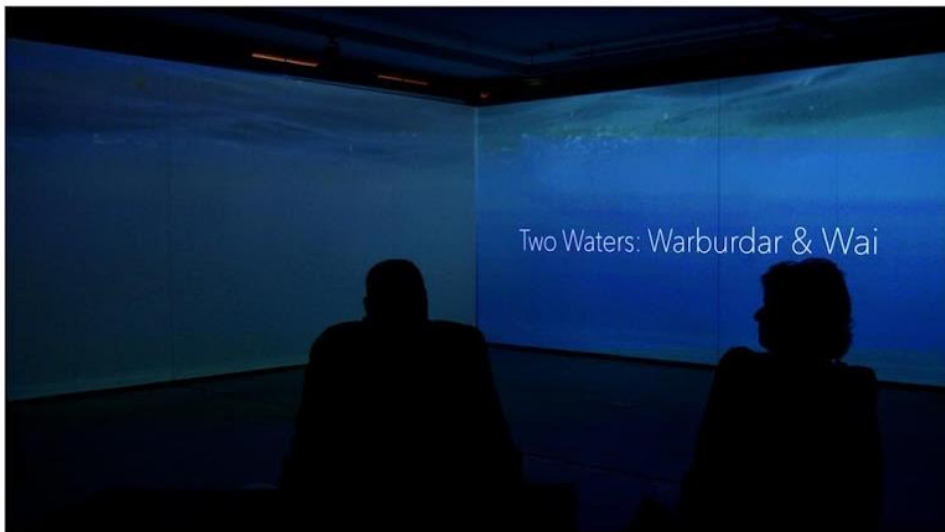
Figure 2. 24: Key moments from Gadrian Hoosan's storyline part 2.



Water is hugely important to- well the whole life system really. The whole life cycle. Water is life. Without water there's nothing. There's a lot of other things that are happening here but um a lot of it is based around people actually understanding why we as Maori are trying to protect those resources, what people don't understand is us as kaitiaki (guardians)- guardians of these resources is hugely important to us. Protecting those resources, protecting a lot of the other elements that have a part to play in the survival of all these resources. It's-it's all based around kaitiaki tanga, and kaitiaki tanga for us here its about- its like- what you call it- it's like a cycle. It's-it's a life cycle, I suppose an example which I've used- It's like a length of chain- now on a length of chain there's many many (he gestures with his hands*) links along that chain. If one link falls out of that chain- or one link is destroyed then that's compromised the whole strength of the chain. If one link is damaged. And one of those links is us as people.

- Elder Patau Tepania

Figure 2. 25: Key moments from Patau Tepania's storyline part 1.



Yes they're huge part of Maoridom and they play a huge part in the whole life cycle that we are all a part of. Some say that they have a whakapapa (ancestry) links back to the whales you know? That was hugely interesting, I didn't realise as well. But yes, no it's- it's funny how everything has a link, like you know you were talking about the oceans, the water and all that. Water ties us back to Australia, to your Indigenous people. And ah- you know our oceans meet. That's our links to each other you know. It's all linking each other to everything. And that's something some people don't consider or don't realise that we're linked in some way and when you spoke about water- the first thing that came to mind was we're linked anyway, through the oceans. And I think we just got to step outside of where we are now and actually jump into a whole different work and think wow you know, yes we are a part of a bigger picture and we are hugely involved with that.

- Elder Patau Tepania

Figure 2. 26: Key moments from Patau Tepania's storyline part 2.

Conclusion

This creative research process provided many insights. Learning to engage ethically with Indigenous knowledge and community members in all phases was part of the research journey. There is always more to learn and share. Elders such as Nancy, Gadrian and Patau were necessary guides and mentors in Indigenous processes and projects such as this and this was reflected in the outcomes of each phase of the creative project. The interviews provided a strong foundation for the project and gave me a platform to learn more about my own culture. Sharing their stories and perspectives enabled my growth. Talking about water and trees and their inter-connected relationships to our cultural histories allowed me to reflect on the stakes we face today. Globalisation and climate crisis are affecting our cultural relationships and community livelihoods.

Looking towards the project production as a whole, it was an epic trial of Indigenous methodology and contemporary technological practices. Being able to test and apply newly learned methods with my contemporary skillset allowed my practice to grow significantly, both culturally and practically. Since the proposal for the creative project, the objective has been to share our Indigenous cultural understandings, practices and solutions to an environmental crisis. I believe we are following the right path in achieving this. The ethics application process prepared me for the interviews and the factors involved when navigating research practice for institutions such as a university. The ethics application also required me to prepare adequately for data storage and protections, for consent forms and for information sheet templates to ensure that I conducted and secured my research adequately.

As the project progressed, the application of Indigenous methods was used where needed, particularly the application of Yarnbar and active listening during the interviews. Purakau's framing of our stories had a pedagogical aspect through the representation of our cultural stories (Lee-Morgan et al., 2019, p. 159), including the Indigenous bricoleur notion of combining set methods to create a new practice through my research journey (Lee, 2009). Finally, the application of Storywork principles was a framework in which to engage all these methods with the Indigenous participants and their stories for this research (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 1). To be given the tools to navigate such protocols provides an example that I hope may be a helpful guide for others to follow in the creative research space.

Chapter Three is a reflection on the *Two Waters* exhibition and research journey, sharing feedback with Elders once they had time to watch and process the documented version of the exhibit. It includes a discussion of their thoughts about the project, its purpose and future possibilities. There will be a formal reiteration of the design process to give a clear guide on what was undertaken, beginning with the incorporation of Indigenous methodologies into my practice and how they have allowed me to become a better filmmaker, creative, collaborator and now researcher. This will be followed by my reflections on the overall creative research journey and what I have learned and achieved on a personal, cultural and creative level. It concludes with an outline of the storytelling methodology in immersive video design.

Chapter Three

Introduction

As I completed the *Two Waters: Warburdar and Wai* installation, there is much to unpack. While Chapter Two described the interviews, production and exhibition of the creative project, Chapter Three provides an opportunity to reflect on the results and the impact that these Indigenous methodologies have had on my practice. This begins with one of the more important aspects of this project, the Elders' feedback and commentary on the exhibit. Following that discussion with Elders Nancy Yukuwal McDinny, Gadrian Hoosan and Patau Tepania, I review the final vision for the creative work and the creative research approach and provide a formal reiteration of its development. To conclude the research journey, I share my overall reflections and discuss the benefits that Indigenous methodologies have brought to my practice.

The Elders' feedback was critical to the outcomes of the *Two Waters* research. As community leaders, collaborators and mentors, they gave weight to determining how successful this project was, especially with the re-presentation of their stories. Key points from their observations were presented to better inform the overall outcomes of the creative research approach, including their initial thoughts, their favourite moments (if any), what changes they wanted to make (if any) and their thoughts moving forward from the project. From their responses I could make adjustments where appropriate and then draw on these outcomes and observations to better inform my conclusions and the development of the creative project.

Although the creative project was a success in its showcasing, I felt it was important to share the complete version of the proof of concept. This sub-chapter therefore describes my intentions and overall final vision for the *Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai* installation. I also reflect on my initial approach and provide some visual examples of how it could be fully presented, should its development be pursued in the future.

The creative research approach encapsulated the overall framework of my practice during this journey. The roots of the creative research journey, from concept to production, were the methodologies of Indigenous Storywork, Yarnbar and Pūrākau and they played a huge role in transforming my research and film practice. I also reveal what I learned about the creative process that resulted in the *Two Waters* exhibit.

The overall reflections share my personal growth as an Indigenous creative researcher. This includes a self-reflection on what I discovered about myself and my culture and general thoughts about the research. It addresses questions such as: Did the premise stay the same the whole way through? What did I learn about water and water trees? What were some of the difficulties faced during my studies? Highlighting my professional and cultural growth through my experiences will hopefully help readers gauge the unique benefits Indigenous research practices present to an Indigenous person working with Indigenous peoples and knowledge.

The conclusion will draw upon my personal reflections and how the Indigenous methodologies have transformed my film practice. This section is guided by my general observations and project outcomes on the significance of Indigenous Storywork and its contribution to my research practice and creative project.

Feedback from Elders

Nana Nancy Yukuwal McDinny & Dad Gadrian Hoosan

The feedback from my Elders regarding the *Two Waters* stories and exhibition was heartwarming, supportive and insightful. Once the exhibit was over, I video recorded the *Two Waters* installation and sent that to the Elders for their feedback. It would have been more impactful for them to participate in person to fully grasp the scope of my creative vision and intentions but unfortunately Covid-19 was still prohibiting both state and international travel. The documentation of the exhibit was prepared with these conditions in mind. The framing in the video was intentionally set from the perspective of audience members, and the sound was overlaid in post-production for quality assurance. The first round of feedback provided was with Nancy Yukuwal McDinny and my father's brother, Gadrian Hoosan.

This is powerful. At this time this is very important message we are sending out to the world about protecting Country and water. In these times all the family play a role, even when living off homelands in protecting Country. This video is a good way to share this message. We have been using film this way since Two Laws (1981).

- Gadrian Hoosan (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

Gadrian's thoughts on the project were positive and encouraging. His impression of the scope and scale of the *Two Waters* exhibit was one of optimism and approval. Being recognised for my role and contribution in curating their stories is very humbling.

We know UTS well and we trust that our stories are being respected and shared for the right reasons. Looking after Country and stopping mining and keeping the culture strong for the young people.

- Nancy Yukuwal McDinny (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

A core part of this research journey was to develop a stronger foundation of ethical representation and reorientation of Indigenous knowledge and story in this exciting digital time. The feedback from both my Garrwa Elders provided insight into the positive outcomes that Indigenous methodologies such as Storywork has to offer. I would like to acknowledge both Nancy and Gadrian for their mentorship and ongoing support.

Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri)

Once Patau had some time to watch and reflect on the documentation, we could discuss his overall thoughts on the *Two Waters* premise and exhibit. It was interesting because Patau initiated our conversation with the topic of the Indigenous standpoint, with observations on Nan Nancy and Dad Gadrian's storylines, how much of what was shared in their stories resonated with his own, highlighting the universal connections Indigenous worldviews have and the cultural relationships we have to our environment.

It's funny, we are all on the same page I think and that's what I think the [exhibit] video shows. That everybody is thinking in the same way. I thought it was quite good. I think it heightens awareness of what is actually happening around the place. Around different areas. I don't think we're different from each other really in that respect too, around all the different resources and what they mean, you know; as taunga; as treasures. When they [Nan Nancy & Dad Gadrian] touched on the [subject of] water itself, you know the end of the day, without water nothing is going to survive. One of the biggest things today is trying to look after that water, to look after that resource. At the end of the day, it's not just a resource, it's life really. That's what water is, and people don't give it that respect. As being the life source of life really. Without water there is nothing.

- Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri)

Patau's commentary and resonance with the other storylines were reassuring. This notion that we are all linked and have a role in protecting our environment was evident throughout each stage of the research journey and more so reflected in the outcomes. The continuity between the initial proposal and the final product highlighted the effectiveness of the Indigenous methods used. As we progressed in our discussion, I was curious as to how he felt about the overall exhibition of all the stories in this immersive installation format. I asked him:

What were your highlights? And were there any changes needed if you had the chance?

He answered:

I think it's captured what it needed to capture at the end of the day. If there were changes needed, we could probably have a good sit down and have a good think about it. Write down some ideas while listening to it. Because I know reflecting on the other two you interviewed there were a number of things, I could've picked up from their [the Elders] korero as well and added to it. It's a work in progress really. It was really good!

- Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri)

The most important take aways for me from this feedback was his confidence in the project and offers of future support. Patau's offer to engage in further korero (talk) about possible ways to develop and collaborate is not something to be taken lightly. This was trust, trust earned through mutual engagement, transparency and communication learned from Storywork (Archibald, 2008), Yarnbar (J. De Santolo, 2018) and Pūrākau (Lee, 2009). To really understand how this was achieved, I believe Patau understood the intent behind the *Two*

Waters project, being transparent and thoughtful of my intent to share Indigenous worldviews aligned with his own, and therefore the wider community he represents. This extended to the Elders Nan Nancy and Dad Gadrian and the community we represent, achieving the project's premise of sharing the cultural significance of water through an Indigenous lens.

I then asked him:

If you had any changes you would like to make, what would they have been?

He answered:

When I was watching it [the video] I was thinking, "Geez, I should've said this, I should've said that."

This made me reflect on my process on how I could have informed Patau better before the meeting. I understood that I had previously interviewed Nan Nancy and Dad Gadrian and from that point, should have developed a short video summary of their discussions for him to view prior to our formal meeting, providing more context for the subject matter and how I planned to disseminate the information in this creative format. At the tail end of our discussion, I revisited my potential plans for the project and the possibility of showing it again. I asked for Patau's blessing and permission to use this story in the future and he did with enthusiasm. For my project to be recognised for its progress and outcomes in such a positive way made me feel as if the project was a success. Thank you Patau.

Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai Creative Vision

With the exhibit and feedback for the Two Waters proof of concept having come to a close, I share my intended vision for this creative project as follows. The exhibition of the *Two Waters* installation successfully articulated the ideas and concepts I set out to achieve, giving me the confidence in its conception should an opportunity to pursue it further arise. Although I have enough content to develop a full-scale piece, there are steps that will need to be addressed before engaging in the production. The first step would be to reach out to the Elders who participated in the project's inception for cultural council and to discuss the scope of the project's redevelopment on a larger scale. This would reiterate the Indigenous Storywork methodology presented throughout this research (Smith, 2012; Archibald, 2009).

Elder Patau mentioned in his feedback that, should the project move forward, he would like to talk further and re-evaluate the project's progress. This would allow him to refine the work and ensure the project's outcomes aligned with his own and the communities he represented. The same respect and opportunity would also be given to my Garrwa Elders, as well, giving collaborators options to make informed changes, should they choose to, now that they had a better gauge from the proof-of-concept exhibit. They may want to add or subtract particular content according to their standards. This process would progress through each phase of the creative project's redevelopment and in terms of the final version, it would be a simple expansion on the current project.

To provide a base idea for the work, I would use the UTS: Design Gallery space as a spatial guide for my exemplar. The installation idea would be quite straightforward and similar to the previous exhibit in terms of how the stories are presented. The audience will be surrounded by four projection walls or screens, one of which would be set as the feature storytelling device and the other three as accompanying acts. Here are some visual examples along with a top view layout plan:

Visual examples:

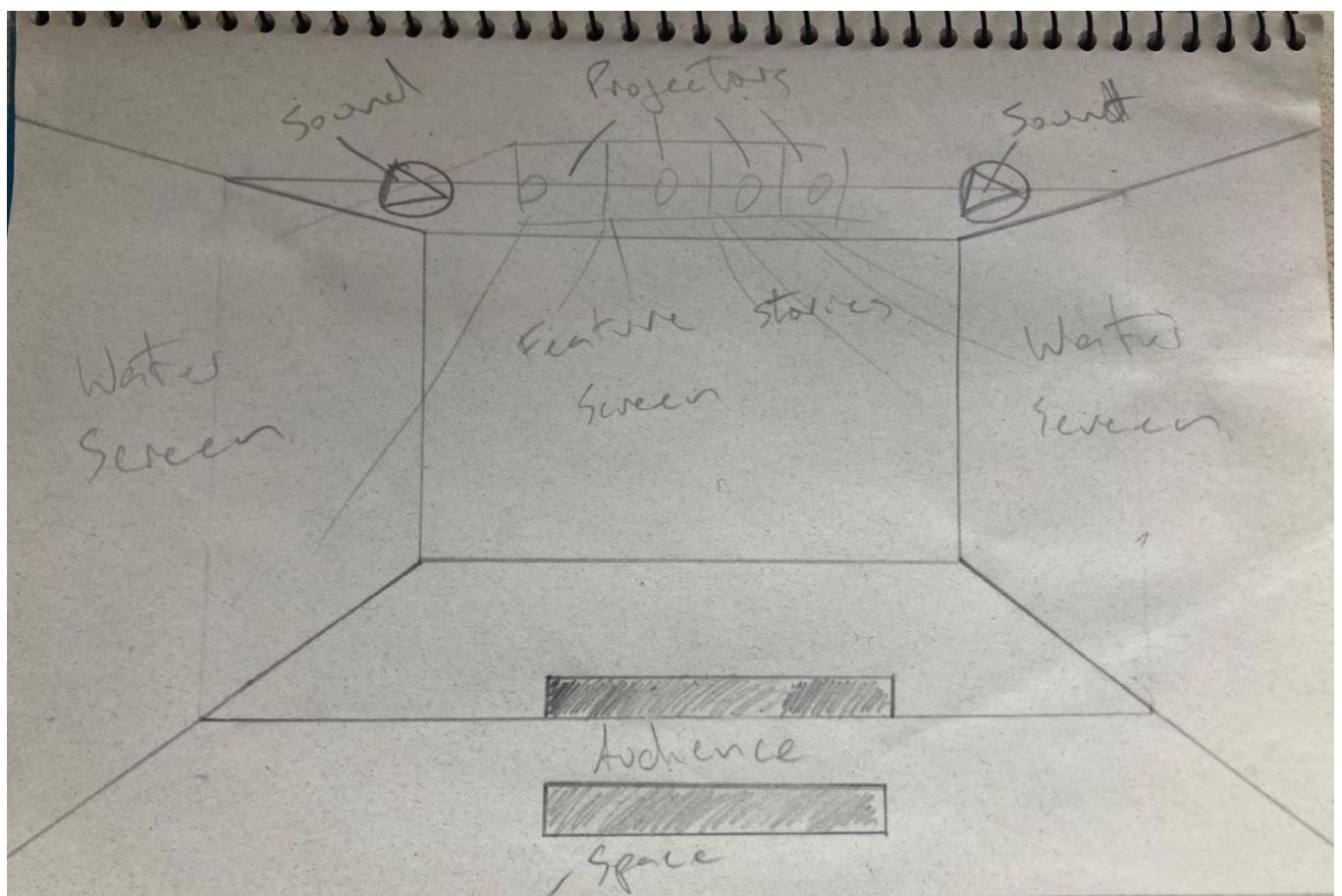


Figure 3. 1: Draft sketch of final vision.

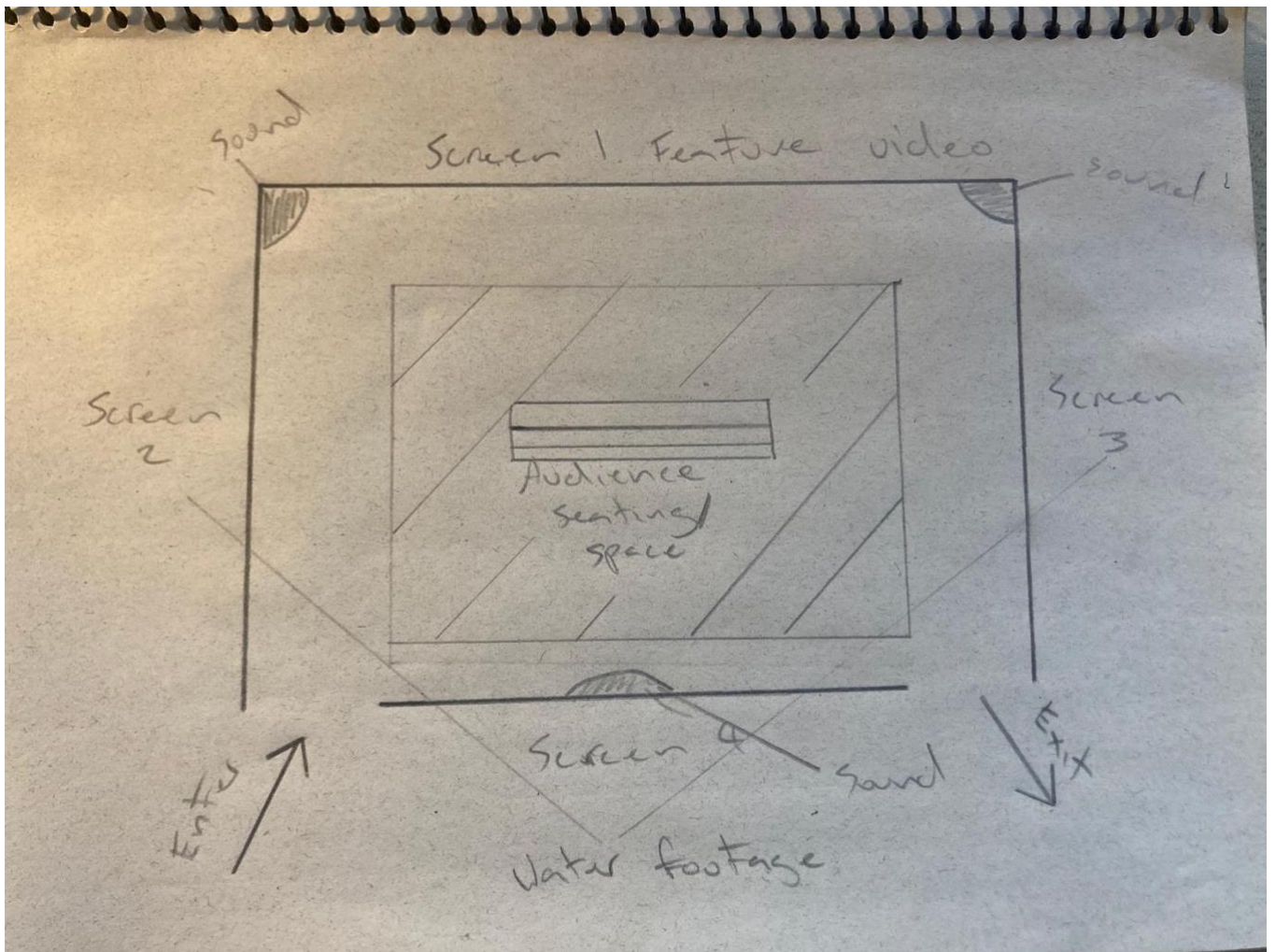


Figure 3. 2: Draft sketch of final vision, top view layout.

Creative Research Approach

To reflect on the overall creative research approach of *Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai*, I must return to the beginning. When this project began, the intention was to figure out how best to re-present Indigenous storytelling and cultural perspective about water from my proposed platform. For many people, Indigenous knowledge can be a sensitive and difficult task to approach, especially for an Indigenous person new to working with cultural knowledge or story directly. How do we know what we are doing is the correct way? How do we know the right way to connect with community members and engage with cultural knowledge? As an Indigenous filmmaker transitioning into a research masters, discovering Decolonizing Methodologies (Smith, 2012), Storywork (Archibald, 2008), Yarnbar (J. De Santolo, 2018) and Pūrākau (Lee, 2009) changed my whole outlook fundamentally. All these Indigenous authors shared their experiences and intentions through their research journeys and in turn set a strong example for me to follow. The creative research approach owes much to these Indigenous academic scholars first because the approach had to be set within a decolonised framework before further creative development could continue.

The implementation of Storywork (Archibald, 2018), Yarnbar (J. De Santolo, 2018) and Pūrākau (Lee, 2009) in this space shifted my own practice significantly as a filmmaker and researcher. A fundamental part of the project relied on using video and sound as tools to document, review, frame and reorientate our Elders' stories. These are tools and skills that I have cultivated throughout my career. Each tool played a critical role at every stage of the *Two Waters* project, to both the research and the creative components. All my interviews were conducted using video and audio for documentation; the creative project presented these interviews as stories using the same video and audio. What guided these tools and the overall process outlined were the selected methods of Yarnbar (J. De Santolo, 2018) and Pūrākau (Lee, 2009). A crucial aspect of Yarnbar explored the shifting and reorientation of practice and J. De Santolo provided me with the framework to undertake my interviews and creative video practice from an Indigenous standpoint with my Garrwa Elders. My understanding of the chosen platform and their guidance in navigating cultural protocol allowed all participants to achieve visual sovereignty together (J. De Santolo, 2018). This was evident in the collaborative efforts undertaken in my creative process, specifically my respecting the role of the knowledge holder and the knowledge shared, my use of active listening during our yarning sessions and revisiting Elders for feedback. The reframing of my practice through the application of these decolonising methods adhered to the values and scope of both the project's premise and aligned with the community's intent. Actioning a right to Indigenous self-determination involves a shift in communication paradigm. The way in which the Storywork principle of respect guided community representation in the collaboration in this research and the exercising of cultural revitalisation by creatively engaging with our cultural knowledge exemplifies, I believe, the actioning of that right.

The concept of the Indigenous bricoleur (Lee, 2009) paved a way for me to formally articulate my new practice. Using my film practice as a base, this research journey enabled me to explore additional and alternative ways in which to engage with Indigenous storytelling as an Indigenous researcher. As mentioned in Chapter One, the concept of the Indigenous bricoleur is the application of various components from a set of practices combining to form a new methodological approach. When I reflected on the overall process, I noticed many

contributing components that developed my skillset and methodological practice, that shifted and reorientated my practice. Yarnbar also set a framework in which to identify key objectives and provided the methods to achieve them.

Let's begin with my progress with the role of interviewer/Indigenous researcher. How did I learn to engage with my interviews the right way, especially in regard to discussing cultural knowledge and story? Although my intent was aligned with my Elders, our dialogue needed to be in a formally documented setting. That can add some pressure to anyone being interviewed. In her *Storywork* (2006), Archibald's shares her experiences from her yarning sessions with Elders. She describes how part of her holistic approach was to respect the time shared in her yarning sessions. I took Archibald's reflection seriously and considered this as an important formality when engaging in my own interview process. This allowed the Elders to share their knowledge at their own pace, which was critical and yet also a point of tension. Also the Covid-19 pandemic made fieldwork very difficult and a Master's timelines seldom match community dynamics.

As the *Two Waters* creative project progressed, many of the new practices in the proposed installation concept were achieved through trial and error. My standpoint was now set, the platform chosen, and the stories were ready to be revealed. The final step was to figure out how to re-present these stories in the set installation format. Although I was familiar with video and sound post-production, there were still many technical hurdles to overcome. My first goal was mastering multi-screen projection. The second was to understand how to apply and calibrate multi-screen projection in a set space. The third needed me to sync the video and audio with the multi-screen set up and the final challenge had me revisit the user experience and ensure that the sound, space and stories would succeed in immersing my audience/s. The art of projection all began with my fascination with projection mapping, an experimental creative space where you can manipulate projection upon a surface. This all required immense amounts of trial and error. Learning these new technical practices through a decolonising lens felt like an empowering venture and transformed my practice, enabling me to become an Indigenous insider researcher (Smith, 2012) and creative practitioner.

To reiterate the design process used in the *Two Waters* project, there were three core components implemented in my practice: research methods, community engagement and creative development. The implementation of Indigenous methodology in the research component helped to frame the standpoint and inform the project's intention. The decolonising framework guided the pre-consultation, interview and collaborative processes, providing insights into protocol and communication pathways with Indigenous knowledge holders and the dissemination of their shared knowledge and ensuring the intent aligned with community values and guidelines.

As I transitioned into the creative project's production, so too did the depth of Indigenous *Storywork* (Archibald, 2006). I would highlight the key themes and quotes from each interview and reorientate them into story scripts. When the fine edits were complete, they were compiled using video postproduction software for image and audio reference. At the same time, the experimental phase with video and projection began, testing the concept in both spatial and multi-screen technical trials. At key milestones I returned to the Elders for consultation and revision of storylines drafts and project concepts and once their feedback

and approval were given, I made the adjustments and fine edited the story points. This completed the three storylines, marking a critical point in the project's development.

As the stories were complete, I then worked towards articulating the standpoint of the stories and their storytellers from a visual and audio context. This was done through deep reflection on the subject themes from the stories and the project's premise. Themes of water and trees started to take form. Referring to early experimental footage and storyboarding, I began the video production and recorded the concept footage. The original intention was to document trees and water at the relevant native sites, but Covid-19 limited our location accessibility. Instead, I gathered adequate substitute footage that provided a strong representation of the concepts proposed. As I got an early sense of the visual presentation of the trees, water and stories footage together, I returned to the Elders for further review and approval. Once all was clear for everyone involved, the next step was to make the adjustments from the feedback sessions.

With the visual component now complete, I could move forward with the sound design. Much like the video documentation, it would have been optimal to record on traditional lands but, as stated above, Covid-19 limited my access. The alternative option was to find high-quality individual sounds of regions, local atmospheric tracks and various water sounds to recreate the audio space manually. As I completed the audio and synchronised it with the video, I could plan how to showcase the media within an installation space. From the earlier trials with the video and projection tests, I was better able to navigate the technical aspects of the installation. Confident as I now as with how to execute the project installation, the organisation of equipment, exhibition space, invitations and showcase dates were next. As the exhibit went live, the whole piece was video documented for assessment and for the Elders who were unable to be there in person. It was also important during the live exhibition to discuss it with audience members and collaborators, obtain their feedback and thank them for their support. Once the exhibition was over, the documentation was successfully stored and sent to the Elders, waiting for an appropriate time to discuss their thoughts on the final piece and its future.

Overall Reflection

To be given the opportunity to explore and develop my creative and written practice through this research Masters has been humbling. Although my skill set began with film production, my discovery of Indigenous decolonizing methodologies, immersive installation and conceptual design inspired a newfound fascination with ways in which to reframe story. From my first experience attending an immersive installation, I was captivated by the limitless possibilities and flexibility that the platform had to offer. This was when ideas of Indigenous story, projection and installation began to manifest conceptually. Being a descendant of two Indigenous cultures I wanted to learn more about them and, in the process, share my experience. During this time, my father, Jason De Santolo, and Garrwa family members were making a film called *Warburdar Bununu: Water Shield* (J. De Santolo, 2019), which highlighted the water contamination problems faced by our Indigenous communities in Borroloola, NT. This ignited the conversation around water, how water sustains life, its cultural significance

and the adversity our environment faces in a time of climate crisis. Aboriginal and Māori practices of sustainability offer hope and, in my journey to better understand water, I hope that together we could all learn and share with one another. This was my intention, and this is what I learned.

It's funny how everything has a link, like you know you were talking about the oceans, the water and all that. Water ties us back to Australia, to your Indigenous people. And ah- you know our oceans meet. That's our links to each other you know. It's all linking each other to everything. And that's something some people don't consider or don't realise that we're linked in some way and when you spoke about water- the first thing that came to mind was we're linked anyway, through the oceans.

- Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri)

Water is life. For all Indigenous peoples. This is what my Elders have taught me. Before beginning this research journey, the scope and importance of water was different to me. Growing up and living in the city had influenced my perspective and allowed me to take it for granted. Easy access to clean water at any moment had desensitised me. Reconnecting with my Aboriginal and Māori roots through my Elders has transformed my perspective and practice. Pursuing this research journey with dual Indigenous identities definitely added another dimension to the project standpoint and research outcomes. The inter-relational nature of water between the two cultures was an exciting concept to explore. Reflecting on the discussions on water, we also touched on water trees and their significance. There were interesting contrasts between the yarns about the Naja (Paperbark) and the Kauri trees. When I was talking with Nana Nancy, she shared the various uses and applications of the bark from the Naja.

Well, they would get wood and use the paper bark for cooking in the stone oven to cover it so the dust and dirt won't go on the meat and it [the meat] would always come out clean. Yeah, like binjiti, it's the paper bark but they still use it to like—old people used to put it and get that leaf and put it on top of the fish for flavour. Take it out and cover it with the paper bark and put dirt over it and it come out really clean! The fish. This is how the old people used to cook it.

- Nancy Yukuwal McDinny (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

The revelation of the old ways was a powerful reminder of the history we have. How we as Aboriginal people have lived with and respected the land for thousands of years. When talking to Patau about the Kauri tree, I found there were also deep links between the Kauri and Māori history. For Māori, the Kauri is revered for its giant stature and high-quality wood, used to create massive waka (canoes) for transport, as an ingredient for ta moko (Māori tattoo) and for buildings such the marae (meeting houses). Patau shares some insight into the cultural history we have of the Kauri with the story of its ancestry.

They're huge part of Maoridom and they play a huge part in the whole life cycle that we are all a part of. Someone say that they have a whakapapa link back to the whales you know? That was hugely interesting, I didn't realise as well.

- Patau Tepania (Te Aupouri and Ngati Kuri)

All this knowledge and support from the Elders empowered my own processes and helped me to better understand true Indigenous worldviews, enabling me to best communicate, engage and re-present Indigenous story. This was significant because it allowed me to combine my interest in Indigenous culture with my fascination with contemporary multimedia like immersive video installation.

One of the interesting outcomes of this experimental design space was to reflect on the intersection between story, ethical research practice and immersive installation design. The ethical research practices learned from Archibald's Storywork synchronised with my filmmaking skill set, providing me with a holistic framework when working with Indigenous knowledge. Additionally, understanding that ethical reorientation and representation were key factors when navigating contemporary storytelling platforms created positive outcomes for all. For example, video was an effective tool throughout this creative research project for capturing the knowledge sharing sessions, highlighting core themes and then reframing them into stories, creating an interesting dynamic to my own practice. Applying these stories on immersive platforms added new forms of engagement with audience members through multi-sensory experiences, while showcasing Indigenous worldviews more efficiently compared to other media formats allowed for a stronger voice and flexible re-presentation of story.

I faced many difficulties throughout this project. Covid-19 limited my access to particular locations both locally and internationally, but I achieved the concepts I was seeking regardless. While I was also lucky to be able to travel between Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia during this time to access Elders and film the relevant subject matter, hotel quarantine during this time was not something I would recommend. Now could the Elders see the final result of the major project in person, although I could share a documented version with them. Their reactions, feedback and overall support created a newfound appreciation that made me hopeful for future collaborative and Indigenous-led creative projects.

Storytelling Methodologies in Immersive Video Design

The aim of this research was to explore and share Indigenous connections to story and water, to expand ways to share the story and share it with the wider community. The formation of video, sound, projection and spatial design combined can provide a multi-sensory experience that adds depth and allows us to appreciate the nuances within a story. Indigenous peoples have always had storytelling as a way to pass on knowledge, and our stories are most powerful when shared in lands of which they were created. Immersive platforms can bring forth and articulate complex concepts more effectively compared to conventional mediums like television. Through our senses, the Two Waters project concept was to shift how people perceive Indigenous relationships to Country and water.

Conclusion

These ideas would not have been achieved without the guidance of Elders and Indigenous methodology. The contribution of Indigenous Storywork to my creative research approach can be split into two sections using Storywork's key principles. Respect, responsibility, and reciprocity were used as ethical guides for my research practice (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 1). There is much trust when an Indigenous knowledge holder shares their knowledge with you. As part of my interviews with Elders it was important to respect their role and the time they shared. Before anything was talked about, it was important to discuss my intentions and objectives. Acknowledging the value of their stories and standpoint created trust between us. Strengthening our relationships in a responsible manner was proper conduct as it was so important to maintain this trust with continued open dialogue and communication, especially at important milestones. The relational connections of the stories to storyteller reveal the synergy of the project.

For Storywork and creative practice purposes, Archibald's Storywork principles of reverence, holism, interrelatedness and synergy were adhered to, thus enhancing the meaning-making process about Indigenous and traditional lived experiences when re-presenting our stories (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 2). This was reflected throughout the creative research approach, to revere the stories and knowledge shared by being careful and responsible with the content. As I progressed in the reorientation of their stories, returning to the original knowledge holder for feedback and guidance, taking a holistic approach to our relationship, rather than a formal western researcher-participant dynamic, allowed me to be responsible in the dissemination. The approach can vary depending on the community and people with which one engages; in my case, I was collaborating with Elders from my community. We had pre-existing relationships and it was important to maintain these carefully and respectfully.

Yarnbar (J. De Santolo, 2018) and Pūrākau (Lee, 2009) contributed greatly to the development of my practice. Yarnbar emphasised the art of deep listening, to be present with Elders and to let them tell their stories in their own time. Another aspect of Yarnbar focuses on the songline logic of shifting and reorienting practice to align intent with collaborators and contributors. The methods and concepts drawn from Pūrākau (Lee, 2009) were the Indigenous bricoleur and the exploration of story as a form of pedagogy. Indigenous bricoleur introduced the idea of articulating a new practice. Integrating Indigenous methods with new technical expertise refined my creative research practice and gave me the tools to collaborate with Indigenous peoples as an Indigenous creative effectively and ethically. The notion of Indigenous storytelling as a form of pedagogy is nothing new to Indigenous peoples. In the context of the *Two Waters* project, the stories were used to help others understand Indigenous cultural perspectives and intentions for protecting water and Country. The difference is the form in which I present the story. Inspired by artists such as Lisa Reihana and Piploiti Rist, by digital galleries such as the renowned Japanese digital art museum TeamLab Borderless, I pushed boundaries and provoked ideas on how to re-present Indigenous stories through immersion. With these inspirations in mind, it was a pleasure to explore and learn alternative avenues for sharing story. I hope the *Two Waters: Warburdar & Wai* project can inspire other Indigenous creatives to strive for similar goals and explore their practice through a research journey or project of importance for them.

To be recognised for my contribution in curating these stories validates the success of the *Two Waters* outcomes and process for me. To be supported by Elders in this project and be

recognised for my ability to re-present this important issue for our community, highlights the impact of actioning decolonising methodologies such as Storywork, Yarnbar and Pūrākau (Smith, 1999; Archibald, 2006; J. De Santolo, 2018; Lee, 2006). These practices set the foundational intent for and commitment to ethical engagement, creative continuity and community alignment. This allowed me the space, time and guidance to be story ready (Archibald, 2019, p. 2). It has been an incredible privilege for me, as an Indigenous creative, to be given the opportunity to learn from and collaborate with my Elders, senior knowledge holders and supervisors.

Immersive video design has vast potential to shift perceptions and rally support for Indigenous peoples' struggles to protect their homelands. Using Indigenous story and methods can transform film practice and offers unique collaborative potential. The *Two Waters* process and outcomes are just a small example of the positive opportunities Indigenous practice holds for a more sustainable future for all, especially at a time when Indigenous worldviews can provide deep understandings about our environment and the long-lasting impacts of climate change and extractive industries.

This research Master's created an opportunity for me to rediscover what is truly important, to contribute to sharing the story of our communities who are fighting on the front line against climate crisis, globalisation and corporate mining. Indigenous communities struggle every day to protect native resources. Water is at the heart of survival.

They're not here for the environment, to look after the environment. They're not here because they're the top scientist and they know what they are doing. They're here for money. We don't do it that way. We don't stand for that money; we stand for that land because that land is going to last forever than that money. We are not going to eat money; we are going to eat what's coming from the land. You know? And that's why it's important.

– Gadrian Hoosan (Garrwa and Yanyuwa Elder)

The message of the Elders is to listen to the old stories and reflect on the old law. To give perspective into Indigenous people's intentions to heal our environment for future generations. Not only for our children, but for our children's children and their children and beyond.

Appendix A

Story Narrative Structure

Stage one:

Input of dialogue from transcriptions. These will drive the story along-side visual and audio components. Once all the required dialogue is in place the editing will begin and the story structure will be developed. Once completed then the newly developed script will be used as a template and base for the rest of the creative project, allowing for me to transition to the next sections.

Story beat template:

- Introduction: Who are we?
- Body: What are the threats we face today?
- Conclusion: What are the solutions or strategies we can utilize?

Selected dialogue for the narrative

Nana Nancy Stewart

Water

Yeah, well the stories are really that water is very important to us. The dream time story, the chicken hawk and crow fought for fire and water. This is how we believe they were fighting, because chicken hawk used to ask the crow could you give me water? I'm thirsty. The crow when then ask well you give me meat, beef, because I am hungry. He said no. So this is how we take telling the story now. Oral people like us, we think about the story from those two animals, because the chicken hawk, was a werili person and the crow, a mumbaly. **Water is a dreaming, even the bush is a dreaming from those two animals. You know? Old people used to carry water. You know because water is very important, it keeps you alive. Without water we'll die.**

Trees

You have to look after the trees. This is why we getting all this, um what they call it now? Hot from the sun. Yeah, land getting dry because you know, it's come from the beginning of the dreaming that people are not allowed to cut down the trees. You have to look after it. Water is good for us to drink, it'll keep you alive. Without water, we all die, and you get burn. *Like old people used to tell us don't cut down that tree -quotes old elders in language- They used to tell us don't break that tree. We'll get burn from up here *points up at sky*. And I got shocked, how did they know. Because they were carry it (knowledge) for thousands of years. You're not allowed to cut tree down because you'll get burned.*

Conflict

Now its very important for me to look after country, that why we fighting today. To the mining company like you know? Fracking. They are destroying the land. That's why it's getting hot, the sun is killing us. You know, we keep telling them don't damage all the rivers, don't damage the water. Because water is really good for us. You know? It's got a lot of dreaming, on the site, the sea and along the coast. Thats where we got to protect it.

Solution

When the old people sit down in the shade. That's where the stories – that where we did it that journey east first. The old people when they were alive. You get song to tell the story. How its important the land is for us. The water, the sea, they protect it for thousands of years. Never throw rubbish anywhere. Didn't burn it at certain times. Certain times they burn it, on the right time. When the rain used to finish. Sometimes they burn the grass, the

Gadrian Hoosan

My mum from the Mumbulia clan **and Mumbulia clan represents the water**. Weyari clan represents the fire. You know? And water to us is important and for me for my mother's side, like I am a Gungai and that's my responsibility to stand up and fight for my mother country. Fight to protect the water in that land, because water is life you know. Water bring life back to the land and water is important for the wellbeing of us, the plants, the animal and for everyone that lives in this country.

Water

Yeah well that's a dream time story, maybe one day you'll have a look at this whole documentary made in 1988, **you'll see that the dream time story about the fire and the water when the crow from the Mumbulia clan and the chicken from the Weyari clan they had a big fight. At this place called *inaudible / I can't spell* plain. And the crow was sitting at one place called black rock in Borrooloola (Name to be added) and the chicken hawk was at the (name to be added) plain sitting in there. They had this big fight because the crow wanted the fire because he wanted to eat his food cooked and the chicken hawk wanted the crow water because he was thirsty. So, they had a big fight. And the crow chucked all the fire all over the chicken hawk and the chicken have that fire off out in the plain. That's a dream time story to it. That's why water is so important because its got story in our ancient culture that goes way way back since creation time. Ijan (need to confirm spelling) we call it. Dream time.**

Conflict 1

Yeah, we had that water contamination at Garrwa one town campsite and Garrwa two as well. Because our source was right next to the river. Right next to the Macarthur river. And the Macarthur river is right on top of our river—Macarthur river mines, its right on top you know. And we know they're flashing it out from the drill wet and that—they're flushing it down the main river, right out to the sea. All that waste they got. During the big flood our *boar(?)* sits right in the middle, it's like an island. Its right here and all the water around it—back water and all from the Macarthur. And that's why we got all that lead into our drinking water—in the tap

Conflict 2

Well, if there's no water in this country, I know I'm just going to have to bring this up. There's a big mining company that are trying to get around the country in the gulf drilling for oil and gas. I know they're going to pump a lot of water and use it for all that drilling around in the gulf region, if they take that away [water], then the tree will die too. And you know all the animal will die. Everything will just go dead. The same way if you knock all the trees down. In both ways. That's why its important that we got to stand up and look after the land the same way we've been looking after it since creation time. We have to keep that country healthy and rich all the time. You know? I know there's a lot of mining companies that go in there and look at the land, but they look at it as resource you know, to make money. But we look at the land and as spiritual connection. An identity of who we are, of that country. We don't look at it the other way. And that's why we stand up and fight really hard for it. But you know, in the eyes of the arrogant, we stand in their way.

Trees

There's a type of palm tree called a Manja Tree. Yanyuwa people call it Manja because it's on Yanyuwa land, *inaudible area*, they cut all these trees down and all that *type of palm (tree)*. And they all ancient tree. You know. That's from the dream time, the tiger shark put it there. You know. He (the tiger shark) grew all that plant, grew all that tree, palm tree that grew there. The tiger shark left it there. It's a dream time story. And that why all them all people cried for it because they got connection to that land. It could be the person who own that country you know. Like *inaudible name (must come back and confirm)*, the owner of that country, the bosses and Jungai

Patau Tepuna

Introduction

Begins with a karakia (a prayer). He then introduces his affiliations in Maori through a known practice called Pepeha (or identity chant).

Hi Kiaora, my name is Patau Tepania. Originally from Ahipara although I, ah, have whakapapa links to the northern iwi Te Aupori and Nga Te Kuri. And also the east coast, ah, Nga Te Kahu. Yes I have my links- and Nga Te Phatua just to the south on the west coast and Nga Puhī. So throughout the Te heku- what we're known as the iwi. 5 iwi all together. Kiaora-kiaora

I suppose, yeah ah mainly ah- I suppose growing up here in Ahipara, I've never left home and never had any ambition to leave home um- I've always appreciated the whole area ah- in the north here. Growing up, also you know- growing up with my dad, he was a fisherman, the very first commercial fisherman here in Ahipara. Part of my life also was hunting with my dad and pretty much living off the land really throughout the north here- up in Teheku. I know the areas very very well. From growing up, I suppose having a horse back in the day as well ah- that used to ah- take me to all the places that nobody could get to and um its- its- its- been a beautiful upbringing here- up in the north here and being able to venture out and see some places with my father and ah- be a part of the hunting journeys that he's taken me on and throughout my school years as well. So to me the whole area has always been precious and very special to me. Through my whakapapa as well.

Topic 1

Water is hugely important to- well the whole life system really. The whole life cycle. Water is life. Without water there's nothing.

There's a lot of other things that are happening here but um a lot of it is based around people actually *understanding why we as Maori are trying to protect those resources, what people don't understand is us as kaitiaki (guardians)- guardians of these resources is hugely important to us. Protecting those resources, protecting a lot of the other elements that have a part to play in the survival of all these resources.*

It's-it's all based around kaitiaki tanga, and kaitiaki tanga for us here its about- its like- what you call it- it's like a cycle. It's-it's a life cycle, I suppose an example which I've used- It's like a length of chain- now on a length of chain there's many many (he gestures with his hands) links along that chain. If one link falls out of that chain- or one link is destroyed then that's compromised the whole strength of the chain. If one link is damaged. And one of those links is us as people.*

And that's what we've been trying to manage that life cycle, that chain- that length of chain is easily compromised with the system- that industry today. And that compromise goes wider- its not just the beach, it involves the coast as well. Part of that chain- that length of chain is the environment.

You know the environment- it involves- even it involves the sun. It involves the rain. Those are parts of those links on the chain. The little streams that run from the land to the sea that feed into the water. The wind and rain that creates the waves and all that. The moon. All those are parts, are links to that chain. And if any one of those things are compromised then it's a downward spiral for life. For us.

Conflict 2

And people don't actually look at it this way because they just look and see what's in front of them and that's where that compromise comes from. It's being ignorant to what's actually behind and I always try and push that

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