

The Living Dreaming: A Study of Sydney's Living D'harawal Knowledges

by **Shannon Foster**

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

under the supervision of Dr Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews

University of Technology Sydney
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

June 2024

STUDENT DECLARATION

Certificate of Original authorship and ICIP

I, Shannon Elizabeth Foster, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences 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 thesis includes Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) belonging to my D'harawal and Worimi families, as well as the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle.

Where I have used ICIP, I have followed the relevant protocols and consulted with the appropriate Indigenous peoples/communities about its inclusion in my thesis. ICIP rights are Indigenous heritage and will always remain with these groups.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution. This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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Dated: 2nd June, 2024

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ABSTRACT

The D'harawal people of the now-Sydney region are a complex and diverse nation of Indigenous Australian peoples. Since the British invasion of our lands in 1788, our Knowledges have been (mis)represented and documented primarily by those from outside our culture, in many cases creating bodies of colonised knowledges grounded in error, deficit and erasure. These colonial discourses are at best paternalistic (we need saving), at worst, genocidal in nature (we no longer exist).

As a D'harawal Knowledge Keeper and government registered Traditional Owner of Sydney, I position myself in a gaping void within the discourse, from where, inspired by the works of Worimi scholar Kirsten Thorpe and Wiradjuri scholar Nathan Sentance, I offer an Aboriginal Right of Reply to the colonial Storytelling about my Country. My research, deriving from a deep synergy of my Indigenous Women's Standpoint with that of the inspirational work of respected Indigenous and First Nations scholars, including the foundations set by Narungga, Kurna and Ngarrindjeri scholar Lester-Irrabina Rigney's Indigenist Research Methodologies, Bard and Yjindjarbandi scholar Dawn Bessarab's Indigenous Yarning, and Stó:lō scholar Joanne Archibald's Indigenous Storywork.

D'harawal Narinya (Living) Stories are stories deriving from our lived experiences and contemporary cultural praxis in response to colonially imposed assumptions that our Ancestral Dreaming ended with the invasion of our lands. My research investigates the life stories of two of our respected D'harawal Elders, Uncle John Foster and Aunty Fran Bodkin. I undertook the research culturally, using different methods of Indigenous Yarning (e.g., personal Yarning and Circle Yarning) as well as collaborative Storywork practices. The main themes emerging from Yarning with Uncle John Foster were stories of

racism, discrimination and the ways in which he resisted the negative forces of colonisation to create a meaningful life for himself and his family. Through Collaborative Storying with Uncle John, his Yarns of his lived experiences were translated into the Story “Garraway the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo.” The main themes emerging from Yarning with Aunty Fran Bodkin were centred on the Stolen Generations, connection to Country and how she overcame the trauma of colonisation to become a much respected Ethnobotanist and Storyteller. Engaging in Collaborative Storying with Aunty Fran, we created the Story “Moolby The Wedge-Tailed Eagle,” based on the key themes arising from her lived experiences.

Both of the Elder’s stories were then presented to Elders within the D’harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle for consideration as a potential D’harawal Narinya Story; a story that represents the values and Lore of the D’harawal Elders and Communities today. Through Collaborative Yarning with the Circle members, new themes emerged including the importance of Community Centred or ‘ground up’ research, and the effectiveness of Storytelling to capture key aspects of our cultural beliefs and ways of being. The Circle reached a full consensus that both Uncle John’s and Aunty Fran’s Stories qualified as Narinya Waduguda Stories, and could be disseminated as such. This research project positions our Narinya stories as knowledge creation and contemporary cultural practice that *we* create and document, not just for the preservation of our Knowledges, but also to forge connections to culture and Country for future generations.

DEDICATION

To my Ancestors and Elders,

This thesis is dedicated to you and those who did not have the opportunity to say and do the things that I can today.

Didjariguru naba gumal

COVID STATEMENT

This doctoral thesis project was undertaken during the Covid 19 pandemic which caused serious setbacks in the completion of the research. This research relies heavily on the wisdom and guidance of our D'harawal Elders. Our Elders are extremely precious and vulnerable, so during the Covid 19 pandemic, we were unable to meet regularly for their own health and safety. Meeting online was not an appropriate option for our Elders. The impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic on my family and I, both personally and professionally, have been immeasurable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Before anything, my endless gratitude and respect goes to the co-researchers of this project without whom, this research would never have existed. Thank you all for your work and for trusting me with your precious Stories and knowledges: it has been an honour and a privilege to work with you all and be inspired by the incredible D'harawal leaders that you all are:

D'harawal Elder Uncle John Foster

D'harawal Elder Aunty Fran Bodkin

D'harawal cousin (and Primary Supervisor), Dr Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews

The members of the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle including (but not limited to) Beela, Bookerrikin, Burrumurring, Diruwan, Garraway, Kannabi, Marli, Wiritjiribin, and Wugan.

Special thanks also to my co-supervisors Dr Katrina Thorpe, Dr Susan Page and Dr Michelle Trudgett for your support and guidance throughout the many years of research involved in this thesis.

It is almost impossible to express my sincerest gratitude to the following list of people. There is no hierarchy in this list: I have compiled it based on the order in which the following people came into my life. Needless to say, without you all, I would never have made it and these Stories might never have been heard. My unspeakable gratitude goes to:

Jo Paterson-Kinniburgh, I have put you first because I know we met in (at least one) former life. Your support, love and friendship has made this thesis possible, especially in its final days, weeks, months and years, you were there for every single word and citation. I cannot ever thank you enough. Didjariguru Giligili.

My mother, the late Kay Foster, for everything of course, but also for making sure I did a Post Graduate qualification in Education in 1995 that paved the way for me to be able to qualify to do this research over twenty years later. Kay encouraged me on the basis that being a schoolteacher means I can have school holidays off and look where it got us Kay!

My sister, Kimberley James, for always being there to help me through the hard days and sharing the joy in the good times. Your belief in me knows no bounds and I will be eternally grateful.

My husband, John Roberts, for your patience and support in doing the heavy lifting while I have been working on this thesis. I cannot thank you enough for believing in me and for the endless love you show in everything you do, everyday.

My children Jay, Paris, Xavier and Jett for inspiring me and giving me a reason to be a better person.

My sister in-law, and longtime best friend, Jackie Foster who suddenly, and unexpectedly, passed away just two months before my thesis submission date. I'm doing this for you, because you couldn't. Well, not this time around anyway. I could feel every ounce of your presence in the courage it took to finish this research while grieving the loss of lovely you. See you on the flip side Jackstar.

Dr Checka MacLaurin for leading the way and showing me the amazing feats of brilliance that fierce, intelligent women can accomplish. Thank you also for sharing your beautiful family with us, especially your late (and lovely) brothers, Fabian LoSchiavo and Simon LoSchiavo.

My student cohort and sensational friends from the Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges (CAIK) UTS, trauma bonded for life, Uncle Peter Pinnington, Treena Clark, Annie-Renae Winters, Michelle (just keep swimming, swimming swimming!) Locke, Nathan West, Lisa Oliver and Rhonda Povey amongst many, many others.

My Bangawarra colleagues Rhiannon Brownbill, Dana Marjan and Wiradjuri man Matte McConnell, for your endless support and patience in holding the fort while I made this dream happen.

My psychologist Dr Bernadette Bywater for your enduring wisdom, patience, and compassion.

Dr Ali Crosby and Dr Terry Royce for your excellent writing skills and for believing in my writing. You both motivated me at a time when I really didn't know if I could do this or not.

My beautiful family and Elders, Aunty Carolyne Brown and the late Uncle John Lennis for being dedicated, loveable Elders and leading the way with laughter and joy!

The Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges (CAIK) UTS and my co-supervisors Michelle Trudgett, Dr Susan Page and Dr Katrina Thorpe.

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Dr Bhuva Narayan, Dr Nick Hopwood and the magnificent Dr Ilaria Vanni - your patience, support and guidance has been there in the darkest of hours. Thank you for your Stories, your support and for being a much-appreciated light in the darkness.

The UTS Graduate Research School for providing the best support and the most helpful piece of advice I have heard on this PhD journey, "a good thesis is a finished thesis."

The many inspiring Indigenous scholars whose work has laid a foundation for me to draw on, and ground my thesis in. I can only hope to do the same for those who come after me.

And, underpinning it all, Country....

Didjariguru D'harawal Galumban Gurad. Ngeeyinee bulima nandiritah.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Positioning

For Indigenous peoples across the world, positioning ourselves when we first meet or begin any work is a vitally important enactment of cultural protocol and kinship (Behrendt, 2019; Foster, 2018; Kovach, Carriere, Barrett, Montgomery, & Gillies, 2013; Kwame, 2017; Martin, 2008). As we introduce ourselves, we include the name of our clan or nation group, our surnames, the Country we are from, and we often even include our sacred animal totems. This is more than an introduction though: this is how we establish relationality and explain where we belong within our complex systems of kinship, responsibility, and cultural protocols. Positioning ourselves also emancipates us from the stranglehold of the colonial agenda that has made it illegal for us to practise culture or even speak about it (Wickes, 2008). Our positioning asserts not only our rights to speak about our cultures, languages, Stories and song, but it also asserts our rights to our lands in the face of a colonial government and society that believes the land is theirs - despite no treaty ever having been exchanged. Esteemed Indigenous law scholar, Euaileyai and Gamillaroi woman Larisa Behrendt (2019), explains,

“There is power in asserting our place in the natural world and in our kinship network as we introduce each other. It is an assertion of sovereignty. To me, it is a personal definition, sovereignty is our identity, our nationhood, our culture, and our worldview. An assertion of these things is our assertion of our sovereignty.” (p. 23).

I feel the enormity of Behrendt's claims as I honour our Indigenous ways of being and begin this dissertation by positioning myself.

My name is Shannon Foster and I am a D'harawal woman and registered Traditional Custodian/Owner¹ of what is now known as the Sydney Basin, Australia. I was born on Gamay (now Kamay Botany Bay) and have always known that I am a D'harawal person, my father, Uncle John Foster, a respected D'harawal Elder, made sure of that from the day I was born, by telling us Stories of our People and culture (Foster, 2018, 2021; Foster, Kinniburgh & Wann, 2020).

I am part of a vast, interconnected, spiritual system that comprises the skies and the waters, the land and the creatures, the cultural knowledges and the people who care for them, as well as the spirits of those who carefully handed all of this down to us. Combined, all of this is what we refer to as Country (capitalised to differentiate this spiritual system from the European concept of land ownership). In this thesis and in my cultural community, I refer to the Country that my Ancestors have cared for as Ancestral Country, and to cultural aspects of Country, such as the ancient knowledges, as Ancestral knowledges. (Foster, 2018, 2023; Foster et al, 2020).

Our Ancestral Country, including the land that we have had an ancient and unbroken connection to for tens of thousands of years, was stolen and colonised by the British military when they invaded our

¹ Registered with the New South Wales Office of the Registrar, Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (ORALRA)

lands in 1788: a devastating event that has radically changed our lives and cultures forever. Our access to skies, lands and waters have been severely impacted, along with our ability to enact culture, speak language and pass all of these things on to the future generations.

My work today is dedicated to exploring the ways in which we have resisted total annihilation and continued cultural practices, particularly through our D'harawal Storytelling Methodologies and adherence to Ancestral values and cultural protocols. Despite the concerted efforts of the colonial government to completely eradicate us, we have survived. Not only have we survived, but we are empowered by our connection to culture. Early in my PhD journey I was inspired by the cultural power of Māori researcher Kimai Tocker, who I encountered at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) conference in Sydney. Tocker speaks of how “[h]aving the grounding and security about who I am has given me the confidence to step out into the world [and] gives me the strength and courage to know what I want.” (Tocker, 2017, p. 123). This is the essence of how it feels to stand in the light of my Elders and Ancestors and their cultural leadership in the work they have done for me, and those who come after me. This forges my cultural identity and inspires me to continue their work, ensuring that our D'harawal culture and Stories live on, with Country.

The Beginnings of Colonisation in Australia

It is not within the scope of this research project to investigate the complex historical and social context of colonialism, and the ensuing acts of colonisation across the globe, or even the whole of ‘Australia’ itself. This is the story of the deliberate British invasion and colonisation of our sacred Country, now-Australia (specifically now-Sydney), that underpins many aspects of the D'harawal Narinya

(contemporary, living) Stories shared within my research. It is therefore pertinent to provide some context of its beginnings here on D’harawal Country. In the case of the continent now known as Australia, the colonisation of our Peoples and Country began with a short visit by British troops in 1770 (Cook, 1770; Moreton-Robinson, 2022, 2021; Brodie, 2016; Neale, 2008; Behrendt, 2003) which then informed a full, military invasion in 1788 (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, 2021; Watego, 2021).

By definition, colonialism is “a form of domination – the control by individuals or groups over the territory and/or behaviour of other individuals or groups.” (Hovarth, 1972. p. 46). Colonisation is the enactment of colonialism and there are many cruel and devastating strategies operationalised by a colonial government/society to destroy Indigenous communities that belong to the land being invaded and stolen (Evans-Campbell and Walters, 2008; Glenn, 2015; Paradies, 2016; Watego, 2021). Wakaya academic, Yin Paradies (2016) explains that for colonised, Indigenous peoples, colonisation includes many acts of destruction including,

“war, displacement, forced labour, removal of children, relocation, ecological destruction, massacres, genocide, slavery, (un)intentional spread of deadly diseases, banning of indigenous languages, regulation of marriage, assimilation and eradication of social, cultural and spiritual practices” (p. 84)

On the 26th August 1768, Lieutenant James Cook’s vessel, the HMS Endeavour left Plymouth Naval Dockyards on a Royal Navy and Royal Society expedition (Cook, 1770)². The military-led voyage was

² In the UTS Library alone there are 21,173 journal articles, 3,495 and 1041 books on the topic of Captain James Cook

commissioned by King George III with the primary (publicly known) objective being to explore the South Pacific Ocean specifically for the purposes of recording the Transit of Venus across the southern skies, due to occur mid-1769 (Brodie, 2016). The Endeavour crossed the Atlantic Ocean and sailed around Cape Horn to reach Tahiti on the 13th April, 1769 just in time for Cook to successfully observe and document the celestial event (Cook, 1770). Cook's observations contributed to measurements from numerous locations across the world that ultimately enabled the calculation of the distance of the earth from the sun (Cunningham & Stanley, 2003). Having completed his first mission, Cook was directed to open a letter with secret instructions to be followed for the remainder of his journey (Brodie, 2016; Nettheim, 1993). The secret letter was signed by British Lords Brett, Hawke, Spencer & Stephens and dated 30th July, 1768, and instructed Cook to continue south to find, and claim for the Crown of Great Britain, the huge land mass that was believed to exist in the South Pacific for some time, but had not yet been fully or accurately recorded by outsiders. (Brett, Hawke, Spencer & Stephens, 1768; Nettheim, 1993). That land mass was our sacred Country, and we have been here since the beginning of time.

Up until that time, the British were struggling with the evolving independence of North America from British rule (Brodie, 2016). The British Empire was bracing itself for a significant blow, particularly in the areas of trade but also because it was soon going to be impossible to continue sending prisoners to the American penal colonies from the overcrowded British goals (Brodie, 2016). It was therefore pertinent to the power and survival of the British Empire to 'secure' land in the South Pacific for, as the letter (Brett et al., 1768) clearly stated: "the Honour of this Nation as a Maritime Power, as well as to the Dignity of the Crown of Great Britain, and may tend greatly to the advancement of the Trade and Navigation thereof." (p.1).

The secret letter (Brett et al., 1768 in Nettheim, 1993) contained detailed instructions of the types of information Cook needed to collect, information that would clearly be required for the purposes of colonising the great southern land mass:

“You are likewise to observe the Genius, Temper, Disposition and Number of the Natives, if there be any and endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a Friendship and Alliance with them, making them presents of such Trifles as they may Value inviting them to Traffick, and Shewing them every kind of Civility and Regard. You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take Possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain: Or: if you find the Country uninhabited take Possession for his Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and Inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors.” (Brett et al, 1768 in Nettheim, 1993).

While travelling the stretch of Southern coastline leading to Gamay (Kamay Botany Bay part of now-Sydney), Cook frequently mentioned smoke from the inhabitants’ fires, and seeing groups of people at a distance. In his diaries, Cook (1770) noted that, *“in the afternoon we saw smoke in several places, by which we knew the country to be inhabited”* (p. 70) but he neglected to honour his orders to ‘cultivate friendship’. It was the evening of Sunday 29th April, 1770 when the Endeavour sailed into Gamay - now called Kamay (sic)³ Botany Bay after the abundance of botanical specimens collected by Cook’s crew (Moreton-Robinson, 2022; Brodie, 2016; Neale, 2008). The British landed on the shores of Kurnell

³ This is the incorrect spelling for Gamay. The ‘k’ was used by 19th century linguists to describe a hard ‘g’ sound as in ‘goat’. The ‘k’ is now incorrectly interpreted and used literally to make a ‘k’ sound as in ‘kitten’.

(our local word for ‘native carrot’) Country to ‘explore’ with the hope of finding a suitable place for future British colonisation. When the tenders approached the shore, “Wirra wirra!” (go away go away) were the first words spoken to the invaders, as the local D’harawal people of Gamay (my family) came out to resist the unexpected arrival of the strangers. The British were still on the beach when they began firing their muskets to assert their authority, with one bullet striking a local man in the leg while his children watched from their bark house just metres away (Cook, 1770; Neale, 2008). Although Cook’s secret instructions strictly stated that he was to gain the “Consent of the Natives” (Brett et al, 1768 in Nettheim, 1993, p. 223), his actions on the beach that first day do not demonstrate a diplomatic or conciliatory approach. Cook underhandedly claimed the land for the British Crown in accordance with orders that could only be executed if the land was uninhabited or if he had permission to do so by the natives (Moreton-Robinson, 2021; Brodie, 2016; Neale, 2008). By Cook’s (1770) own admission, the land was indeed inhabited - by my family and others, none of whom gave consent for either the land to be invaded by, or ‘claimed’ for, the British monarchy (Nettheim, 1993). No such authorisation was sought nor was it given away by any of the hundreds of distinct Aboriginal nations that were (and are still) Custodians of the landmass now known as Australia (Moreton-Robinson, 2007, 2021, 2022).

Cook recorded some detailed observations of the local Aboriginal people as he travelled our lands (Cook, 1770). On the 6th of May, after just over a week ‘exploring’ Gamay and waiting for the optimum sailing weather, the troops travelled north for three months. Upon reaching the northernmost point of their explorations at Kauneg (later named Possession Island of the Torres Strait Islands after Cook took ‘possession’ of it), Lieutenant Cook raised the British flag, not for the first time, and on the 22nd August,

1770, declared the entire east coast of the continent and its islands, now in possession of the British Crown. Cook (1770) documented this moment in his log:

“I once more hoisted English colours, and though I had already taken possession of several particular parts, I now took possession of the whole eastern coast, from latitude 38° to this place, latitude 10-½ S., in right of his Majesty King George the Third, by the name of New South Wales, with all the bays, harbours, rivers, and islands situated upon it: we then fired three vollies of small arms, which were answered by the same number from the ship”.

(p.196)

After Cook's exploration, our lands remained unvisited by the British until 1788, when a fleet of vessels was sent from Britain to invade and colonise the saltwater coastline of what is now known as Sydney (Brodie, 2016; Moreton-Robinson 2007, 2021, 2022; Neale 2008). Initially the colony was to be established at Gamay (now Botany Bay) until it was decided that War'ran (now Port Jackson) was a more suitable place to set up the first British penal colony in Australia (Phillip, 1789). The fleet, led by the British Governor Arthur Phillip, arrived at War'ran on the 26th January, 1788. What ensued was the decimation of Country and the local communities of Indigenous peoples, whose numbers in the immediate vicinity of the colony have been estimated to be approximately fifteen hundred people at the time of British arrival (Brodie, 2016). Through the disease, warfare and destruction of Country, as well as the genocidal and assimilative policies of the imposed colonial government, the numbers of local people dwindled rapidly within just the first few years of colonisation to become a 'remnant'

community of approximately twenty local Aboriginal people (Irish, 2017). I, and the co-researchers of this thesis, are descendants of this ‘remnant’ Sydney community. We have survived.

Indigenous Perspectives on Colonisation

For Indigenous peoples, colonisation is not a single event; it did not just occur as an isolated moment in the past that is now over (Laenui as Burgess, 2000; Cunningham & Stanley, 2003; Muller, 2007:2014; Tuck & Fine, 2016). Although Aboriginal sovereignty has never been ceded, colonial efforts to reinforce Lieutenant Cook’s underhanded land claim, that neglected to “cultivate friendship”, have continued to disavow Aboriginal peoples of their rights to treaty, sovereignty or connection to their own Country ever since (as described in White 1904; Moreton-Robinson, 2007, 2009, 2021; Fredericks & Bradfield, 2023). In 1835 NSW Governor Bourke went so far as to retroactively and officially proclaim, “*terra nullius*”, meaning land belonging to no one, as a fraudulent post-rationalisation for refusing to establish a treaty (Bourke, 1835). Murri scholar Lorraine Muller (2007) elaborates that colonisation is “not a past event but an ongoing and contemporary issue” (p. 79) and today, over 230 years later, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in now-Australia are still fighting the ongoing destruction caused by colonisation. We have never ceded sovereignty of our lands and a treaty has never been offered by the colonial government (Moreton-Robinson, 2007, 2009, 2015, 2021, 2022; Watego, 2021; Fredericks & Bradfield, 2023). For us, as colonised peoples, the fight isn’t over yet and we are exploring ways that we can undo some of the impacts of colonisation and *decolonise* our lives, experiences and knowledges in the process (Tuck & Fine, 2016; Blair, 2015; Muller 2023). One important way that we can do this is through telling our own Stories and re-writing the colonial histories from our own perspectives using

our own methods and methodologies as Indigenous peoples (Martin, 2007, 2008; Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Blair, 2015; Tuck, 2009; Tuck and Yang, 2014, 2012). This thesis is part of that work for our D’harawal family.

Colonial Storytelling

In a Western geographic context, D’harawal Country begins around what is now Broken Bay on the NSW Central Coast and stretches south down the east Australian coast as far as Eden and west to the Burratorang Valley and Blue Mountains. Spiritually, D’harawal Country is connected to the Ancestors and the entities of all beings throughout deep history, to the Ancestral knowledges, and the Creation (Foster, 2023). Ecologically, D’harawal Country is rich with unique flora and fauna that all play a part in cultural practice and lore (Bodkin-Andrews, Bodkin, Andrews, & Whittaker, 2016a). This information derives from the oral histories that have been passed on to me from my father and my Elders, and it is knowledge that is also supported, in part, by the colonial archives and records. I have known all my life that I come from a long line of remarkable Aboriginal people who have been almost completely erased and silenced by federal, state and local government, as well as the Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs); those micro-governments created through the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (ALRA). For many years the local LALCs have claimed there are no Sydney ‘Traditional Owners’ on a legal (but not culturally honest) technicality,⁴ despite our protests and proof to the contrary. I have

⁴ I have personally encountered a number of meetings and events on my Ancestral Country where a Local Aboriginal Land Council representative has stated that there are “no Traditional Owners” on their books. I believe this to be because they are not required to keep a list of Traditional Owners, and if they don’t keep a list that can say they have no records. That is a technicality, but not a truth. I think this is partly because the requirement of the LALCs to keep a list of Traditional Owners (from the ALRA 1983) was overturned in 1984 and the wording was changed from “shall” to “may” keep these records.

gone through the long process of formally registering as a Traditional Owner of Sydney through the Office of the Registrar Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (ORALRA), which requires providing evidence of our family tree back to the time of colonisation and demonstrating that we have a continuous connection to, and occupation of, the Ancestral Country that we belong to (which would then allow us to participate in their formal land claim process).

In the context of contemporary, colonial research, the term ‘Traditional Owner’ refers to an Indigenous person who has Ancestral connections to a particular geographical area of Country, as opposed to a person who may also be Indigenous but has Ancestral connections to a different geographical location (Foley 2007; Kingsley, Townsend and Henderson-Wilson, 2013). In our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, however, the term “Traditional Owner” is considered a colonial government fabrication, which is culturally meaningless. Our Indigenous ways of being do not involve ownership of land but rather, Custodianship and care in a reciprocal relationship with Country. We care for Country, and Country cares for us. We use the term “Custodian” or “on-Country” instead, as we believe that we belong to the land and are custodians or caretakers (as opposed to owners) of Country (Watson, 1998). Respected Arrente Elder, the late Uncle Bob Randall phrased this concept perfectly when he explained “the land owns us” (Randall, 2009, 2.41).

From an Indigenous perspective, we see so much confusion and so little understanding about our cultures and Countrys⁵ from non-Indigenous Australians that it is necessary to incorporate terminology that is easily understood and recognised by settler-colonial communities. This can be almost directly

⁵ Pluralised Country retains the ‘y’

attributed to British colonial concepts of land ownership, the prevalence of colonial perspectives and ways of knowing in the archives, and “outsider” informed research of our peoples and cultures, all of which I refer to as ‘colonial Storytelling’.

I have had to alter my cultural identity to include both terms, “Traditional Custodian/Owner” as it seems to be the most widely accepted and understood terminology. This requirement to alter our cultural knowledge is evidence of one of the main issues with colonisation in itself: we have to alter and transform our cultures to suit the colonial community and government (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007). This is a defining feature of the fifth stage of colonisation, “Transformation/Exploitation” which is a concept that is comprehensively explored later in the Literature Review of this thesis (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007).

Many Indigenous and First Nations scholars have noted that our cultures, Stories, languages and communities have been misrepresented and corrupted by British colonisation. This leads to bodies of knowledge that privilege outsider, colonial Storytelling (Bodkin-Andrews, Bodkin, Andrews & Evans, 2016b; Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2013; Blair, 2015; Watson, 1998; Martin, 2008; Tuck, 2009; Fredericks, 2020).

Contemporary non-Indigenous understandings of Aboriginal Sydney are frequently authored by non-Indigenous people, reiterating colonial dominance in books such as such as Grace Karskens’ (2020) *People of the River*, an account of the Hawkesbury-Nepean area; or Heather Goodall and Cadzow’s (2009) *Rivers and Resilience: Aboriginal People on Sydney’s Georges River* which contained so many erasures and omissions as to be damaging to many local families; and Paul Irish’s (2017) *Hidden in Plain*

View: The Aboriginal People of Coastal Sydney, which, conspicuously selected only a small sample of Aboriginal families to engage with, and summarily erased most of my family's (and others') unbroken presence here. These are just three important examples of outsider research or colonial Storytelling (Behrendt 2016), whereby our stories and knowledges have been researched and retold (briefly, incorrectly and with erasures and omissions), by those from outside our culture and communities, for profit.

While others from outside our communities have been telling our Stories, under colonial government law, many Aboriginal people have had to renounce their Aboriginality to be permitted to move freely about our Ancestral Country, and have not been allowed to talk publicly about our cultures or use our languages (HEROC, 1997).⁶ Many Indigenous scholars will attest that the learning institutions of the settler colonial state have only supported scholarship in a prescribed Western format, with non-Indigenous researchers and Storytellers documenting our peoples, cultures and Country (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2013; Behrendt, 2009; Arvin, Tuck and Morrill, 2020; Tuck, 2009). Within Aboriginal communities I have encountered, and felt myself, deep resentment towards a system that marginalises us, giving our narrative over to white researchers, lest the devastating realities of our colonial oppression be told.

Non-Indigenous researchers have long been armed with Western education and the privilege of being from the coloniser's settler, and often racial, background, so their work has legitimacy in the Western

⁶ My own family's story testifies to these experiences directly. As laws changed, my father vividly remembers my grandfather in the kitchen at home ripping up his exemption certificate that had permitted him to leave the mission.

research academy (Nakata, 1998; Blair, 2015; Tuck 2009; Betasasomake Simpson, 2017). White researchers have been allowed, and even encouraged, to research us and talk about us through their biased, colonial, outsider lens - often, especially initially, with the intention of documenting what they considered a dying race or a race so savagely inferior that colonisation would have to save us from ourselves (Rose, 2012; Tuck 2009; Betasasomake Simpson, 2017). This has led to superficial bodies of knowledge that are biased, corrupted and, in most cases, factually incorrect (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2013; Tuck and & Yang 2014). For Aboriginal people, it has been noted that non-Indigenous accounts of us have never been as holistic as our own knowledges, and have frequently supported the deficit discourses of the colonial agenda (Bodkin-Andrews et al 2016b; Blair, 2015). I have read with disgust the white accounts that perpetuate myths about Aboriginal peoples being cannibalistic savages with inferior intelligence to their white counterparts, and was dismayed to discover such claims originated as a loophole for Europeans to enact the slave trade, as Larissa Behrendt explains:

“Another important aspect to the label of ‘cannibal’ was that the Spanish were, under their laws, allowed to capture only cannibals for the slave trade.... Claims of cannibalism [therefore] became more prominent as colonisation (along with its own barbarities) had to be justified.” (Behrendt, 2016, p. 120).

There is a demonstrably vast difference between stories told by us, as opposed to stories told about us (Bodkin-Andrews, Foster, Bodkin, Foster, Andrews, Adams, Evans & Carlson, 2022; Bodkin-Andrews et al, 2016a, 2016b; Blair, 2015; Watson, 1998). An excellent illustration of this difference arises in the 1836 story of English woman Eliza Fraser, who was shipwrecked on K’Gari, Badtjala/Butchulla

Country (later renamed Fraser Island after Eliza and her husband by British colonists). The colonial storytelling of Fraser's alleged kidnapping by 'savage' Aboriginal people, who she described as 'beasts,' plays into all of the stereotypes of 'natives' in the early colonial era, and was popularised in media accounts of the day. Fraser claimed her torment ended when her white saviours arrived, proving "...her story is that of the moral victory of the Old World over the baseness of the New." (McNiven, Russell & Schaffer, 1998). While non-Indigenous scholars collaborating with Badtjala/Butchulla people (such as McNiven et al., 1998) brought the media frenzy around Fraser's account into question, it was the scholarship of Larissa Behrendt (2016) that provided the discourse with an Aboriginal centred perspective of the story. Behrendt (2016) pointed to the politics of storytelling, "...reminding us that often there is a motivation - a politics - that accompanies the telling of any story." (p. 6).

Using her artistic research practice, Butchulla artist Fiona Foley has gone further to describe, from an on-Country, Aboriginal women's perspective, the intricacies of cultural practices that Eliza Fraser found to be threatening, such as protecting the skin from sunburn and insects by rubbing it with ash, fat and sand - which Fraser had described as degrading, and humiliating and a form of attempted torture. Foley's people have been burdened with the global perceptions of them through Fraser's account, motivating the artist to produce "K'gari" a collaborative interactive artwork with SBS that allows listeners to use depictions of Country to erase Fraser's damaging words (K'gari, 2017). Foley's artworks speak in an on-Country voice into the discourse, including her online exhibition of K'Gari, a film work *Out of the Sea Like Cloud* (2019), her photographic series *Horror Has A Face* (2017) and her recent chapter *Disrupting the Silence: Australian Aboriginal Art as a Political Act* (2022), in which she offers her own perspective as a Butchulla woman of the colonial and patriarchal violence enacted on her family.

Circling back to the beginning of this Introduction, this is why positioning is so important in Indigenous research. It is imperative that we know if we are working with people, knowledges, and Stories from on-Country peoples as insider researchers; or from other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities (that are not on-Country) as hybrid inside (Indigeneity)/outsider (cultural group) researchers; or is the work generated by outsider (non-Indigenous) researchers. When we position ourselves as Indigenous peoples, we are declaring our seat within our communities and making it clear, where we are from and how we can speak on our knowledges and culture. This also has the secondary effect of making it obvious, from the very beginning of the research/writing, the people who are not Indigenous and who do not position themselves. Neglecting to position yourself has the effect of locating you far outside the cultural space that an Aboriginal community values - and well into the space of colonial storytelling (D Foley, 2003; Linklater, 2020; 2020; Kovach, 2010; Rigney, 1998).

Colonial Storytellers centre the views and priorities of the outsider researcher, taking the erroneous view that their worldview is impartial and unbiased and therefore, positioning is unnecessary to them (Smith, 2013, 2006). There is an inherent misunderstanding (bias) in the contemporary academy that the Western worldview is the most scholarly and objective approach for knowledge, and there is relatively little criticality about its role in producing graduates who uphold settler colonialism by silencing Indigenous voices (Betasamosake Simpson, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2014; Smith 2021, 2013; Foley, D 2018). Being outside 'whitestream' education, our Indigenous methodologies and knowledges have been regarded as inferior and therefore, they have been (and continue to be) oppressed and marginalised in favour of non-Indigenous, colonial accounts and methods (Bodkin, 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2011; Nakata, Nakata, Keech & Bolt, 2012; Martin, 2008; Tuck, 2009, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2014; Nxumalo

& Tuck, 2022). The Australian Prime Minister's Literary Awards are a classic example of this. In 2021, all of the six nominations for the Australian History section were entirely preoccupied with Indigenous knowledges and Stories however, all six authors were non-Indigenous, there were no Indigenous authors recognised in the awards.

The need for information regarding the Sydney-based D'harawal peoples is acknowledged by outsider researchers, albeit paternalistically, who have argued that “[c]learly a fuller history of the Dharawal since the arrival of the Europeans needs to be written” (Duyker, 2008, p. 129). Perhaps most potently, D'harawal insider researchers are now also advocating for D'harawal knowledges and methodologies, and their relevance to critical discourse, particularly the writings of D'harawal Knowledge Holder and education scholar Professor Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews (2016a, 2016b, et al 2022), myself (2018, et al 2019, 2020, et al 2022, et al 2022b) and our Elders Aunty Fran Bodkin (2016, 2013, et al 2008), Aunty Karen Adams, Uncle John Foster, Uncle Ross Evans, Uncle Gavin Andrews and our collaborators (2022, 2023). Our work demonstrates that D'harawal knowledges have strong connections to Country, in the case of this research, the Sydney region. This connection has been continually maintained through the reciprocal relationships between Our Stories, Our Peoples, and the Country we belong to (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023). We now have the opportunity to enact a right of reply to the colonial records and the associated colonial Storytelling. In the next section I unpack the concept of a right of reply and its relevance to this research project as an important foundation for *decolonising* our cultures and Stories.

Right of reply

In her recently completed thesis ‘Unclasping the White Hand: Reclaiming and Refiguring the Archives to Support Indigenous Wellbeing and Sovereignty’, Worimi archivist Dr Kirsten Thorpe (2023) argues that,

“The records can support people searching for personal, family, and community histories and assist as language and cultural reclamation and revitalisation sources. The archives are vital for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people despite the incomplete and biased nature of the records they contain”. (p. 18)

Based on the ambiguities of a colonial archive, Indigenous scholars are now demanding that we have the right to respond to the mistakes and misinterpretations that the colonial archives (and by association, colonial Storytelling) contain: to correct the lies, and to be present and represented in response to our erasure (Thorpe, 2023, 2019a, 2019b; Sentance, 2022). Thorpe (2017) describes the trauma she has witnessed, and experienced, working with New South Wales archives and Aboriginal peoples. She asserts that documents that claim to represent the truth, actually omit any personal Stories or oral histories that might contextualise or correct the records. From her own experience as an Indigenous woman, Thorpe (2017, 2019a) has been driven to advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples’ versions of events to be given respect and acknowledgement, in what is known as the ‘right of reply’ to the colonial account. Her work has included inviting responses or submissions to records and protecting those submissions in accordance with cultural practice - such that only people who are culturally eligible can access specified knowledges, or only the people recorded and their descendants can access personal records, if that aligns with the family cultural protocols Thorpe (2017, 2019b).

It was during the mid 1990's when I was first able to (fairly easily) use the internet to access government records and information about my family, the D'harawal people of the Sydney region. Nearly thirty years, and thousands of hours in archives later, I know I haven't found everything, but I have found a lot. These tiny crumbs of information may be insignificant to some, but to us, they validate what we have always known and should not have to prove (even though we do). In finding corroboration in government records with our oral histories, we forge our cultural identities more fiercely (Foster, 2020). Of course, the archives are a double edged sword: I have always known that now-Sydney was our Country and where our Stories survived, yet, due to outsider, colonial research and Storytelling, I have had to continually contend with supposed 'experts' telling us where we belong, which, according to many, is apparently not Sydney, but only south of Gamay (Botany Bay) and down to the South Coast of New South Wales⁷. In the archives, I have found records of my Aboriginal great-grandfather's activism, artwork, performances and music compositions as the first Aboriginal person to write and compose Western music; my Worimi great-grandmother's shell work, Stories and video footage; and photographs of my D'harawal great-great-grandmother who lived in the abandoned government boatsheds in Circular Quay during the early years of the colony. Some things I wish I hadn't found, while others I am so glad that I have. When thinking of my own right of reply to colonial erasure, their presence begins to undo the colonial Storytelling (as enacted in Foster, 2022, 2022b). I am inspired by Narungga poet and academic Natalie Harkin (2022, 2019a, 2019b, 2014) as she echoes my own

⁷ I have no intention of citing these kinds of erroneous sources or adding them to my reference list, as that could be perceived as validating their work. I make reference to such writers as Kohen, Goodall, numerous Council websites and others

sentiments that “*we need to be present in sites that disrupt colonial narratives beyond the old disciplines of knowledge production.... Resistance. We can transcend and subvert*” (Harkin, 2014, p. 6).

In a colonial context, Aboriginal oral histories are not always regarded as legitimate or evidence of the truth in Western research whereas the colonial written records are (Thorpe, 2017). However, for us as Aboriginal people, we know that lies can be written down too, and that the colonial written records can be false or incomplete (Papertalk Green and Kinsella, 2018)⁸. Harkin’s written and performed poetic practice, and the baskets she has woven from the printed words of the violent archives about her grandmother and her grandmother’s-mother’s Country, capture the defiance I believe is required to enact a right of reply to the dominance of colonial Storytelling and the deceit it upholds. In her performance at the Sydney Biennale as part of the Unbound Collective, Harkin with Ali Gumillya Baker (Mirning woman from the Nullarbor, South Australia), Simone Ulalka Tur (from the Yankunytjatjara community, north-west South Australia), and Faye Rosas Blanch (Murri woman from the Atherton Tablelands of YidnijiMbarbarm descent) enacted a right of reply in the colonial gallery of the Art Gallery of NSW projecting imagery and text such as “not your terra nullius” on colonist paintings in a performance that evoked a smoking ceremony, but used dry ice vapour rather than smoke (The Unbound Collective, 2019). Like Harkin (2022), we need “...a means to understand and theorise that which is silent, hidden or absent, but is nevertheless acutely present and felt” (p. 8) and ensure that it is also grounded in our cultural protocols and practices.

⁸ In their poetry anthology *False Claims of Colonial Thieves*, Charmaine Papertalk Green and John Kinsella explore specific colonial lies that are transformed into “fact” through the act of their being recorded.

Following behind the Unbound Collective performance were two local Aboriginal women, Rhonda Dixon (Gadigal/Bidjigal, Yuin) and her daughter Nadeena Dixon (Wiradjuri, Yuin and Gadigal) who were wrapped in their possum skin cloaks and solemnly witnessed the defiance enacted in the right of reply to colonial Storytelling. I would have dearly loved if the invitation to participate had been cast more widely to a broader group of us local Traditional Owner women, so that we could collectively share a community expression of defiance, but it has to be commended that some local women were represented, albeit minimally.

A right of reply holds, at its core, the idea of countering colonial Storytelling with Indigenous perspectives and epistemologies. For me, this means speaking my own family's Stories and knowledges as our *right of reply* and defying colonial Storytelling through citing our oral histories and participating in collective cultural actions.

Objectives of this Research

The primary objective of this research project is to counter the damage of colonial Storytelling and to tell our Stories, in our ways, centering our D'harawal Elders' lived experiences, and cultural guidance. We are driven to document this work so that it is in place for future generations to draw on, with the intention that this work will contribute to the forging of cultural connections to Country and Story for those who come after us. I set out with the aim to uncover the ways on-Country Indigenous Storying about contemporary contexts might contribute to the *decolonisation* of D'harawal culture and knowledges. This thesis will also offer new ways to work with the wisdom and guidance of our Elders, Indigenous Storytelling and Storylistening through the introduction of the D'harawal Traditional

Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle (the Circle). This thesis is guided by D’harawal Storytelling Methodology and the inherent values of our cultural protocols that have emerged from deep, ongoing engagement with our Elders and Ancestral Stories.

Outline of Chapters

The first chapter after this Introduction is Chapter 2 which is the first part of the Literature Review of this thesis. In this chapter I unpack the five stages of colonisation and *decolonisation* engaging with the works of Virgilio Enriques and Poka Laenui (2000, 2007), Lorraine Muller (2007; 2014) and the Women’s Wellness Study (Walker, Fredericks, Mills & Anderson, 2013). Throughout Chapter 2 I weave in Stories of my own family and the evidence of how colonisation has affected our lives. Most importantly, though, Chapter 2 also unpacks how we have resisted the destructive forces of colonisation and engaged with work that has contributed to the *decolonisation* of our knowledges and cultures.

Chapter 3 is the second part of the Literature Review of this thesis and looks at Standpoint Theory and its value in research, particularly for Indigenous Storytelling. The chapter begins with the development of a Feminist Standpoint (Smith, 1974; Harding, 1987, 1992, 2004), then Indigenous Women’s Standpoint (Behrendt, 1993), Indigenous Standpoint (Nakata, 1998; Rigney 1999) and finally, narrowing down to an Australian Indigenous Women’s Standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013), the position from which I identify as co-researcher of this thesis. Chapter 3 concludes with an investigation of the unique epistemology, ontology and axiology (ways of thinking, being and doing) inherent in an Australian Indigenous Women’s Standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

Chapter 4 unpacks the methodological framework and methods of this thesis. In this chapter I explore Narungga, Kurna and Ngarrindjeri scholar Lester Irabinna-Rigney's (1999) three principles of Indigenist] research; Tribal Methodologies as developed by Plains Cree and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (2007); D'harawal Storytelling Methodology, Bangawarra'o Waduguda (Strengthening of Laws) (Bodkin, 2013; Bodkin et al., 2023) and the 'storywork' of Coast Salish, Sto:lo scholar Joanne Q'um Q'um Xiiem Archibald (2008a, 2008b). From methodology, Chapter 4 goes on to explain method including Indigenous practices of Yarning (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Walker, Fredericks, Mills, & Anderson, 2013) and the inadequacies of Western methods such as narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) for Indigenous peoples. In the second half of Chapter 4, I outline the process of creating a Narinya Story from the research findings and gaining approval from the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle (The Circle) for the Narinya Story to be considered a D'harawal Narinya Wadugudu (Living Law) Story. Chapter 4 also includes the process of applying for the ethics approval and the scholarship surrounding the application. I unpack the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007) and reveal the UTS Ethics Approval number for this project, ETH18-2138. Chapter 4 concludes with an introduction to the Elders, Uncle John and Aunty Fran, as co-researchers of this project.

Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis are the results chapters. Chapter 5 provides thematic analyses of Yarning sessions I have undertaken with D'harawal Elder, Uncle John Foster. This results chapter includes a D'harawal Narinya Story that has been co-created with Uncle John from these themes. As the chapter comes to a close, I also provide a thematic analysis of the Yarning sessions held with the D'harawal

Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle. This session was an opportunity to present Uncle John's Narinya Story to The Circle for their approval with the hope that they will accept the Narinya Story as a D'harawal Waduguda Narinya (Living Law) Story.

In Chapter 6 of this thesis, I explore the results of Yarning sessions with the second co-researcher of this project, D'harawal Elder Aunty Fran Bodkin. In this chapter, I use the same approach as Chapter 5 and present a thematic analysis of our Yarning sessions as well as a D'harawal Narinya Story that has been co-created with Aunty Fran from these themes. As the chapter comes to a close, I also provide a thematic analysis of the Yarning sessions held with the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle. This session was an opportunity to present Aunty Fran's Narinya Story to The Circle for their approval with the hope that they will accept the Narinya Story as a D'harawal Waduguda Narinya (Living Law) Story.

Chapter 7 is the Discussion chapter where I analyse the knowledges and Stories from Yarning sessions held with the Elders and The Circle in relation to the key themes arising from the Literature Review chapters. I also analyse the methodological approach of this thesis identifying its strengths and challenges in relation to the evidence found within the Yarning sessions with the Elders and The Circle. I explore the findings from the Yarning sessions that uncover new areas of research supporting the importance of 'Community/Ground Up' methods of inquiry.

Chapter 8 is the Conclusion of this thesis and in this chapter I provide a summary of each chapter of the thesis and discuss recommendations based on the outcomes of this research project.

It was with great excitement, and trepidation, that I then began this research project.

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW PART 1: Colonisation and Decolonisation

Introduction

During the mid 1990s, Hawai'i Indigenous scholar Poka Laenui (a.k.a Hayden F. Burgess), recorded numerous discussions that he had with Indigenous Philippine Professor of Psychology, Virgilio Enriques. Their discussions were based on Enriques' work developing what he described as the five stages of colonisation (Laenui, 2000). These five stages of colonisation are:

1. Denial/Withdrawal;
2. Destruction/Eradication;
3. Denigration/Belittlement/Insult;
4. Surface Accommodation/Tokenism; and
5. Transformation/Exploitation.

Enriques passed away shortly after these conversations, but his initial work has endured and has been further developed by many Indigenous scholars since, including Poka Laenui himself. Laenui built on Enriques' work by developing five accompanying stages of *decolonisation* (my emphasis) for Indigenous peoples (Laenui, 2000). These five stages of *decolonisation* are:

1. Rediscovery and Recovery;
2. Mourning;
3. Dreaming;

4. Commitment; and
5. Action.

In this chapter I will be discussing the stages of colonisation and *decolonisation* through a D'harawal (Australian) Indigenous women's perspective. In particular, I will be engaging with the social work research of Murri scholar, Lorraine Muller (2007,2014,2023) as well as the Indigenous Women's Wellness Study (Walker, Fredericks, Mills & Anderson, 2013) both of which propose a *decolonising* approach to Indigenous women's health in now-Australia.

Muller (2007, 2014, 2023) emphasises the need to understand the mechanics and ongoing pressures of colonisation to enact the critical processes of *decolonisation*. As argued by Muller (2007), colonisation and colonial storytelling continue to perpetuate stereotypes, misconceptions and create myths in discourses about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples, communities and cultures within a contemporary context. *Decolonisation* within research, at its briefest, is about the process of undoing some of the damage of colonisation by valuing, reclaiming and emphasizing Indigenous standpoints and voices (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007; Walker et. al., 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In doing so, the opportunity to critically deconstruct dominant Western-only discourses emerges and longstanding trends of othering and silencing Indigenous voices in research can be dispelled (Smith, 2013:1999,, 2006, 2005). In a *decolonial* context, Indigenous voices and standpoints are placed at the forefront of our own research and our epistemologies, ontologies and axiology (ways of knowing, being and doing – Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2008) are centred within the research process so that *our* truths may become known.

Throughout this chapter I have engaged with the stages of colonisation and *decolonisation* as a scaffold for understanding our lived experiences as D’harawal peoples. I have woven into this chapter some of the stories of our family from our oral histories, as well as archival research, as a means to understanding the impacts of colonisation on us and on Country, as D’harawal Traditional Custodians/Owners. Most importantly though, I use the stages of *decolonisation* to explore the ways in which we have resisted colonisation and survived despite over 230 years of British invasion on our sacred, Ancestral Country. This chapter contributes to our right of reply to the colonial archives by centring our worldviews and our unique standpoint as insider researchers.

It is worthwhile to note here, that whilst it can be recognised that the stages of colonisation and *decolonisation* may vaguely fall into a chronological schema, they are definitely not confined to this linear understanding (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007). It can be argued that the stages of colonisation not only systematically perpetuate the destructive nature of colonisation for Indigenous Australians, but they are also intrinsically interrelated as combined forces of oppression that flow into and out of each other, repeating and reflecting persistent themes and ideologies with almost complete disregard for time or convention. It would be advised that these stages and eras be viewed as merely a framework for understanding and not a strict representation of the years in which the events exclusively occurred. Similarly, this framework for understanding colonisation and *decolonisation* should also not be applied across the board as being the same experience for all Indigenous peoples in Australia as our cultures are as diverse and as complex as our unique areas of Country and, in much the same way, so too are our responses to, and experiences with, colonisation and *decolonisation*.

First Stage of Colonisation: Denial and Withdrawal

The first stage of colonisation is the coloniser's act of engaging in the 'Denial and Withdrawal' of Indigenous cultures and peoples (Laenui, 2000). Laenui (2000) asserts that "the colonial people will deny the very existence of a culture of any merit among the Indigenous people" (p. 1). This is a deliberate act of colonial storytelling that reinforces the colonising agenda to claim land, including the notion of *terra nullius* (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew & Kelly, 2012), which contradicts Lt Cook's documented observations of, and interactions with, many different Indigenous peoples on his voyage along the east coast of Australia in 1770 (Cook, 1770). It cannot be refuted that the land was occupied: This fact cannot be erased from history. Cook's explicit denial of, and withdrawal from, his responsibilities to Indigenous peoples - the first stage of colonisation - began in 1770, and reflects what Unanga Indigenous scholar Eve Tuck (Tuck & Fine, 2007) describes as a "retreat from responsibility" (p. 153).

'Denial and Withdrawal,' as the first stage of colonisation, also refers to the deliberate epistemic distancing of colonial communities and individuals from the local Indigenous peoples and their cultures as a means to dehumanise and ultimately, disregard the Indigenous people as the rightful 'owners' of the land. This was largely enacted by the colonial state by evaluating Indigenous peoples as "people without culture, no moral values, nothing of any social value to merit kind comment" (Laenui, 2000, p. 1) and thus deserving of the brutality of colonisation. Many Indigenous scholars have noted that Australian Indigenous peoples and cultures were deemed invisible at best, and have certainly been considered a dying race which would be unable to survive colonisation (Rose, 2012; Watson, 1998). By denying and

minimising Indigenous peoples and their ways of being, the colonists could justify the invasion and destruction of Indigenous lands. Darug scholar Jo Anne Rey (2022) articulates the denial stage of colonisation “as a perpetuation of colonising forces, their bureaucracies, and how insidious these practices are” (p. 26) as if Aboriginality is non-existent.⁹ Rey further emphasises the denial, when she claims that “by leaving out Indigenous perspectives, the silencing practices that have underpinned white European hegemony since colonisation are perpetuated” (p. 27).

Muller (2007) engages with colonial records to demonstrate how the first stage of colonisation - Denial and Withdrawal - has been maintained even though the physical presence of Aboriginal peoples could not be denied. She shares a particularly brutal story found within the archives to reveal the “dehumanisation inherent in the colonising process” (p. 80). Muller summarises the murder and brutalisation of Aboriginal people (including young Aboriginal children) from the area now known as the Tulloh property located close to the Grampians in Victoria, Australia as evidence of Denial. In the example that Muller (2007) draws on, the body of a murdered Aboriginal person was described by Robinson (Chief Protector of the Aborigines May 1841) as “‘the corpse of a native on 3 sticks’, apparently used as bait to lure and kill emus.” (Robinson, 1841, in Muller, 2007, p. 80). These acts of brutality deny Aboriginal people any value as humans that might be worthy of respect or mercy from the colonists. Muller (2007) notes that these stories must have also infiltrated the wider settler colonial psyche otherwise, she asks *“How could good citizens allow the current state of health and well being of*

⁹ Rey doesn't directly use the terminology of Poka Laenui - Denial or Withdrawal - to describe the same phenomenon. Instead Rey borrows the term 'whitewalling' from D'Souza (2018) which refers to a combination of whitewashing (only white perspectives are acceptable) and stonewalling (unwillingness to discuss it).

Indigenous Australians if not for the internalisation of and perhaps a subtle and subliminal perpetuation of the colonisation process?" (p. 80).

Internalised Racism

Interestingly, in his conversations with Enriques, Poka Laenui (2000) revealed that in the context of the first stage of colonisation, Denial and Withdrawal, some Indigenous people will even begin to withdraw from their own culture and join the colonisers in their agenda to deny, and withdraw from, other Indigenous peoples and cultures as a form of internalised racism. In a paper led by Bardi scholar, Pat Dudgeon, investigating how the practice of psychology has contributed to the colonisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia (Dudgeon, Rickwood, Garvey and Gridley, 2014) it was argued that this phenomena is called "internalised oppression" (p. 44) whereby the Indigenous people themselves turn on each other and perpetuate colonial destruction and violence.

For D'harawal people and our kinship relatives in now-Sydney,¹⁰ denial, withdrawal and the toxic outcomes of internalised oppression are especially felt when Indigenous peoples, who are not Ancestrally connected to the local area, are placed in positions of power (by the colonial government) over local Indigenous land, resources, or funding and they then claim to hold cultural authority also (Foley, D 2007; Foster, Kinniburgh and Wann, 2020). This context denies the local cultural protocols (as well as colonial statutory obligations) that dictate on-Country Indigenous peoples, local custodians or 'Traditional Owners' of the land should be the custodians of their own culture and caretakers of

¹⁰ I use the term "now-Sydney" to refer to the geographical aspects of Aboriginal Countrys that are now referred to as Sydney. This is an explicit critique of colonial renaming of places that already had names for countless generations. I do likewise with "now-Australia" to refer to the many Aboriginal nations, already named for thousands of years before colonisation, that are now bundled together and referred to simply as Australia.

Country (Bodkin-Andrews, Bodkin, Andrews & Whittaker, 2016a; Bodkin-Andrews, Foster, S., Bodkin, Foster, J., Andrews, Adams, Evans & Carlson, 2022; Rey, 2019; D Foley, 2007; Schmider, Cooms & Mann, 2022). Through government departments and some Local Aboriginal Land Councils, the colonial government has given away cultural rights and resources to other Indigenous peoples who will engage in this stage of colonisation - Denial and Withdrawal - to distance themselves from local peoples and deny the presence of on-Country culture and communities, thereby protecting their own livelihoods and the colonisers' illegal invasion of the stolen land (D Foley, 2007; Rey & Harrison, 2018; Foster, Kinniburgh & Wann, 2019). The colonial system that was put in place to govern the process of Indigenous land claims is clear evidence of the reluctance of the colonial government to meaningfully acknowledge Traditional Owners lest we challenge their claims to our stolen land (Foley, 2007). The negative effects of this are far reaching and create a subsequent wave of oppression and subjugation for on-Country peoples who not only have to contend with denial and withdrawal from the non-Indigenous 'settler' colonial communities, but also from the internally colonised Indigenous gatekeepers (Dudgeon et al., 2014).

Homogenising Aboriginality

Publishing together with his Elders, D'harawal academic, Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews, et al. (2016b) draws on the D'harawal Garuwanga (Ancestral) Story of the Burra'gorang to discuss the effects of Western imposed, identity politics on D'harawal cultures and peoples. Bodkin-Andrews et al (2016b) uses the term 'pan-Aboriginality' to describe the ways in which the colonial government and communities engage with (and homogenise) Aboriginal peoples and knowledges. In a 'pan-

Aboriginality’ context, outsiders engage with any Aboriginal person to tick an engagement box,¹¹ regardless of their knowledges or connections to Country, thereby completely ignoring (erasing and silencing) any of our on-Country cultural protocols and diversities. This has serious, detrimental effects on us and our on-Country knowledges that are often dismissed or ignored in favour of culture that is imported from other parts of now-Australia, into now-Sydney. In this way, nuanced and complex, local on-Country knowledges and cultures are being erased and replaced with generic, pan-Aboriginal cultural knowledges and expressions from completely different areas of Australia, as if there is just one Aboriginal community across the continent and not hundreds of different groups, languages and cultures (Bodkin-Andrews et al, 2016a; Carlson, 2016). Fighting this onslaught is exhausting. Marnie Graham with Darug man Lexodius Dadd (2021) also describe the difficulties of working with local culture in now-Sydney which requires us to “*undertake incredibly complex, confronting and challenging emotional labours trying to change the pervasive and deep-colonising narratives and assumptions about Indigenous peoples in the Greater Sydney region*” (p. 445). In this context, we can understand the complexities of the first stage of colonisation, denial and withdrawal, knowing that even when the colonial government recognises the presence of Aboriginal peoples, there is a complete denial of, and withdrawal from, our unique and diverse cultures in preference for a colonially driven, simplistic and homogenous view of an apparent, pan-aboriginality (Bodkin-Andrews, et al., 2016b; 2016a).

¹¹ Many government processes require ‘engagement’ with the ‘Aboriginal community’ - as if there were only one community (or even one individual from the community) - and the need to tick the engagement box on the paperwork leads to some bizarre ways to work the system. I have witnessed an engagement report that included over 100 names allegedly ‘engaged with’, but they were almost all only entrants in a colouring competition! I have seen many others where the consultants have spoken to anyone they can get to respond, and their reports are not inclusive of local peoples. These systems lead to some very unsatisfactory outcomes for the Aboriginal people who hold an obligation and desire to care for Country.

Storytelling

For the D'harawal people of now-Sydney, our Stories and Knowledges have been used by the colonial storytellers to denigrate, belittle and insult us and our culture (eg; Peck, 1933; Reed, 1965). Our complex, nuanced and vitally important Ancestral stories have been retold by colonists as nothing more than fanciful children's stories under the title of Aboriginal myths and legends (Bodkin-Andrews, Foster, Bodkin, Foster, Andrews, Adams, Evans & Carlson, 2022). Outsider understandings of our Stories do not take into account Indigenous ways of learning, and so our Stories are curated to only reveal elementary levels of our culture and lore until the Story-listener is ready to understand and accept the responsibility for higher levels of knowledge (Archibald, 2008; Bodkin, 2013; Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2022). Non-Indigenous outsiders misunderstand our cultural curation of what we have chosen to reveal to strangers who, by our cultural understanding, have not displayed the responsibility, reverence or respect required to understand the additional layers of knowledge and meaning deeply embedded within our Stories, so they appear more like elementary, children's stories to outsiders (Archibald, 2008; Bodkin, 2013; Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2022). Our Stories contain vital information to survive and thrive with Country, including our Lore and Law and teachings about the repercussions of not learning from the Ancestors through the Stories they have left behind for us (Bodkin, 2013). Storytelling is an essential element of our culture and degrading, belittling and insulting our Stories has caused shame and destruction for our people and the future of our culture (Bodkin-Andrews, et al., 2016a; Muller 2007).

In the research led by D'harawal scholar, Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2022) the authors explore how our Indigenous Storytelling is a powerful counter narrative that can speak back to, and undo, the violence of colonial storytelling explaining, "*Storytelling is seen as not only a critical*

method of sharing knowledges, but also a valuable tool for resistance to and healing from ongoing colonial violence affecting both individuals and communities” (p. 29).

As on-Country, D’harawal Traditional Owners of now-Sydney, the co-researchers of my doctoral research project have extensive experience and knowledge of the emotional labours that arise out of the “Denial and Withdrawal” stage of colonisation as well as the strength of our Storytelling in resisting this colonial violence. Indigenous and more specifically, true D’harawal Storytelling is more comprehensively covered in the Methodology chapter of this thesis.

Second Stage of Colonisation: Destruction and Eradication

The second stage of colonisation ‘Destruction and Eradication’ involves the colonists’ reluctant acceptance of the existence of Indigenous populations, followed by the need to quash Aboriginal claims to sovereignty, as they threaten the legitimacy of the colonisers in their pursuit to invade and claim the land (Muller, 2007; 2014; 2023). Muller’s research (2007) draws on the example of the federal government’s (under the then Prime Minister, John Howard’s Liberal Party) Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) to investigate claims of child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities (Freeman, Townsend, Mackean, Musolino, Friel, McDermott & Baum, 2022; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Colloquially known as ‘The Intervention’, the government response could have had the potential to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and communities but in reality extensive research on the subject consistently reveals that, *“The Federal government proceeded instead with an agenda underpinned by racist discourses pathologizing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and reproducing white sovereignty and white supremacy”* (Freeman et al., 2022, p. 16). The findings of

countless bodies of research have revealed that the NTER contributed significantly to the ongoing damage and destruction of colonisation for Aboriginal peoples (Freeman et al., 2022; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Muller, 2007). Many would argue that the government's agenda was total eradication for the remote communities under scrutiny, particularly knowing that the first community to be affected by the intervention was Mutitjulu which happens to be (not by accident in this context) the community who holds the Native Title of one of Australia's most profitable tourist attractions, Uluru (also known as Ayers Rock). If the government could prove the abuse of children in the community, the community could be closed down and Native Title extinguished so the federal government could once again control Uluru (and its lucrative profits) (Freeman et al., 2022).

Muller's research (2007) also raises the question: Why did the Australian Federal government declare an emergency, mobilising hordes of military, police and medical professionals, when for decades prior, the same government had ignored calls for help from Aboriginal communities desperate to alleviate the effects of colonial 'Destruction and Eradication' on Country, peoples and culture? Muller (2007) specifically notes that during the NTER, the 'emergency response' team created a long-drop toilet on a sacred ceremonial ground despite the fact that toilets were available nearby. This destruction of culture and Country shows a colonial attitude of superiority, while Aboriginal values were held as inferior, destructible, and of no value. The eradication of a sacred site for something as degrading as a toilet is an act that sends a clear message of disdain, disgust and complete denial of sacred Aboriginal cultural beliefs. From an Indigenous viewpoint, sacred Country and ceremonial grounds are the equivalent of a western cathedral in terms of the reverence and respect that must be displayed, especially when an individual enters or interacts with the space. Muller (2007) asks the reader to understand the Aboriginal

perspective and consider, “constructing such a facility as crude as a toilet would never be acceptable in a mainstream cathedral” (p. 81). Criminology researchers have subsequently also investigated the heavy handed NTER intervention and even questioned “the utility, morality and relevance of the ... law enforcement approach” (Anthony & Blagg, 2012, p. 72).

Not surprisingly, the destruction and eradication of Aboriginal cultures through colonisation still occurs today, not only across media and politics (Moreton-Robinson, 2015), but also in research itself (Bodkin-Andrewset al, 2016a), as our values and knowledges continue to be either ignored (Schmider et al, 2022), consumed for profit (e.g., Karskens, Irish, Nugent) or portrayed as fabrications and illusions (e.g., Windschuttle).

Stolen Generations

Undeniably, one of the most destructive and cruel policies of the British colonial government was forcibly taking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families (Paradies, 2016; Read, 1982; 2014). Children were stolen by Australian government officials and placed in non-Indigenous families and orphanages as a means to assimilate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children into white society, while also training them to be labourers for the colonial agenda (HREOC, Bringing them Home Report, 1997). This was a key tactic in the assimilation of Indigenous peoples in now-Australia and became known as The Stolen Generations (Read, 1982, 2014; Behrendt, 2003). Removing entire generations of family members from Indigenous communities works to dismantle vital bodies of knowledge and dissolves the pathways to maintaining oral traditions and culture (Cassidy, 2009; Rigney, 1998; Behrendt, 2009). Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems surviving the atrocities of

the early waves of colonisation (e.g., massacres, disease, dispossession) rely heavily on all generations within the community being present to learn and, most importantly, to relay the knowledge lived and learnt to future generations, particularly those learnt through our oral histories (Hunt, 2016). The government strategy to take the children served not only to forge the process of assimilation into white culture, but also assisted in the colonisation of the land and cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples (Cassidy, 2009; Rigney, 1998). Once the children were removed, it was believed that it was only a matter of time before Elders would eventually die off, and the need for government funded reserves would no longer exist leaving more land for the coloniser's bidding (Goodall & Cadzow, 2009; AAPA, 1937). Although now considered a bygone era, many would argue that the Stolen Generations are not over, as there are more children removed from their families today than during any other time in history (O'Donnell, Taplin, Marriott, Lima & Stanley, 2019).

The Durbaya'ora (Hidden Ones)

In order to avoid the punitive 'Destruction and Eradication' measures of the colonial government, including their cruel assimilation methods (e.g., The Stolen Generations), Aboriginal people have had to become what D'harawal Elder and Ethnobotanist, Aunty Fran Bodkin (2013, p. 2) describes as the 'Durbaya'ora – the Hidden Ones.' Fearing the endless persecution of the government, Aboriginal peoples had to hide their bodies and their identities by partially assimilating into Western communities (Bodkin, 2013; Hromek, 2019). Many Aboriginal people like my D'harawal family, and the co-researchers of the project this thesis is associated with, have suffered dispossession and dislocation from their communities, so they formed their own Aboriginal communities made up of other Aboriginal

peoples who were also in hiding (Bodkin, 2013; Hromek, 2019). Living in white communities, our Elders created extended families of other Dubaya'ora; Aboriginal Aunties and Uncles that helped to share and preserve culture, passing it onto future generations just as their Ancestors have done for generations before them (Foster, 2023). These communities have been fundamentally forged by the intended destruction of that which they would not allow to be destroyed.

Being hidden means that these communities of Dubyara'ora are often overlooked in research, as they are not typically associated with high profile, government-funded bodies like Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALC), and are therefore, not easily 'found' by researchers, so their stories are either erased or misrepresented in published records (Foster, 2020; Thorpe, 2019b). It may be argued that this is especially prevalent in research undertaken by non-Aboriginal researchers from outsider communities who perpetuate the 'Destruction and Eradication' of this stage of colonisation (examples can be found in as Karskens, Goodall, Irish and Nugent), who may rely on making connections to Aboriginal people through the colonial records, land councils and government organisations, not through personal connections and kinship networks that are often deeply embedded within Country, stories and culture (Foster, Kinniburgh & Wann, 2020).

Third Stage of Colonisation: Denigration Belittlement and Insult

The third stage of colonisation, 'Denigration Belittlement Insult' describes the colonisers' derogatory views of Indigenous cultures and peoples, as a means to justify the imposition of values from (what is seen by the colonial agenda as) the 'superior white race' (Sherwood, 2013; Sherwood and Edwards, 2006). As colonisation becomes deeply embedded in a place and colonial systems, institutions and

practices take hold, Indigenous cultures are consistently portrayed as inferior, absurd and deserving of destruction and colonisation (Laenui, 2000; Tuck & Fine, 2007). This attitude serves to justify the abuse of Indigenous peoples and deflect blame from the colonisers as the perpetrators of genocide, assimilation and destruction (Muller, 2007; 2014; 2023).

In Muller's (2007) research on the government intervention into child abuse in the Northern Territory, she draws on the denigration, belittlement and insult inherent in this third stage of colonisation, and the need to understand the treatment of Aboriginal men in this highly destructive government project. Muller (2007) argues that this stage of colonisation is being used to "falsely portray Aboriginal men as child-molesters, violent and drunkards" (p. 81) when in reality, most of the abusers of Aboriginal children are not Aboriginal people but people from outside our racial group (Anderson & Wild. 2007; Behrendt, 2007, 2009; Behrendt & Watson, 2008). Behrendt (2007) notes that the intervention did nothing to address child abusers of other racial backgrounds, and this is evidence of the fact that the intervention was employed to denigrate, belittle and insult Aboriginal peoples, and was not an exercise in protecting our children from real harm and danger from non-Indigenous perpetrators (Behrendt, 2007; Muller, 2007).

Kathleen Sims (Bundle, Foster, Foot, Saunders)

Similar situations as the one Muller describes have also occurred in our D'harawal experiences here in now-Sydney. My family's oral histories of my great, great grandmother, D'harawal woman, Kate Foster (a.k.a Kathleen Sims, Foot, Saunders & Bundle) reveal that our Ancestors here were also judged and belittled from the earliest days of the colony. Like many of the Sydney Aboriginal peoples at the time,

Kate spent the mid to late 1800s in the various Aboriginal camps around Sydney including the Rushcutters Bay camp where her child, Joseph Bundle was born in 1880 (Irish, 2017; Organ & Speechley, 1997; Watt, 2020). Kate also lived in the abandoned government boat sheds on Gadi (grass tree) Country (now Circular Quay) within a community of approximately 20 Aboriginal people (Irish, 2017; Watt, 2020). At the time, the colony was rapidly expanding and Aboriginal people were struggling to survive on the available remnants of stolen and decimated Country (Irish, 2017). There were many complaints about the state of affairs at the boat sheds, and it appears at first glance that the Aboriginal community was to blame (Legislative Assembly NSW, 1883). On closer inspection of the archival material, it is revealed that it was actually the interference of the colonial community that was causing the most problems in the Aboriginal camps like that of the boatsheds. Protector of Aborigines at the time, George Thornton, actually felt it was best if the Aboriginal communities were kept away from the destructive influences of the colonial community stating (in his report to the Legislative Assembly NSW, 1883), “It is needless to expatiate upon the baneful influences to which the aborigines are subjected by their intercourse with our race” (p. 2). Thornton went on to establish that he had the primary agenda to eradicate Aboriginal peoples in Sydney stating: “One of my first anxieties on assuming the duties of Protector was to endeavour to get all the aborigines [sic] away from Sydney” (Thornton in Legislative Assembly, 1883, p. 3).

It clearly was not the behaviours of Kate and the other Aboriginal people causing the issues at the boat sheds and other Aboriginal camps. It was the debauchery of elements within the invading British society taking advantage of vulnerable Aboriginal people, who had little option but to live in an unsafe, condemned building built on their stolen land (Irish, 2017; Legislative Assembly, 1883; Maynard,

1997). The colonial archives support what we have long known through oral histories: colonists consistently caused problems for the small Aboriginal communities that remained in Sydney (Legislative Assembly NSW, 1883). Not only did this community of Aboriginal people survive the fierce destruction of the first century of colonisation, but they were then condemned, belittled and abused, for struggling to find shelter on their decimated lands.

Colonial storytelling, in this context, holds the capacity to form stereotypes and create biases that influence entire societies and the systems that operate within them. In the case of the government boat sheds, Aboriginal people were seen as the problem and the government decided that the boatshed and other Aboriginal ‘camps’ around Sydney should be closed and the Aborigines Protection Board of NSW (APB) was established (Legislative Assembly, 1883; Maynard, 1997). Under the APB, all Aboriginal people were forced to live in government-controlled missions and reserves, many of which were not connected to their Ancestral lands. As Worimi scholar and activist, John Maynard explains;

“Confinement on these reserves would prove to be a method by which the NSW Government sought to assimilate Aboriginal people and destroy the structure of their society and religion. Aboriginal people were forced off their land and incarcerated into an environment of control which stripped them not only of land, but also of their dignity and culture” (Maynard, 1997, p. 4-5).

Kate was sent to the La Perouse mission, thankfully, still on-Country on the northern shores of Gamay (Kamay Botany Bay), where she gave birth to my great grandfather, Tom Foster (year is uncertain but 1890 is best guess). This is where he met my great grandmother, Worimi/Biripi/Awabakal woman Eliza

Foster (nee Clarke), who as a teenager, had been forced onto the La Perouse mission, some 300kms south of her Ancestral Worimi Country (now-Newcastle region). Tom and Eliza married and had my grandfather, Fred Foster, at La Perouse. Tom and Eliza were considered the 'gatekeepers' of the Sydney Aboriginal community and were key organisers of many high-profile events (Foster, 2023; 2022). Tom was an Executive member of the Aborigines Progressive Association, as treasurer, taking leadership organising Aboriginal involvement in the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932 and collaborating with Aboriginal leaders from other parts of Australia to organise the 1938 Day of Mourning protest to name a few (Foster, 2023; Harris, 2021). My grandfathers, Tom and Fred Foster, were ceremonial men who passed on cultural knowledge to my father, John Foster (born on Gadi Country) who has in turn passed knowledge and Stories on to me (born on Gamay/Goggerah Country). We have all always identified as D'harawal from now-Sydney, and my family have lived continuously in now-Sydney Country all of our lives. This includes D'harawal Country/Clan spaces including Gamay, Guriwal, Gadi, Bididi/Bidji, Nattai, Wann, Goggerah and Gwea Country (among many others). We are government identified and registered Traditional Owners of the Sydney region, based on the evidence (both cultural and colonial) of my family tree that is dated back to before the start of British colonisation here on our Country. Despite the lengthy processes we have gone through to prove this, we still experience the insult and denigration of the third stage of colonisation from people who belittle our claim to Country because it doesn't fit their preconceptions of who belongs where.

Fourth Stage of Colonisation: Surface Accommodation and Tokenism

The fourth stage of colonisation ‘Surface Accommodation and Tokenism’ explains the colonisers’ (at times reluctant) acceptance of what Indigenous culture still remains after the destruction of the previous stages of colonisation (Laenui, 2000). In this fourth stage, colonisers accept that there is an Indigenous culture that needs to be recognised, but not necessarily embraced or explored in any depth, and neither is it considered an integral part of the overall Australian identity (Laenui, 2000). This stage can be frequently identified within education and creative arts where simplistic and essentialist versions of Indigenous knowledges are presented in stereotypical and tokenistic ways (McCrae, 2006; Rose, 2012). While well-intentioned, the word ‘inclusion’ points to the lack of any meaningful endeavors in this stage of colonisation, as to ‘include’ requires a person or institution with power to give (or bestow) the inclusion upon those who are left out (Martin, 2006). Rather than empowering First Nations peoples to express complex Indigenous perspectives, this stage of ‘including,’ through ‘Surface Accommodation or Tokenism,’ acts only to misrepresent and devalue our cultures, by stifling them, regardless of good intent. This stage of colonisation reveals that Indigenous cultures are only given a token role in the new colonial society, which is experienced by many of us as a display of paternalistic leniency and calculated generosity to mask the coloniser’s genocidal regime. (Laenui, 2000; Martin, 2006; Muller, 2007)

Continuing her research on the intervention into child abuse in the Northern Territory, Muller (2007) reveals that surface accommodation and tokenism were also at play during the consultation processes of the NTER project. Muller addresses Indigenous Senator Pat Dodson’s concerns surrounding the selection of Indigenous representation on the project team. Those selected to assist the government were unelected and according to Dodson “recklessly naive in aiding and abetting the Howard government’s

agenda” (Dodson, 2007, p. 23 in Muller, 2007, p. 82). The colonising government and their media outlets named the Indigenous peoples chosen to participate in the intervention as Indigenous Leaders when in our communities, they are not considered so and have never been elected by us to represent us (Muller, 2007). The government handpicked who they considered to be Indigenous accomplices, not actual leaders or representatives of our communities. Muller (2007) rightfully concludes that “Consultation and respect are not part of the intervention; it is a top down grasp of power and control of Aboriginal communities” (p. 82), asserting that the colonising government deliberately chose the Indigenous people who would support their agenda. Going back to Poka Laenui’s (2007) original argument that the damage of colonisation can be perpetuated by the colonised peoples themselves (as an act of internalised racism), Muller’s example of the intervention is powerful evidence that the colonising government can achieve any token agenda, when they pick and choose which surface aspects of our cultures, or which politically-aligned Aboriginal people, they decide to engage with. Conversely, by selecting allied political outcomes, they also choose what to deny altogether, what to erase, or what to pay (token) lip service to (Laenui, 2000; Martin, 2006; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Muller, 2007).

Muller (2007) also uses the example of the opening ceremony of the 2000 Olympic Games held in now-Sydney to explain surface accommodation and tokenism. Muller (2007) argues that “Aboriginal art is used to portray Australianism even when items bearing such reflection of Indigenous culture have no other relationship to Aboriginal peoples” (p. 82). At the opening ceremony of the 2000 Olympic Games, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural icons and performances were used to project an image to the world of the magical, mystical, exotic and easily consumed aspects of our cultures, while in reality for Indigenous peoples in Australia, (then and now) the suffering, trauma and distress from the

destructive forces of colonisation was tearing entire communities apart (Muller, 2007). Meaningful engagement with the Indigenous experience here in now-Sydney has been consistently sidelined by the colonisers in preference for the superficial, surface engagement of palatable aspects of our culture like our arts and performance (Angel, 1999; Muller, 2007).

1932 Harbour Bridge Opening Ceremony

Many acts of surface accommodation and tokensim have also been inflicted on our D'harawal family. Interestingly, a high-profile story from our family occurred at a colonial opening event for the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932 (Harris, 2021), as evidenced by a family photo of my great grandfather, Tom Foster, and his daughter Renee Foster in our family album. My father has always explained that it is a picture of his grandfather, Tom, after he had performed a corroboree for the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932. It was so hard to believe this story from my family; surely if this had happened, we would have been taught this at school and heard about it outside our home? It is such a sensational story, and it was hard to believe that Aboriginal people, my great-grandfather no less, would be allowed to do this at what would have been considered such an important, colonial event (Harris, 2021). My father elaborated on how my great-grandfather and the other Aboriginal men performing the corroboree were intended to be the first people to walk out onto the bridge at the official opening. The story in our family goes that just before they walked out, a government official stepped in front of the group and officially became the first person to walk out onto the bridge. Understandably, the Aboriginal men were incensed and my great-grandfather's anger and frustration is always the prominent subject whenever the story is told (Foster, 2021).

I have always searched for evidence of this event but had no luck until one day in 2018, an image from Fairfax media appeared on my social media news feed. It was an image of a group of Aboriginal men at the opening of the Harbour Bridge. I was stunned and frantically scanned the photo to find that, amongst the group that also includes my grandfather, was my great-grandfather Tom, in his skins, playing the gum leaf and holding one of his Harbour Bridge boomerangs aloft. In the front of the procession, just as my father had always said in his story, was a government official. Through a research project with Dr Amanda Harris and the Conservatorium of Music, I found out that the man was non-Indigenous man, J. R. Milne, Minister for the Aborigines [sic] Protection Board (APB). Milne stepped into the front of the group and fraudulently claimed ownership over the Aboriginal men as well as crediting himself for their presence there, after they had organised every detail of their own participation in the two-day event themselves (Harris, 2021). This kind of paternalistic, surface accommodation and tokenism enacted by the colonial government and its representatives, is demoralising and pervasive, so much so, that the emotions and disillusionment of the day were still being felt and spoken about in our family's oral histories over 90 years later (Foster, 2021).

With further research though, it is found that the colonial audience at the time did not want to engage with meaningful enactments of culture and that the opening event's focus on Aboriginal culture through the men's performances "seems to have fallen flat with the general public, who liked their history European" (Harris, 2021, p. 31). Harris (2021) reveals that Aboriginal people were only included in the opening event to tokenistically represent Australia's past under the racist pretense that we have no relevance to contemporary Australian life, and certainly not its future. However, contradictorily, other evidence suggests that through their own self-determination, autonomy and cultural knowledge,

the group of men led by Tom, became an important part of the event: sharing culture and educating crowds of guests across the two-day event and long after the colonial program of events fell short for the crowds (Harris, 2021).

For us, as contemporary D'harawal people struggling to have our oral histories recognised against the colonial expectation of tangible (colonial archival) evidence, the discovery of this photograph is remarkable, and we can now re-tell our story against the backdrop of this image. It is an important corroborator of our oral histories, and evidence of our resistance and survival: of the cultural knowledge and dedication of my Elders and our connections here to this Country that have survived through our oral histories and Storytelling (Foster, 2020).

An important part of our right of reply to the archives involves challenging colonial storytelling by giving our perspective of the stories (Bodkin-Andrews et.al, 2023). Hearing and telling our own Stories allows us to continue those Stories, particularly in contemporary contexts. We can explain their sacred significance and purpose to us as the knowledge keepers of our culture, despite the surface accommodation and tokenism with which they were included and received at the time. Finding the images of Tom in the archives and knowing through our oral histories that he was a cultural man who actively worked to keep our culture and stories alive, fills me with the strength and determination to continue his work and contribute to a better future for D'harawal peoples and culture (Foster, 2018:2021:2023).

Fifth Stage of Colonisation: Transformation and Exploitation

The final stage of colonisation, 'Transformation/Exploitation' describes a process that begins with the colonists' reluctant acceptance of the Indigenous culture that has refused to completely die out (or go away) under the pressures of colonisation (Laenui, 2000). This acceptance, however, is always conditional on the colonisers' terms, with the colonial agenda centred and prioritised and the Indigenous culture requiring transformation to fit. Any "permitted" Indigenous cultural expression must be palatable to the coloniser's sensibilities and preferably open to commodification (Laenui, 2000).

Muller's (2007) research highlights how the transformation and exploitation of Indigenous cultures opens avenues for Indigenous communities to be mainstreamed or normalised in the context of the colonial society. That is: assimilating Indigenous peoples into urban, colonial communities, a strategy that is deployed with the assumption that predominantly white urban areas are superior places to live than remote or segregated Aboriginal communities (e.g., reserves and missions). Again, Muller (2007) uses a quote from Pat Dodson (2007) to highlight that urban areas such as Redfern, Mt Druitt or Perth are not better places to live if you are an Aboriginal person in now-Australia, and that "there is no paradise for those in the Northern Territory to pass over into the Promised Land on the side that is mainstream Australia" (p. 81). Dispossessing Aboriginal peoples from their Country and communities has not been for the benefit of the Aboriginal peoples themselves. Instead, through understanding the stages of colonisation from an Indigenous perspective, the antithesis is true: that it is only the government and the settler colonial society that will benefit from the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into Western communities and there is even colonial archival evidence to support this (AAPA, 1937; Muller, 2007). The colonial archives also holds evidence of the Australian government's cruel, deliberate

and premeditated initiatives to assimilate Aboriginal people into the British colonial society and that “all efforts be directed to that end” (AAPA, 1937, p. 3), regardless of how destructive, traumatic and genocidal the processes are for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures (Maynard, 1997; Moreton-Robinson, 2015).

1937 Conference

On the 21st April 1937, the Commonwealth Government of now-Australia held a conference in Parliament House Canberra (now the Australian Capital Territory) to decide the fate of the Aboriginal peoples (AAPA, 1937). That is those who survived after the first 150 years of colonial onslaught across their Countries. The 1937 Aboriginal Welfare “Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities” was attended by twelve white men from around the country representing “the Chief Protectors and Boards controlling the aborigines [sic]” AAPA, 1937, p. 3). There were no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples present, nor anyone who represented their needs and concerns, so unsurprisingly, the final resolution of the twelve government “protectors” was that:

“this conference believes that the destiny of the natives of aboriginal [sic] origin, but not of the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth, and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end” (AAPA, 1937, p. 3).

The official conference document details inhumane, white-supremacist attitudes and strategies within the colonial government agencies, that came to have far-reaching consequences for me, for my immediate family, and for this dissertation. It is necessary to take time with the conference records, and to consider the Indigenous perspectives on the words spoken and the decisions taken. I have deliberately

chosen to extensively quote the official document, rather than to paraphrase, so that the information is brought into the scholarly discourse, word for word, in all of its colonial storytelling (and rationalised horror and ugliness from my standpoint). I wish the colonial attitudes to be clear and represented honestly, so they can in no way be misunderstood or watered down. In doing so, I am enacting a right of reply to colonial storytelling; to respond accurately to the calculated strategies of colonial society, and the complicity of non-Indigenous settlers, to eliminate Aboriginal people so that colonisation could be complete (Morrissey, 2016).

During the 1937 conference (AAPA, 1937), the Northern Territory Chief Protector of Aboriginals [sic] outlined the three ways in which the government could proceed in its long term dealings with the Aboriginal population. The first option would be to “leave them alone, they will die, and we shall have no problem, apart from dealing with those pangs of conscience which must attend the passing of a neglected race” (p. 14).

The second option proposed was to “develop an enlightened elaborate system of protection which will produce an aboriginal [sic] population that is likely to swamp the white” (AAPA, 1937, p. 14), and the third option was to “follow a policy under which the aboriginal [sic] will be absorbed into the white population” (AAPA, 1937, p. 14).

There was great concern amongst the delegates about the Aboriginal population outnumbering the white population, as it was recognised that “People who are protected, especially those who are less than full blooded aborigines [sic], multiply very quickly” (AAPA, 1937, p. 14). Being *protective* of Aboriginal people was deemed not a viable option to the apparent ‘protectors’, as the Western Australian delegate

rhetorically enquired, *”Are we going to have a population of 1,000,000 blacks in the Commonwealth, or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there ever were any aborigines [sic] in Australia?”* (AAPA, 1937, p. 11).

Concern was also shown by the Northern Territory delegate that “[i]f aborigines [sic] are protected physically and morally, before long there will be in the Northern Territory, a black race, already numbering about 19,000, and multiplying at a rate far in excess of that of the whites” (p. 14). He continued that:

“unless the black population is speedily absorbed into the white, the process will soon be reversed, and in 50 years, or a little later, the white population of the Northern Territory will be absorbed into the black. I suggest that we first decide what our ultimate objective should be, and then discuss means to that end” (AAPA, 1937, p. 14).

Alongside the fear of being outnumbered, there was much discussion during the three day conference regarding classifying Aboriginal peoples according to their Aboriginal blood quotient and using dehumanising terminologies such as ‘full bloods’, ‘half castes’ ‘octoroons’ or ‘mixed bloods.’ Many Indigenous and First Nations scholars have noted the racial connotations of such terminology, and the racist policies associated with those terms (Carlson, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Tallbear, 2008).

The racism embedded within blood quantum narratives was fully highlighted at the conference where it was deemed that leaving the ‘full blood’ population alone was not an option as they were not safe in a colonial world (AAPA, 1937). Besides the fear of population growth, it was also revealed that “the

primitive native is suffering from contact with the lower type of white people—miners, stockmen and others—who invade his territory” (AAPA, 1937, p. 18): A similar situation to that noted earlier in this chapter as suffered by Kate Foster and the community in the government boat sheds on Gadi Country. Despite this, it was decided that, “the wild, uncivilised blacks, who, temporarily at least, are to be left on their reserves to live their own lives as aborigines [sic]” (AAPA, 1937, p. 13). Parochial attitudes prevailed, when the conference resolved that “[i]f we remain callous we shall undoubtedly see the black race vanish. There is an historical appeal in preserving a vanishing race, but I think we should seek to assimilate these people” (AAPA, 1937, p. 14).

When discussion of the apparent ‘vanishing race’ came to a close, conversation turned to what should become of what the government considered the ‘half castes.’ Our D’harawal community and family, being located in New South Wales, was represented by Aborigines (sic) Protection Board member, Mr Harkness, who stated that he was, concerningly, “an inspector of schools, not an expert on aborigines [sic]” (AAPA, 1937, p. 14). He had, however, “had some contact with them” (AAPA, 1937, p. 14). Mr Harkness affirmed that “Every effort should be made to merge these people into the white population” (AAPA, 1937, p. 14). Under the Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (NSW), child removal was completely legal and had become a key strategy of assimilation policies in settler colonies around the world (Armitage, 2004; Jacobs, 2004; Rolnick, 2021). The 1937 conference formalised the implementation of varied policies of assimilation, that would later come to specifically target my family who had already been forced to live under constant surveillance on the La Perouse mission. The children in the next generation of my family, my father and his siblings, would become key targets of child removal policies, and were at great risk of being stolen from their family and placed with a white family or into a

government institution (Bringing them Home Report, 1997; Read, 2014). In the 1937 conference (AAPA, 1937) the Western Australian delegate callously stated (in regard to assimilating mixed breed children) that:

“To achieve this end, however, we must have charge of the children at the age of six years; it is useless to wait until they are twelve or thirteen years of age. In Western Australia we have power under the act to take any child from its mother at any stage of its life, no matter whether the mother be legally married or not”. (p. 11)

The West Australian delegate then explained the strategy that they had been implementing in his jurisdiction whereby they deliberately sent young Aboriginal girls’ into service with white families knowing that they would invariably become pregnant to the husband of the house (AAPA, 1937). The Western Australian government actively ‘assimilated’ their half caste babies, repeatedly, as outlined by Neville when he explained:

“Our policy is to send them (young Aboriginal girls) out into the white community, and if a girl comes back pregnant our rule is to keep her for two years. The child is then taken away from the mother and sometimes never sees her again. Thus these children grow up as whites, knowing nothing of their own environment. At the expiration of the period of two years the mother goes back into service so it really does not matter if she has half a dozen children” (AAPA, 1937, p. 12).

Conference delegates agreed, and so it was resolved that “The policy of the Commonwealth is to do everything possible to convert the half-caste into a white citizen” (AAPA, 1937, p. 14). It was left up to

the individual state governments to decide how this assimilation policy was to be enacted, whether assimilation would occur by stealing children, controlling the lives of Aboriginal people or dictating where Aboriginal peoples lived for example. The 1937 conference document provides detailed evidence of the callous lengths that the Australian government went to in order to transform and exploit the local, now-Sydney Aboriginal peoples including my own D'harawal family.

Historical Trauma

In a research project studying the connections between Holocaust survivors and the unresolved trauma and grief of colonisation on the Lakota community, Lakota scholar Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (1998) initiated the term 'Historical Trauma,' and defined it as "...cumulative trauma — collective and compounding emotional and psychic wounding — both over the life span and across generations" (p. 298). It was pertinent in Brave Heart's (1998) research to engage with the stories of the Holocaust as it is widely recognised as a validly traumatic event for Jewish peoples and their ongoing grief and trauma is to be expected and accepted (Brave Heart, 1998). For Indigenous peoples, like the Lakota, the catastrophic events of colonisation and the associated grief and trauma have been minimised and even completely dismissed despite involving the same acts of racism, genocide and destruction as the Holocaust itself (Brave Heart, 1998).

Drawing from the expanding literature base of Historical Trauma for Indigenous and First Nations peoples, and engaging with Enriquez's five stages of colonisation (Enriquez, 1999; Muller, 2007; Laenui, 2000), a gruesome picture of life for those impacted by the unrelenting and destructive forces of colonisation in now-Australia begins to emerge (Sherwood, 2013; Tuck, 2009; Walter & Anderson,

2013). In her scoping research on the impacts of colonisation on Indigenous peoples, Gamilaroi health scholar Reakeeta Smallwood (Smallwood, Woods, Power & Usher, 2021) recognises that the “...practice of colonization is directly linked to the burden of disease, poverty, and disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Peoples, who were displaced from their land, culture, and resources” (p. 60). Still though, many settler colonial individuals, groups and government bodies deny the ferocity (and even validity) of colonisation and instead, blame the apparent racial inferiority of colonised communities and cultures for the trauma and disadvantage they have to endure at the hands of colonial governments, their systems, and their ‘settler’ communities (Sherwood, 2013; Walter & Anderson, 2013).

For the colonial government in now-Australia, their contemporary Productivity Commission’s report into *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* (2020) details the significant discrepancies in life expectancy, health and positive life outcomes between colonised Indigenous peoples and communities and their non-Indigenous counterparts (SCRGSP, 2020). Acknowledging the inequities can quickly divulge into a focus on deficit discourses, and Palawa academic, Maggie Walter (Walter & Anderson, 2013) makes a compelling argument that,

“The unacknowledged power relations inherent in these discourses position the Indigenous population as in need of being ‘brought up’ to the non-Indigenous standard in educational, labor market, and other socioeconomic indicators, and produce statistical configurations anchored in development or deficit-based understandings of Indigenous peoples and communities” (p. 22).

The colonial (capitalist) government is preoccupied with productivity and creating solutions that only address the symptoms of Indigenous disadvantage without addressing the root causes of the problems,

that being: the underlying systemic issues and racism inherent in the enactment of colonisation (Walter and Anderson, 2013). The colonial government has decided what strategies will be implemented to ‘help’ Aboriginal peoples as a “problem to be solved” (Dodson, 2003, p. 27) despite the fact that their report has identified that a key factor in creating meaningful change for Indigenous peoples is to ensure that we are involved in the decision making and planning regarding our own lives and outcomes (SCRGSP, 2020). Critically, Sherwood (2013) notes that while autonomy and self-determination is the best way forward for Indigenous peoples, work should be undertaken by Indigenous communities without the burden of government ineffectiveness and inaction impacting their outcomes (Sherwood, 2013).

Further to this, the position of a growing number of Indigenous and other oppressed peoples is that the institution does not deserve our trauma (hooks, 1990; Nxumalo & Tuck, 2022; Tuck, 2009, 2010; Tuck & Yang, 2012, 2014;). As hooks (1990) explains:

“the forces that invite those on the margins to speak also say, Do not speak in a voice of resistance. Only speak from that space in the margin that is a sign of deprivation, a wound, an unfulfilled longing. Only speak your pain” (p. 343).

The colonial government and its communities do not want to hear our stories of resilience and strength, instead, our stories of brokenness and trauma support their essential belief that we are the intrinsically inferior race to be kept in our lowly place of subjugation and oppression (Brave Heart, 1998). To them, we must stay in our traumatised state and not resist, rebel and survive like the warriors that we are. We

are recognised as the oldest surviving, most sustainable human culture in history that is still in practice today and now, not even the ‘mighty’ British empire and its butcher’s apron¹² could bring us down (Foley, 1996; Rasmussen, Guo, Wang, Lohmueller, Rasmussen, Albrechtsen, & Willerslev, 2011). We have survived but this is not what they want to hear. They want to see us as a pitiful race that can only be saved by their paternalistic good grace and generosity as our white saviours (Moreton-Robinson, 2015:2000).

What colonial storytelling rarely reveals is the survival and resilience of Indigenous peoples and that despite the ongoing forces of colonisation and resulting historical traumas, our capacity to resist colonisation through acts of *decolonisation* is becoming increasingly evident (Laenui, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Muller, 2007; Walker et al., 2013). In the next section I will examine the processes of *decolonisation* and the ways in which Indigenous peoples, including the D’harawal peoples of now-Sydney, have resisted total annihilation and the ongoing forces of colonisation to ensure a future for our people and cultures (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006).

Processes of *Decolonisation*

Decolonisation within research, at its briefest, is about the process of valuing, reclaiming and prioritising Indigenous standpoints and voices (Laenui, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Muller, 2007; Walker et al., 2013). In doing so, the opportunity for Indigenous people to critically deconstruct dominant, Western-only discourses emerges, and space opens for an Indigenous-led right of reply to the longstanding trends

¹² ‘The Butcher’s Apron’ is a term used to describe the British flag as it approached from the sea bringing with it death and destruction, blood shed and pillaging (Foley, 1996).

of colonial storytelling. This should result in a reversal of the othering and silencing of Indigenous voices in research, and the subsequent perpetuation of historical traumas (Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Foster, 2018, 2020, 2021; Harkin, 2014, 2019a; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). The emphasis on *decolonisation* being Indigenous work is necessary here, because “[t]here is a long and bumbled history of non-Indigenous peoples making moves to alleviate the impacts of colonization” (Tuck & Wang, 2012 p. 3) that continue to disempower Aboriginal sovereignty and ensure ‘innocent’ settler-colonial futures (Tuck & Wang, 2012; Malwhinney, 1998). As a result, to engage with *decolonising* processes, it requires that Indigenous voices and standpoints are at the forefront of the research, and Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies (ways of knowing, being and doing) are reflected within the research process (Martin, 2006, 2007; Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2009; Rigney, 2007).

In their work researching Indigenous women’s perceptions of health in now-Australia, Walker et al. (2013) engaged with the Five Stages of *Decolonisation* (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007) to centre Indigenous voices in their project and help develop two-way relationships between the researchers and the researched. The research became the Women’s Wellness Project and through prioritising Indigenous worldviews and ways of being, the work has improved the outcomes for Indigenous women’s health and well-being in sustainable and autonomous ways (Walker et al., 2013). I use the Women’s Wellness Project (Walker et al, 2013) through the following five stages of *decolonisation*, to launch a discussion of my historical D’harawal context for each stage.

In the following section I unpack the five stages of *Decolonisation*:

1. Rediscovery and Recovery
2. Mourning
3. Dreaming
4. Commitment
5. Action

In her doctorate, Lorraine Muller (2010) introduced an additional sixth stage to the Stages of *Decolonisation* for health and social work settings, which she named 'Healing.' In her subsequent book, *A Theory for Indigenous Australian Health and Human Service Work: Connecting Indigenous Knowledge and Practice*, Muller's (2014) focus on facilitating positive health outcomes and well-being for Indigenous clients, led to an entire chapter dedicated to Healing as a stage of *decolonisation*. In the following Literature Review section, I have elected to focus on the original Laenui (2000) stages as my research is located outside of a clinical health care and social work context.

First stage of *Decolonisation*: Rediscovery and Recovery

The first stage of *decolonisation*, Rediscovery and Recovery, is fundamental to the work required for *decolonising* both society and the systems that uphold colonialism from within (Laenui, 2000). This stage of *decolonisation* urges colonised peoples to meaningfully connect to and express their cultural identities; to celebrate, speak language, sing, dance and immerse themselves in their Indigenous ways of being as a starting point to unraveling the effects of colonial oppression on their identities and beliefs. To rediscover and revel in our cultures, brings healing and recovery from the damage and destruction of

colonisation. Practicing culture is essential in *decolonising* our epistemologies and ontologies - not just on an individual level, but collectively building capacity to create systemic change and affect countless generations into the future. (Walker et al, 2013)

Laenui (2007) unpacks the connection between the fifth, and last, stage of colonisation (Transformation and Exploitation) and the first stage of *decolonisation* (Rediscovery and Recovery) explaining that “One of the dangers in this phase is the elevation of form over substance” (p. 3). Laenui (2000) warns that Indigenous cultural enactment could be under threat of exploitation, particularly if an Indigenous person has internalised a coloniser mentality and only engaged with their culture on a surface level. This could result in tokenistic and superficial levels of engagement with the aspects of our culture that are easily consumed and commodified by outsider communities and are not necessarily grounded in meaningful connections to culture, ceremony, story and Country (Laenui, 2000). I described my experiences of these types of tokenistic engagements with government and LALCs in now-Sydney earlier, and they may be considered the epitome of what Laenui warns about.

In their work on women’s perceptions of health and wellness, Walker et al, (2013) found that the initial stage of *decolonisation* - Rediscovery and Recovery, was an important driver for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in questioning the apparent superiority of colonial, British ways of being that have been imposed onto our cultures. The Womens’ Wellness Project (2013) found that a colonial deficit-mentality of sickness and disease was at odds with their primary objective to positively promote good health and wellbeing for the future of our cultures and communities. Through the *decolonial* stage of Rediscovery and Recovery, the women took control of the research and engaged with their own ways

of working and thinking about health and wellness to create a successful program that Indigenous women felt safe to participate in. For Indigenous women, the research project reflected their values and motivations, centring their own desire for positive change and a better future for the next generations.

Recovering aspects of our lives and stories from the archives has given me valuable pieces of colonial evidence to support our oral histories though there are many gaps. Since the establishment of lands councils, native title and other government 'cultural interventions', we have watched the stories of our Elders and Ancestors being erased and omitted from many of the stories and research of now-Sydney Country, mainly those that have been compiled by people outside our community. It is time now to ensure that the erasure does not continue and the stories and knowledge of our family is recognised, and keeps its rightful cultural location on this Country.

Circling back to my great-great grandmother, Kate, the records substantiate that she was an interpreter between the local Sydney Aboriginal communities and the English language speakers (Watt, 2020). One of the very few female historians in the colony, Mary Everitt, worked with a number of Aboriginal women in Sydney including Kate whose stories she recorded. Unfortunately, much of her research that came from Kate was never published and is still lost somewhere in an archive, but some very interesting information did arise and was recorded (Watt, 2020). Everitt wrote to A.G Stevens the literary editor for the Bulletin explaining that she had some interesting material for their 'Aboriginalities' column (Watt, 2020). The actual material was never published but details were included in her letter to Stevens outlining some of her work with Turruwul/D'harawal (alternative spelling D'harawal/Tharawal using the linguistic device 'dt' to indicate the sound of the 'd/t' being like that employed in the word 'that')

peoples including, interestingly, “an account of the first meeting with Cook, translated by Mrs Kate Saunders (Everitt in Watt, p. 122). This is powerful archival evidence of our rightful presence here in now-Sydney despite many others asserting that D’harawal peoples only belong south of the Georges River (Goodall, Organ, Kohen, Karskens etc). This evidence, gathered in the 1880’s, also demonstrates the presence of D’harawal peoples and language in Sydney long before other nations of people were identified. This is an incredibly unique position to be in: we are survivors on the frontline of colonisation in now-Australia, we have survived when so many have not.

While we assert our Ancestral connections and custodianship over this land as D’harawal peoples, I would also like to acknowledge that this Country (now known as the broader Sydney Basin) is considered to be the Ancestral Country of many other people and groups. While I respect their connections to place here, I ask that they also respect mine and my family’s. We do not subscribe to the colonial notion of one people, one place, one language, and one *owner*. Instead, we understand our D’harawal lore that describes our lives within a complex kinship system, with the capacity for many different people to belong and be connected to the same lands. The alternative to this multiplicity is the homogenisation of our peoples into an easily understood (e.g., primitive) whole that betrays our unique Stories and Lore (Bodkin-Andrews, et al., 2017). For example, there is the 1890 Sydney Morning Herald article clearly stating that “The Aboriginals about Sydney spoke the language known as ‘Turruwul’.” Despite this evidence, almost through some ‘one-nation’ colonial mentality, we have been repeatedly incorrectly labeled and described by countless colonial outsiders (and an increasing number of ‘insiders’)

as Dharug¹³ (Dharuuk, Darug and other spellings) (Mathews, 1901; Kohen, 1983); Eora¹⁴ (Zeppel, 1999); and Gadigal¹⁵ (Cadigal). While these groups can/do exist and we acknowledge them in now-Sydney, my family continues to use the name that has been passed down to us from our Ancestors such as Kate who uses the term D’harawal to describe us. This is the name we received culturally, transferred through the generations, from our Ancestors to us today, using our oral histories. Second to this is that this fact is also substantiated in official government records (Irish, 2016; Watt, 2020). Going forward, we need to develop more complexity and inclusiveness to the cultural stories that are told about Aboriginal now-Sydney, whereby all of the people of this place are acknowledged by whatever cultural term or moniker they choose. (Foster, Kinniburgh, McConnell, & Brownbill, 2022; Foster, Kinniburgh, & Miranda, 2021). This contributes to the decolonisation of our knowledges and asserts our cultural ways of being that teach us that all things are connected and are a part of a complex, interrelated system of kin and Country in which all aspects rely on each other for survival (Bodkin, 2013).

¹³ ‘Darug’ refers to the tubers and roots of plants that we farm and harvest as a staple in our diet. Unqualified amateur linguist RH Mathews (1901) named the local Sydney language Darug because he couldn’t think of a better name for our languages here. This has since been misconstrued as the name for a nation of people that includes us as D’harawal people here despite having our own cultural terms to describe ourselves.

¹⁴ ‘Eora’ is one of our local words meaning ‘here, from this place’ and is not the name of a nation of a people. It has been employed by the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council as a way to subvert traditional owners in the Native Title process. We do not use eora as a nation name so Eora as a nation, is a colonial construct and weapon of lateral violence.

¹⁵ ‘Gadigal’ refers to Gadi Country (a very small area of Country where the ‘gadi’ (flower spike) is used to fish from the rocks) and ‘gal’ is the suffix for man. Women are not referred to in this naming convention. The suffix ‘galleen’ refers to women. This is a very limiting and exclusionary naming convention also employed by LALC to keep traditional owners excluded and silenced as we will very rarely identify as Gadigal as it represents a kinship system that has been destroyed by colonisation.

Second Stage of *Decolonisation*: Mourning

The second stage vital for *decolonisation* is ‘Mourning’ and there is a lot to mourn (Muller, 2007:2014; Walker et al., 2013). The sadness, frustration and sense of loss over what has been destroyed, erased or forgotten (and deliberately silenced) by colonisation must be acknowledged and addressed. Experiencing this mourning is an ongoing process. Muller (2014) argues that many of our stories constantly reveal that much has been lost, displaced and destroyed due to the continual, ongoing nature of colonisation. As a result, the mourning will not end so we must find a way to reconcile the loss. In order to do this though, colonised peoples must work with the mourning stage, yet not be consumed by it. Instead, we must embrace what is and use it as a catalyst to create change for future generations (Braveheart, 1998; Muller, 2014; Smallwood, et al., 2021).

Laenui (2000) explains that mourning is an essential phase to experience so that healing can begin. He also argues that mourning can speed up the first stage of rediscovery and recovery as both phases feed off each other. As we mourn, we can find ourselves totally immersed in our culture in whatever ways we can as a way to channel the anger and mourning. For some though, they remain stuck in the mourning phase and what Laenui (Laenui, 2000, p. 4) describes as their “victim-hood.” It needs to be acknowledged that our mourning is very real and very justified, but that if we stay in this phase, the damage of colonisation is perpetuated and continued. We need to channel our anger into action and engage with our cultures in every way we can through rediscovery and recovery, even if only to spite the erasure and destruction of colonisation (Braveheart, 1998; Muller, 2014; Smallwood, et al., 2021)..

Walker et al. (2013) engaged with the first two stages of *decolonisation*, Rediscovery/Recovery and Mourning in the first phase of their Women's Wellness Project. The first phase was to consult with local Indigenous women to gain an understanding of their position on their own health and well-being. The women demonstrated a high level of understanding of the issues at hand and the role that colonisation has played in their subjugation and oppression. The women mourned the loss and destruction they had suffered due to colonisation but were motivated to move forward and recover from the impacts of colonisation through a rediscovery of their own cultural connections and power (Walker et al., 2013). The success of the project was grounded in these two initial stages of *decolonisation*, as the women took control of their own health care in their own ways, thereby releasing the stranglehold of colonial systems and forging a new future for themselves and their communities.

1938 Day of Mourning Protest

This section draws heavily on my published chapter "Mungari Buldyan: Song for my grandfather" (Foster, 2021)

Over eighty years ago, my Elders were thinking in similar ways when they took an important opportunity to tell the world of their mourning and oppression at the hands of British colonisation. An integral event demonstrating not only our mourning but also our resistance to colonial destruction was the Day of Mourning protest in 1938 (Dodson, 2000). My great grandparents, Tom and Eliza Foster, were key organisers of the Day of Mourning protest held here in Sydney, at Australia Hall, on 26th January, while the settler colonial communities were celebrating the sesquicentenary of their invasion on our lands.

This protest saw Aboriginal people from all over the country come together to ask, quite simply, for equal rights for Aboriginal people. This is arguably one of the first civil rights protests in the entire world, and it happened here in now-Sydney. This was over twenty years before Martin Luther King Jnr, Rosa Parks or Nelson Mandela hit the world headlines, yet very few people know about it or have learnt about it in Australian history in schools, let alone in the mainstream media. No one knew that standing in the pictures with Aboriginal warriors Jack Patten, Doug Nicholls and William Cooper is my great-grandfather, Tom Foster. I feel a sense of responsibility to honour the work of these amazing people, the hardships they endured, and tell their stories in an attempt to reawaken their narratives from the erasure and oppression of Australia's 'silent apartheid' (Rose, 2012). I found the words that Tom spoke on that day in 1938, and they are powerful, concise and inspiring. 26 January 2018 saw the eightieth anniversary of the Day of Mourning protest, and I was invited to deliver Tom's speech at an event held in Australia Hall to honour the day with other descendants. On that day, I walked up the same stairs that Tom had walked up eighty years earlier; I stood under the same roof that Tom had stood under and I read his words:

"The Aborigines have three enemies. The first is the Aborigines Protection board, which has meted out most callous treatment to our people, and has forced us to do as the white man wishes. The second enemy is the white missionary, who preaches to our people. Some of these are disgraceful. The third enemy is liquor. White men brought liquor for us, and it has helped to destroy our people. We should stand shoulder to shoulder to destroy these three enemies." (Foster in Foster, 2021, p. 19).

There are no words to describe a moment like this, and the complexity of emotions I feel as I explore these stories. I am wracked with grief hearing the stories of loss and mourning, but I am buoyed by the strength and resistance of my Elders, and the legacy they have left for me and those who come after us.

Third Stage of *Decolonisation*: Dreaming

The third stage of *decolonisation* addresses the notion of “Dreaming” whereby we re-imagine a future for our own cultures (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007, 2014). Laenui (2000) argues that this is the most critical stage for *decolonisation* and we must be patient and let it take its course so that we can create a meaningful future for ourselves, in our ways, and not just fit into the colonisers culture and systems. Laenui (2000) makes the critical point that often during the Dreaming phase, some may rush in and accept narrow-minded goals (usually based in money and materialism) that are still embedded within the colonisers government, laws and society. Laenui (2000) suggests that patience and time will contribute to more holistic, meaningful outcomes, and that actual systemic change can create a new future for Indigenous cultures that is inclusive of our ideals and ways of being, doing and thinking. It is in the Dreaming stage that we allow ourselves the space and time to reconstruct the expressions of our cultures, and plan for our futures. We will ask questions of ourselves; What does our future look like? How will we express and create this Dreaming? How will it manifest? In this phase, we are ‘allowed’ to immerse ourselves in culture and explore how we are going to be seen, and understood that because we do still exist, all is not lost and that we must be recognised.

For the women in the Indigenous Women’s Wellness Study (Walker et al., 2013), their Dreaming led to the group organising an ‘Indigenous Women’s Wellness Summit’ - a day of coming together and

celebrating wellness in their own ways and with their own values centred in the programming of the event. This was especially important not only to the individual women, but also to the Women's Wellness project; in that, by organising their own event, they were able to create space for activities that positively celebrated Indigenous women and their futures as opposed to the deficit mentality of illness and damage that colonial systems and programs had previously projected onto their lives and communities to date (Walker et al., 2013). The women saw the importance of their own views and ideas and understood the ways in which their work challenged western notions of disease and illness, thereby creating new systems and events for the future that are grounded in Indigenous women's ways of being and doing. In this way, the Indigenous Women's Wellness project and the subsequent summit, successfully enacted the third stage of *decolonisation*, Dreaming, in the ways that Laenui (2000) had envisioned.

D'harawal Narinya Waduguda (Living Law)

An important aspect of our contemporary D'harawal culture and Storytelling is our Narinya or living dreaming. There is an ongoing colonial assumption/belief that our 'dreaming' or 'creation period' ended in 1788 when our lands were invaded, but our Narinya stories are testament to the fact that our Storytelling and culture live on. In dreaming of this research project, I envisaged a future whereby the stories of our Elders today would be easily accessible. I dreamed of continuing the work and stories of my family Kate, Tom and Eliza and ensuring that the Elders who came after them, were also recorded as a means to document our continued connections to Country here in the now-Sydney Basin. I dreamt of future generations of D'harawal peoples finding cultural strength in our Elders' Stories in the same

ways that they have informed mine. Our Elders and Ancestors have created an anchor that stabilises our cultural identities and it is the intention of this research project that others will be able to access the Stories and knowledges to fortify their own.

White Earth Ojibwe (Anishanabe) thought leader Gerald Vizenor (1999) has articulated what cultural survival and power is for Indigenous peoples when he wrote that survival is “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction.... native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry.” (p. vii). This is particularly relevant for D’harawal peoples who are continually silenced and erased within the broader Sydney region, despite in many cases being a living embodiment of resistance to colonisation. Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg (Anishanabe) scholar Leanne Betasomake Simpson (2017) further extrapolates that culture is ongoing and that active participation in storytelling - both traditional and contemporary - “refuses the containment of settler colonialism and inserts Indigenous presence.” (p. 196). Our very presence is an act of resistance and our dreaming lives on in our continued Storywork and knowledges.

Fourth Stage of *Decolonisation*: Commitment

From the Dreaming phase, Laenui (2000) describes the fourth stage of *Decolonisation* as Commitment. Commitment asks us to measure our involvement in the pursuit of *decolonisation* (Muller, 2007, 2014). A commitment to *decolonisation* is a way of being, beyond even a passion. It is instilled in all that you do such that it is not always driven by acknowledgement, reward or economic benefit. It is a recognition that this pursuit is greater than the individual, it is a fight for the whole. After Dreaming has occurred and Indigenous peoples know and understand what they want for their futures, commitment is required

to see our goals and objectives come to life as more than just a small part within a wider, colonial, western system. Laenui (2000) talks about our need to come together and join forces with other Indigenous peoples, to set the wheels of *decolonisation* in motion so that we do not have to rely on colonial government systems or funding to prioritise our needs, instead, we can come together and find new, better ways to enact our dreams for our communities and futures.

An inspiring example of this has arisen from the Indigenous Women's Wellness Project (Walker et al., 2013). The Indigenous women in the group were committed to making change not just for themselves, but for their entire communities in the present day, and also into the future. Through the course of the research, they realised that one of the best ways to do this was to bring Indigenous women together to begin the process of creating the Indigenous Women's Wellness summit. The researchers and women within the community decided to work with a not-for-profit community controlled organisation, Bunyabilla Inc. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation, who applied for funding and made it possible for the summit to sit outside the university funded research project. So while the research project was owned and funded by Queensland University of Technology, the summit was owned by the local community and developed in partnership, an arrangement that allowed the Indigenous women the self-determination and autonomy required to commit to the event and bring it to life (Walker et al., 2013). This strategy was successful and led to the establishment of the North Brisbane Indigenous Women's Wellness Summit which was held at Strathpine Community Centre on International Women's Day, 9th March, 2012.

D'harawal Traditional Elders and Knowledge Holders Circle

I have learnt commitment through my Elders and their work as the D'harawal Traditional Elders and Knowledge Holders Circle (The Circle). The Circle meets once a month to discuss a wide range of issues and concerns but most importantly, we engage with our Ancestral Stories to understand our values and priorities as contemporary D'harawal peoples. Laenui's (2000) work confirms the need to come together and join forces with other Indigenous peoples, to commit to the work required to create our own futures and continue our cultures in the face of colonisation.

Each month, The Circle, (including up to three generations of over six D'harawal families) gathers together to find cultural strength in our Stories and knowledges. Our Elders have committed to continue working, doing hands-on work, on the ground, with our children, teachers and families to honour our Ancestors, and the Stories that have educated and guided our Peoples since the beginning of time. Walker et al. (2013) also asserts that coming together in groups like that of The Circle is a, "proactive response, with positive action that challenges historical injustices rather than punitive action. This proactive response positions the researcher as an activist, allowing the process of *decolonization* to manifest into a greater social transformation" (p. 209).

In the context of this thesis, working with The Circle has been integral to the methodology and methods undertaken to ensure cultural protocols and values are honoured and respected in the research process. For this reason, I draw on the commitment of our Elders in their work as The Circle to understand this stage of *decolonisation* but do not fully investigate our cultural protocols and contribution to

scholarship until the Methodology and Discussion Chapters of this thesis where they can be meaningfully unpacked and given the respect they deserve.

Fifth Stage of *Decolonisation*: Action

The fifth stage of *decolonisation* calls us to “Action” (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007, 2014). Action comes in many forms and it is recommended that action be pro-active, not re-active and should at all times derive from the consensus of the colonised peoples (Laenui, 2000). Action, in the context of the fifth stage of *Decolonisation*, is not necessarily about marching in guns blazing (though sometimes through desperation and survival it may be) but also about “technological developments” (Laenui, 2000, p. 6). Laenui (2000) sees the long term strategy of *decolonisation* as grounded in online mechanisms such as social media as they are “more effective in executing the long term battle plan” (p. 6). In the past, Laenui (Laenui, 2000) notes that action may have been more about physically overthrowing the colonial government, but with access to online resources, it is now possible to speak before a national congress or politician or even the United Nations so moving forward with less reactive solutions could be more productive today.

For Walker et al. (2013) Laenui’s (2000) framework for *decolonisation* helped to provide a structure that the women could work within to take action and bring the Women’s Wellness Summit to life. In every facet of the project, the *decolonisation* framework (Laenui, 2000) supported the women in an event that “was shaped by Indigenous womanhood and centred Indigenous women in learning from one another too.” (p. 212).

Walker et al. (2013) engaged with varying methods to measure the success of the Women's Wellness Summit. On the day, women contributed their thoughts and ideas relating to the summit at discussion tables set up at the venue: a concept that was culturally led and implemented by the Indigenous women organising and running the summit. Drawing on their own cultural values, the women respected and honoured cultural protocols with the important inclusion of specifically designated, Elders tables as a pivotal point in the community centre. At their discussion tables, the Elders were able to provide invaluable feedback and debriefings pertinent to the success of the summit. The value of our Elders' views and feedback is an important aspect of cultural respect and responsibility and in the case of the Women's Wellness Summit, "When the Elders told us they were happy with the summit, happy with our work and happy with the process, we were happy" (Walker et al., 2013, p. 213).

In the research of Walker et al. (2013), adopting a *decolonising* framework helped prioritise and centre the needs and worldviews of the Indigenous women in their own community. Understanding the stages of colonisation and the impacts of this on their lives, helped the women assert their needs and respond with programs that were ideally suited to support their communities, culture and Country (Walker et al., 2013). This reframed their work from re-active (centring colonisation) to pro-active (community and culture focused) the success of which has been recognised by funding bodies who, in the concluding statement, are now undertaking further work with Indigenous communities using the same, *decolonising* strategies (Walker et al., 2013, p. 213).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to tell some of the stories of my D'harawal family through the established frameworks of the stages of colonisation and *de*colonisation. Through these frameworks, I have been able to explain some of the devastating impacts of colonisation on the lived experiences of my family including racism, assimilation policies, historical trauma and the devastation of the Stolen Generations. It is critically important though, that our D'harawal peoples and cultures are not just viewed through the lens of colonial trauma and destruction. Engaging with a framework such as the stages of *de*colonisation allows us to also explore our strengths and resilience as sovereign peoples. Telling the stories of my family's survival and their activism against colonisation, also serves to forge my own cultural identity as well as those who come after us. This allows us to speak back to the archives, to correct the records and add rich and complex layers to the Stories of our Elders and Ancestors, often with first hand accounts and oral histories that have survived since the beginning of time.

As Indigenous peoples, it is now imperative that we write up our own knowledges and tell our own stories because they are different, they are real and rich, and we are the ones ideally suited to tell them. This leads us to our standpoint. Who are we? What do we stand for? What do we have to say? The next chapter is part two of this Literature Review and in it I will examine the theoretical foundations of this thesis. Firstly, Standpoint Theory, beginning with the Marxist foundations within the emergence of Feminist Standpoints, which then has been argued to have led to Indigenous women developing their own standpoint theories as separate to other feminist scholars (Behrendt, 1993; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). From Indigenous Women's Standpoint we then see the development of Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Nakata, 1998; Rigney 1999), and following on from that, a specifically Australian Indigenous

Women's Standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013), and this is where I situate myself and how I operate as a co-researcher on this project.

Chapter 3 LITERATURE REVIEW PART 2 Standpoint Theory

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented important information to understand the role of colonisation in Australia, and the government policies relating to assimilation, and the subsequent Stolen Generations. Also covered was the attempted erasure of my family, D'harawal peoples as Traditional Owners in the Sydney Basin, along with the colonial storytelling that has continued to devalue and destroy our culture and communities. The previous chapter unpacked the stages of colonisation and, importantly, the stages of *decolonisation* (my emphasis), and the ways in which we enact our right of reply to the archives when we tell our stories, not only of colonially imposed historical trauma, but also our stories of resistance, survival, and the crucial role being played by insider storytelling within this thesis.

The aims of the previous section of this Literature Review was to provide clear and detailed evidence to support the need for Indigenous peoples to write up their own knowledges. When we tell our stories they are different, they are real and rich, and we are the ones ideally suited to tell them. This leads us to our standpoint or worldview. Who are we? What do we stand for? What do we have to say?

This chapter, as part two of the Literature Review of this thesis, will examine Standpoint Theory, beginning with the Marxist foundations within the emergence of Feminist Standpoints, and then leading into a discussion of Indigenous women developing their own standpoint theories, independent

from other feminist scholars (Behrendt, 1993; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). From the Indigenous Women's Standpoint, we will then consider the development of Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Nakata, 1998; Rigney 1999) followed by the specifically Australian, Indigenous Women's Standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). It is in this standpoint where I situate myself, and how I operate as a co-researcher on this project.

Standpoint Theory

The notion of 'standpoint' has been an ongoing and complex discussion in sociology from the earliest days of modern Western philosophy (Harding, 2004). A standpoint is the position(s) from which individuals perceive the world, and that standpoint has the power to influence how the individual then believes the world is socially constructed (Rolin, 2009). Standpoint (as a) theory asserts that the power and authority inherent in knowledge lies with the individual or group from whom that knowledge has arisen (Rolin, 2009). An individual may be aligned with numerous, even infinite, standpoints that can evolve and change as the lived experiences of the individual influence their beliefs and perspectives over a lifetime (Rolin, 2009).

Standpoint is understandably complicated and multifaceted, arising as a direct critique of the essentialist, blinkered priorities of Western research that have been founded and controlled by a patriarchal ruling class (Harding, 2004). This Western patriarchal governance claims ownership of not just knowledge but also, contradictorily, truth and neutrality despite its skewed hegemonic structures and patriarchal privileging (Smith, 1990). Quandamooka scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2013, p

333) provides one of the most valuable contributions to standpoint theory in that she says it reveals “the spurious truth claims to impartiality of patriarchal knowledge production.” Standpoint theory makes the alternative claim that an individual’s bias, experience and perspectives cannot, and should not, be kept separate from the research process, either from the perspective of the researcher or the researched (Harding, 1992). In this way, standpoint theory is a vital element in disrupting dominant social discourses and presenting fuller and more comprehensive bodies of knowledge (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

The Western research model centres and privileges the ideals and perspectives of the white, able-bodied, heteronormative, Christian and male individual, thereby erasing, silencing and oppressing all ‘others’ (Harding, 2004:2005:1992). Standpoint theory recognises that the ‘truth’, or more complete view and knowledge of a situation, is more thoroughly and holistically understood when told by the ‘insider’ or marginalised, oppressed individual or group (Harding, 1992; Smith, 1987). In the Western research world, research is most commonly undertaken by those from outside the researched group and by individuals in positions of power over the oppressed collective (e.g., the privileged, white, male, educated scholar - Behrendt, 2016). This then results in the overall corruption of the knowledge produced as it is filtered through the narrow lens of the outsider, oppressor experience, which is limited in relation to the research ‘subject’ (Harding, 2005). Standpoint theory recognises that those best to tell a story are those who have lived the experiences being researched, regardless of their perceived level of social, economic, education or gender status (Rolin, 2009). By valuing the voices and perspectives of the oppressed,

standpoint theory has expanded the power of research and become an important liberating and emancipatory tool for oppressed individuals and groups (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

The Western academic world is preoccupied with the search for knowledge and truth (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1983). We are taught that if we can understand the concepts underlying standpoint theories, we can then make sense of the false notions of objectivity and neutrality in research (Hartsock, 1997). Through standpoint theory, we can process the ideas of subjectivity and individual experience in the processes of knowledge sharing and the pursuit of 'truth' (Harding, 1987). Beginning with the feminist critique that the production of knowledge is not dependent on adherence to dominant patriarchal structures (Harding, 1987; Moreton-Robinson, 2013), standpoint theories respond by allowing for a range of perspectives through valuing embodied experience and individual subjective knowledge (Harding, 2005).

Feminist Standpoint Theory

Whilst standpoint theory focuses on the viewpoint of individuals, it also encompasses the notion of the "collective" or groups of individuals who may share the same worldviews or experiences (Rolin, 2009). Understandably, women were one of the first groups of scholars to challenge Western patriarchal systems of knowledge through standpoint theory, and in the early 1970s, the specific term feminist standpoint theory was established as one of the first focussed theories to develop from the establishment of generalised standpoint theory (Smith, 1974; Harding, 1987). Like standpoint theory, feminist standpoint theory makes the claim that those from within the community should undertake the research

of marginalised groups; those individuals with the life experiences and epistemologies of the oppressed 'subject', in the case of a feminist standpoint, are women (Smith, 1974).

Feminist standpoint theory goes one step further to say that the perceived 'other' or oppressed and powerless individual or group possesses an even more rigorous level of objectivity than the outsider researcher(s), a notion that has since been termed 'strong objectivity' (Harding, 1992). The views and knowledge of the oppressed are more closely aligned with the truth as they take into consideration multiple perspectives (Harding, 1992; Hartsock, 1997). To further explain, the oppressed relies on knowing the ideals and motivations of the oppressor to be able to function in the oppressor's world. However, the oppressor does not need to understand the position or viewpoints of the oppressed as it is of no consequence to them. The views of the oppressor are therefore very limited and subjective in comparison to the views of the insider individual or group. In the context of Indigenous research, the standpoint of the oppressor is therefore viewed as not as objective, or valuable as the views of the oppressed communities and individuals involved in the research (Hartsock, 1997).

From an Indigenous women's perspective, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate scholar Kim Tallbear (2014:2019) supports the feminist theory of strong objectivity. Tallbear (2014) was raised with the intellectual and political guidance of her mother Leeann Tallbear, who introduced her at an early age to Vine Deloria Jnr's (1969) integral book, "Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto". This significant publication taught Tallbear (2014) the importance of an Indigenous standpoint and the need for the marginalised to tell their own stories from their own standpoint and, as a result, "objectivity will be strengthened" (p. 3).

In her Whidden Lecture, Tallbear (2019) further explains standpoint and its relationship to strong objectivity, stating:

“You see more clearly when you’re coming from a marginalised perspective because you don’t only see the world through your eyes but you have to see the world through the white man’s eyes right? Because you have to know how the world works through his eyes and you have to know how the world works through your eyes. He only sees his world because he’s not marginalised he doesn’t have to see your point of view”. (Tallbear, 2019)

However, when proposing an Indigenous standpoint, Torres Strait Islander scholar Martin Nakata (2007) was less interested in the preoccupation of truth and objectivity and instead focused on standpoint as a means to explore and reveal knowledge from multiple, differing perspectives stating that an Indigenous standpoint is:

“a distinct form of analysis, and is itself both a discursive construction and an intellectual device to persuade others and elevate what might not have been a focus of attention by others. It is not deterministic of any truth but it lays open a basis from which to launch a range of possible arguments for a range of possible purposes” (p. 215).

Critically, Nakata’s work, while opening up possibilities for Indigenous researchers, neglects to address gender and makes assumptions regarding the male standpoint being the neutral position, thereby erasing the unique experiences of Indigenous women within a standpoint context. Indigenous feminists

rightfully responded to Nakata's notion of a non-gendered Indigenous standpoint by developing a specific Indigenous women's standpoint. This is unpacked in detail later in the chapter.

Coming back to a feminist standpoint, Australian Indigenous feminist scholars have been challenging the inadequacies of a non-Indigenous feminist standpoint theory for Indigenous women for decades (Behrendt, 1993; Fredericks, 2010; Huggins, 1991; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). While Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2013) is scathing in her assessment of where a feminist standpoint has failed the Indigenous woman, she does admit a debt to their work, stating:

“They have challenged dominant patriarchal paradigms, which discursively privilege men as knowing subjects, by exposing the partiality of the universal male standpoint.”

(p332)

Moreton-Robinson's (2013) primary critique of a non-Indigenous feminist standpoint is its inability to address the cultural, social and political differences amongst women, such as class and race, in the same ways that Nakata's (2007) work developing an Indigenous standpoint denied differences in gender. It has to be acknowledged that if the experience of the world is different for women as opposed to men, then it would stand to reason that the female experience differs according to who the woman is and what has shaped her lived experiences (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

A significant preoccupation of Australian Indigenous women's scholarship regarding white women's feminist standpoint revolves around invisible white privilege, difference, power, dominance, deracialised experiences and the need to deconstruct the white feminist's claim to neutrality and

objectivity, ironically, in much the same ways that feminists have deconstructed and scrutinised the patriarchy for the same (Behrendt, 1993; Fredericks, 2010; Huggins, 1991; Moreton-Robinson, 2000). Moreton-Robinson (2000) highlights that from the perspective of a non-Indigenous feminist standpoint, “gender is the quintessential basis of women’s oppression. In effect, it becomes the only shared difference that matters” (p. 345) to the exclusion of the myriad forms of oppression that Indigenous women experience.

Australian Aboriginal Murri scholar Bronwyn Fredericks (2010) also argues that feminism has overlooked (and achieved little for) Australian Indigenous women:

“despite the growing struggle for women’s rights and the momentum of the women’s movement in Australia, the societal and economic positioning of Aboriginal women has remained stagnant for many years and continues to be an everyday struggle even within feminism”. (p. 547)

A strong example of this is Fredericks’ (2009) research on epistemic racism within universities and the treatment of Indigenous women scholars invited to join a review panel under the guise of ‘inclusion’ as dictated by well-meaning, white, postmodern, feminist thinkers. What came about was the expectation that the Aboriginal women were to be unpaid informants (or paid in food triggering the author to recall the trauma of government-controlled rations for Aboriginal peoples) whilst all other panel members, notably non-Indigenous, were to be paid for their participation on the panel. This level of feminist ‘white saviour’ thinking, allowing for the ‘inclusion’ of Aboriginal women at the table without taking into consideration the circumstances of the Aboriginal women or their right to fair and equitable

monetary compensation, is what Fredericks' (2009) eloquently refers to as “recycling of the colonial power” (p. 6) demonstrating how “the engagement of white notions of ‘inclusion’ can result in the maintenance of racism, systemic marginalisation, white race privilege and radicalised subjectivity” (p. 1). In her concluding statement, Fredericks (2009) expresses her despair when the very people that are united with you in some forms of your shared marginalisation actually inflict secondary layers of oppression on you, as is the case with many aspects of the non-Indigenous feminist standpoint and its contribution, or lack thereof, to Indigenous women’s lives (Moreton-Robinson, 2014).

White feminism, while exposing the inadequacies of the patriarchal Western systems of knowledge, has done little for marginalised groups such as Indigenous women and communities (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Using standpoint for the basis of inquiry, Indigenous scholars have also attempted to create a position, albeit non-gendered, from which Indigenous peoples can tell their own stories within the Western research academy (Nakata, 1998; Rigney, 1999). The question remains though: is a non-gendered, Indigenous standpoint descriptive and reflexive enough to respond to the specific lives and stories of Indigenous women and their worldviews as unique to Indigenous peoples in general?

Indigenous Standpoint Theory

In much the same ways that non-Indigenous women were driven to develop their own feminist standpoint in response to patriarchal systems of knowledge, Indigenous scholars and communities have mobilised themselves to do the same. Gai-mariagal Elder and academic Professor Dennis Foley (2003) credits a feminist standpoint as being “instrumental in the development of the new humanities and

social science” (p. 45), particularly in the context of research by (and for) Indigenous peoples, as he also credits a feminist standpoint as being the “evolutionary base for Indigenous standpoint” (p. 45). Throughout time, Indigenous peoples have been persistently angered by non-Indigenous researchers engaging in research with Indigenous communities and blithely employing culturally unsafe and damaging Western research worldviews and methodologies (Behrendt, 1993; Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson, 2016; Foster, 2020; Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Nakata, 1998; Martin, 2006 Trudgett, Page & Harrison, 2017; Smith, 2004). Through outsider research, Indigenous knowledges have been harvested and re-packaged for the tastes and consumption of Western academia with complete disregard for Indigenous epistemologies (ways of knowing), ontologies (ways of being) and axiologies (ways of doing) (Muller, 2020). The outcome of this Western research has resulted in colonised bodies of Indigenous knowledges that are not as truly reflective, complete, rich, holistic or diverse as their realities within an Indigenous life. Research for Indigenous peoples, instead of being a potentially emancipatory device (Rigney, 1999), has actually perpetuated the epistemological violence of colonisation (Nakata, 1998).

Building up to the 1990s, it was becoming apparent that a specific and very different standpoint had emerged that separated itself from the Western research environment, whilst still speaking to it. In the *decolonial* struggle for self-determination and the recognition that the Western way is not the only way, First Nations researchers worldwide began to theorise and apply methodologies and methods that originated in their cultural ways of knowing, being and doing (Nakata, 1998). Torres Strait Islander scholar Martin Nakata (1998), perplexed at having to justify his Indigenous knowledges in a Western research context, published research that worked towards an Indigenous standpoint stating that he was interested in “developing an Indigenous standpoint from which Indigenous students can view their

position as viewed by others as a legitimate academic practice” (p. 11). Nakata (1998) not only recognised the need for Indigenous scholars in the Western academy, but also that they then need the ways and means to tell their stories in ‘legitimate’ ways. Nakata was intent on developing an established theory that other Indigenous academics could draw on.

In his book aptly titled “Disciplining the Savages: Savaging the Disciplines” (2007), Nakata outlines the three overarching principles of Indigenous standpoint theory, the first being that it is an important tool for use in the generation of knowledge in contested spaces such as Indigenous communities. The second principle of Nakata’s work is that standpoint theory gives agency to those people wishing to tell their own stories, thereby dispelling the myths and misrepresentations of their stories as told by outsiders. Nakata’s third principle then acknowledges that standpoint theory highlights the tensions inherent at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007, 2002). These tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous positions create the space for further knowledge production and understanding.

Perhaps one of the most powerful examples of employing the principles of Indigenous standpoint is in Nakata’s (1998) paper investigating the reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to his Ancestral Country (The Torres Strait Islands). Nakata (1998) used his standpoint as a Torres Strait Islander man to respond to the deficit colonial storytelling in the six volumes of the often-celebrated Haddon Report (the output of early colonial expedition). The main intention of these reports, from a Western anthropological perspective, was to document the lives of the Torres Strait Islander peoples before they were impacted (and decimated) by colonisation. Nakata (1998, 2007) employed an Indigenous standpoint to dismantle many of the negative colonial discourses within these reports,

including one colonial narrative surrounding the existence of infanticide in the Torres Strait Islander communities. While the researchers claimed that infanticide was being practiced in the Torres Strait Islander communities, the actual research data did not reveal any direct evidence of infanticide in the communities at all. The only evidence provided is the difference in family sizes reported, with Torres Strait Islander families being smaller than their Western “norm” counterparts. I would argue that the outsider researchers made a (detrimentally) significant assumption when concluding that the smaller family size is the unfounded product of infanticide in Torres Strait Islander communities.

Understandably, Nakata (1998, p. 11) responded to the report by stating, “their conclusions about the practice of infanticide were suspect and in need of revision.” Nakata (1998) rebutted the infanticide stereotype by engaging with his own Indigenous standpoint and knowledge of his community, utilising his insider knowledge to critique the texts against other available data for a more comprehensive and honest investigation of the subject. With his insider knowledge, Nakata argued that the smaller family sizes amongst Torres Strait Islander communities compared to Western families could more likely be the result of the Torres Strait Islander families being, on average, younger than the Western families.

Nakata (1998) went on to argue that the (mis)information presented in the Haddon Reports was not substantiated by any data or scientific evidence so that it may have arisen from bias and speculation (Nakata, 1998). Nakata’s research also revealed that the white male investigators on the Haddon Report set about to find the differences between ‘them and us’; with them (Western, white, male researchers) being civilised people and the ‘us’ being Torres Strait Islander peoples who were believed to be savages with the capacity to kill their own babies. Should differences or anomalies between the two communities

be discovered in the research, the Western logic would follow that the continuing colonisation of the Torres Strait Islands was warranted and necessary in the eyes of the wider colonial community (Nakata, 1998). In this way, research was once again used as a weapon of the colonial project, thereby providing evidence of the absolutely vital need for an Indigenous standpoint and insider research that has the capacity to correct the misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples and cultures in Western research.

Critically, Nakata's (1998) Indigenous standpoint does not account for differences in gender (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Whilst Nakata does acknowledge that Indigenous peoples will all experience life differently, there is little explanation, however, as to how these differences can be understood, including, it seems through gender (Nakata, 1998). Despite his engagement with feminist work, Moreton-Robinson (2013) describes Nakata's work as being "gender blind" (p. 338), primarily because it does not acknowledge the differences that Indigenous women experience, in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts, as opposed to Indigenous men. In fact, whilst Moreton-Robinson's critique of Nakata may be considered harsh, the logic of the argument should not be ignored;

"Ironically by omitting gender from his standpoint theory Nakata universalizes Indigenous men's experience. Thus producing an Indigenous form of patriarchal knowledge that mimics the kind of patriarchal knowledge production feminist standpoint theorists have critiqued." (p. 339)

Moreton-Robinson (2013) argues that while Nakata (2007) does acknowledge bodies in his work on memory and physical experiences, he doesn't acknowledge differences in gender specifically as its own unique position. In his examination of the Western anthropological texts, the Haddon Reports, Nakata

(1998) states that his work is “from my standpoint of a Torres Strait Islander” (p. 3). In not mentioning his gender, Nakata has universalised his gendered, male experience and ironically, created the same tensions for Indigenous women as those imposed by non-Indigenous, feminist standpoint theorists. Moreton-Robinson (2013) speculates that perhaps Nakata has not addressed gender in his work with the mistaken belief that as Indigenous peoples we have all experienced the same oppressions under colonisation regardless of gender. Moreton-Robinson (2013) rightfully asserts that gender does indeed play an important role in an Indigenous standpoint and the ways in which we experience the world and generate the knowledges thereof.

This glaring omission of gender in the foundations of Indigenous standpoint theory as well as the inadequacies of a white feminist standpoint to acknowledge the racialized differences in women’s lives, led Moreton-Robinson (2013) to develop what she terms an “Australian Indigenous Women’s Standpoint”. It is an Australian Indigenous women’s standpoint, being the most closely aligned with my own worldview that has informed the position from which this research project has been primarily guided and directed.

An Australian Women’s Indigenous Standpoint Theory

The departure point for an Australian Indigenous women’s standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013) from a non-Indigenous feminist (Harding, 2004) or non-gendered Indigenous standpoint (Nakata, 1998) is multifaceted; for Australian Indigenous women, it is not just our gender that is a cause for our oppression (as is the case with those of a feminist standpoint) but it is also the inherent complexities of

our racial identities and the interface of the two (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). As Indigenous women, we are not just oppressed by men but also by non-Indigenous women, feminist or otherwise (Behrendt, 1993; Fredericks, 2010; Moreton-Robinson, 2000). From an Australian Indigenous women's standpoint, our lives have also been shaped by our lived experiences as sovereign women living under a violent and genocidal regime of British colonisation (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

It is difficult however, to identify a structured set of tenets that a group of common individuals can all align with, such as in the case of an Australian Indigenous women's standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Naturally, Indigenous women's standpoint theory asserts the primacy and importance of the voice of the Indigenous woman in telling her own story. It challenges the 'othering' of Indigenous women when their stories are recorded and reported by patriarchal colonial records, while also embracing multiple perspectives, deliberately avoiding singular colonial accounts and simultaneously acknowledging gender (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Moreton-Robinson (2000) explains this problem in the Australian context:

“White Australia has come to “know” the “Indigenous woman” from the gaze of many, including the diaries of explorers, the photographs of philanthropists, the testimony of white state officials, the sexual bravado of white men and the ethnographies of anthropologists. In this textual landscape Indigenous women are objects who lack agency.” (p. 1).

Through Moreton-Robinson's (2013) proposal of an Australian Indigenous women's standpoint theory, Aboriginal women's stories, as told by them, have the power to defy the colonial patriarchy's hold over our knowledges and assert our agency. Standpoint theory (Nakata, 2007) allows us the

opportunity to legitimise our research, stories and knowledges though the space between being an Indigenous person and an Indigenous academic can be fraught. Moreton-Robinson (2013) states:

“I want to explicitly acknowledge that, while disciplinary knowledges are irrelevant within conversations about things that matter to our families and communities, they do have currency within the academy and we have been disciplined to use them.” (p. 339).

For Moreton-Robinson (2013) it is not about being either Indigenous or an academic but the epistemological advantages of being both; one does not negate the other; rather, they both contribute to the telling of our stories and the sharing of our knowledges in our own ways, using our own unique standpoints. Moreton-Robinson (2013) also asserts that an Australian Indigenous women’s standpoint is reflexive and flexible, stating:

“our individual experiences will differ due to intersecting oppressions produced under social, political, historical and material conditions that we share consciously or unconsciously” (p. 332)

This is an important point for Moreton-Robinson who goes on to explain that we can code switch or perform with what Sandoval (2004) describes as “tactical subjectivity” (in Moreton-Robinson, 2000, p. 203). Moreton-Robinson uses the example that we can work within the academy and deliver a presentation whilst still “challenging its episteme” (p. 340).

Despite the variabilities of this position, an Australian Indigenous women’s standpoint has been anchored in three fundamental tenets arising from the interconnected relationships between our ontologies (ways of being), epistemologies (ways of knowing) and our axiologies (ways of doing)

(Moreton-Robinson, 2013). For Moreton-Robinson (2013), Australian Indigenous women's ontologies are centred on a relationship to Country, whilst our epistemologies are anchored in interconnectedness and relationality to all things, and our axiologies are the ways in which we operate in the world with the understanding that all things are connected. Most importantly, Moreton-Robinson (2013) acknowledges the individual within this system of beliefs reiterating that "there is scope for interpretation and change by individuals through dreams and their lived experiences" (p. 340).

Australian Indigenous Women's Ontology

To understand an Australian Indigenous women's ontology, a definition of Country must first be established (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). For the Indigenous women of Australia, the notion of Country is not just understood as a land mass or the natural environment of a space. Country is its own entity with an ongoing spiritual life to be honoured and respected (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2016; Foster, 2020; Foster, Kinniburgh & Wann, 2020; Martin, 2006; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Country is the land, sea, skies and all living and non-living aspects of the earth, including rocks, wind, mountains and all things that exist on this physical plane (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2016; Foster, 2020; Foster, Kinniburgh & Wann, 2020; Martin, 2006; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Country is more than just these physical elements; it is also the Ancestors, Spirits and creator beings who formed and shaped Country and, significantly, laid down the laws and lore for all beings to live by (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2016; Foster, 2020; Foster, Kinniburgh & Wann, 2020; Martin, 2006; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). It is an Australian Indigenous woman's connection to all these aspects of Country that forms her ontologies and ways of being in the world (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). There is nothing more important than Country;

Country is Mother and provides everything we need in this life plane (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2016; Foster, 2020; Foster, Kinniburgh & Wann, 2020; Martin, 2006; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). We honour this sacred relationship in everything we do, always prioritising Country and the essential role it plays in our lives. As humans, we are not separate from Country or any aspect of it; we are intrinsically connected to it, we belong to it, and are not more important than any part of it.

Moreton-Robinson (2013) makes the point that a feminist standpoint prioritises the female human above all other aspects of Country, an ideology that is *not* valued by Australian Indigenous women.

Moreton-Robinson (2013) explains:

“feminist standpoint theory is predicated on a body/earth split discursively positioning women as female humans above other non-human living things through making gender/sex the epistemological a priori” (p. 335)

In Australia, hundreds of Indigenous language groups and communities are connected to different areas of Country by birth and Ancestry. Moreton-Robinson (2013) uses this point to demonstrate that our bodies represent our sovereignty, circling back to the concept that bodies (including their gender) influence our worldviews and standpoint, which is an important aspect of our episteme that is missing from a non-gendered (or male-centric) Indigenous standpoint, as in the work of Martin Nakata (1999: 2007).

For Australian Indigenous women, our connection to Country as Mother and our understanding of our lives and bodies as an equal (and not more important) aspect of an interrelated, universal whole is

paramount to our cultural identities (Dudgeon, Herbert, Milroy & Oxenham, 2017; Martin, 2006; Moreton-Robinson, 2013:2000). Moreton-Robinson (2000) explains:

“I use the term country here to mean not only the tracks of land to which we are inextricably tied but it is also the term used to denote Indigenous people who have bloodline to that country through creator and ancestral birth” (p.335)

In her explanation of this concept, Moreton-Robinson (2013) draws on the example of reading stories by Indigenous women through her research. One book in particular (which she does not name, presumably to not draw undeserved attention to the publication) really unsettled Moreton-Robinson because of its lack of engagement with Country. The writing did not engage with Country and its integral place in our lives even though all of the other publications written by Australian Indigenous women had indeed, prioritised Country. Moreton-Robinson found this highly unusual as Country is the fundamental basis of all of our knowledges, Stories and culture yet there was no mention of Country despite this work supposedly being written by an Australian Indigenous woman? Moreton-Robinson’s confusion and reservations about the work were vindicated when it was soon revealed that the book was published fraudulently in the name of an Indigenous woman when it was, in fact, written by two non-Indigenous, male authors. This is powerful evidence supporting the importance of Country to Australian Indigenous women as described in Moreton-Robinson’s (2013) standpoint theory. Our work is recognisable to each other as we are all equal parts of the same standpoint and worldview and we know that Country is the foundation of all things that we do. Other’s outside our standpoint are not even aware of these priorities for Indigenous women and arrogantly believe that they can create work in

our names: that they know better and that they can represent us and we won't even be able to detect the fraudulent writing (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

Australian Indigenous Women's Epistemology

If our ontologies are grounded in our sacred relationships to Country then our epistemologies flow from this (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). From an Australian Indigenous women's perspective, our epistemologies are derived from our relationality and connectedness to all things. Moreton-Robinson (2013) emphasises the importance of relationality and interrelatedness to Australian Indigenous women stating that "interconnectedness is the basis of Indigenous sovereignty" (p. 335). We do not exist in a vacuum, and Moreton-Robinson (2013) draws on the individualistic and disconnected priorities of the Western research academy to illustrate the importance of shared experience and relationality to our ontologies. An Australian Indigenous women's standpoint acknowledges that all we know is informed by and connected to all other things. Relationality is at the heart of all that we do, consciously or subconsciously.

As Indigenous women, we share many aspects of our lives as oppressed, colonised, and subjugated peoples but our experiences also differ greatly, and it is the acknowledgement of these differences and allowing for the variability of outcomes that lies at the heart of our standpoint. Moreton-Robinson (2013) explains, "Generating our problematics from the diversity of Indigenous women's shared knowledge is an important indicator of the validity of our research." (p. 342). Our differences, and the problematics that arise thereof, are a vital aspect of understanding our worldview and how it diverges from a non-Indigenous, feminist standpoint that values our shared experiences as women whilst

ignoring our differences whether they be social, political, racial or otherwise (Fredericks, 2010; Huggins, 1991; Moreton-Robinson, 2000).

Eualeyai/Kamillaroi academic, Larissa Behrendt (1993), draws on the example of Angela Harris (1990) and Catherine McKinnon (1991) to demonstrate the ignorance and arrogance of white feminism in dealing with issues of difference, particularly race, amongst women. Harris (1990) is a black feminist scholar who, in her critique of McKinnon's white feminist writings, argues that white feminists have homogenised women's experiences and forced women into prioritising their gender over their race. Harris discusses the importance of her race with her lived experiences leading Behrendt (1993) to draw on the example of the rape of Aboriginal women to illustrate the problematics of ignoring the issues of race in feminism. Behrendt (1993) explains:

“When an Aboriginal woman is the victim of a sexual assault, how, as a black woman, does she know whether it is because she is hated as a woman and is perceived as inferior or if she is hated because she is Aboriginal, considered inferior and promiscuous by nature? Aboriginal women are raped by the police when that would cause great public outrage if the victims were white women. That police officers do not rape young white women means that their sexual assault of Aboriginal women is as much an issue of race as it is of gender”
(p. 35).

Interestingly, in her reply to Harris (1990), MacKinnon (1991) further illustrated Harris' criticisms by once again universalising the female experience and ignoring race. MacKinnon (1991) argues that "this does not mean that there is no such thing as skin privilege, but rather that it has never insulated white

women from the brutality and misogyny of men, mostly but not exclusively white men, or from its effective legislation" (p. 20). Behrendt rightly asserts that MacKinnon (1991) is invalidating and minimising the effects of racism on black women's lives by equating the experiences of white women with the experiences of black women, in effect, denying the violent and traumatic experiences of racism that black women experience existing in a racist world.

Behrendt explains:

"Again, MacKinnon has created a model of universal history. Again, she has ignored the experience of racism, and does not address the fact that the experiences of black women of poverty, degradation and oppression are endured at the hands of white women as well as white men and are sometimes due to racism." (p. 36).

Behrendt's (1993) research is one of the earlier examples of many that highlight the blinkered priorities of white feminists and their stubborn ignorance in acknowledging that race matters in discussions of women's oppression and resistance (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

Australian Indigenous Women's Axiology

As Australian Indigenous women, our axiology is inextricably linked to our ontology and epistemology, that is to say, everything we do is informed by our connections to Country and the interrelatedness of all things (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Our life experiences, social location, and experiences of colonisation inform all our behaviours and activities, providing us with a unique worldview that

Moreton-Robinson (2013) aligns with the feminist concept of strong objectivity (Harding, 1992). From her insider perspective, position and social location, Moreton-Robinson (2013) details how she applies her Australian Indigenous women's standpoint in her research methods, drawing on observations of Indigenous women and men with whom she is uniquely positioned to engage as a member of the same community.

Moreton-Robinson (2013) explains that in enacting her standpoint, she listens, reads and talks with Aboriginal men and women to understand their priorities, preoccupations and contentions. In engaging with the stories and knowledge of the people in her community, Moreton-Robinson (2013) generates a problematic that then requires thinking and reading to propose an idea or solution, a technique that Moreton-Robinson applied when compiling research for her work on white possession. Through her networks of local Aboriginal peoples in southeast Queensland, Moreton-Robinson (2013) was able to harness the potential of relationality and connections to Country to complete the research in alignment with her epistemologies as a Quandamooka woman. As Moreton-Robinson (2013) explains, "Understanding that all things are connected in the world is the basis for observing, engaging, being and doing in the world" (p. 342), and it is with this understanding of her own Indigenous women's worldview that Moreton-Robinson (2013) approaches her research and honours her Indigenous epistemologies even within a Western research environment.

More recently, Wiradjuri academic Corinne Sullivan (2018) engaged with an Australian Indigenous women's standpoint to conduct her research on Indigenous Australian women's sexual intimacies as described by the colonial project. Sullivan identified that from a colonialist perspective, Indigenous

Australian women are paradoxically viewed as vile and savage yet also sexually desirable. The dominant, colonial deficit discourse surrounding Indigenous Australian women's sexuality has only served as another tool of repression and oppression for us, though Sullivan (2018) has identified several examples of the ways we strengthen and enact our own agency, using our sexualities as a tool of our resistance.

Sullivan engages with Indigenous Australian filmmaker and artist Tracy Moffatt's work "Nice Coloured Girls" (1987) to examine Indigenous women's resistance to colonial oppression. Through the colonial lens, Aboriginal women have been (mis)represented as only 'victims' of prostitution. Moffatt's work, on the other hand, depicts Aboriginal women as assertively taking advantage of white men, using their own sexual desirability to extract money and goods from their naïve victims. In telling these stories, Sullivan engages with an Indigenous women's standpoint to make visible and legible, the views and desires of Indigenous Australian women as a means to disrupt the oppressive and damaging outsider views of the white, male colonial project. As a result, Sullivan (2018) made sense of what she describes as "the uncertainties, paradoxes and complexities" (p. 399) in the research, drawing on the flexible and reflexive priorities of an Indigenous women's standpoint to address the variable experiences and positions on the subject. Sullivan's (2018) intent was to,

"position Indigenous women as multiply located, engaging with the complexity and ambiguity of Indigenous women's experiences to unsilence and demarginalise our positions and voices." (p. 399).

Employing an Australian Indigenous women's standpoint in her important research ensured that Sullivan (2018) prioritised the voices and lived experiences of Indigenous women (including her own)

in the research, effectively releasing the hold that the destructive, deficit discourses of colonisation have had on aspects of Indigenous women's lives, bodies and stories.

Conclusion

In the context of this research, an Australian Indigenous women's standpoint, as proposed by Moreton-Robinson (2013), is the location from which I position myself as a researcher and it is the theoretical proposal of this standpoint that gives this research validity and credibility in the Western research environment. I identify as a D'harawal woman above all other aspects of my life, prioritising the Country from which I belong first and foremost (D'harawal Country as located in the now-Sydney Basin, Australia) first and foremost. The fact that I am a woman, cannot be separated from my D'harawal identity and creates differences in my lived experiences from that of D'harawal peoples of other gender orientations. All activities that I engage in, especially research, are informed by my D'harawal woman's standpoint and social location, underpinned by the essential belief that all things are connected and everything we do is in relation to all other aspects of our lives (Foster et al., 2020: Foster, 2020). The articulation of this position in the context of this research is delivered with deep gratitude to those Indigenous writers and scholars who came before me and who prioritised a responsibility to community and Country in conducting their research. They laid a foundation for my work to be anchored to, giving it validity and authenticity in the Western research academy using their Indigenous ways of being to honour their connections and responsibilities to community, ensuring that those who will come after them will not only benefit from their work, but will continue the work for future generations.

The following chapter is the Methodology chapter of this thesis whereby I engage with my unique standpoint as a D'harawal (Australian) Indigenous woman to investigate the Indigenous Research Methodologies and methods I have chosen to utilise in this research. The next chapter also explains the ways in which our unique D'harawal Storytelling Methodology can respond to the deficit discourses of colonial storytelling as our right of reply to the archives. The following chapter closes with a detailed examination of the processes required to create a D'harawal Narinya (Living) Story and the culturally grounded method needed to have that story accepted as a D'harawal Narinya Waduguda (Living Law) Story through the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle.

Chapter 4 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

It is widely argued that Indigenous peoples have suffered a long history of forced and extractive research whereby their knowledges and experiences have been used in ways that are culturally damaging and destructive (Behrendt, 2016; Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023; Martin, 2008). This research aims to *decolonise* (my emphasis) Indigenous knowledges by centring the voices of two Elders who have supported and informed cultural growth on Country within the D’harawal (now-Sydney) community. The Elders whose lived experiences are represented in this research include my father, D’harawal man John Foster, and my Aunty, D’harawal woman, Frances Bodkin. As co-researchers, both Elders have been asked to develop and share a Narinya (Living Dreaming) story from their lived experiences. The overarching research question that has guided my work with the Elders has been inspired by my cultural relationship with the ancient rock engravings on the saltwater coastline of our Country (Foster, 2023). That is, whenever I see the engravings, I think about what I would like to leave behind for future generations:

If you could share a story or engrave a message in the sandstone for future generations what would it be? (Foster, 2023)

Each Elder has been asked to share a life-experience or story that conveys a message they would like to leave behind to inform or inspire future generations of Aboriginal peoples.

Simply telling our own stories within a colonial research system though, is not always enough (Foster, 2020b). That this research project has been heavily influenced by the destructive impacts of Western research systems – colonial storytelling and outsider research – on our knowledges and culture, one of the main aims of this research is to decolonise the research process and do this research *our* way. This will ensure the cultural safety of the Elders as co-researchers and, as well as their knowledges as outputs of this research. For this reason, I have decided to deeply engage with Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM) instead of limiting my lens to more commonly accepted Western theories and research methods. Methods that have historically (and I would argue, contemporarily today) contributed to the oppression of our people. IRM have been developed to reflect and respect our diverse Indigenous standpoints and our unique epistemologies (ways of knowing), ontologies (ways of being) and axiologies (ways of doing) as Indigenous peoples (Rigney, 1999; Martin 2008).

In this chapter I will explore Narungga, Kurna and Ngarrindjeri scholar Lester Irabinna-Rigney's (1999) three principles of Indigenist research as a foundation for Indigenous Research Methodologies. I will then build on this work through an investigation of Tribal Methodologies as developed by Plains Cree and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (2007, 2010, 2013, 2017, 2021). Tribal Methodologies are important here as this project is not just about a broad view of Indigenous knowledges from a range of different people from a variety of differing locations. This research is specifically concerned with the knowledges of D'harawal people living here on their Ancestral Country (Country that is now known as Sydney), who are engaging with the D'harawal Storytelling Methodology, Bangawarra'o Waduguda (Strengthening of Laws) (Bodkin, 2013). This D'harawal Tribal Methodology will be examined as a necessary part of the storytelling and story-creating process for D'harawal peoples.

Given that a D'harawal Tribal Methodology is one of storytelling, I will also explore the 'storywork' of Coast Salish, Sto:lo scholar Joanne Q'um Q'um Xiem Archibald (2008), as a means of understanding the importance of storying in Indigenous contexts. The work of Archibald (2008) also serves to highlight the inadequacies of Western storying methodologies such as narrative inquiry (McIvor, 2010), so as this chapter progresses, I will critically investigate narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and address its inadequacies as a research methodology for Indigenous peoples. I will explore the idea that narrative inquiry does not acknowledge the cultural respect and responsibility that is inherent in Rigney's Indigenist Research Principles (1999) and Archibald's Storywork (2008). Understanding the mechanics and inadequacies of a Western research methodology like narrative inquiry provides justification for why I have insisted upon engaging with IRM and methods in this research and sought to revive and revitalise a D'harawal Storytelling Tribal Methodology.

After adhering to the overarching principles of IRM, it would only make sense then to commit to employing Indigenous methods here. I continue this chapter with an exploration of Indigenous Yarning as the primary method used to gather knowledge, as it is a familiar and trusted process that respects our ways of being as Indigenous peoples (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). To understand the different types of Yarning and how best to employ Yarning in a research setting, I have engaged with the work of Bardi and Yjindjarbandi scholar Dawn Bessarab and Botswanian scholar Bridget Ng'andu (2011) who identified four different types of Yarning. Building on this foundational work, Palawa scholar Melissa Walker (Walker, Fredericks, Mills, & Anderson, 2014) identified a further two types of yarning which have also been partly employed in the knowledge-gathering methods of this research project.

In the second half of this chapter, I outline the ways in which I analysed the co-researchers' stories and knowledges to identify key themes that then contributed to the creation of a Narinya story for each body of knowledge. I go on to explain the process by which the Narinya story is created and presented to the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle for consideration as a D'harawal Narinya Wadugudu (Living Law) story.

As the chapter draws to a close, I explain the important processes that are in place to protect the co-researchers and their knowledges through the mandatory ethics approval process undertaken for this research project. In the last section of the chapter, I introduce the two co-researchers and explore their importance to this project and the ways in which they have inspired this body of work.

Methodology

In order to be true to our Elders' stories and to centre their voices and perspectives as Indigenous people, it has been a deliberate choice in this research to engage with IRM (Rigney, 1999), Indigenous storywork principles (Archibald, 2008) and the associated practice of Indigenous Yarning (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Walker, Fredericks, Mills & Anderson, 2014). By definition, a research methodology is an overarching framework that informs all areas of the research project and guides the methods that will be employed to conduct the research (Evans, Gruba, & Zobel, 2011). IRM then, more specifically, describes a range of principles and values developed by Indigenous peoples, and can be undertaken by Indigenous researchers to *decolonise* the research process and the subsequent knowledge that then arises from it (Rigney, 1999). As methodology, these principles and values carry through the entire research process, from researching and establishing the theoretical framework to collecting and analysing research

data (Evans et al., 2011). The next section provides a discussion and investigation of IRM, and the ways in which they will be engaged with, in this research project.

From Indigenous Standpoint Theory to Indigenous Research Methodology

Genealogically, contemporary IRM (Rigney, 1999) arose from the development of Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Nakata, 1998), whereby it was recognised that Indigenous peoples have unique perspectives on the world that are separate to, and even challenge, the ‘norms’ of Western society (as it is understood through the lens of the predominantly white, male, able-bodied, heteronormative worldview). Instead, Indigenous Standpoint Theory is preoccupied with Indigenous perspectives that can encapsulate Indigenous epistemologies (ways of knowing), ontologies (ways of being) and axiologies (ways of doing) (Rigney, 1999).

But what specifically are Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies? This has been a difficult question to answer, as there is no one answer. The answer varies according to the Indigenous group or individual and is explored more fully later in this chapter as a part of a Tribal Methodologies framework (Kovach, 2007, 2010, 2017, 2021). One of the greatest issues for Indigenous peoples in the context of the research world is that our knowledges have been extracted by outsider researchers and used inappropriately and without our explicit consent (Rigney, 2006). The resulting exploited cultural knowledges are corrupted, misrepresented and even commodified versions of deeply complex and interconnected knowledges which become operational only to benefit the Western research agenda, causing untold damage to the Indigenous peoples to whom the knowledge belongs (Behrendt, 2019; Martin, 2008; Rigney, 2006).

For Rigney (2003), it would only stand to reason that there should be a methodological reform that applies specifically to the intersection between Indigenous peoples and the research world to “disrupt the socially constructed identity of the ‘archetypal Aborigine’, as a controlled and oppressed being” (p. 36). Rigney (2003) developed an Indigenous/Indigenist research framework in response to what he asserts is the effect of feminism, post-colonialism and post-modernism bringing about an ‘undisciplining of the disciplines.’ Rigney’s (1999) work established three main principles that should be adhered to, to challenge Western research’s detrimental effects on Indigenous peoples. The first principle is that the research should have an emancipatory imperative for Indigenous peoples and their knowledges. That is, research that is undertaken should, at all times, seek to free Indigenous peoples and reclaim their knowledges from the restraints of negative and oppressive colonial discourses. Rigney’s second principle states that the research should also align with the political integrity of the Indigenous peoples being researched, and uphold their own unique essential beliefs and concerns (Rigney, 1999). Finally, Rigney’s third principle explains that research should also privilege Indigenous voices and centre the knowledges and ideas of Indigenous people over those of ‘outsider’ voices (Rigney, 2003). To further explain, the knowledge of the researched should emanate from the researched themselves and “make public the voice and experience of their communities in their own way” (Rigney, 2003, p. 42).

In engaging with Rigney’s three principles of Indigenist research, I have committed to an overarching protocol and resulting methods that address the concerns upon which Rigney’s principles are based (Rigney 1999; 2003; 2006). This research project is founded on the basic principle that all knowledge belongs to the Elders themselves and that they have complete control over how the information shared in this research is used (Bodkin, 2013). In this way, it is the intention of this research to co-create with

Elders, producing a body of knowledge that centres their own voices and dispels the myths and misrepresentations of colonial discourses (Rigney, 2003).

As discussed previously, one of the most destructive factors of Indigenous research within the Western research academy is that knowledge has been, and continues to be, extracted from Indigenous peoples and misappropriated and disseminated without their full knowledge or consent (Behrendt, 2019; Rigney, 2006). This is founded on the basic belief that the researcher (and their institution) of a Western research project ‘owns’ the rights to the knowledge and will therefore ‘use’ the knowledge in whatever ways they choose (Porsanger, 2004). This is regardless of whether it is for the benefit or destruction of the cultural, political, or emancipatory values of the Indigenous peoples that have originally shared the information. This is even reflected in the fundamental methods employed in Western research projects, such as research consent forms that have to be signed by Indigenous Knowledge Holders as ‘participants’ in research projects. Projects which then legally (in a Western system) and unethically can give away the rights to their cultural, intellectual property and allows outsider researchers to misuse their information (Wilson, 2001).

As an Indigenous researcher belonging to the community that I am ‘investigating’, I have undertaken this project with the fundamental belief that I am not just responsible to the research community of the Western academy, but more importantly and in the first instance, I am responsible to my D’harawal family and community and, in particular, to the Elders whose knowledges I am engaging with (McIvor, 2010; Wilson, 2008). As maskiko-nehiyaw (Swampy Cree) scholar Onawa McIvor (2010) explains, this is a,

“dual responsibility. We are responsible to a scholarly community as well as to our own and other Indigenous communities to which we may be a part”. (p. 141).

With this in mind, this research project has been founded on the essential belief that our Elders, as co-researchers, remain the owners of their information and have the final authority over what is being said. As this research has progressed, Elders have been consulted at all stages including signing off on the development of drafts and final transcripts, especially before any information is published or disseminated. Elders may change their transcripts and add or remove information at any time as they see fit. Further ways in which this has been implemented into, and supported by, the design of this project, are discussed more comprehensively in the Methods and ethics sections of this research project.

Tribal Methodologies

Critically, whilst IRM are based on Indigenous worldviews, it can be argued that it should not be considered a tool to further homogenise the many and varied IRM and protocols across the globe, as there is no one Indigenous cultural viewpoint (Kovach, 2007, 2010; Rigney, 2003). It should also be noted that IRM, whilst existing as a “generic” framework for use when researching with Indigenous peoples, must be flexibly applied in response to the unique needs of each individual community and their own protocols, epistemologies, axiologies and ontologies (Kovach, 2007, 2015).

Kovach (2007, 2010, 2017) explains that engaging with IRM is not a one size fits all plan. Every Indigenous community is unique and has its own way of creating and sharing knowledges, and this should be valued and respected as an integral part of the research process. In the process of investigating

her own Plains Cree methodology, Kovach (2007, 2010) clarified the concept of Tribal Methodologies by stating that:

“Indigenous methodologies flow from an Indigenous worldview while needing to be congruent with specific cultural ways and protocols of the differing nations” (Kovach, 2007, p. 3)

To support its validity and success, numerous Tribal Methodologies have been recorded across the world, including those of the Quandamookah (Martin, 2008), Sami (Kuokkanen, 2000), Kaupapa Maori (Bishop, 1999) and even D’harawal (Bodkin, 2013; Bodkin-Andrews, Bodkin, Andrews, & Evans, 2017; Bodkin-Andrews, Bodkin, Andrews, Whittaker, 2016).

Gai-mariagal academic, Dennis Foley, made one of the earliest distinctions between the work of Rigney and that of more tribally-orientated methodologies such as West’s (1998) Japanangka paradigm. Foley (2003) explains that “Ira binna-Rigney (1999) provides an Indigenous justification for Indigenous research, whereas Japanangka West (1998) provides the Indigenous process” (p. 47). These two different bodies of work are categorised as methodologies; however, one describes an overarching philosophy that can be applied across the board (Rigney, 1999), while the other describes a specific methodology belonging to an individual group (West, 1998) or what Kovach (2007, 2010, 2015, 2017, 2021) would later describe as a Tribal Methodology.

D'harawal Epistemologies, Ontologies and Axiologies: Bangawarra'o Waduguda (the Strengthening of Laws) Dharawal Storytelling Methodology

For the purposes of this research, I have engaged with our specific D'harawal Storytelling (Tribal) Methodology to demonstrate the importance of our D'harawal epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies as they relate to this project. Our Tribal Methodology is a process we know as Bangawarra'o Waduguda, which roughly translates to "strengthening of the laws" (Bodkin et, al., 2023; Bodkin, 2013; Bodkin-Andrews, Bodkin, Andrews, & Evans, 2017; Bodkin-Andrews, Bodkin, Andrews, Whittaker, 2016). Employing a specific Tribal Methodology ensures that local, on Country protocols are engaged with throughout the research process. (Kovach, 2007, 2015).

Engaging in on-Country practices is particularly important for my family as Sydney D'harawal people living on our own Country. Current Australian Bureau of Statistics data (ABS, 2019b) reports that, on average, only 27% of Indigenous Australians live on-Country, with this dropping to less than 15% in non-remote, metropolitan areas. Our Country, part of which is the Sydney region, is now the largest and most heavily populated city in Australia and is a classic example of this statistic. The Sydney area was the site of the first contact with British invaders initially in 1770, and then again later in 1788. Being from the frontline of colonisation here in Sydney, local D'harawal peoples are a minority within a minority: we are not only Aboriginal people, but we are the distinct minority of Aboriginal people that belong to this part of Country and still living here, with unbroken Ancestral connections despite the ongoing onslaught of colonisation on our population.

In Sydney D'harawal culture, Storytelling is the primary method used for the exchange of knowledges (Bodkin-Andrews et, al., 2022; Bodkin, 2013; Foster, 2018). As a result, knowledge being the prime

resource and the most powerful ‘currency’ we have (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2022; Bodkin, 2013). The sharing of our knowledge is often achieved through Stories, and embedded within our Stories are our laws, epistemologies and understanding of Country (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2022; Bodkin, 2013). Each Story contains layers of meaning that, when discovered, uncover the laws of our Country and the rules required to live with Country and community, responsibly and sustainably (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2022; Bodkin, 2013). D’harawal scholar Professor Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews and colleagues (2016b) explains:

“within the D’harawal context, storytelling is one of our most important methods of communication, learning, and promoting mutual respect and understanding.” (p. 20)

Across the world, many other Indigenous scholars also explore the power of storytelling and its importance within their Indigenous communities, including Joanne Q’um Q’um Xiiem Archibald (2008), Karen Martin (2006), Margaret Kovach (2010) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2013). The Storywork principles of Archibald (2008) and its importance in this research will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter after first investigating D’harawal Storytelling.

Sydney D’harawal Storytelling culture involves using three different types of Stories; Narinya, Garuwanga and Waduguda (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2022; Bodkin, 2013). To explain, Narinya stories are living Stories, Stories that we are creating now, in the present, such as the Stories told by the co-researchers within this project. Garuwanga Stories are our older, Ancestral Stories that have been passed down through families, whilst our Waduguda Stories are our law and lore stories that teach us rules to live by and ways of being (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2022; Bodkin, 2013). Garuwanga stories, from our

Ancestors, are always Waduguda Stories, as they often speak of Creation and the important Ancestral law/lores that have arisen from the Creation process – e.g., how the White Waratah Became Red – (Bodkin, 2013). Yet Waduguda Stories can also exist independently of Garuwanga Stories as they may also involve significant law/lores, but do not involve the Creation processes (e.g., How Kannabi became wise – Bodkin, 2013). This thesis focuses on constructing two Narinya stories, and the cultural processes (and research) required to decide whether or not they may become D’harawal Waduguda Stories. This status is decided by the D’harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle through the process we know as Bangawarra’o Waduguda (Strengthening of Laws - Bodkin, 2013).

It is important to note that Bangawarra’o Waduguda is a process that is guided by an important D’harawal epistemology known as the D’harawal Midan’Duragai Yewing (thirteen truths - Bodkin-Andrews et, al., 2022; Bodkin, 2013). The first five truths are about understanding law and lore. The first truth is understanding your own place in reality (what I see); the second truth is seeking to understand the place of others (what you/they see); the third truth is concerned with the actual reality (what is), the fourth truth is understanding what came before (what was) and the fifth truth is what will come after or what are the consequences for the future (what will be) (Bodkin-Andrews et, al., 2022; Bodkin, 2013). The subsequent seven truths (six to twelve) cannot be revealed here, but speak of a long journey towards being truly recognized as a Knowledge Holder and Elder. The final, thirteenth truth is that there is to be a consensus amongst all the Elders and Knowledge Holders, and that the law or lore in question is no longer disputed. Our understanding of these truths helps us to clarify our diverse, yet shared, relationships with our stories and knowledges, and therefore are intrinsic to both the hearing, learning, telling, and even creation, of our stories (Bodkin-Andrews et, al., 2022; Bodkin, 2013).

In the case of this research, co-researchers have contributed stories from their lived experiences to create a Narinya story. Through the process of creating a Narinya story, the co-researchers decided how to tell their Narinya story in such a way that it could speak to many different audiences in a site that is ultimately post-invasion in nature. It was decided that the stories would contain animal characters (both Sacred native animals and ‘introduced’ species) that live out the life experiences of the co-researchers, and highlight that these stories have emerged from the time of invasion onwards. As a result, the hope was to create stories that could apply to anyone today, anywhere, and not just those that had experienced the same life events. In this way, it is hoped that the story will have more power for larger audiences and will more successfully teach our D’harawal epistemologies, ontology, and axiology.

Using the Bangawarra’o Waduguda process that is guided by the D’harawal Midan’Duragai Yewing (thirteen truths - Bodkin, 2013), the co-researchers’ Narinya stories were presented to the D’harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle for consideration as a Narinya Waduguda story or D’harawal Law/Lore story. The methods involved in this process are discussed later in this chapter.

Storytelling

As touched on previously, Storytelling, however, is not just a D’harawal methodology. Many Indigenous peoples across the world have used, and still use, Storytelling as their primary means of transmitting knowledge (Archibald, 2008; Martin, 2008; McIvor, 2010). Onowa McIvor (2010) explains, “Storytelling is a central part of an Indigenous worldview and has been an important part of Indigenous culture since the beginning of time” (p. 141).

Even contemporary Western science can now validate that Storytelling is one of the most powerful ways to engage an audience and present information in a format that is easily accepted, retained, and recalled by individuals (Gottschall, 2012: 2014; Oatley, 2011). Interestingly, research has revealed that the success of Storytelling is grounded in the ways in which the human brain processes knowledge in a narrative form. Delivering information via Storytelling serves to facilitate cognitive processing as following a narrative triggers the experiential processing areas of the brain (Gottschall, 2012: 2014; Oatley, 2011). This allows the brain to absorb information, as if the listeners had actually experienced the story themselves, making it easier to retain and recall than straight data that is only processed through basic language instruction (Gottschall, 2012: 2014; Oatley, 2011).

For Indigenous peoples though, Storytelling is much more than a “cognitive process.” In the opening pages of their book “Decolonizing Research Indigenous Storywork as Methodology” (2019), the Indigenous editors (Joanne Q’um Q’um Xiim Archibald, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan and Jason DeSantolo) explain the importance of stories to Indigenous peoples:

“Our stories were part of articulating our world, understanding our knowledge systems, naming our experiences, guiding our relationships, and most importantly, identifying ourselves” (Archibald, Morgan & De Santolo, 2019, p 17)

For D’harawal Storytelling, we are not just storytellers, but also deep listeners of stories (Bodkin-Andrews et, al., 2022; Bodkin-Andrews, Bodkin, Andrews & Evans, 2016). An inspirational Indigenous methodology that has a strong alignment with our standpoints and Storytelling practices can be found in Archibald’s (2008) concept of Storywork. Archibald examines not just the principles of Storytelling

but also those of Story listening and Story re-telling. Through her work with Stories relating to Indigenous traditional and lived experiences, Archibald (2001; 2008) has established an Indigenous pedagogical, methodological and theoretical framework of seven principles which she refers to as “Storywork”. These seven principles are respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy, and all are considered key protocols for engaging with storywork (Archibald, 2008).

To establish these seven storywork principles Archibald built on the work of Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), who identified the principles of respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility in their research into higher educational systems for Indigenous students. Archibald adapted and expanded upon these principles to create the four key elements of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reverence. When engaging in Indigenous Storying, these key elements are required for a person to become “Story ready” (Archibald et al. 2019, p. 13).

Archibald (2008) asserted that “Important knowledge and wisdom contain power” (p. 3) and should be valued as such. Through Archibald’s Storywork principles (2008), we learn that *respect* must always be shown for the culture you are working with, especially for those who own the Stories and knowledges. You also have a *responsibility* to record the details of the Stories correctly, to listen and pay attention whether you are teaching or learning. *Reciprocity* is also important in showing respect to a storyteller, and the listener can reciprocate by showing *reverence* when listening to the Storyteller. In the case of going on to teach the Stories, reciprocity can also be shown by telling the Stories respectfully, accurately and with acknowledgement to the original Storyteller.

Archibald then expanded on these foundational key elements to include holism, interrelatedness, and synergy as the three key principles to be applied in the analysis and “meaning making process” (Archibald et al. 2019, p. 13) of Indigenous Storying. This is an important aspect of Storywork, as Storytelling is not just about the person telling the Story, but also about the Story listener and the Story re-teller.

As Archibald (2008) states, “Only when our hearts, minds, bodies and spirits work together do we truly have an Indigenous education” (p 12), which explains the need to understand that Storytelling is not simply an individual process. For Archibald, *holism* refers to honouring the connections between an individual’s intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical worlds, as well as recognising that the development and construction of these worlds are influenced by the many different factors that can derive from the *synergies* between family, community and nation. Through holism and synergy, we can demonstrate the *interrelatedness* of all things, living and non-living, spiritual and physical. Nothing exists in solitude and all things interact and affect each other. This same philosophy applies to Storytelling and Story-listening. Archibald (2008a) explains this in the context of Storywork,

“Effective Storywork grows out of the actions of interrelatedness and synergy formed by the Storyteller, the Story, the listener, and the context in which the Story is used” (p. 6).

This point is particularly important when we look back to standpoint theory and the initial (and vital) act of positioning ourselves as researchers. When we position ourselves, we recognise that our agenda, bias, opinion and beliefs are brought into the research process; they cannot be separate to us or ignored in the research process in the pursuit of a false sense of ‘objectivity’ (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). We are

human and we all have our own unique standpoints that we bring to everything we do including research. Archibald's interrelatedness acknowledges the part that the story listener (or in this case me as a co-researcher) plays in the process of Storywork thus further highlighting the need for positioning.

In the context of this research, I am particularly drawn to Archibald's (2008, p. 112) statement, "Many first nations storytellers use their personal life experiences as teaching stories in a manner similar to how they use traditional stories." This research project is about the development of our D'harawal Narinya stories, the stories that explain our lived experiences in this time, right now. In the colonial storytelling context, much emphasis is placed on Aboriginal stories of the "Dreaming" as authentic, old, traditional stories (Peck, 1925). Our old stories are valued as if our 'Dreaming' or 'Creation period' ended in 1788 with the invasion of the British (Foster, 2022). The importance of D'harawal Narinya stories is to remind people that our 'Dreaming' did not end in 1788. Our culture is still alive and responding to this time and place (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2016a: 2016b). Our stories, both old and new, are still being created and told as vital aspects of our living culture that reflect our past, as well as looking to our future (Bodkin, 2013; Foster, 2018).

Narrative Inquiry

Through researching Indigenous methodologies, it has become obvious that the importance of narrative and storytelling is not limited to Indigenous contexts. Western research methodologies such as narrative inquiry embrace similar principles as Indigenous storytelling, but critically, they lack the connection to our epistemologies that IRM have been founded on (Rigney, 2006).

In a Western qualitative research paradigm, the narrative inquiry methodology recognises the effectiveness of studying narrative in research and education processes. Narrative inquiry is about making sense of, and interpreting, stories (Reissman, 1993). It gives focus not just to the stories themselves, but also to the act of analysing them. Much of the theorising of narrative inquiry arises from the work of Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2006, p. 44) who acknowledge that “lived and told stories and talk about those stories are ways we create meaning in our lives.” Most importantly to this research, Clandinin and Connelly (2006, p. 44) acknowledge that storytelling is employed to “enlist each other’s help in building our lives and communities.” In the same way, this research also uses storytelling to engage the wider community in understanding the knowledges and lived experiences of the D’harawal, with the greater objective to protect and forge our cultures and knowledges for future generations.

In response to the narrative inquiry work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Onawa McIvor (2010) recognises that:

“Although Clandinin and Connelly (2000), with their decades of experience, assist the understanding of storytelling as a method within narrative inquiry; with more Indigenous scholars joining the academy, storytelling as Indigenous research is emerging”
(p. 141).

It is necessary to point out here though that storytelling as Indigenous research is not just ‘emerging’; it has always been extant (although in some instances it may be ‘revived’). It may be more widely acknowledged, recognised and theorised now in the Western research system, but it has always been our

primary method of engaging with our knowledges, especially within the D'harawal context (Bodkin, 2013).

Narrative inquiry however, emerged far more recently, and primarily in opposition to the positivist approach in much social science research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The positivist approach to social science research is founded on the basic belief that human lives are governed by laws that can be counted, measured, and surveyed through observation (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Furthermore, positivism recognises that our personal and social worlds can be controlled by laws in much the same ways as our physical world, and that it can be measured by scientific methods or research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Alternatively, a post-positivist approach to social science research, such as in the case of narrative inquiry, instead focuses on the social lives of individuals as being complex and diverse, which then, in turn, affects the world around them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Narrative inquiry supports the theory that lived experience is a valuable and valid form of knowledge, and that these human experiences can be told through narratives (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). As a post-positivist approach, narrative inquiry also recognises that all experiences are individual, and no two people will respond to the same social forces in the same way. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recognise the need to focus on the individual, however, they expand on this to highlight the significance of the complexity of experience on individuals stating, "they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context." (p. 2).

Engaging with a Western research methodology, such as narrative inquiry, is a difficult space to occupy as an Indigenous woman (Foley, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Rigney, 2001). This research project

is about freeing our knowledges from the stranglehold of the Western research context and its associated methods and methodologies. We want to do things our way, with respect and responsibility to our communities and our Ancestors. I have therefore chosen to investigate the Western methodology of narrative inquiry through an Indigenous lens by drawing on the research work of Worimi scholar, Katrina Thorpe (2017). I have specifically drawn on this work as it aligns with my essential beliefs and values (as well as the Indigenous research principles of Rigney, 1998) that emphasise that we should centre Indigenous voices wherever possible. Going one step further, I have also deliberately chosen the work of an Indigenous woman in order to align with, and privilege, the values and principles of the Indigenous women's standpoint theory (Moreton-Robinson, 2013) that I also ascribe to (as discussed in the Literature Review of this thesis).

Thorpe (2017) extensively employed the use of narrative inquiry in her research investigating the educational and life experiences of pre-service teachers in the field of Aboriginal Education. To understand the basic foundations of narrative inquiry, Thorpe (2017) acknowledges the work of American psychologist and post-positivist theorist, John Dewey (1938) as an entry point for understanding the nature of experience in the field of education. John Dewey (1938) makes the claim that:

"I have taken for granted the soundness of the principle that education in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society must be based upon experience - which is always the actual life-experience of some individual" (p. 251).

With this in mind, Dewey established three criteria for experience; continuity, interaction and situation, or as Clandinin and Connelly (2006) describe the same criteria “temporality, sociality, and place” (p. 480).

Continuity and temporality recognise the importance of time in human experience whilst also addressing the notion that one experience arises from another and influences the next and so on (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). Interaction and sociality relate to the interactions between an individual’s internal and external environments and influences, and the interplay between the myriad of forces that affect lived experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). It is important to note that whilst these criteria could be considered two separate forces, Dewey believes that “The two principles of continuity and interaction are not separate from each other. They intercept and unite” (Dewey, 2011, p. 17).

The criterion of situation and place relates to the importance of the physical space within which an experience is performed. Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 480) define place as “the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place.” Thorpe (2017, p. 114) reiterates in her research that “All events must occur somewhere, and the particular site/s of these events will impact on experiences and the stories an individual tells of these experiences.”

In the case of the pre-service teacher participants in Thorpe’s research, place could be specifically defined as “a particular classroom, and the wider community in which they have lived or currently live and learn” (p. 114). For Indigenous peoples, this priority would be described as the importance of, and connection to, Country (Archibald, 2008; Martin, 2008; Wright, Lloyd, Suchet-Pearson, Burarrwanga, Tofa &

Bawaka Country, 2012). Archibald's (2008) storywork examines Country as not just the physical place of story, but as also the teller of stories and the unifying force that brings all entities together, both living and non-living, to connect to Ancestral knowledges, as a part of an interrelated whole. The expansion of research methodology to include Country and interrelatedness is a vitally important aspect of Indigenous epistemologies, and it is largely absent from non-Indigenous storytelling methodologies such as narrative inquiry (Archibald, 2008; Martin, 2008). The inadequacy of narrative inquiry to address these priorities is a driving force behind the decision to engage with Indigenous methodologies in this research.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) did however, go on to build on Dewey's three criteria of experience to develop the concept of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, that is, the metaphoric three-dimensional space being created by the three axes of continuity, interaction and situation. Narrative inquiry researchers work within this space with their participants, and each individual inquiry is uniquely defined by the three-dimensional space within which the inquiry takes place (Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Clandinin 2006). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) distinguish between the idea that narrative inquirers can work with stories that are *told* by participants, or they can follow them and experience the stories *with* their participants. In the case of Thorpe's (2017) research with pre-service teachers, both modes were chosen, and the research commenced with "the telling of stories as I engaged in a conversation with the participants who shared stories of their experiences" (p. 131).

Thorpe (2017) then engaged with what Clandinin and Connelly (2006) call a 'relational living alongside' as she followed her participants over a twelve-month period. Thorpe (2017, p. 131) notes that "The

notion of living stories differs in that it focuses attention on the researcher's relational engagement with the participants." This led to surprising and unexpected developments for Thorpe and the participants who discovered that through the process of living stories and the telling and re-telling of stories that "Some of our conversations appeared to open up unexpected opportunities for the participants to reflect on their experiences and push for deeper self-understanding during the interview process" (p. 132). In this way, narrative inquiry was a successful mode of research for Thorpe as well as an important pedagogical tool (Olsen, 2008) for the pre-service teacher participants involved in her research. However, despite this engagement with 'relationality', narrative inquiry still does not honour the importance of Country (and all its entities) in Storywork, nor does it adequately express the depth of meaning and complexity that interconnectedness holds for Indigenous peoples and, subsequently, our relationships to Storywork and research (Archibald, 2008; Martin, 2008).

The elements of narrative analysis that resonate particularly with this research involve the gathering of stories, analysing the stories, story interpretation and creating new stories in connection with the previous knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Critically though, narrative inquiry, whilst an effective form of knowledge transmission, does not privilege Indigenous values and ways of being in the same ways that engaging with our own insider-methodologies and methods does (Rigney, 1999). For this reason, I have decided to not limit my research engagement with narrative inquiry, but more strongly draw from Indigenous methods of knowledge gathering such as Yarning (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010).

Research Method - Yarning

For the purposes of this research, I will be centring the Indigenous research method of Yarning to co-research with and gather knowledges and stories from my Elders. I have chosen to engage with Indigenous Yarning as my method for several reasons. Yarning is a way that we have always respectfully communicated, and by using Yarning we are privileging our Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies in the research process (Geia, Hayes, & Usher, 2013). The implementation of IRM and methods in a research project returns the power and authority rightfully back to Indigenous peoples and ensures the cultural safety and respect of Indigenous co-researchers and their stories (Rigney, 1999). In designing this research project, I was guided by Rigney's (1999) three principles of Indigenist research that requires that research for Indigenous peoples must have an emancipatory imperative, it must reflect the political views and beliefs of the Indigenous peoples being researched, and it must centre the voices and experiences of Indigenous peoples. I ensured that these principles were adhered to in all areas of the project from the creation of supporting documentation to the methods employed in gathering data, which in this case is the use of Yarning as an Indigenous research method.

As an Aboriginal person being raised and living within an Aboriginal family and community, I am aware of the importance of Yarning not just as a practice, but also the power inherent within the terminology. Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010, p. 38) explain, "When an Aboriginal person says, "let's have a yarn", what they are saying is, let's have a talk or conversation", and the use of the word 'yarn' is important and deliberate for Aboriginal peoples as a way to assert our cultural agency and reject the imperialistic Western vernacular, especially in research (Battiste, 1998). Potlotek First Nations Mi'kmaq academic,

Marie Battiste (1998) recognises the need for using culturally appropriate language and terminology in her research in education, explaining that the concept of “English language superiority” simply supports its “Eurocentric educational foundations that support linguistic imperialism and Aboriginal oppression” (p. 16). The language of the oppressor is a powerful tool used to denigrate and colonise Indigenous peoples across the world (Battiste, 1998). By using the chosen language and words of Indigenous peoples (such as yarning), researchers and the wider community can contribute to *decolonising* research processes and strengthening the emancipatory power inherent within the research for Indigenous peoples (Rigney, 1999).

To further explain, the term “yarning” is a familiar and widely used term for Aboriginal peoples: it is not as clinical, formal or alienating as other Western-centric inquiry-based research terminologies, such as “interview”, “survey” or “focus group” (Geia, Hayes, & Usher, 2013). These terms invoke feelings of disconnection and powerlessness in the research process for Aboriginal peoples, reflecting the kinds of damaging research that has been undertaken by people outside of our communities for centuries (St Denis, 2005). Understandably, I would like to avoid this in our research project by using Yarning (both as a term and a practice). In doing so, I am acknowledging that I want my Elders to feel comfortable and respected in this stage of the research process by privileging the ways in which they prefer to operate as co-researchers and storytellers.

As a practice, yarning has been recognised by numerous Indigenous scholars as an informal, conversational style of information gathering and sharing familiar to Indigenous peoples and communities (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Geia, Hayes, & Usher, 2013; Martin, 2008). It must be

understood though that “Yarning is more than just a light exchange of words and pleasantries in casual conversation” (Fredericks, Adams, Finlay, Fletcher, Andy, Briggs, & Hall, 2011 p. 8). As a research method, yarning has been developed, refined and employed in numerous Indigenous research projects, and has become a key component used to *decolonise* the research process by centring Indigenous knowledge systems (Dean, 2010), privileging Indigenous voices in research (Blair, 2015), and respecting Indigenous ways of conducting research (Martin, 2008).

The primary focus of Yarning is that it is a reciprocal approach to research requiring a give and take between both the researcher and the researched (Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2009). The Yarning researcher states their stance and remains completely transparent in regard to not only their research agenda and motives, but also their familial and personal connection to the research subject (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Bishop, 1999; Muller, 2007). This creates a level of trust and honesty in the research process that Western systems of knowledge gathering, such as narrative inquiry, fail to achieve, and is a key component of engaging with Indigenous communities in culturally safe and respectful research (Bishop, 1999). As a research method, Yarning also serves to *decolonise* the imposed assumptions, stereotypes and tensions inherent in colonial representations of Indigenous peoples, by centring Indigenous epistemologies and privileging our voices.

Before embarking on Yarning with my Elders, as a member of the same family and kinship network, I did not have to explain my familial and personal connections to them and their knowledges as the research subject (Walker, Fredericks, Mills & Anderson, 2014). However, I did clearly explain my research motives and agenda. To show my respect for my Elders as co-researchers, I explained from the

outset that the emphasis of this project was on only engaging in knowledges that they were comfortable with sharing, and that what was shared was to be dictated only by them. I clearly explained that at any point they could stop or not participate in the research without consequence, and that they were to self-determine their intellectual property. Throughout the research project, I also encouraged co-researchers to add extra information as they felt it was required, and they often returned to record additional yarning sessions, especially after they had had a chance to walk away and think more about what we shared. I did not place any limits on how much information was recorded, or how many times the yarning took place; that was directed by the Elders themselves. I also assured my co-researchers that they had the final say regarding how their information would be used. The ways in which I ensured these aspects of the research project were implemented are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Our research Yarning began by explaining the kinds of information I was focusing on with the use of a research question: *'If you could share a story or engrave a message in the sandstone for future generations what would it be?'* This research question was inspired by my own experiences of the ancient sandstone engravings that had been left behind by our Ancestors on the sandstone outcrops around Sydney as explored more fully in the Literature Review of this thesis.

In Yarning with the Elders, I was guided by our mutual respect as Knowledge Holders and the principles and possibilities embedded within differing Yarning methods. While respecting the foundations of IRM, this research is committed to Bard/Yjindjarbandi (Pilbara) scholar Dawn Bessarab's and Botswanian scholar Bridget Ng'andu's (2010) Yarning method, which identifies four interrelated types of Yarning that serve different (yet related) purposes within the research journey. These include *social*

Yarning, research topic Yarning, collaborative Yarning and therapeutic Yarning. From this foundation, two other forms of Yarning were identified by Palawa scholar Melissa Walker, including family Yarning and cross-cultural Yarning (Walker et al., 2014). Both family Yarning and cross-cultural Yarning have also been used in the Yarning sessions with the co-researcher Elders.

Social Yarning

Social Yarning is employed during the very initial stages of engaging in research with Indigenous communities, as it is informal, unstructured and conversational, and allows relationships to be established in a relaxed, two-way discourse between researcher and co-researchers (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). Social Yarning is similar to a “quick catch up” between family members and can include a range of topics that help build intimacy, respect and trust between the ‘researcher’ and the ‘researched.’ As family members, the co-researchers and I are already very comfortable with each other and have a deep level of trust, so it could be argued that social Yarning is not necessary between us as co-researchers. However, I deliberately engaged in social Yarning with the co-researchers for many reasons, not least to help us relax and clear our minds ready for the Storytelling process. Through social Yarning we took the time to discuss recent events, our children and families, the Country surrounding us, and memories of our past experiences together and where those moments had taken us as individuals. By first engaging with social Yarning, we were better able to re-establish our familial connections, create a relaxed atmosphere and then focus on the following stages of the Yarning process.

Research Topic Yarning

Research topic Yarning differs from social Yarning in that research topic yarning is governed by a clear agenda of gathering information for the specific purposes of the intended research (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). Once the co-researchers and I had engaged in social yarning and were ready to begin research topic yarning, I clearly stated that we would begin yarning about the research and that with their consent, I was going to start recording our yarns. Until this point, I had not been recording our social yarning, as I wanted to establish a clear line between us engaging socially and us engaging as co-researchers. An overarching imperative of engaging with IRM is to be completely open, honest, and transparent in your research agenda and outcomes (Rigney, 1999; Martin, 2008). To ensure that the co-researchers thoroughly understood the research process, I created detailed consent and information forms (Appendix 1) that stated in clear language everything the co-researchers needed to know, including:

- Ø Who is doing the research.
- Ø What the research is about.
- Ø What the co-researchers have been asked to do.
- Ø What will the research involve including the amount of time that is estimated the co-researcher will be required for; the remuneration that will be given to the co-researcher; that they can choose to be anonymous or identified and that at all stages of the research they will

be in full control of their information and knowledges and can retract their information, change it or withdraw from the research at any time with no repercussions.

Ø What risks or inconveniences may be involved in taking part in the research.

Ø That the research is confidential.

Ø A list of contact details to use if any concerns arise.

I gave the consent form to the co-researchers long before the research was to begin so that they could take their time to read it and respond with changes if necessary. I also read through it with them in person to ensure that they understood what was expected of them and the power that they held as co-researchers.

As an additional resource, I also created a Yarning Plan (Appendix 2) so that the co-researchers were informed of the kinds of information we might be yarning about. This was an important document to provide to ensure that the co-researchers were prepared for the kinds of discussion topics that might arise, and so they could be in further control of the research process. The Yarning Plan outlined the following themes as potential subjects for discussion:

Ø D'harawal cultural values

Ø Experience of overcoming adversity

Ø Discrimination (e.g., racism, sexism)

Ø Important values and principles to live by

Ø Elder's roles in communities

Ø Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities; and

Ø Survival and resistance for D'harawal peoples

The Yarning Plan also explained that I might use the following conversational cues whilst we yarn:

Ø What is your name, age, and Aboriginal Nation/language group?

Ø In your eyes, what does it mean to be D'harawal?

Ø How may being D'harawal be different to being a non-Indigenous Australian?

Ø How is being D'harawal different to other Aboriginal Nations?

Ø What is the D'harawal relationship with the Sydney basin region?

Ø What is your first memory of being D'harawal?

Ø If you could pass on one story from your life to future generations, what would it be?

Ø What is an important story or event in your life?

Ø What would you really like our future D'harawal Elders to know?

Ø What can future generations learn about life from your experiences?

Ø What do you think is one of the most important cultural values and rules to live by?

Ø What are some important values that emerging generations should know?

Ø How do you think your life now will differ from the lives of future generations?

The Information Sheet, Consent Forms and the Yarning Plan were vital documents in informing the co-researchers of the content of the research and guiding us in our research topic yarning. As family members, we like to engage in in-depth yarning that often follows many different, seemingly unrelated,

tangents. Creating a Yarning Plan was a helpful reminder of the kinds of topics we would like to cover during research topic Yarning.

Therapeutic Yarning

As we engaged in research topic yarning, in some instances, therapeutic yarning took place. Therapeutic yarning happens when the issues discussed in the research yarn become highly emotional and the yarning becomes a cathartic experience for the participant (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). It must be noted that therapeutic yarning is not active clinical therapy, though it does often raise topics and issues that can be very challenging for co-researchers (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). An important section of the Information sheet that I created and shared before the research commenced provided details of Indigenous and non-Indigenous counselling services that could be accessed should the co-researchers feel that they needed professional help to process some of the incredibly traumatic and distressing content we may cover during therapeutic yarning .

When yarning with the co-researchers, the research agenda became secondary when therapeutic yarning was in play, in order to support the co-researchers in the expression of their memories, stories and emotions without interruption. There were many times during research topic yarning that therapeutic yarning naturally began to happen. It was not forced or staged, it happened organically as the research yarning unfolded and the co-researchers themselves led the conversation. As directed by the co-researchers, most of our yarning took place outside with Country, in spaces and places where the co-researchers felt comfortable and at peace. Country is an important healing and calming force for us as Indigenous peoples, and it is amongst the natural surrounds of Country that we would most be able to

cope with telling what could be potentially distressing stories and knowledges. For these reasons, connecting to Country has been an important element in undertaking therapeutic yarning sessions.

Collaborative Yarning

Through the process of Yarning with my Elders, we often found ourselves engaging in collaborative Yarning which involves Yarning amongst several people to open discussion for the purposes of sharing ideas and revealing new information, viewpoints and concepts important to the group (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). As a matter of transparency, it is a vital part of the collaborative yarning process to share an individual's critical analysis of ideas to establish their positioning in a wider context (Behrendt, 2019). In the case of this research project, once research topic yarning had taken place, both my co-researchers and I engaged in a deep, collaborative Yarn to create a D'harawal Narinya story from the knowledges and stories that had been shared. This Narinya story was then taken to the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle to be discussed through a second phase of collaborative Yarning as a larger group (called Circle Yarning). The Circle Yarn was recorded, transcribed, and analysed to discern the key themes discussed in relation to the Narinya story. It was during the collaborative yarning session with the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle that the possible D'harawal values and principles arising from the Narinya story were discussed. This process then led the Circle to decide whether each Narinya story should be considered a Waduguda or D'harawal Lore/Law story.

Family Yarning

Interestingly, family yarning has been identified as not just yarning between family members, as was the case with my Elder co-researchers and I, but also yarning that includes discussions of family, kin, and our connections to each other and to Country (Walker et al., 2014). Family yarning helped us to emphasise our relativity and relatedness, a vital aspect of our stories and knowledges (Martin, 2008). When we discuss family and our kin connections, we position ourselves and others so that we understand our accountabilities in the context of our communities and families. Engaging in family yarning with my Elders was unavoidable, and welcome. Yarning about our family and Country helped us as co-researchers to communicate complex ideas, helping me, as a listener and learner, to understand relationships in our family and the impacts they have had on my Elders and their stories.

Cross-Cultural Yarning

Similarly, cross-cultural yarning refers not only to yarning between individuals of differing cultures but also to the non-Indigenous protocols and methods engaged during the Yarning or research process (Walker et al., 2014). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in research, it is commonly assumed that, as the minority, we will engage with the research protocols and methods of the dominant Western worldview, including direct questioning, using surveys, and shaking hands to greet each other (Walker et al., 2014). Alternatively, cross-cultural yarning engages with research methods that derive from multiple, differing cultural research paradigms. For instance, in Yarning with my Elders, even though we are all Aboriginal (and specifically D'harawal), we engaged in a mix of Indigenous and Western research methods (often out of necessity to meet institutional requirements). During our

yarning sessions, we engaged with Indigenous research protocols that made us feel comfortable, such as sitting within the natural surrounds of Country, whether in a backyard or a National Park. We were most comfortable and relaxed when we were outside and surrounded by Country. We also chose to use Yarning over Western conversation methods such as interviews or inquiry-based communication. We did, however, draw on aspects of Western research methods and protocols that fit comfortably within our ways of working, such as outlining and signing written information and consent forms, as well as recording our Yarns using recording equipment and then having the yarning sessions transcribed. Engaging with cross-cultural yarning allowed us to cherry pick from the differing research ‘cultures’ so that we could research in a way that works for us as Indigenous researchers. This allowed my Elders to be more flexible and responsive yet still feel culturally safe and respected.

D’harawal Narinya Stories and Storywork (Archibald, 2008)

To develop the Elders’ Narinya stories with integrity and respect, it was necessary to revisit Archibald’s (2008) processes of Indigenous storywork for storytelling, story listening and story re-telling. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Archibald (2008) highlights respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness and synergy as the key principles of Indigenous storywork, and it was through the lens of these seven guiding principles that I was able to analyse, create and re-tell the co-researchers’ stories. Following Archibald’s seven principles of storywork ensured that our Elders’ voices and their ways of being were centred and prioritised in the research process.

Through the methods engaged in this research project, I demonstrated *respect* by centring Elders' stories and working in ways that were directed by the co-researchers themselves, ensuring that they felt comfortable, valued and in control of the research process. I also honoured the great *responsibility* I have been entrusted with, making sure to listen deeply, detail the stories correctly and give the co-researchers the final say in what is being said and released into the public realm. I focussed on *reciprocity*, ensuring that co-researchers are remunerated fairly and that the work that is produced is a valuable and meaningful expression of their lived experiences, that they can be proud of and utilise as they see fit. In demonstrating reciprocity, I also ensured that the co-researchers were named on all of the work, and that they would receive co- authorship credit if the work was published or shared in any way. When working with my Elders, I have also focussed on showing great *reverence* when listening to their stories as well as their feedback on the research outputs, making sure that their input is honoured by being incorporated into, and guiding, the entirety of the research processes behind this thesis.

In analysing and re-telling the Elders' stories I also focussed on Archibald's key principles for making meaning in storywork including holism, synergies and interrelatedness. I focussed on *holism* to describe and pay respect to all aspects of the Elders stories and their lives including their physical, spiritual and intellectual worlds. Understanding the *synergies* between nation, community, and family and how these influenced aspects of the Elders' different, lived experiences was also key in constructing meaningful and engaging Narinya stories that honoured the complexities of the Elders' voices. Exploring holism and synergy in the Elders stories meant that we could then more easily understand and express the interconnected nature and *interrelatedness* of all things. Nothing exists on its own, and it is through carefully and holistically documenting Elders' lives and stories with respect for the multitude of details

and events (including Country) that we can truly comprehend the connections between all things. Interrelatedness is a vitally important element in the Elders' lives as Indigenous peoples, and it is essential that this be reflected and honoured in their Narinya stories.

Archibald's (2008) work proved fundamental in providing a set of principles that could guide and support the work required to explore the Elders' lives and stories with respect and integrity. The resulting Narinya stories and their later acceptance as D'harawal Narinya Waduguda stories are a testament to the success of Archibald's (2008) storywork, and the significance of its seven key principles in responding to the ways of being of Indigenous peoples, including the co-researchers of this project as D'harawal Elders.

Analysing Elders' Stories

After Yarning with my Elders, the voice-recorded sessions were transcribed and copies were given to them to read, edit and revise in any way that they felt was necessary to effectively tell their stories, thereby ensuring that the Elders as co-researchers had full control over what is to be shared. Once edited and approved by the co-researchers, the final transcripts were then entered into NVivo qualitative data analysis software so that I could read through each transcript and code them, identifying the overarching individual themes that emerged from the Elders' stories.

The themes and emerging sub-themes were then re-explored in greater detail, often referring back to aspects of the Elders' knowledges to provide greater context, as well as evidence of, the nature of the themes with regard to Sydney D'harawal lives and histories. These themes were then shared with the Elders to ensure that they were an accurate representation of the Elders' voices and lived-experiences.

Some of the themes identified in the Elders' voices included racism, dispossession, assimilation, survival and resistance. It was often then necessary to engage in archival research to further explore these themes and how the political, social and legal priorities of colonisation had affected the lives of the Elders, their Country, and their Ancestors.

Creating a Narinya Story

After establishing the themes present in the Elder's Yarning sessions, it was then possible to begin exploring these themes in relation to possible Sydney D'harawal Narinya stories. Through ongoing iterative Yarning, the founding requirements for each story were further developed and established. For example, did the Elder want their own name used? Did they want the characters to be human or non-human? Who was the target audience for the story? What were other elements to be included in their story?

In planning the key elements of the Elder's Narinya stories, I first established the main aspects of each story under the relevant themes that had been identified with each Elder. I then transformed aspects of the Elder's life events into what could be considered relevant experiences in the life of each story's main protagonists. The co-researchers were involved in every aspect of the Creation of their Narinya stories, and each had the final say in who and what was included, how they were represented, and what was omitted.

Gaining Consensus as a Narinya Waduguda Story

The final stage of creating a Narinya story involved presenting the story to the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle for consideration as a Waduguda (Law) Story. Through

collaborative yarning and their own Knowledge of D'harawal Ancestral and Law Stories, the Circle members deeply engaged with the D'harawal Storytelling (Tribal) Methodology of Bangawarra'o Waduguda, which roughly translates to "the strengthening of laws" (Bodkin, 2013; Bodkin-Andrews, Bodkin, Andrews, & Evans, 2017; Bodkin-Andrews, Bodkin, Andrews, Whittaker, 2016). The members of the Circle were guided by the Thirteen D'harawal truths (outlined earlier in this chapter), as they discussed their own interpretations of each story, and the possible shared D'harawal Law/Lores that were being revealed to the story listener. After analysing and further discussing the Narinya story in a subsequent Circle meeting, Circle members then decided whether or not the story reflected and was connected to overarching D'harawal values and principles, and whether the Narinya Story should be accepted as a D'harawal Narinya Waduguda story or Living Lore story. After robust collaborative yarning amongst the Circle members (to be further outlined in the Results/Discussion section), it was decided, through full consensus, that each Narinya story would be accepted by the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle as Narinya Waduguda (Lore) stories.

Indigenous Ethics

As part of this chapter, it is also important to note this thesis' adherence to essential ethical research processes (both Western and Indigenous). This research project has been guided by and conducted in partnership with the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle, with two of the members being the primary co-researchers and contributors of the knowledges and stories within this thesis. I was committed to undertaking this research in a completely transparent manner with the Circle and have taken steps (as outlined earlier in this chapter) to ensure my co-researchers' cultural

safety and protection. Throughout the research project, I was open to any recommendations or suggestions that the Circle members may have had, and as a matter of reciprocity, I have ensured that they all had a voice in determining all stages of this project.

As a Higher Degree Research student, it was also compulsory to obtain ethics approval from The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) before commencing research with the co-researchers and the Circle to ensure that all research was respectful, safe and of the greatest benefit to the co-researchers. The UTS Human Research Ethics Committee is guided by both the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007).

The NHMRC's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research "*Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research*" (2007) includes six guiding values that I adhered to at all times during the research process including:

Reciprocity – that the research journey be a two-way process that is beneficial to the Indigenous community first and foremost. I ensured that the co-researchers were fairly remunerated for their time and that I could provide cultural gifts throughout the research. Each Elder co-researcher received a \$50 gift card for each Yarning session as well as some seeds of our sacred, locally endemic plants: a cultural protocol that has been enacted for many generations in our families. I also ensured that the primary driver behind the research was the emancipation of D'harawal Stories from damaging colonial misrepresentations and outsider research: an important priority for the co-researchers.

Respect – that the opinions and contributions of all participants and co-researchers be valued and their voices centred in the research process. All research was undertaken showing the utmost respect for the co-researchers, ensuring that their needs and requirements were met over and above other competing forces like budgets, schedules, and Western research protocols. To show respect for my Elders and prioritise their needs in the research process I made sure they were comfortable, and their needs were met and valued. I provided lunches, coffees, drinks, and I picked them up and dropped them home whenever necessary. I ensured the Elders decided where to hold our Yarns and that the date and time were convenient for them.

Survival and Protection – of our families and our Knowledges, as separate and unique entities apart from other Indigenous communities. We are not one homogenised culture but individual bodies of culture. By centring individual co-researchers and their stories, this research project provided a means to document the knowledges of Elders, to ensure the survival and protection of their stories for the future.

Responsibility – to family, community, Country and maintaining a balance between all. We are not just individuals but representatives of a whole community. This research is driven by our shared responsibilities to each other, and also to the future of our cultures and their knowledges. The outputs of this research have the capacity to benefit all of us not just the two co-researchers involved, but the entire Circle as a whole.

Spirit and Integrity – recognising that Indigenous cultures are centred around, and guided by, deep connections to Ancestral knowledges. This research is focussed on protecting these

connections and the knowledges of our Elders to ensure that they survive to guide our future generations and the continuation of our Dreaming just as our Ancestors have done before us.

Equality – that everyone has the right to be different, to be individual and that equality does not mean we are all the same. All participants/co-researchers will be free from the restraints of stereotypes and prejudice. This research privileged the voices and stories of the co-researchers, providing them with a platform to address the injustices and erasure of previous research undertaken, particularly that of outsider researchers.

These values are extremely important to me and my co-researchers as Indigenous D’harawal peoples, and they are also closely aligned with the values and principles embedded within the IRM (Rigney, 2006) and Archibald’s (2008) storywork principles that have been utilised throughout this research project. At all stages of the research process, every effort has been taken to ensure the cultural safety of the co-researchers included in the project as respected members and Elders of not just an ‘at-risk’ community, but also of my family.

After an arduous online application process whereby, it was logarithmically assumed that I was a non-Indigenous researcher wishing to undertake research with an Indigenous community (after all, Indigenous peoples are universally viewed as the researched not the researcher eg: Behrendt, 2019), I was granted UTS Ethics approval with the reference number being: ETH18-2138.

The Elders as Co-researchers: Their Positioning

The co-researchers of this project were self-selected (with approval from the D’harawal Circle) for their contributions to my D’harawal cultural identity. They are Elders that I have been raised amongst and

who have informed my D'harawal Indigenous woman's worldview. This research has been heavily influenced by our experiences as the Dubyara'ora or Hidden Ones (Bodkin, 2013). Both co-researchers of this research project were deeply affected by the decisions made by the Australian colonial governments to forcibly assimilate Aboriginal children, and sometimes their families, into white society recommending that "all efforts be directed to that end" (Johnston, 1937). In many cases this created small pockets of Aboriginal families, like my own, hiding (often involuntarily) amongst white families, and not within the larger Aboriginal communities. What the government hadn't counted on was that we would find each other and create our own communities like that of the two co-researchers of this research project: my father, John Foster and my aunty, Frances Bodkin. They have been specifically chosen because of the contributions they have made to not only my cultural identity, but also that of countless other Aboriginal people. They have spent their entire lives straddling the two worlds of white and black, suffering unspeakable abuse, and still working tirelessly to undo so much harm and destruction in our communities. Their lives and stories have motivated me to undertake this research, and to ensure that their stories are documented and protected for future generations to access, and draw strength from, in the same ways that I have been so privileged to do today.

John Foster

"I am a Sydney D'harawal saltwater man, proud father, grandfather and now great grandfather. My family and my children are my greatest accomplishments though I have also had a rewarding career that I am now retired from. I was a Vocational Development officer and

Aboriginal Liaison officer for the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) as well as a volunteer for the Aboriginal Disabilities Network”. Uncle John Foster, in conversation, 4/2/23

My father is such a special man, seventy nine years old, with a lasting and profound effect on everyone he meets. I have dreamt of documenting his stories for as long as I can remember, as I knew from the youngest age that the stories he shared with me were important and vastly different from anything else I was learning in life. As I grew up, and entered into Aboriginal education, one of the overriding messages I received from my father was to go ahead and share what he had taught me. In the wider community though, I was told (understandably) that Aboriginal knowledge was not to be shared, lest it be corrupted or used without authorisation (Foster, 2018). Being from the frontline of colonisation though, my father and our family had witnessed so much culture die within the bodies of those who had held it. As a result, he knew the importance of sharing and documenting knowledge. He saw the gaping holes in the ways that our stories and cultures were being mishandled by others, and the ways in which we were being completely erased on our own Country. My father has dedicated his life to ensuring that his knowledge would not die with him, but instead, be shared and passed on to the next generations with care and consideration. Being handed the privilege to take part in our cultural practices by helping him document and share his stories and knowledges is a privilege that I will spend my life honouring.

Aunty Fran Bodkin

“I am a descendant of the D’harawal people of the Bidjigal clan from the George’s River/Woronora catchment area. As an educator of D’harawal knowledge I work with children of preschool age

through to adult learners. I hold a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences with five majors, one of which is Environmental Sciences, plus other postgraduate degrees. Combining the knowledge passed down through my Aboriginal mother, my university education and my journey of lifelong learning, I bring a holistic understanding of the environment in order to promote a deeper understanding of how to care for our natural environment. I have published three books on D'harawal culture, stories and natural resources. I am an active member of the Wollondilly Aboriginal Advisory Committee. In the past I worked for the NSW Parliament for many years. I also played a key role in the development of Campbelltown Hospital, Campbelltown TAFE, Mount Annan Botanic Gardens and what is now the Western Sydney University Campbelltown Campus” (Bodkin in Hromek, 2019, p. 38)

The impact that eighty-nine-year-old Aunty Fran has had on my life is immeasurable. I have watched her for many years now change people’s hearts and minds right before my eyes, as she generously shares the most phenomenal stories and knowledges passed down to her from her mother, grandmother and from Country. I have learnt so much from this remarkable woman that it is hard to pinpoint one moment or story that defines my relationship with her. It is her humour, inquisitiveness and the ability to explain the complex relationships between all things that I find so compelling and engaging. Not a lot of people know that Aunty Fran has kept a lifelong file of unrelated facts, and patiently awaits moments that bring two (or even more) seemingly unrelated events or pieces of information together into one cohesive understanding. Her dedication to being aware of how all things are related and connected deeply resonates with my understanding of the world, and where so many of us go wrong in thinking that what we do, say, or think has no real impact on the greater outcomes of the world around

us. Everything matters. Every single, small moment is important and has ongoing impacts that make it matter, not necessarily in grand ways, but even in small ways, it will always matter and be connected to everything else. Through Aunty Fran I have learnt that we are all a part of a much greater whole and we should live our lives accordingly, with awareness, sensitivity, and the curiosity (and cheekiness) of a small child. It has been an honour to work with Aunty Fran, documenting some important stories from her life, and understanding how she became such an amazing, resilient, and inspirational woman.

Conclusion

It was not a culturally safe process delving into the Western research world to tell the precious stories of my Elders. I was fortunate though, to find the work of so many generous and driven Indigenous scholars who understand the dilemmas we face as researchers, and who have fought hard to find ways for us to tell our stories legitimately within the academy, whilst still maintaining our cultural integrity. Rigney (2001) acknowledges this in his work stating that,

“Such a journey is traumatic and deculturalising for some of our Indigenous peoples. However, without such an intellectual journey, our contemporary problems and their solutions remain neither knowable nor visible.” (p.8)

Rigney’s (1999) work provides an invaluable scaffold for Indigenous scholars to work from, and his three principles of Indigenous Research Methodologies have contributed to building a theoretical framework for this research project that respects our ways of knowing, being and doing. Across the world, there are Indigenous researchers contributing in multitudes of ways to create a space in academia for our knowledges. Tribal methodologies (Kovach, 2007, 2010, 2017, 2021), Storywork (Archibald,

2008) and Yarning (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Walker et al., 2014) are some of the examples that are emerging in the Indigenous/Indigenist research world, and they have also been pivotal in establishing the methodology and methods engaged with in this project. Through this foundational work, Indigenous researchers are now able to find a space to share their own theories and stories with academic rigour, whilst upholding their own cultural values and integrity.

The following chapter is the results chapter for the Yarning sessions I held with my father, Uncle John Foster. I have provided a thematic analysis of key aspects of the Yarning sessions interwoven into the Narinya Story that we created in response to Uncle John's lived experiences, "Garraway, the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo." The chapter ends with a thematic analysis of the Yarning session held with the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle (The Circle). In this Circle Yarning session The Circle deeply engages with the Narinya Story we created from Uncle John's Yarning sessions to discern whether the story of "Garraway the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo" can be classified as a D'harawal Narinya Waduguda (Living law/lore Story).

Chapter 5 RESULTS - YARNING WITH UNCLE JOHN FOSTER

Yarning Sessions

This results chapter summarises the data collected in four Yarning sessions with Uncle John Foster and one Yarning session about John's Narinya story with the Circle. These sessions are listed below and each time they are referenced, they appear as they do in this list.

John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018

John Foster - Yarning session #3 04/02/2019

John Foster - Yarning session #4 04/02/2023

The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the research findings revealed through Yarning with Sydney D'harawal man (and my father), Uncle John Foster. Uncle John's stories are an exploration of the ongoing effects of colonisation on the lives of now-Sydney D'harawal people as some of the original custodians of the land that became the frontline of British colonisation in Australia in 1788 (Attenbrow, 2010; Watt, 2019).

This chapter has four main components;

1. My personal reflections on Yarning with my father as researcher on this project;
2. Some of the key findings from the Yarning sessions with Uncle John and the overarching themes that they relate to;

3. Uncle John's Narinya Story co-authored by both myself and Uncle John is presented in sections and woven into the main body of the findings as a means to interpret aspects of the story and understand the academic and political context of the findings. I have presented sections of the Narinya Story in separate text boxes to the main body of the thesis to highlight it as a separate but associated body of information. The writing that follows each shaded text box interprets the Narinya Story using information from the the Yarning sessions with Uncle John for context;
4. The findings of the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle when presented with Uncle John's Story for consideration as a D'harawal Narinya Waduguda (Living Law) Story.

Several main themes have arisen through this research with Uncle John including assimilation, discrimination, dispossession, and resistance. In this chapter I will explore these themes in relation to John's lived experiences as a Sydney D'harawal man. Throughout this research, Indigenist Research Principles (Rigney, 2003), D'harawal Storytelling Methodology (Bodkin, 2013; Bodkin-Andrews, Foster, Bodkin, Foster, Andrews, Adams, & Carlson; 2022) and the associated practices of Indigenous Yarning (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Walker, Fredericks, Mills & Anderson, 2014) have been implemented in order to *decolonise* the research processes (Martin, 2008) and provide for the cultural safety of John and the, at times traumatic, knowledges that arise from this research.

In this chapter, I not only investigate the damaging effects of colonisation on Uncle John's lived and cultural experiences, but I also examine the ways in which he resists, through the translation of his trauma and survival into the telling of a Sydney D'harawal Narinya (Living) Story. For Sydney D'harawal people, our lived experiences are not just defined by the damage of colonisation, nor the false

assumption that the Garuwanga Waduguda (Ancestral Law Dreaming) ended in 1788. Uncle John's story is also about the power of D'harawal resistance; that despite being from now-Sydney, on the frontline of the destruction, the dispossession from land and family, the disease, and the damage of colonisation in Australia – he has survived; he is still here and his culture is alive and strong.

Yarning with John Foster

“The most important thing is discrimination and the effect it's had on my life”

John Foster, D'harawal Elder, Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

My personal reflections of Yarning with my father.

My father, Uncle John Foster, and I live on the Kaieemagh (now Georges River) Songline in what is now known as Sydney. D'harawal people have always lived here and our stories travel back and forth on the tidal waters that run between Garigalo Country (saltwater) to Nattaigalo Country (sweet or fresh water). At Tucoerah (where the two waters meet), here on Kaieemagh is Biddigalo Country (bitter or sour water), and I have called this Country home all my life. I have listened to my father's stories since the very beginning of my time, but today on a cool, breezy, Wiritjiribin (August) morning, against a backdrop of glowing yellow Boo'kerri'kin (Golden Wattle), we are finally going to record them. As we yarn, and sometimes laugh and sometimes cry, I cannot help but imagine the future for these recordings. Who will listen to them; what will they think? I recall the moments I have had, uncovering the knowledges of my Ancestors and Elders in the archives, the pure, transcendent joy reverberating through the decades as I looked into their eyes, as I heard their music, watched their dances, and held their artworks. I want this for someone else. I want others to know what it feels like to connect to people and stories from long ago that you absolutely know are still embedded in your bones. I want them to hear the messages that have travelled the

Songlines throughout time, leaving footprints in the earth that will fit their feet. I want our future generations to know that we were here. That we left something for them, because we love them and we want this for them; so they can know us and in turn, they can know themselves. This is how we have always shared and learnt knowledge; Yarning with each other, with a shared understanding of each other, in places that are comfortable, familiar and cradled in Country. The setting for this research is no different, the methods we use and the reasons why we use them have been with us for millennia. And so, my father's Narinya begins.

*The Story of Garraway
the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo*

Garraway was born into a large flock of cockatoos on Gadi (grass tree) Country in a place called War'ran, on the saltwater coastline of what is now known as Sydney. Garraway and his family lived peacefully amongst the D'harawal people, and together, they all helped to look after their beautiful Guriwal (whale) Country. Every evening as the sun was setting, the cockatoo family would proudly dance through the skies screeching to each other and all the other birds, signalling that it was time to go to bed, for soon it would be dark and not safe to be out. Garraway loved his life as a cockatoo with his family, flying high above beautiful saltwater Country, calling out to the other birds and sharing important news across the land...

Country - Guriwal

Garraway is the D'harawal name for the sulphur crested cockatoo which is a sacred totem animal for D'harawal man and Elder, Uncle John Foster. In the Narinya Story of Garraway the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo, co-author Uncle John, decided to use the character of Garraway to represent him in the Story of his lived experiences.

Uncle John was born in 1944 on Gadi (grass tree) Country (now known as Sydney) into an Aboriginal family that was confined, at the time, on the La Perouse Aboriginal mission. The community all looked after each other and shared culture and language together which helped to protect and forge Aboriginal cultures and identities. Though the conditions on the government mission were deplorable, John remembers La Perouse fondly:

“We were living down at La Perouse when I was born in 1944, and we were living in a tent, in a little valley just down from my grandmother’s place, and I’ve only had one memory of down there, and that was running around when it was raining one day, and the bottom of the tent was flooded with about six inches of water, and I was running around in the water in the nuddy.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

La Perouse is a Sydney suburb situated on the northern shores of Gamay (Botany Bay), which is located just ten kilometres south of the Sydney CBD. For Uncle John’s family, the La Perouse area is known as Guriwal/Gooriwahl, which is their D’harawal language word for ‘place of the Aboriginal people’. ‘Goori’ meaning people and ‘wahl’ meaning ‘the place of’. Guriwal overlooks vast expanses of beautiful Garigalo (saltwater) Country (the Pacific Ocean) that hosts the yearly migrations of gawura/guwara (the whale), up and down the East Australian coast. Uncle John’s Country and community has had a long spiritual association with Guwara, as is evident in the ancient sandstone engravings of the sacred animals that are scattered across the sandstone coastline (Bursill, Jacobs, Lennis, Timbery-Beller, & Ryan, 2001; Foster, 2022).

Garraway had learnt all about being a cockatoo from his family. His grandmothers taught him how to stretch his dazzling, golden crest and soar high through the sky. Garraway's Aunties taught him how to use his sharp beak to crack the hard seeds from Dahl'wah, (casuarina tree), while they sat amongst her branches to listen to the D'harawal Elders tell their stories. Garraway loved to listen to their Stories, and he couldn't wait for the day that he would have his own babies to tell stories to.

Aboriginal Women

Dahl'wah (casuarina or swamp oak) is a sacred tree for Uncle John's family and she represents our Old Women: the grandmothers and aunties who care for our knowledges and pass them onto our children. Dahl'wah is used here in his Narinya Story to represent Women as the Knowledge Holders for future generations. The women in John's life, particularly his mother, sister and grandmother Eliza, had a strong and positive influence on him and his Aboriginal identity. D'harawal women are Storytellers, Our cultural work is to ensure that culture and lore are passed onto future generations through our maternal responsibilities.

In La Perouse Uncle John was surrounded by family and a large Aboriginal community who were led by his grandparents, Tom and Eliza Foster, though Tom had passed away in 1940, just four years before John was born. John distinctly remembers his grandmother, Nanny Eliza, a Minimbah woman from Worimi Country (near Forster on the New South Wales mid North Coast). Nanny Eliza was a staunch and courageous woman who fought for over sixty years to keep the La Perouse community together. While she did not identify as a Sydney D'harawal woman, she had a major influence on John's life as a D'harawal man, and he remembers her as:

“an adorable person not just because she was my grandmother but because of the person that she was [she was a] real beautiful and gentle lady real humanitarian very lovely person.” John Foster - Yarning session #3 04/02/2019

The stories told today by John’s cousins who were raised on the mission with Nanny Eliza, also describe her as a selfless warrior who fought the authorities on the mission by raising, protecting, and teaching countless children, grandchildren and great grandchildren through some of the darkest days of colonisation (Foster, 2018). Today, her legacy still lives on, and she is a much-loved and remembered matriarch of the La Perouse community (Various, 1988).

Throughout his life, John has always been influenced by strong, protective, nurturing women. He speaks highly of his grandmother, mother and sister as well as other Aboriginal women in his community:

“when I was in that job [Aboriginal Liaison Officer for the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service] I sat on a lot of committees and boards, and everything like that, and Aboriginal women mainly were involved in those sort of things, and I love Aboriginal women, ‘cause they’re strong, upstanding, and will do the work, you know. If they say – they put their hand up in a meeting, you can rely on them to follow through with whatever...” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

This strong female influence has played an important role in John’s life, instilling in him a strong desire to have children and provide a good life for them. Later in this chapter, John attributes this

paternal/maternal desire as his main reason for surviving and resisting the harsh world of colonisation and assimilation.

Unfortunately though, things had been changing on Garraway's Country. The cockatoos had heard stories of strange people coming from far, far away in giant canoes with huge white sails that filled with the wind, propelling them here to Saltwater Country. They were called the Mayal and they did not know or care for Country, so they began to destroy it. They cut down the trees that the animals needed for protection and habitat. They didn't understand that the waterways were vital to a healthy Country, so they built right on top of them. Garraway's family was struggling to live on saltwater Country, they couldn't screech and soar through the skies anymore and there were only a few trees left to rest in.

Soon though, things were going to get a lot worse....

Colonisation

“Mayal” is the Sydney D’harawal word for ‘stranger or alien’ and in this context, the Mayal symbolise the British and colonisation. This section refers to the impacts of colonisation and destruction of Country which has deeply affected John and his family as Sydney Traditional Owners. From the first instance that the British arrived on our shores, our Country and communities were decimated by land clearing, pollution, quarrying of sacred sandstone, introduced species, hard hooved livestock and disease among the many other destructive aspects of British invasion on our sacred Country.

The British invasion and colonisation of John’s Ancestral Country occurred in 1788 and less than 100 years later only a small community of approximately twenty local Aboriginal people remained in the

Sydney colony (Attenbrow, 2010; Irish, 2014). John's grandmother, Kate Sims, was one of those people living with her Aboriginal community in the abandoned government boatsheds located on the shores of what is now Circular Quay and in the current location of the Sydney Opera House (Irish, 2014).

Kate and the other members of the 'remnant' Sydney Aboriginal community were relatively free to move around, follow their Ancient Songlines and live amongst the different communities and Aboriginal camps around Sydney and the wider Southeast Australian region (Goodall & Kadzow, 2009). Kate's son, Joe Bundle, was born in 1880 in the Rushcutter's Bay community during the time when the government was looking for reasons to close the abandoned government boatsheds at Circular Quay (Irish, 2017; Legislative Assembly NSW, 1883). In 1881, an article in the Gazette newspaper reported that Kate's now fourteen-month-old son, Joe was playing on the shoreline in front of the boatsheds while his mother was making a shell basket and supervising the children. Kate looked up to find little Joe floating in the shallow water and she ran to pull him out but unfortunately, she was unable to save him from drowning (Irish, 2017).

This devastating event was just enough to push the government to close the boat sheds and establish the NSW Aborigines Protection Board for the apparent 'protection' of Aboriginal peoples (Irish, 2017). From this point on, all Aboriginal peoples in NSW had to be living on a mission or reserve and could not leave without a written permit. Across the state, Aboriginal people were rounded up and forced into confinement sometimes hundreds and thousands of kilometres away from their Ancestral lands. For John's family, they were extremely fortunate that Kate went to the La Perouse mission, which is still on

their Ancestral Country, thereby allowing them to continue cultural practices in union with the Country from which they were derived.

The living conditions on missions and reserves were horrific and John remembers that the houses were simple shacks which “*weren’t much more than corrugated iron sheds.*” *John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018.* The houses provided by the government on the mission were incredibly basic with no electricity, running water, bathrooms, or kitchens. Aboriginal people were not allowed to leave the mission unless given written permission. They were not allowed to work and were forced to live on government rations. There was very little health care, only basic education to an 8-year-old level, and no pensions or other financial assistance from the government (Perry, 2013). It was a meagre subsistence that was tempered only by the beautiful surrounds of Gamay and the ability to still be able to live off the land and enact culture to some degree, though it was technically illegal to do so (Zuckermann, Shakuto-Neoh & Quer, 2014). Today, Kate’s descendants, including John and his family, still live on Country in Sydney despite the persistent and factually incorrect view that all Sydney Aboriginal people are extinct (Irish, 2014).

You see, word was getting around that some baby cockatoos were going missing. The Mayal were coming, catching young chicks, and taking them away in cages. The cockatoo mothers, grandmothers and aunties all tried to protect their babies, hiding them and attacking anyone who tried to come near them. They screeched and fought, protecting the chicks with their lives, but sometimes it just was not enough and they were taken.

Once in the cages, the Mayal wanted the baby cockatoos to be calm, quiet birds like the doves. The stolen chicks were not allowed to screech or fly anymore. The cages squashed their beautiful crests flat amongst the other feathers on their heads. If they acted like cockatoos, they were punished until they learnt to be like the doves. The chicks were suffering without their families and their families never got over their loss. Sometimes, they escaped from their cages but they had a hard time remembering how to be cockatoos and life was never the same for them.

Stolen Generations

One of the most well publicised policies of the Aborigines Protection Board was the act of forcefully removing Aboriginal children from their families and placing them into orphanages or adopting them into white families to be assimilated into Western culture and society (HREOC, 1997; Johnston, 1937; Locke, 2018; Read, 1982). The intention of this was to dismantle and eradicate Aboriginal communities by removing future generations and their access to language, culture, stories and knowledge. This became known as the Stolen Generations (Locke, 2018; Read, 1982) and was just one of the devastating acts of genocide inflicted on Aboriginal peoples throughout the ongoing colonisation of Australia. Although now considered a bygone era, many would argue that the Stolen Generations are not over, as there are more children removed from their families today than during any other time in history (O'Donnell et al., 2019).

Families living on Aboriginal missions like the one at La Perouse were particularly vulnerable to brutal government policy as they were living under the constant surveillance of the church and authorities. At the time of his birth, John's father, Fred Foster, also a proud D'harawal man, was a performer and "snake man"; making a living by taking a collection of snakes around the city to perform shows and dances with

the deadly animals (see Fig. 4 image of grandfather dancing with snake). Stories are still told today throughout the community about how Fred and his father, Tom, were both strong cultural men who performed ceremony, song and dance together. John's mother, Jesse Russell, however, was not Aboriginal, she was a white woman from Narrm (Melbourne), which meant that John and his siblings were considered "mixed blood" or "half caste" Aboriginal children. This is the offensive and racist terminology used in the 1937 Aboriginal Welfare "Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities" (Johnston, 1937 p. 3) as previously discussed in the literature review chapters of this thesis.

Since John and his older brother and sister were born from a mixed-race relationship, they were at great risk of being stolen from their family should they stay in the La Perouse mission. John's family did not want to leave Nanny Eliza, or any of their family and community in La Perouse, but the miserable conditions and constant fear of the authorities in the mission at La Perouse meant that the family had no alternative but to leave the mission and their wider family and community in the hope of protecting their children.

Garraway's family was very worried about the Mayal taking their chicks, so they decided to move away from the large flock and try to hide. They flew up along the Kai'eemagh waterway until they reached the mudflats of their bitter water Country. There they found flocks of birds that belonged to the Mayal. There were large families of doves, pigeons, mynas, starlings and ducks, and Garraway's family hoped

that by hiding here amongst the birds of the Mayal, the young cockatoos wouldn't be noticed and they would not be taken.

Dispossession & Assimilation

The Mayal taking young chicks from their nests symbolises the government taking Aboriginal children from their homes. This period of colonisation in now-Australia, has become known as the Stolen Generations. This section also represents the government sanctioned decimation of Aboriginal cultures and ways of being to allow for the assimilation of Aboriginal children into western culture. John was not one of the children stolen from his family in La Perouse but he suffered assimilation and dispossession in other ways.

John's family moved approximately twenty kilometres west along the Gamay (Botany Bay) river system, following Kaicemagh (Georges River) to a reserve at Salt Pan Creek in Herne Bay (now known as the suburb of Riverwood) on D'harawal Biddigalo (bitter water) Country. Having left the mission and the Aboriginal community, the family qualified to apply for a Housing Commission home, which was an enticing offer at the time. With internal bathrooms, kitchens, separate bedrooms and living areas, electricity and running water, Housing Commission homes were a deceptively positive, upward move for an Aboriginal family after the horrific conditions on the La Perouse mission, and in the Herne Bay Reserve (Morgan, 2000).

It was at Herne Bay at just three years of age that John remembers his first experience of discrimination in the form of racist comments that were made about him. John tells the story of what was known as ‘Community Night’ at Herne Bay where everybody would have dinner together, usually a big pot of soup. One night, they were having vegemite sandwiches before dinner and John remembers a white man offered some to him,

“when I got my sandwiches, the bloke who gave it to me said, ‘Here, eat all these’, he said, ‘It’ll put colour in your cheeks, as if you need it’, and everybody laughed, and I felt discrimination there for the first time, and at three years old, you wouldn’t think that it would affect me, but it’s something that I’d never forget. At three years old, I didn’t understand discrimination or anything like that, but I felt it. So it was at a very early age that I felt discrimination.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

Discrimination includes a complex and diverse range of behaviours and attitudes aimed to belittle, degrade, insult, stereotype and otherwise inflict cultural harm on its victims. So profound was its impact on John that he can recall the exact moment and location of his first interaction with racist behaviours over seventy years ago. It should also be noted here that to this day, John still does not eat vegemite, a fact that all his family know, but only now do they understand its origins in John’s life.

In Herne Bay, what the families didn’t know was that the government was using the allocation of public housing as a method to assimilate Aboriginal people into the white community. This was known as the “salt and pepper” or “chequer board” technique of assimilation, referring to the mixing black and white people together with the eventual outcome being that the black community will have no other option

but to assimilate into the white community (Goodall & Cadzow, 2009). Houses were allocated according to the racial breakdown of the family: if both parents were Aboriginal, you were allocated a government house on the outer margins of a city such as in the western suburbs of Sydney (in suburbs like Blacktown - initially named The Black Town for this reason) (Goodall & Cadzow, 2009). If, however, one of the parents was white, and the children were considered 'half caste' the family was allocated a government house in the middle of a 'white' suburb. The idea was that 'half caste' children were more easily assimilated into the white community if they were first separated from their wider Aboriginal family and community and relocated to a predominantly white suburb with their immediate family. These techniques of assimilation and dispossession were performed in much the same ways as the child removal policies, in that they ensured that Aboriginal communities were broken up and cultural connections were severed, with the ultimate intention of destabilising the future for Aboriginal peoples and culture (Johnston,1937).

With an Aboriginal father and a white mother, John's family was allocated a government house in what was considered a white community in the southern Sydney suburb of Narwee and, as he recalls they were "*the only family that I know of in Narwee that were Aboriginal.*" *John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018.* At the hands of the government, John's family had been intentionally forced from their community and extended family in La Perouse and enticed into government housing in Narwee with the promise of having access to the same privileges as white people including healthcare, employment and education.

But poor Garraway wasn't happy living amongst the other birds. He wasn't like them. He was bigger and clumsier than the doves and pigeons; he had a big, sharp, hooked beak that wasn't as cute as beaks on the ducks and he definitely wasn't as quick and cunning as the brown myna birds. The other birds had never seen or heard anything like Garraway, so they were always mean to him, calling him names and picking on him for being different. The birds did not like him for all of the reasons that made him special. They would tell him to be quiet and not screech. They laughed at his sulphur crest that sprouted across his head whenever he was excited, and they pecked at him as he flew eagerly through the sky. Often times, fights broke out. With his big sharp beak, Garraway was a good fighter, but he always felt bad after he had a fight with the other birds. He didn't like fighting. It didn't solve anything, it just caused more fights, so Garraway spent a lot of time staying away from the other birds and he was very lonely.

Discrimination & Violence

It is the main priority of John's involvement in this research that the discrimination and racism he has suffered living within the white community is documented. When asked the guiding research question 'If you could share a story or engrave a message in the sandstone for future generations what would it be?' John's answer is simple and direct "*The most important thing is discrimination and the effect it's had on my life.*" *John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018.*

Living in Narwee in a white community, John and his family suffered extreme racism, abuse, prejudice, ignorance, and exclusion which has had severe, and long-lasting effects on John's life. John recalls he had "*troubles at school and at home at the time*" *John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018* and he had no one to turn to for help. Through our yarns, John reveals an aspect of dispossession that is not taken into consideration often enough: the devastating impact on families when they are forcibly removed from

their wider community and support networks. John felt this loss deeply and expressed the differences between being raised in an Aboriginal community, as opposed to a white community:

“Being looked after by the Aboriginal community, is different to being looked after by a white community....You are talking about two purely different things with the black and white culture being involved here.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018

Throughout his traumatic childhood, John remembers that during the bad times at home he had no one to turn to:

“most of the Aboriginal kids at La Perouse knew that if there was trouble at home they would go to an uncle or aunties place. I didn’t have that at Narwee.” John Foster - Yarning session #3 04/02/2019

John regularly mentions “safe houses” and that, “Aboriginal children have always had a safe house to go to.” John explains:

“if there’s trouble in the family they would always go to a well-liked person’s place you know, sort of a second home for them and my grandmother would be one of the people who would take these kids in and look after them until the trouble passed over.” John Foster - Yarning session #3 04/02/2019

Due to the policies of assimilation via the allocation of government housing, John and his family were living far away from his grandmother and protector, Nanny Eliza, as well as the support network of his extended family in La Perouse. He explains “and my cousins and that you know like I never had that

family life we were just so many miles between us.” John Foster - Yarning session #3 04/02/2019. Being in Narwee, John was located too far away to run to his grandmother’s house for protection, “and that’s a big thing too you know like that’s part of my family life that ah, I never had you know.” John Foster - Yarning session #3 04/02/2019.

In his childhood home, John and his family suffered immensely at the hands of his Aboriginal father, Fred, who had turned to self-medicating to manage the pain of living in a world of severe systemic racism, poverty, and limited access to education and employment, coupled with the devastating early death of his father and fellow ceremonial man, Tom. John describes his father, revealing *“My father had a very violent attitude, everything was solved with violence from him.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.* As a child, John witnessed his father’s ongoing, violent outbursts, *“He bashed my mother really badly” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018* and in describing the poverty he endured he says, *“I’ve had to eat bread and dripping (animal fat) that’s how bad it was.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.*

When asked how he survived this trauma without the support of his family and community in La Perouse he explains:

“To survive what my father put us through, ah I got no idea how I survived that. I was only a nipper, and I held a knife under his chin one night when he threatened to kill me mother, and I said, ‘you kill me first,’ and he says, ‘I’ll kill you right now.’ You know and out came a knife and I put it under his chin, and I said, ‘try it.’ You know and he went to bed with

his tail between his legs and I didn't sleep for about a week." John Foster - Yarning session

#2 06/12/2018

John endured this horrific abuse at home and when he went out to the wider community to go to school, the abuse continued from his peers and teachers:

"When it was time for me to go to school, we were living at Narwee, we were the only black kids in the school. There was my brother, my sister and myself." John Foster - Yarning session #3 04/02/2019.

Yarning with him about his memories of school in Narwee, John reveals more stories of the harrowing and traumatic experiences of racism he suffered, especially being one of the only Aboriginal children in a white school and suburb. John recalls *"at school we copped a hell of a lot of racism"* John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018 from both students and teachers. He recalls:

John's family was not safe living under the authorities at La Perouse so they took up the offer of a housing commission house located inland up Kai-eemagh (the Georges River) so they could hide out away from targeted Aboriginal communities. Aunty Fran Bodkin uses the term "Dubyara'ora" (the Hidden Ones). What the family didn't realise was that the government was deliberately controlling where Aboriginal people were living. Families like John's with one white parent were allocated a house in the middle of a white suburb (amongst the "birds of the Mayal") so that their "half caste" children could be assimilated into the white community. For John, the racism he suffered at school was so intense he rarely attended,

“Myself, I copped a lot of racism there, and lots of fights, so I hardly ever went to school, right up to high school, I’d like go one day a week or two days a week, and then not go at all for a month or so, and the truant officers were always calling on our house, you know, to see where I am and what I’m doing and that, and one big bloke threatened to take me away from home. I remember his name, it was Betson, and my father gave me a big serve one day when Betson said that he was going to take me away when I don’t go to school. When the bloke went my father gave me a big serve, but I still didn’t go to school ‘cause of the fights and that.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

Much of John’s schooling was spent physically fighting other students who were racist and abusive towards him. He had learnt violence as a coping mechanism from his father and now both his home and school environments were violent battle fields that John did not want to take part in, but was forced to:

“Yeah. I hated violence at a very young age, but I didn’t know what to replace it with... until, you know, much older.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

John tells many stories of violent fights with fellow students, but it is clear that John is not proud or comfortable talking about his violent responses to the horrific abuse he suffered:

“Yeah. But my biggest problem is the violence that I had when I was younger, and the violence got me nowhere, you know. Yeah, and I’m dead set against violence now.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

When John described a time that the racism had settled down somewhat, he explained: *“It wasn’t too bad some of the kids would just say ‘get out of the way nigger’ or something like that once in a while.” John*

Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018. Unsurprisingly, John did not last long at school, "I ended up leaving school round about the age of fourteen, not able to spell. I could read alright, and my maths was alright." John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018. With little or no education, John left school and worked in factories for the next thirty years of his life. Interestingly, John explains that adult life at work was different to his life in government schools:

"My first job was in a factory over at Mortdale, and I'd never missed a day of work... Compared to my school attendance, you know, it was a thousand per cent, you know, I wouldn't go to school because of discrimination and that, and at work people were always more mature, and treated me a lot better." John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

As John's life unfolded, he fought hard to overcome the shame and degradation he felt as a child victim of violence, racism and prejudice. He always worked hard to better himself and his position in life, eventually leaving factory work and buying a local, small mixed business shop which John and his wife ran together. After two years it was decided that they would sell the shop and go back to full time employment, John explains:

"Where do I want to be in five years' time? And I'd be slamming away on the machine thinking, I don't want to be fucking here, that's for sure. When the opportunity came and we got the shop, I wasn't going to go and take a step backwards and go back to a factory again. I wanted my job to be much higher, which it turned out to be and it paid off big time, simply by pushing myself." John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018

Whilst working in factories, John had decided to explore his lifelong interest in visual arts and undertook a part time art certificate course at a local technical college. This in itself was an act of great resilience and resistance; undertaking tertiary study when his previous experiences with education were so traumatic and damaging. Adding to the difficulty of the situation, he was working long, hard hours as a welder, in a hot and dirty factory all day, and studying at night with below average literacy skills. John demonstrated great courage and determination as he worked hard to succeed, eventually graduating in 1989 with a trade certificate. His persistence and sacrifice paid off though, and with this qualification, John was able to secure a rewarding and fulfilling role in a government job in the early 1990s:

“I got a job with what they call CRS Australia, which was the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services, and I got a job in their Bankstown unit... I was there for about six years, and I got a sideways promotion, ended up in their state office... discrimination was very poorly thought about in those days, it was just becoming a big thing, you know, about discrimination.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

While John recognised that the overt, outward incidences of racism that he had experienced throughout his schooling were no longer occurring in his workplace, he was experiencing different forms of racism:

“But yeah, discrimination in CRS was not heard of, although I did feel discriminated against in a few aspects of my job there... it was sort of latent, it wasn’t visual enough to complain about, but it was people with their ideas of Aboriginality and that.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

John would find himself explaining and justifying his experiences of racism to his well-meaning colleagues. From an Indigenous perspective, John had become the outsider's "learning moment" whereby he was responsible for the "emotional labour" of the educational experiences for ignorant outsiders. This is so often expected of Aboriginal peoples, particularly those who are surrounded by non-Indigenous people (Moreton-Robinson, 2015):

"All these things about discrimination I've learnt from different aspects, and I feel, you know, discrimination in Australia is really rife, and a lot of my friends – when Pauline Hanson came on the scene, my white friends would say to me, 'Oh, but you're not discriminated against, are you, John?' I'd laugh, and I'd say, 'You wouldn't believe it if I told you' And they wouldn't because discrimination, as I said, can be latent, it can be hidden, or so subtle, you know, that people don't realise it's discrimination." John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

But John did not allow the continued racism to impact his friendly and gentle way of being as he would no longer resort to violence and aggression. He explains, *"I know discrimination when I see it, but you know, I don't complain or that, you know, I just turn my back on it, you know."* John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018. John developed new ways to resist discrimination, and his family witnessed his strength and personal power in rising above the pain and frustration he suffered every day to become a distinguished, and much-loved, government Aboriginal liaison officer for his community.

It didn't matter though, how much the other birds picked on Garraway, or how many fights he had, in his heart, Garraway still loved being a cockatoo. He was proud to be unique, he didn't want to be like the other birds, and he dreamed of a day when he wouldn't be teased for being a cockatoo. Garraway wanted things to be different so that when he had his own little chicks, they wouldn't have to go through what he had experienced. As Garraway grew up, he learnt that instead of fighting with the other birds, it was better to be patient and teach them what it was like to be a cockatoo. Garraway began to tell stories just like his grandmothers and aunties had done when they were teaching him. Garraway became a wonderful teacher and the other birds were amazed by his stories. They learnt about how clever, strong, and resilient cockatoos are, and many of them became friends with Garraway. Garraway liked his new friends, but it was never the same as being with other cockatoos who knew and understood him. He didn't have to patiently teach them; they could all just be together and look after each other flying high above Country. Garraway desperately missed the cockatoos he belonged to, and he longed to be a part of a large flock again.

Resistance

John had spent much of his young life resorting to violence to counteract racism and discrimination and through these lived experiences he had learnt that it was not what he wanted for his, or his children's lives:

"I think you've got to have that back-up plan, you know. If you've got somebody antagonising you in your life, you've got to have a back-up plan instead of violence, 'cause violence doesn't achieve anything, I don't think. It makes you lower than the people dishing out the discrimination." John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

A natural teacher and storyteller, John learnt to develop kindness and patience, and take the time to explain and educate people who did not understand his position or had racist views. His advice is clear and direct:

*“Violence is not the answer.....don’t hold it against them because of their ignorance, because they can turn out to be better people if you give them a chance to, and I gave them the chances, and.....it worked out, you know, really well.” John Foster - Yarning session #1
09/08/2018*

Through learning from his past experiences and always aspiring for more from his life, John had found a way to resist racism without violence, using his intelligence and kind, patient spirit to befriend and educate people regardless of their position in life or the level of racism and ignorance he faced. John credits education for arming him with the tools necessary to combat discrimination:

“I was sick of fighting and violence, I hated violence and that... so I tried to think of ways of overcoming discrimination by having more knowledge than the people who were giving it to me.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

It was John’s friendly and patient manner, coupled with his own self learning, that helped him resist, not just discrimination, but also the larger forces of colonisation, assimilation, and genocide. But John doesn’t see himself as an Aboriginal warrior of resistance. At first it appears that the racism he has suffered has been internalised to some degree as he belittles himself and his methods of resistance:

“When you say resistance, I don’t see myself as being a resistance fighter or something like that, you know. I’ve never marched down the street with a banner or anything like that, it’s

always been a sort of passive resistance from me you know, 'cause ab, that's my nature. I can't get on a soapbox down The Domain. I'm more complying to the society that I live in and I live in a white society. If I didn't do that, I'd probably be a real bad bastard, you know." John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018

After further Yarning and reflection, John understands that there are many forms of resistance, and that it is not always necessary to take part in protests and political activism to be considered a resistance fighter. Under a colonised regime, the everyday act of living an Aboriginal life and educating people about our stories and cultures is the ultimate act of resistance (Martin, 2008; Muller, 2007). The government has relentlessly pursued endless policies of assimilation and genocide to silence and eradicate people just like John, so it can be argued that just John's presence alone is an act of resistance. Importantly, John proudly explained that he *"never denied my Aboriginality, not once, to anyone."* John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018. Through John's lived experiences, it can be clearly understood that he has had to face many traumas as a result of colonisation and racism, yet he has remained a strong Aboriginal person, and not become beguiled by its violent tendencies and substances. John has gone even further though, to ensure that he has not just survived in a colonised world, but he has also created opportunities to continue culture not just for himself, but for countless others who will come after him, and so he honours his ancestors and their teachings.

In the second Yarning session with John, he tells the story of a friend that he worked with for many years who took every opportunity to make racist jokes and remarks to John about Aboriginal people. When

John decided to respond, using words and not violence, he found the situation a very positive experience stating that,

“I got a lot of strength out of that that empowered me.....I don’t feel as if I got power over him, but ah I get strength out of our relationship.....I seem to get strength from discrimination....when I’ve been confronted with discrimination, ah I seem to come away from it a stronger person....It’s hard to describe why I felt stronger about it...you know and ah I think it’s a good strength, it’s not a strength you know of bashing or anything like that, you know its strength of character that’s what I’m trying to say.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.

My father has learnt, from a childhood of violence that, *“It’s easier to be nice than to be a mongrel you know....Be nice all the time, and uh that’s helped me so much.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.*

It is important to note though that my father still suffers at the hands of discrimination, as he explains,

“Subtle discrimination over the years because of discrimination and things like that. I’ve become a loner you know I haven’t had close black family to rely on. I find having white friends, I don’t care how non discriminative they think they are; they still do it in a subtle way they can’t see, but I see and I feel it you know.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.

Within this Yarning session, John revealed that racism and discrimination deeply affects him, and he says, *“I feel separated.....I’ve become a loner.....I only like the relationship with my family.... And with my*

black friends that I've had over the years, those have been great.” John Foster - Yarning session #2

06/12/2018.

Just as he had dreamed, life became much better for Garraway when he became a dad and had his very own family. His babies loved to hear his stories and learn from him. Garraway taught them everything he knew about being a cockatoo and soon their screeches could be heard across the skies from sweet water to saltwater Country and back again. Other cockatoos that had also been hiding heard their screeches and came to join them. The older cockatoos helped Garraway teach his babies and together, they all made a family that could fly and screech and stretch their crests together. Garraway didn't feel so alone anymore, and he was happy that his children knew what it meant to belong to a large flock just like he had known when he was little.

Survival

After an agonising childhood living in Narwee, John eventually met, and fell in love with, unsurprisingly, a local white woman, and they had three children - all with fair skin and green eyes. In the eyes of the government, their assimilation policy had worked; they had bred out the black (Johnston, 1937 report). However, what the government did not understand though, was that you can breed out the colour in skin, but you cannot breed out the culture in hearts and minds (Carlson, 2016). John explains, “*Black is not a visual thing, it's in your heart and in your mind*” (Foster, 2019), and fortunately John worked hard to ensure that his cultural connections survived despite the weapons of dispossession and assimilation of the colonial government.

In a publication released by Georges River Council, John proudly explains his views on survival:

“As an Aboriginal man, I see our people as survivors. We have survived imported illnesses, assimilation, genocide; we are the greatest survivors on this earth.” (Foster, 2016).

Towards the end of his career, John became a consultant, delivering talks on cultural awareness as well as disabilities and inclusion. As an artist, John is always doodling and the image of a koala in a tree that has had all of its branches lopped off is one that he does often. He explains that he does the same drawing for the guests at his talks:

“I ask, ‘Am I a victim of my environment like this koala sitting in a tree with no leaves and the branches cut off?’ Then I say ‘I am not a victim. I am a survivor of my environment! You people are survivors too, otherwise you wouldn’t be here today! I want you to spread the word that Aboriginal people are survivors. We have survived imported illnesses, assimilation, genocide – we are the greatest survivors on this earth. I have overcome and survived discrimination.’ (Foster, 2013)

Through teaching and education, John has experienced many healing and restorative moments, *“In my cultural awareness training I say a lot of things that I want to say, you know, telling people how I’ve survived and you know, what it’s like to be discriminated against.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.* When asked if he thinks that being able to share and educate people has contributed to his survival he answers:

“Oh most definitely and I think from teaching you learn a lot and you learn a lot about yourself and you think, ‘I didn’t realise I thought that way’. Teaching is a good learning tool.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.

John comes to life when he is sharing stories and you can see how cathartic the process is for him. When asked, do you like telling your stories, he replies, *“ooh I love it ooh yeah”* and *“I find it very helpful.”* John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.

Through further Yarning, John arrived at the conclusion that he can also attribute his survival to his maternal instinct; he could not wait to be a father and ensure that his children had a different life to the one that he had lived, *“I think you’ve got to put down my survival to a maternal instinct in me. I always wanted my children to have a better upbringing than I did.”* John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.

A part of that was to raise children who knew that they were Aboriginal, and who understood what it meant specifically, to be D’harawal. In order to do this, John had to retain his sense of cultural identity and pride and not allow it to be eroded by the racism he suffered not only as child, but throughout his entire life:

“Yeah and I’ve always wanted to have children of my own. I think having children has helped me get to today. I love my children very deeply, nobody will ever know how much I love them. I just want to see them happy.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.

Upon deeper analysis, John reveals that his maternal instinct could also be attributed to the women in his life and the positive impact they have had on his lived experiences. As previously discussed, all the women in John’s early life were loving and compassionate to him. In our Yarning sessions he speaks fondly of his mother, sister and grandmother who all helped ease the abuse and violence of the male figures in his life, most significantly, his father.

As John's story unfolds it also becomes clear that his lived experiences do more than just highlight some of the government's cruel assimilation policies and the trauma and abuse that is suffered by Aboriginal people at the hands of a colonial government. John's story also interrogates the dichotomy of the Aboriginal experience that says you either grew up on a mission, or you were a victim of the Stolen Generations (Irish, 2014). There are other lived experiences made up of mission refugees, runners, and those swept up by the many policies of assimilation in the hope of a better life for their children.

In many cases, Aboriginal people had to become what Aunty Fran Bodkin (2013) calls the 'Dudbaya'ora – the Hidden Ones' (p. 2) hiding their bodies and their identities by partially assimilating into Western communities to avoid persecution from the government (see also Hromek, 2019). Many Aboriginal people like John, who have suffered dispossession and dislocation from their wider communities, formed their own Aboriginal communities, made up of others who were also in hiding. Living in white communities, John drew on the love and respect of an extended family of other Dudbaya'ora (Hidden Ones); wonderful Aboriginal Aunties and Uncles who helped him protect culture and pass it onto his children just as their Ancestors have done for generations before them. These communities have been fundamentally forged by the intended destruction of that which they would not allow to be destroyed.

Another aspect to be understood is that these communities of Dubyara'ora are often overlooked in research, as they are not typically associated with government-funded bodies like Aboriginal Land Councils, and are therefore, not easily 'found' by researchers so their stories are either erased or misrepresented in published records (Foster, 2020). It may be argued that this is especially prevalent in research undertaken by non-Aboriginal researchers from outsider communities (e.g., Karskens, Goodall,

Irish, Nugent), who may rely on making connections to Aboriginal people through the colonial records and government organisations, not through personal connections that are often deeply embedded within Country (Foster, Kinniburgh & Wann, 2020).

Aboriginal peoples like John have had to hide to survive, and now, through insider research like this project, their stories can be more clearly heard, and their lived experiences can be understood, remembered, and respected. John has enjoyed recording his stories through our insider Yarning, and he highlights the cultural and personal safety he feels in undertaking this work with a member of his family:

“I can say more to you than I could to them, because you understand me and know where I’m coming from and all that sort of stuff. I don’t have to explain the ins and outs of a duck’s arse to you, because you already know it all.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.

After a lifetime living with and amongst non-Indigenous people, John now understands the difference when he is with his community: *“With Aboriginal people definitely. I feel safe, I feel secure, I feel happy and content.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.* When he is with non-Indigenous people though, he explains that:

“Sometimes when I walk into a room and it’s full of whites, sometimes it can be hindering a bit, because I don’t feel I’m part of the group. Even though I feel unique and all, I find it hard. If I’m a member of that team, it’s hard for me to feel like I’m fitting in, it’s hard to describe.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.

John points out a particularly significant time during his career with the CRS when he was able to work for Aboriginal peoples, and connect with the wider Sydney Aboriginal communities:

“when I moved into the city office, I had an autonomous position, and I was able to attend a lot more Aboriginal functions and be more involved in the people and that, because part of my job description was to be involved in community activities.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018

This had a positive effect on John and his children who made invaluable connections to other Aboriginal people and organisations across the Sydney region, connections that have reinforced their cultural identity and practices.

With the strength of their family Garraway’s screeches grew louder and louder and soon he was dancing through the skies again and attracting the attention of all kinds of birds, not just cockatoos. Garraway helped all of them, teaching them what he knew about flying and screeching, and about being the best bird you can. He helped so many birds, birds who had been stuck in cages, birds whose wings had been broken and birds who just did not think they could be birds and fly high anymore.

Garraway’s babies watched everything he did and learnt to be strong, proud, brave cockatoos just like him. With Garraway’s help they found ways to get along with the other birds and teach them how wonderful it is to be a cockatoo. Garraway was so proud of his babies and they were so proud of him too. They loved that Garraway had made sure to remember all the ways to be a cockatoo so that one day, he could teach them how to be cockatoos too.

Today, John cherishes the opportunity to share what he has learnt about surviving discrimination with his children:

“that’s what I advise my kids to do too, you know, turn your back on discrimination, you know, like don’t let it win... if you let it upset you, it’s winning, you know. If it makes you want to fight, it’s winning... I don’t want to fight about discrimination these days.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018.

It is also his wish that he can help other Aboriginal people resist and survive discrimination too, *“Well, I hope any Aboriginal person listening to this, I hope it helps them deal with a shocking bloody issue, you know in some way.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018.*

When asked how he feels about being Aboriginal, John is quick to reply, *“I am bloody proud to be Aboriginal, always have been.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018.* As he reflects on the question though, he adds that he also feels *“A lot of pride and joy, and sadness.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018.* When questioned about the sadness, John explains his feelings about the La Perouse community and a recent visit to his cousin’s home on what was once the mission, *“I felt so at home that day. I started crying tears of sadness for myself like, I’ve missed so much of my family.... it was so nice being there and hearing stories.” John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018.* As his daughter, it was difficult for me to witness the pain John feels at not being able to be raised with his community and family in La Perouse.

Despite this, John goes on to explain that overall, being Aboriginal makes him feel special:

“Unique, I feel unique. When I’d walk into a room full of people and they are all white, sometimes I’ll sit at the back. Even in photos, you see photos of me in a group, I’m always right over the left or right over the back, or right over the right.....I feel sort of separated you know, but in a nice way, a sort of unique way.” John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.

In many ways, John and his story are unique: he is a survivor of the frontline of colonisation in Australia, and I would argue that there are very few people who can claim the same story of resistance and survival with the integrity and pride that John demonstrates.

John has overcome insurmountable damage and abuse at the hands of the government and pressures forced upon his direct family, and it is easy to get lost in the pain and despair of John’s story, but it is his unwavering resistance and survival that is the key message here. Today, John is a proud leader of his family and community, and in 2010 his work with community was recognised when he was nominated for the NAIDOC Elder of the year award. It was just a few years later as he was preparing for a well-earned retirement, that John’s career culminated in his address to the United Nations on behalf of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia at an Indigenous Peoples with Disabilities conference (Foster, 2019). It is beyond awe-inspiring and life-changing to know that against all odds, that little boy who felt the sting of racism at just three years old; the little boy who was racially and physically abused for his entire childhood; the young man who laboured for decades in hot factories and the man that has lived a lifetime witnessing the torment of his people and culture being destroyed by colonisation, has now overcome so much to become the proud Elder and D’harawal man who is so loved

and cherished today. For myself, Uncle John's story is a compelling argument for our ability to survive and remain culturally strong, and he has one last wish for the future of his culture:

"I want to see those young Aboriginal people saying the same thing to young people in ten years' time. I say to our Aboriginal youth, learn your lessons well and pass this survivor message on. We will never survive if we live off hand-outs. We have to train and teach our children about Aboriginal culture and how we have survived in the past. We have to imagine and fashion our future." (Foster, 2013, p. 20)

Today, Garraway's screeches can still be heard across the country, far and wide, from saltwater Country to sweet water and sour water. When you hear Garraway's screeches it is a reminder to you to remember how special and unique you are, just for being you. The echoes of Garraway's calls across Country remind us of the power that you hold in your voice, and it has lasting effects. You never know who is listening and who you are helping, so raise your crest, screech your loudest screech and dance across the skies for there is no one out there that will do it just like YOU!

Results: Yarning with The Circle

After analysing John's knowledges and co-writing the story of Garraway, the next stage of our D'harawal Storytelling methodology was to present the story to the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle (*The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020*). This process allowed John to share the Story with those he trusted culturally, our valued Elders and Knowledge Holders to

contribute their analysis and interpretation of the story to the research, and importantly assess the story as a potential D'harawal Narinya Law/Lore story.

John and I presented the story to the Circle at their monthly meeting held on July 2nd, 2020. The meeting was recorded, and I analysed the transcript to distinguish the main themes and discussion points that arose from the Circle members after hearing the story of Garraway. Following is a thematic analysis of the discussion with the attendees referred to by their cultural pseudonyms, as selected by each individual: Garraway, Beela, Diruwan, Bookerrikin, Burrumurring, Garraway, Kannabi, Wiritjiribin, and Wugan. The key themes (or shared meanings) to emerge from the Circle were: Survival and Resistance; Colonial Violence; Positivity; The Future; Relatedness; Symbology; and Personal Interpretation. These augment the interpretations of the Story of Garraway, as I outline below.

Survival and resistance was an important shared theme for the Circle, and discussion centred around the ways in which the story of Garraway offered insights into how to survive and be resilient to the forces of colonisation. From this resilience, the ability to resist colonisation emerged, with the Garraway Story itself offering an example of how our culture can be revived.

“It's not enough for people to hear that he was very maternal and wanted to have kids and couldn't wait to be able to give them a life he didn't have, and they can't accept that that is his way of surviving and resisting and getting up every day and doing a good job to make sure that he had kids that were proud of it. Academia can't explain that and theory can't explain that”. Beela The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020

Colonial Violence was another shared theme that emerged through the Circle discussion. This theme outlined how the Garraway Story was reflective of the destructive forces, and unmitigated consequences, of colonisation itself for the Elders and Knowledge Holders;

“Your grandchildren, “Gran, tell me about your dad,” and you could just tell them that story and they would get an understanding of the ... a basic understanding that there was trauma and violence in life and separation and segregation and imprisonment... containment.” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020

Positivity was another important theme identified in the Circle discussion. In the face of colonisation and the traumatic lived experience it spreads, a re-occurring theme voiced for the Story centred on the need to remain positive rather than perpetuate the negativity of the colonial violence itself.

“Having said what you just said, over my years, I've believed every one of us have the right to fight in our way and to respect that and having said that, I believe you catch more bees with honey than bullets and kill them with kindness. That's helped me survive a lot”. Garraway The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020

The Future is an important aspect of culture for the D’harawal circle. Contributing to the survival and success of future generations was another key theme that arose. The importance of the Garraway Story was particularly evident in its use for teaching and strengthening the future generations of D’harawal and all Aboriginal children.

“...at the end of the day, what do we want the reader, the young ones to pick up from this? What do we want them to take into their future? The old and the new mixed together perfectly, I think.” Bookerrikin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020

Relatedness was a theme that also arose from the Circle discussion. Within this, relatedness not only refers to interpersonal connections between Uncle John’s Narinya Story and the Circle members, but also how the Story is connected to Ancestral (particularly matriarchal) and Spiritual elements of what it means to be D’harawal.

“I found it very relatable knowing that you said it was Uncle’s story and I don’t know you very well at all or anything about your family, your past or anything. In my mind’s eye, I pictured you as that cockatoo, as the role model, as the carer, the protector. I think you were saying that your dad had some instincts to want to love and be a family person and all that. I got all that from that story. It made me feel very comfortable. It made me feel like I could relate to that in certain ways.” Bookerrikin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020

The Symbolology inherent within the Story of Garraway was also a point of discussion for the Circle. Within this theme, Circle members spoke of the depths of meaning embedded (and sometimes hidden) within the Garraway Story.

“That’s’ one of the main reasons I enjoyed it because I know little bits of you and I can see bits of you in there, but I can still see a whole lot in that story even if I didn’t

know you, and I could still draw a lot out of it, which is the purpose of a lot of those stories.” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020

The Circle discussion also centred around the theme and understanding that this Story reflects the Narinya of Uncle John himself. There was a unanimous recognition that this was Uncle John Foster’s Narinya Story, and many of the Circle members spoke about how it directly reflected on (and taught of) his lived experiences as a D’harawal man.

“Hidden in that is the story of the sharing to revitalise society, to revitalise a cultural society.... Sharing is a means of renewal. There’s a whole lot of things like that that aren’t John Foster-specific, yet all of those things are also John Foster-specific. So, someone who doesn’t know you and has never known of you could still take a lot out of that story”. Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020

Another important theme that was discussed by the Circle is the meaning and importance of Narinya Stories. It was agreed that creating a Narinya Story was a meaningful way to reflect John’s Story, and to also demonstrate the constantly evolving nature of our Dreaming and Lore:

“I guess that’s what our stories are about and one of the purposes of the Narinya stories is to continue on our Dreaming and our Ancestral stories; we can all relate to them in some way and so although there would’ve been a time when the Ancestral Stories may have been about a particular individual or group of people’s

lived experiences, they speak to us all and they can speak to us in different ways”

Kannabi The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020

After the telling of the Garraway Narinya Story, discussion emerged around the partnership between myself and John as co-creators of the Story and the reciprocity that is embedded within this way of working with D’harawal Storytelling protocols. There was an appreciation of the inclusion of John as co-author of the Story, and how this was an example of the need for meaningful reciprocity in research.

“I even went to her after I read it and I said, “Look ...” She got me down as the author and I said, “Take my name off there and put your name on there,” and she says, “No way.” John Foster The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020

... At the end of the day, would this exist without him? No. So, it’s his. It’s something we worked on together” Shannon The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5 02/07/2020

Personal Interpretation was an important theme that also arose with a number of the Circle members speaking about how John’s Garraway Narinya Story reminded them of their own lived experiences. This is a particularly important feature of a Narinya Story as they are intended to be accessible and relatable for anyone who engages with them. (Bodkin-Andrews, Foster, Bodkin, Foster, Andrews, Adams, & Carlson, 2023). Some members of the Circle were able to apply the Garraway Narinya Story to specific events in their life, helping them to make sense and meaning of some of their lived experiences:

“My grandmother had a stroke when I was a little fellow, about six, and I used to sit on the end of the bed and talk to her, read her stories, upside down book, making the story up, so my mother told me. But yeah, I'd sit there and I'd be there and if she wanted something, I'd go out and hassle Mum to give it to me so I could give it to Nan. So, very close, me and my grandmother...As I said, I can relate to it really well” *Wugan The Circle, Circle Yarning session #5*
02/07/2020

Consensus

At the conclusion of the Circle discussion, conversation turned to whether or not the Circle agreed that John's Garraway Story could be considered a D'harawal Narinya Story. It was a powerfully affirming moment when complete consensus was reached, and it was decided that John's Story should be seen as a D'harawal Narinya Story.

“So, there's one other thing that needs to be done about the story and that is do we have a consensus on accepting it as a Narinya story? – Kannabi. Oh, yes. – Burrumurring. Absolutely. – Wiritjiribin. I think that's quite easily done – Wugan. Unanimously. – Bookerrikin”.

Summary

In this results chapter I summarised the Yarning data from four Yarns with Uncle John Foster and one Circle Yarn with The Circle about Uncle John's Narinya Story. I drew themes of Country, Aboriginal

women, Colonisation, Stolen Generations, dispossession, assimilation, resistance and survival from the Yarning Data and wrote these into the Garraway Narinya Story, as I worked from my D'harawal (Australian) Indigenous Women's Standpoint and in collaboration with Uncle John. Finally I presented the themes as they emerged in the Yarning data with the Circle, and they echoed the themes, but also introduced some new ones that enriched the interpretation. I showed that a consensus decision was reached on the Garraway Story's status as a D'harawal Narinya Story. In the next chapter, I present the findings from an almost identical process with another of my incredible Elders, Aunty Fran Bodkin.

Chapter 6 RESULTS - YARNING WITH AUNTY FRAN BODKIN

Yarning Sessions

This results chapter summarises the data collected in three Yarning sessions with Aunty Fran Bodkin and one Yarning session about Aunty Fran's Narinya story with the Circle. These sessions are listed below and each time they are referenced, they appear as they do in this list.

Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6 26/06/2018

Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020

Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021

The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the Stories and knowledges of Sydney D'harawal Bidjigal woman, Frances Bodkin (respectfully known as Aunty Fran). There are very few words that capture how truly special Aunty Fran is to my family, but I will begin by explaining our connections to her.

There are many ways in which Aunty Fran's story intersects with the life and experiences of my father, and the first co-researcher of this thesis, Uncle John Foster. Like John, Aunty Fran is also a D'harawal Sydney person raised in the white community, and she too has had to endure severe racism and abuse for being Aboriginal. Aunty Fran's story is also about survival and resistance and the ways in which

D'harawal people and culture have continued to survive here, on-Country, despite the ongoing destruction and damage of colonisation.

Both my father and I have always lived just ten kilometres from where Aunty Fran was raised in Marrickville. Being in close proximity to each other, and having mutual friends, my father and Aunty Fran initially met each other over thirty years ago in the course of working for Aboriginal communities in Sydney; Aunty Fran in research and education and John in the health and employment sectors. John and Aunty Fran were part of a group of Aunties and Uncles who were in white dominated areas of Sydney, hiding in plain sight and 'doing the work.' That is, they did their best to stay out of the infighting and internalised oppression that Dudgeon Rickwood, Garvey & Gridley (2014) identified within Indigenous communities. In their research regarding psychological treatments and the care of Indigenous communities, Dudgeon et al (2014) identified that within oppressed communities "Internalisation of their devalued status and feelings of oppression can lead to the adoption of denigrating views and judgments both about themselves and about others in their racial or ethnic group" (p. 44). Instead, both Elders chose to stay focused on their work. They were both driven by a passion to educate the young, as well as the wider community, about who we are, as D'harawal people, and what is important to us, ensuring that our Stories and knowledges are shared and safe for the future.

What they did, essentially, was create important platforms and spaces for me, and others from the younger generations, to work from: Spaces that celebrated rather than politicised our Knowledges and Country; spaces that were culturally safe and supported, particularly by Elders. This has been extremely important for my cultural identity and my ability to undertake work in Aboriginal communities here in

Sydney. Indeed, this research project (not just this PhD, but the broader *Shielding our Futures* D’harawal Storytelling ARC grant project) has actually evolved from the work of Elders like Uncle John and Aunty Fran: they have spent their lives ensuring that D’harawal Stories and knowledges are heard and shared, and now I have the privilege to learn and share their individual stories as important cultural knowledges that can inform a new, more culturally safe future for the generations to come.

Numerous themes have arisen through this research with Aunty Fran including those of Storytelling, the Stolen Generations, Country and interconnectedness. In this chapter I will explore these themes in relation to Aunty Fran’s lived experiences as a Sydney D’harawal woman. To prioritise her voice and unique standpoint, I have intentionally engaged with Indigenist Research Principles (Rigney, 2003), D’harawal Storytelling Methodology (Bodkin, 2013; Bodkin-Andrews, Foster, et al., 2022) and the associated practice of Indigenous yarning (Bodkin-Andrews, Foster, Bodkin, Foster, Andrews, Adams, Evans & Carlson, 2022). Implementing these Indigenous research methodologies, methods and practices has *decolonised* the research process for myself and the co-researchers as well as provided a culturally safe space for Aunty Fran. Therefore, Aunty Fran’s expression of her stories and knowledges, have been able to reach depths that other, Western methods of research, would have failed to do (Martin, 2008).

From the Stories and knowledges collected through our Yarning sessions, we have created a D’harawal Narinya (Living Dreaming) Story, “Moolby the Wedge-tail Eagle”, as evidence of the continued survival of our cultural life despite the colonisation of Country in 1788. This Narinya Story can be understood and applied by anyone, regardless of whether they know Aunty Fran, or have even experienced the

destruction of colonisation. Through the Narinya Story of Moolby, Aunty Fran's life can be understood as one of trauma and immense pain, but also a deep and enduring connection to Country and community. Survival and resistance are key themes arising from this Story and it is hoped that the Story of Moolby will bring peace and understanding to those asking questions and seeking answers.

Yarning with Aunty Fran

“That’s us. We destroy the smallest part and it has repercussions on every other part.

*It might take a long time. It might take a short time, but whatever we do,
it has repercussions. That’s when I thought, we are part of a huge whole.*

We are part of this, we’re part of the universe”

Frances Bodkin, D’harawal Elder - Yarning session #6 26/06/2018

It was a cold, wet day in the season of Burrugin (winter in the European calendar) when I met with Aunty Fran Bodkin at Yandelora (a place of peace between peoples now known as Mt Annan). Yandel’ora is a special place to us as D’harawal people; Country here holds many of our Stories, in particular those that talk about our ceremonies and coming together with people from all over the continent for peaceful celebrations and ceremonies. This is the spirit of generosity and peace that I have learned from my Elders like my father John, and Aunty Fran. That is, as we are taught by the lessons of the Yandel’ora Garuwanga Story (Bodkin, 2013; Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2022) we can come together, put our weapons down and celebrate with Country as the uniting force that brings us all together.

This is how we have always learned culture and Stories; sitting with the women Elders and Aunties amongst the Dahl'wah (casuarina), following the meandering Stories and taking note of what we have heard before, and what we will need to hear again.

The Story of how Moolby became the wedge-tailed eagle

Many moons ago, on D'harawal Bitterwater Country, during the season of the Ngoonungi, a tiny bird was born into a nest high above the mud and the mangroves of the wetlands. The little one's mother was Burrumurring, the wedge-tailed eagle, who spent her days soaring high above Country making sure that all was well, and that everyone was safe. The baby girl's father was of another land, a Merlin raptor who was a great traveller and brilliant navigator. Together, they protected their precious little girl, telling her Stories and gently preening her soft, fluffy feathers that were the same pale cream colour as the beautiful flowers of the native frangipani. They decided to call their little girl Moolby to honour the special plant.

Frances Bodkin was born in 1937 to Harland and Elvie Bodkin during the season of Ngoonungi, otherwise known as spring in the Western calendar. Elvie was a D'harawal Bidigal woman from the region now known as Sydney, and she had been learning Stories and cultural knowledges from her mother and Aunties all her life. Harland, a keen train enthusiast, was of Irish heritage, and also a great Storyteller, but in a different way. Their first child Fran was born in the back of the car when it hit and killed a tree in the middle of Sydney. As was customary, Elvie and Harland planted Moolby (D'harawal

word for *Hymenosporum flavum*, the native frangipani) in honour of their baby's birth. To this day, over eighty years later, the beautiful plant is still a favourite of Aunty Fran's and for this reason, Moolby is the name chosen by Aunty Fran for the main character her Narinya Story

Storytelling

From their nest high up in the tallest gum tree, Moolby's parents taught her everything she would need to know to live a happy life on D'harawal Country. Sometimes they would even hide her amongst their feathers and fly her to special places, so she could experience all of D'harawal Country (across the salt, bitter, and sweet waters), and learn about how magnificent her homelands are. One of Moolby's favourite places to go was Nattai (Sweetwater) Country. She loved the cool, clear ponds and waterfalls that carved their way across the land, creating valleys that were filled with the most beautiful flowers and amazing plants.

Moolby's father taught her how to find her way around, pointing out the pathways across Saltwater Country and Freshwater Country, and explaining how they were all connected across the land. Moolby's mother taught her how everything on Country was connected; nothing existed on its own, and that every single aspect and entity of Country relied on each other for protection and survival. She showed her how Country was like the branches of their nest – if one branch was disturbed or removed, the whole nest was affected and could fall apart. On D'harawal Country, everyone must respect every little thing, no matter how small it was or how insignificant it seemed, everything was important and must be protected.

Moolby learnt that you must look after Country so that Country can look after you. Her mother explained that the Great Spirit Woman gave the eagles the important job of protecting the people by looking after the skies just as the ants looked after the earth, the eels looked after the rivers and the

sharks looked after the seas. All together, they made sure that everything on Country was protected and that the Laws that had been passed on from the Ancestors, were being followed.

Aunty Fran's family were committed to teaching her everything they knew about Country and the world around them. Elvie, in particular, was a dedicated Storyteller, and she wasted no time in making sure that Aunty Fran knew as much as possible about her connections to D'harawal culture and Country, and the many Stories that had been diligently passed on to her through countless generations.

Aunty Fran loved her mother's Stories and all the incredible lessons they held. She explains:

"I liked the Stories because they were like, explained Country to me. And no matter where I was, when I was running away all those times [often from foster homes], I knew where I was, or no, not [just] that, but I knew that I could eat. I knew that I would never go hungry."

Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021

Aunty Fran understood from a very early age that with the knowledge the Stories contained, she could live off Country anywhere and be alright; Country would protect her and keep her safe and fed. Aunty Fran learnt essential knowledges of Country through her mother's Stories, such as how to test plants for toxicity before you eat them, lessons that effectively required patience and time to learn from the plants themselves:

"I knew how to test the food so that I knew I could eat it, because mum had taught me a long time beforehand, even when I was little, how to test if I could eat it or not. What it is,

if there was food, well more particularly vegetation, vegetative food. You firstly tested it on your wrist by crushing it up and rubbing it on your wrist. And if there's no reaction there, you then test it on the inside of your elbow. If there's no reaction there, you tested it under your arm and if there's no reaction there, you tested it on your lip. And if your lip didn't swell up, you were fine.” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021

Most importantly though, knowing the Stories of Country made Aunty Fran feel connected and safe even when she was removed and taken far from her own D’harawal Country and placed into Foster care in other areas. Stories still played an important role in her survival though she does make a cultural distinction between her own D’harawal Stories that she is free to share, and those of other people and places, that are not for her to tell:

“I always had a Story to fall back on, you know? And no matter where I was taken, there was a Story about the place, although I can't tell some of those Stories because they don't belong to me, the Stories explained the land and it helped me.” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021

Country

Aunty Fran’s parents understood that the best way to learn was experientially from Country itself, so they would take Aunty Fran and her younger brother and sister to many different places to learn about Country *from* Country. Aunty Fran’s favourite place to go was Nattai (freshwater) Country, *“It is so peaceful, and all was so peaceful and beautiful there and yet there was adventure!”* Fran Bodkin - Yarning

session #6 26/06/2018. She loved everything about Nattai Country including the plants, pools, ponds, rocks, and the animals that she would encounter, especially the platypus. Aunty Fran still tells the story of when they first encountered a platypus in the Nattai River:

*“There were 30 different platypus families living in that part of the river. I remember the first time that we ever saw them, we nearly shit ourselves. We were in the water and we saw these two eyes and this sort of nose and this ‘v’ coming towards us. We thought it was a crocodile. Dad had gone by then. We thought it was a crocodile. We climbed up the tree and we looked down and it was a platypus... We used to actually slip into the water quietly and we would put our legs in, and the platypus would come up and nibble the hairs on our legs. It was so wonderful down there. It was heaven.” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6
26/06/20188*

Aunty Fran and her siblings were so well connected to Country and felt so safe that they often spent days at a time out on Country without their parents. As Aunty Fran and her younger siblings grew older, they would bicker and fight with each other and Country became their refuge:

*“We used to fight a lot, so Dad used to throw us into the back of the ute with a carton of baked beans and drive us all the way down to the Nattai Valley. Throw us off. Right? And said, ‘When you stop fighting, you can come back.’ He’d come back a couple of days later and pick us up, but it was just so beautiful down there.” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7
17/07/2020*

Today, this might seem unsafe and probably terrifying for any child, but Aunty Fran and her siblings loved being sent out on Country, and they would often pretend to fight so that they would be sent off again. Aunty Fran explains, *“That’s why we used to muck up. We had this play [fight] written and we tape recorded it so when dad came home from afternoon shift, or night shift, we’d lock the bedroom and play it.”* Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021. Aunty Fran’s father would hear the (pretend) fighting and pack the children up and leave them on Nattai Country again until they had sorted it out. Aunty Fran explains her long and familiar connection to Country:

“Country is beautiful..... I always knew when I left my Country and when I came back I always knew the moment we crossed into my Country. It was such a wonderful feeling. It’s like a warm, furry blanket on a cold night. I’m safe”. Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020

Aunty Fran’s father Harland, a skilled navigator who loved trains and buses, taught Aunty Fran the railway network across Sydney, showing her that if you could make your way to Central or Sydenham stations, you could make your way anywhere. Harland took her on many trips and taught Aunty Fran that the railway lines connected all the suburbs together just as the waterways connected different areas of Country to each other. As Aunty Fran explained:

“I was never lost. Today I might have been if the same thing happened. I was never lost because of one specific thing and that was, dad loved railways and he taught me about the railways, and in those days the railways only belonged to each state. They didn’t travel

over the borders. So, I knew that I was always in my home Country". Fran Bodkin -

Yarning session #8 01/03/2021

Interconnectedness

Through her parents, Aunty Fran learnt that everything is connected, nothing exists on its own and everything affects all other things:

"We are only a very, very small part of a very big whole. That's whole, spelt with a W. And that we are dependent on the rest." Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6 26/06/2018

Aunty Fran's mother helped her understand interconnectedness by telling her Stories of Country. Elvie would take young Aunty Fran to places and tell her Stories, sometimes though, she would just point something out and tell Aunty Fran to just remember it, and that its meaning would become clear at a later time. Aunty Fran now uses the migration of Parradowee (the Eel Spirit) to explain interconnectedness:

"I'm going to tell you a little story about my mum. She used to take me places and show me things and then say, 'Remember that.' It must be caught in my head somewhere and it will pop up when I least expect it. On this particular time she took me down to Tempe, and the railway bridge that goes across the Cooks River near to the station. We were standing near there and she said, 'Look in the water, what do you see?' Those days the sand at the bottom of Cooks River was white, not dirty brown like it is now. There, laying on the bottom of the water was these sharks and they were just laying there in the sunlight. I said, 'They are

sharks, Mum'. She said, 'Yeah, what are they doing?'. 'All they are doing are laying there in case you wade in their water'. I said, 'Mum, they are sunbaking'. She said, 'No, have a closer look'. I looked a bit closer and the fish that were on the side and underneath the bellies of the sharks were dropping off and they were swimming upstream. I said, 'Look, mum, it's having babies'. She said, 'They don't look like the shark, do they?'. 'No, no'. So, they were normal fish and she said, 'What are they doing?' I said, 'They are dropping off fish, instead of sharks and they are going upstream'. She said, 'Good, I want you to remember that'. So, I did, never forgot it, because they were the key words that she always said, 'I want you to remember that'. Then, seven years later, or three, or four foster homes later, she took me down to Liverpool Weir. It wasn't like it is now, it was just sort of a whole lot of stones heaped up on the Georges River. What was happening was the big eels were coming down the Georges River from upstream and sliding over the weir and swimming in the stream. She said, 'What are they doing?'. What was remarkable about it was those eels, there was so many of them that you felt that you could walk across the river on their backs. It was amazing. The whole water was moving with the eels. So, I said, 'Look at them. They're going down stream.' She said, 'Good, now, if they are going down stream, where do you think they would be going to?'. 'I don't know, the bay, out to the sea?'. She said, 'Good, I want you to remember that'." Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6 26/06/2018

Aunty Fran retained all of these moments with her mother, and it wasn't until many years had passed that she was able to piece all the details together to reveal the full, interconnected Story of Parradowee and Booambilyee (the shark):

“I was doing all these excursions up on the Great Barrier Reef. I was talking to a scientist up there and I mentioned the sharks. And he said, ‘Oh, I know where they go’. I asked him ‘What do you mean?’. ‘This time of year’ he said, ‘they all go out into the Coral Sea and they feed off the eels’. I said ‘What? Come on, let’s go’. So, we borrowed the Sydney University boat, the massive thing, the oceanographic vessel and we went out to the Coral Sea, at that time, the sharks were gathering. The sharks were gathering to eat the eels, so, what happened was that the sharks come into the estuaries to get the suckerfish off. The suckerfish then go up into the headwaters of the rivers and the creeks, where they spawn and die. Waiting to eat them are the eels. Now, then, the mature eels, that’s the last meal they ever have, the eels, the mature eels. They go all the way out to the Coral Sea, where they spawn and they die and waiting to eat them are the sharks”. Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6 26/06/2018

To complete the cycle, the sharks then return on the tides with the baby eels, to the rivers and streams of Aunty Fran’s Country, around Sydney where the Story then repeats and continues. These are the details and nuances of Country that fascinate Aunty Fran the most and she is understandably animated as she finishes her Story with, *“That was wonderful, you know? I thought about it and I was like, “Wow!”* Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6 26/06/2018.

Knowledges such as this had such a profound effect on Aunty Fran that she now keeps track of seemingly random facts and ideas in what she calls a *“file of unrelated facts”* Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020. Aunty Fran has been keeping this file her entire life with the understanding that

eventually she would find ways to connect various unrelated facts together. When asked if she has always been curious and asking questions Aunty Fran responds, “*No, I’ve always been seeking answers,*” and it is with steely determination that she emphatically states, “*I will find the answer*” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6 26/06/2018. She calls the way she works, “*sideways thinking*” meaning that you sometimes have to think outside the square and join many different thoughts and ideas together to find the answers you are seeking. Aunty Fran understands that if you, “*think sideways you’re safe, because nobody else does.*” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6 26/06/2018.

Through her deep connections to Country, Aunty Fran has learnt so much and one of the earliest lessons she taught me was that the best scientific equipment you can use are your five senses. It was also through observing Country’s natural associations of plants that Aunty Fran understood interconnectedness and relationality in action. She explains:

“It just hit me, that everything is related to everything else, right? And it’s the plants that taught me that, because when you have like here, out there, (gestures towards native gardens and bush) you have an association of plants growing there that grow there naturally together and they feed each other, right?” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020.

Aunty Fran is now a generous teacher, and she voluntarily applies her knowledge to projects that benefit local schools and community groups:

“I’ve tried it out in a couple of schools and where the teachers themselves have been really good and we’ve planted associations in the schools....I think I’ve got about 19 of those associations that belong to that area in schools now. And it’s good to see them growing and

it's good to see them growing together. Look at that over there, that's proper association and look how healthy they are" Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020.

Aunty Fran's dedication to education and sharing knowledge has resulted in the development and implementation of an Indigenous Science course at university level. She explains:

"What's even more important is, it's opened up a whole new field of study for students at uni, and what we found is that there's a microsomal fungus that exists in eucalypts, travels around the eucalypts, accumulates in the leaves, the leaves fall down to the ground, they start to decompose. The microsomal fungus then leaves the leaves at the canopy, and then goes down into the ground and it attaches itself to the roots of the plants growing underneath the trees, and allows those plants then to take up the nutrients they need to be able to produce their medicines. Isn't that wonderful?" Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020

Aunty Fran's enthusiasm is infectious, and it is incredible to hear her share these Stories and knowledges. She is understandably in awe of Country, and she humbly completes her Story with, *"It took a whole bloody lifetime to find that out" Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020.* From clues in the Stories and lessons taught to her when she was a child, and then a lifetime of asking questions, seeking answers, and finding the connections. This is the methodology that Aunty Fran describes as "sideways thinking" *Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020.*

Understanding interconnectedness is a vital aspect of life and culture for Aunty Fran, but she is dismayed to find that so many people behave selfishly and independently, as if their actions do not have repercussions. She explains her ideas using bubbles as an analogy:

“Now, when I make a big discovery, or anything like that, I go and have a bubble bath in the daytime, because you get the light shining on the bubbles and you get these beautiful colours. I love to think there, in the bath. I was thinking and I was watching this little bubble and it had the most brilliant colours in it and it burst. Aw, you know? And then all the others grew bigger to fill in that hole and they lost their colour and then they burst. You know, after about an hour, or so, there is nothing left. I was like, that’s us. We destroy the smallest part and it has repercussions on every other part. It might take a long time. It might take a short time, but whatever we do, it has repercussions. That’s when I thought, we are part of a huge whole. We are part of this, we’re part of the universe, but we can’t see how we have an effect on the rest of the universe. But the whole thing is we are part of this earth. Whatever we do, it has an affect and we have got to watch ourselves. We really have to. We have got to look after the animals. We have got to look after the seas, the bush. Yeah”.

Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020

Identity



Little Moolby loved her mother so much and wanted to be just like her. She listened carefully to all of her mother's Stories and made a promise to one day tell the Stories to others so they too could follow the Laws and protect Country. But Moolby worried that she looked so different from Burrumurring that it was hard to believe that she could even be an eagle. With her little tufts of feathers, Moolby couldn't fly like her mother who had big, shiny, dark brown flight feathers and could fly higher than any other bird. Moolby's mother reassured her that it didn't matter what she looked like, she was smart and could think sideways, like an eagle to come up with brilliant solutions to tricky problems. Her mother often whispered to her "You will fly little one, so long as you remember your Country and its beauty and strength."

Like so many people across the world who have been forced to survive colonisation, Aunty Fran has needed to address outsider issues around identity and has experienced racism and discrimination due to her appearance. To explain, Aunty Fran does not have dark skin as some would expect for an Aboriginal person. The wider Australian non-Indigenous community does not understand the impacts of colonisation and assimilation, and how this has then changed the visual appearance of many Indigenous peoples who have, in part, been the product of forced assimilation (and cultural genocidal) policies. There is very little understanding that our D'harawal identities are not about what colour our skin is or our visual appearance. Aunty Fran explains:

"I was different. Even my sister and my brother are a bit darker than me. But the other thing too was, one of the things my grandma did, and this is on dad's (European) side of the family, she used to bathe me in hydrogen peroxide. Used to be washed every day in

hydrogen peroxide... to keep my skin white. And now it still flakes off” Fran Bodkin -

Yarning session #7 17/07/2020.

Despite these racist and traumatic experiences, Aunty Fran was fortunate though, in that her mother was in contact with other Aboriginal families who instilled in her the importance of her D’harawal identity:

“All the black fellas that we knew that mum used to go and visit in Marrickville, they all said ‘it’s not the colour. If you’ve got one drop of black in you, you are a black fella” Fran

Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021.

This is how Aunty Fran has lived her life, committed to sharing culture and knowing that she is Aboriginal despite what people say about her appearance.

Colonisation

Moolby’s family also taught her about the some of the dangers on D’harawal Country. Like her father’s family, there were many new animals that had recently arrived on Country, but some did not respect Country, nor cared to learn of its Laws. Animals like the sly foxes and the greedy brown mynah birds behaved badly and broke many Laws. They would wait enviously for the eagles to land so they could attempt to steal their big, beautiful feathers and make their own wings that would take them high into the skies.

One day, as little Moolby waited for her mother and father to return to the nest with food for her, a pack of horrible mynah birds flew up and sat on the edge of Moolby’s nest. They began pecking at her

and saying nasty things to her. One asked, "Who are you? What are you doing in such a big nest so high in the trees?" Moolby bravely answered, "I am Moolby the baby eagle!" The birds all laughed and one exclaimed "You can't be an eagle you don't even look like one. You are little and white". Moolby shook in frustration and fear "I am an eagle leave me alone!" The horrible birds sniggered and laughed until one cried out "Well if you're an eagle let's see you fly" and knocked little Moolby out of her nest! She went tumbling through the trees and fell to the forest floor. Poor little Moolby was terrified, she had no idea how to get back to the safety of her nest so far up in the trees, as her tiny little wings still couldn't help her fly yet. She flapped and flapped but Moolby's wings just didn't work, and she couldn't get off the ground.

In the re-telling of Aunty Fran's story, it was a conscious decision to depict entities of colonisation through the use of the brown mynah birds (known as common mynahs, as opposed to the native, grey, noisy mynahs) and the foxes as animals that have been detrimentally introduced into the Australian environment during the course of colonisation itself. It was a deliberate choice to not draw on the identities of native animal species to represent the damage and destruction of colonisation to avoid demonising our own, sacred animals.

In the course of her work and her life, Aunty Fran has faced severe racism and prejudice from the narrow-minded, settler-colonial communities that have had great difficulty accepting Aboriginal people, let alone Aboriginal people who do not fit the established stereotypes. Aunty Fran has suffered racism not just from non-Indigenous people, but also from those within the Aboriginal community. As discussed within the literature review, this can be known as internalised racism or lateral violence (Dudgeon et al., 2014). Aunty Fran believes that internalised racism and lateral violence amongst our communities is due to the influence of colonial and capitalist ideals that have corrupted our communities, an idea

echoed in the literature (Dudgeon et al., 2014). Some people in our communities now behave with the individualistic pursuit of money and possessions, operating in direct opposition to our Indigenous worldviews that ideally should prioritise community and Country over material possessions (Bond, 2018). Aunty Fran has had to endure countless instances of abuse from other Aboriginal peoples (who are nearly always not D'harawal), who were responding to her work (and popularity) in the wider community by questioning her appearance and Aboriginal heritage. She explains:

*“Now look at our people. They are so jealous. When somebody gets something, [they think] it’s my right to have it too and we have learned that from the white people. You need to realise that you are just a small part of a much bigger whole, it makes you a lot happier. That’s the thing that really destroys me, to see our people acting the way they are. ‘I’m better than you. I deserve more than you’. It’s so wrong” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6
26/06/2018.*

The damage and destruction of colonisation, and its impact on Aboriginal identities is understandably, a long and complex story. Aunty Fran prefers to discuss identity through Country, and her totem animal, Burrumurring, the female wedge-tail eagle (Mananga being the male). When asked if she would like to use the sacred bird in the Narinya Story, Aunty Fran emphatically responds,

*“I think so, yeah. It’d be really good, because they were my favourite creatures and I loved them so much. I always wanted to fly like an eagle.” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7
17/07/2020*

As she thinks about Burrumurring sitting alone, high up in the trees silently observing Country, we Yarn about the advantages of being quiet and observing, especially over that of being loud and fighting aggressively for what you want. As Aunty Fran explained, *“Hey listen, you can get away with more and you can find out a lot more if you just sit there, very quietly and pretend that you’re shy. I can fight if I want to.”* Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020

Australian Indigenous Women’s Standpoint

The focus on Burrumurring also speaks to deeper layers of Aunty Fran’s identity as an Indigenous woman, and the unique standpoint that arises from this social positioning, *“If you look, the female is about twice the size of the male. She’s the boss. That’s what I like”* Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020. This reflects her staunch, feminist views, so it is not unexpected then that Yarning with Aunty Fran is often punctuated by Stories of the matriarchal foundations of D’harawal society (also embedded within many of the Ancestral Stories) that support this same respect for matriarchs. Aunty Fran explains that it was the patriarchal structures of the invading British colonial society that has diluted, and in some cases, erased the matriarchal foundations and strengths of our D’harawal culture. This erasure is clearly reflected in the colonial archives and arguably, in the wider settler-colonial psyche that persists today.

British culture has been one that has implanted and reinforced patriarchal power relations across many nations all over the world. (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Within the ‘Australian’ context it was the British men who were responsible for recording the interactions with our people, culture, languages and

Stories during the early years of invasion (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Being inherently patriarchal in nature, and the fact that most early invaders were male, the British men focused their attentions on D'harawal men as, what they considered to be, the apparent authority here on this Country (though there are a few exceptions eg: William Dawes research with Pateygorang. Aunty Fran explains:

“This is the whole thing, because the English arrived here, and they took notes. And they took notes of only the males. They didn't take notes of the females.” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020

Being colonised by a patriarchal society that only valued the contributions of men resulted in either the complete erasure of D'harawal women's Stories from the colonial archive, or the corruption of our Stories in the public realm, as they are retold through the outsider lens of a colonial, white, male worldview (Behrendt, 2016). Despite this, (or perhaps in spite of this) Aunty Fran has a strong, Indigenous D'harawal woman's standpoint that she applies to all aspects of her life as she works with, and shares, our D'harawal knowledges and Stories.

Early in her career, Aunty Fran learnt that she wasn't going to succeed on her own “*merits*”, as an Aboriginal woman in a colonial, patriarchal employment context. *Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021*. To subvert the negative stereotypes imposed on Aboriginal women and the misogynistic systems in place (Sullivan, 2018), Aunty Fran harnessed the power of her femininity and used it to gain knowledge and, ultimately, justice, in many situations. She explains, *“Being feminine was very important right, because that's where I got the information that put a crook in jail... I always thought that's why I always wore the shortest skirts I could” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021*. Essentially what

Aunty Fran did use her intelligence and cunning to work the oppressive, patriarchal systems in place, for the benefit of the people that she was helping. Aunty Fran has many interesting and entertaining stories about the ways in which she operated during the early years of her career, playing on the gendered stereotypes that she had to navigate. Through her knowledge of D'harawal Stories and our patriarchal society, Aunty Fran understood that women could be, *"Sweet little things.....or tigers with claws"*, Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021, and she performed her 'sweet little thing' role to disguise her 'tiger with claws' female strength accordingly. (Sullivan, 2018). She had learnt that some men were easily manipulated, especially if she distracted them by showing off her legs, *"It's really funny. It's where short skirts came in real handy. I knew in those days I had good legs you see"* Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021.

Aunty Fran's story also highlights the ambiguities and contradictions in feminism for Indigenous women (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Sullivan, 2018). While she does believe in feminist principles like equality for women, and she actively works to promote strong feminist values, Aunty Fran asserts that she is not a feminist. She is impacted by negative public perceptions of feminism that has been cast as extreme man-hating doctrine (Duncan, 2010). Adding to this, is the inadequacy of white feminist scholarship to address the specific gendered racial issues of Indigenous women; issues such as the effects of Country, colonisation and racism on their lived experiences (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

While I can understand the reasons why Aunty Fran does not identify as a feminist, I would argue though, that feminism comes in many forms (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). For example, Aunty Fran's ability to navigate male dominated working environments using gender specific, feminine devices to

achieve successful outcomes for the community in justice, education and research, qualifies as a feminist practice of self-determination and agency, or considering the context of this research, potentially a (D'harawal) Australian Indigenous women's feminist standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013)?

In the Literature Review, I addressed the challenges of identifying with feminist views and while many would argue that Aunty Fran's harnessing of her feminine physical attributes to achieve successful outcomes within toxic, male dominated fields does not qualify as 'feminism' I would argue otherwise. Moreton-Robinson (2013) explains, "*our individual experiences will differ due to intersecting oppressions produced under social, political, historical and material conditions that we share consciously or unconsciously*" (p. 332) these differences will then require different responses and the feminist principles of our actions lies within our self-determination and the freedom to decide for ourselves how we will operate as women under the oppression of a patriarchy, and in the case of this research, as Indigenous women also living under the pressures and destruction of colonisation. Moreton-Robinson asserts the same explaining that from an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint, "there is scope for interpretation and change by individuals through dreams and their lived experiences" (p. 340). It is the very freedom to decide and choose how we engage with our femininity that lies at the foundation of feminist values.

Further to this, and in the context of an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint (AIWS), the findings from Aunty Fran's Yarning sessions also revealed that her lived experiences and ways of being as a D'harawal woman closely align with the three founding tenets of AIWS as described by Moreton-Robinson (2013). For Moreton-Robinson (2013), Australian Indigenous women's ontologies are

centred on a relationship to Country, while our epistemologies are grounded in interconnectedness and relationality to all things, and our axiologies are the ways in which we engage with the world with the understanding that all things are connected. For Aunty Fran, Country is the most important aspect of life and culture, and it is through Country that she can also understand interrelatedness and relationality as they are all deeply intertwined in her life and identity as a D'harawal woman. She explained: *"It just hit me, that everything is related to everything else, right? And it's the plants that taught me that, because when you have like here, out there, (gestures towards native gardens and bush) you have an association of plants growing there that grow there naturally together and they feed each other, right?"* Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020. So while Aunty Fran may not think of herself as a 'feminist' according to the concepts (and stereotypes) of contemporary non-Indigenous feminism, the values and principles that she lives her life by are recognised and understood as an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Aunty Fran is a powerful woman that uses her femininity not only to help others, but to also make them laugh and she finishes our Yarn with, *"I really had to concentrate and use my legs to stop evil"* Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6 26/06/2018.

Stolen Generations

All of this ruckus attracted a pack of very dangerous foxes who sneaked up on Moolby and without a moments delay, snatched her up and ran away with her. Little Moolby was terrified and she squawked and struggled but just couldn't get away from the foxes. After a long while, they arrived

at the foxes den, and little Moolby was handed over to the old women foxes who guarded her until her feathers would be big enough to steal.

The old women foxes were very mean to little Moolby and told her terrible lies about her eagle family. They tried to convince Moolby that she wasn't an eagle, that she would never be able to fly, and that eagles were stupid, horrible, bad birds who shouldn't even exist. Moolby knew that they were wrong, but she could not escape the den, no matter how much she tried. She became sad and lethargic, pining for her family that she missed so much.

One of the most well publicised policies of the Aborigines Protection Board was the act of forcefully removing Aboriginal children from their families and placing them into orphanages or adopting them into white families to be assimilated into Western culture and society (HREOC, 1997; Johnston, 1937). The intention of this was to dismantle and eradicate Aboriginal communities by removing future generations and their access to language, culture, Stories and knowledge. This became known as the Stolen Generations (Locke, 2018; Read, 1982; HREOC, 1997) and was just one of the devastating acts of genocide inflicted on Aboriginal peoples throughout the ongoing colonisation of Australia.

One of the primary ways that the Australian government enacted assimilation policies and attempted genocide on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was to forcibly remove children from families and communities and place them into state care. Aunty Fran knows this pain and terror personally, and she can still vividly describe the first time she was taken from her family at approximately three years of age:

*“The first time I was taken away and I was put with these two old ladies at Cronulla. And they lived on the point of Cronulla in this house. I did something wrong, anyway, and it gave them the excuse to take me away. And so it almost destroyed my mum. And they put me in this house with these two little old ladies and they found out I could read, they made me read the Bible every night....If I pronounced anything wrongly, I got a belting with the feather duster, the wooden end of the feather duster” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7
17/07/2020.*

Aunty Fran’s story is an overwhelming testament to the cruelty of child removal policies and the extreme lengths that the Australian government went to (daily) in the pursuit of destroying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. The government forced children into situations that caused severe harm both physically and psychologically, leaving behind scars and terrifying memories that affect the children and their families for their entire lives.

Resistance

As time passed though, the foxes became lazy. It was taking a long time for Moolby’s feathers to grow, and the foxes were finding it more and more difficult to remain vigilant. One afternoon, as the foxes carelessly napped, Moolby took her chance. She remembered one of the Stories that her mother had told her about the lovers Murrogan and Oorawong, and how Oorawong had escaped her evil captor who was stronger than her. Moolby knew that if Oorawong could do it, she could too.

Moolby scurried from the den as quietly as she could. As she came out into the afternoon sunshine she realised that the air was different, and she could smell a strange smell. She didn't know what it was, but it smelt kind of familiar and nice. She knew she was far away from her home when she saw the biggest pond of water she had ever seen! It was so big only the rocks surrounding the water could stop it from rushing across the land. The water wasn't like the still ponds around her nest, the water here made big waves like there were giant animals swirling it up from underneath. Maybe it was Parra the eel and Booambilyee the shark from the stories her mother had told her? Could this be Saltwater Country that she had heard so much about?

Moolby sat on the rocks by the water's edge, being careful not to be washed away by the rough water. She felt lost and was so scared as she missed her mum and dad, but sitting on the rocks and watching the water made her feel a little bit better. It wasn't long though, before little salty tears started to form in Moolby's eyes. She was so sad to not be with her family that her little tears grew bigger and bigger until they trickled down her cheeks and dripped into the water. She sat and watched her tears swirl into the waves and disappear.

Moolby watched the water rise and fall, building higher and higher until a wave formed and crashed on the rocks, splashing her face as it did so. Moolby tasted the water and it tasted the same as her tears. She thought, maybe this water was made of tears? Had all of the sad animals in the world cried their tears into this water? If this was how many tears that had been shed, then there were a lot of sad animals out there, just like her. Realising this made Moolby feel not so alone anymore, and she decided to do her best to get back home and do something to help the other sad animals. Thinking about helping others made her feel so much better, and she realised she had learnt an important lesson; when you help others, you help yourself too.

Moolby was only a little bird, she may not have been as strong as the foxes or as sneaky as the mynahs, but Moolby was sure she could outsmart them. She was an eagle, and eagles were smart, her mother

told her so. She knew her family's Law Stories and that they could be used to protect herself and the Country around her. She remembered that her father had also told her that every waterway was connected to her home, so if she could find her way from this big pond of salty tears, then she could get to the Bitterwaters where her nest was.

Wherever she went, Aunty Fran knew that if she connected to Country, she would know what to do. She suffered horrific abuse at the hands of the government sanctioned foster 'homes', but thankfully, no matter where she was sent, Aunty Fran had her connections to Country, and Stories to help her cope with the traumas she faced when she was taken from her family. She explains the situation as it occurred during the first time she was taken:

"One morning I got up fairly early and I went out to the point where the rocks were, and I sat on a rock and I was crying. I can remember I was crying because my tears were running down my face... I licked a tear off my face, just went like that. It was salty. Oh. And then the sea was salty. And a bit splashed up and I went, oh, it's salty. And then I thought, the sea must be made of the tears of all the sad people in the world. So, I'm not the only sad one. And I felt so much better after that. If there were enough crying sad people to create the sea, then I was happy because I wasn't alone. And that's when I thought, good. Now I'll find my own way home, thank you." Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020

Connecting to Country and being a “sideways thinker” helped Aunty Fran find not just comfort and solace, but also a reason to resist the pain of being taken from her family and to keep going. Aunty Fran continues the story to explain how she found her way back home:

“Because I’d been to Cronulla before, I had a fair idea of what to do. And I went to the bus stop and there was a lady there with four or five children, and she was waiting for the bus. And I thought, oh I know what I can do. And I stood with the kids when the bus came along. And I knew I was young enough not to pay a fare because dad used to take me on the buses.... So I waited for this woman with all those children and when the bus came along, her and the kids got on and I sort of hung behind them and sort of acted as if I didn’t want to get on. Anyway, I got on and sat behind the other kids and then we got to Sutherland Station and I knew where I could go from Sutherland Station, by train. So I just got on the train and waited and got out at Sydenham and from Sydenham, I was able to walk home” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020.

Aunty Fran ingeniously applied the knowledge of the train system and the connections between all things to make her way home. What she also did was hide in plain sight, and this became a strategy that Aunty Fran, and many other Aboriginal peoples, applied to almost every aspect of their lives for many years, especially during the assimilation era of colonisation here in Sydney. By hiding amongst a family, Aunty Fran knew that she would go unnoticed and would be able to begin the journey back to her family home in Marrickville. Aunty Fran did make it home safely and waited in the backyard for

someone to come home. Once again, Aunty Fran found protection and safety with Country, by knowing Country:

“Dad had built this beautiful big fishpond, big concrete one and it had all these reeds in it and everything and I loved it. It was beautiful. And this is in the middle of Marrickville. And so I hid in the fish pond. Well I didn’t hide until I heard someone coming in the front gate and I peeked and it wasn’t my dad, and it wasn’t my mum, and it wasn’t any of my uncles. And I thought, uh oh. So I rushed down the back, which was fortunate because mum had planted a whole lot of plants there. And they were men in brown suits. So I thought, ah, this is where I hide. So I jumped in the fish pond and hid amongst the reeds.” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020

This kept Aunty Fran safe from the strangers who turned out to be representatives from the Aborigines Protection Board and wanting to take her back to a foster home. The opening page of Aunty Fran’s book “Dharawal Seasons and Climatic Cycles” honours hiding as a survival strategy stating: *“the safest place to hide is amongst those who are seeking you.”* (Bodkin, 2008). This was the reality for Aunty Fran’s family, and also for so many other Aboriginal peoples and families trying to escape the authorities. The very authorities who inflicted harsh punishments on Aboriginal peoples, whether living on missions or in the wider community. For some, it was safest to separate from your Aboriginal family and community, to hide amongst communities of mixed-race Aboriginal families who effectively hid in the white, settler, colonial communities. It was here they were able to escape, in part, intense levels of scrutiny and surveillance. Yet this did not mean they gave up, or lost, their Aboriginal connections.

“We survived because of the Hidden Ones.... There was about 12 or 13 families in Marrickville alone, Aboriginal families, that were living amongst white people. And the white people didn't give a stuff what they were. You know, didn't matter. And so there was no racism there, or not amongst our mobs anyway. And it was great.” Yarning session #2, 17/07/2020.

In our D’harawal language, we use the phrase “Dubyara’ora” which directly translated means “the Hidden Ones.” Across Sydney, there were many Aboriginal families like Aunty Fran’s, living in hiding amongst white people to avoid punishment and harassment from the government and authorities.

Connecting to Country and being with Country has always been a source of healing and meaning for Aunty Fran. To this day, she comes alive when she is out in nature and physically connecting to Country, enthusiastically sharing Stories and dancing across the rocks with the energy of someone a quarter of her age. One of the key messages that Aunty Fran has learnt from Country, especially during the darkest hours of her life is, *“Helping others helps you” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021.* Listening deeply to Country and observing it with intent helped Aunty Fran understand important life messages that then filled her with the tenacity to resist and survive great adversity. From the youngest age, Aunty Fran drew on her connections to Country and Story to help her through the devastation and trauma of being taken from her family, to then be able to find her way home again. Through Country, Aunty Fran learned that to help yourself, you must help others too and she took the message with her throughout her life.

Aunty Fran went on to dedicate her life to helping others through research and education. One of her first positions was as a researcher with Parliament, a role that she remembers fondly:

“It gave me great pleasure when I was doing something or investigating someone who was bad, really bad, and when we got him - and it was usually a him - when we got him. I felt as if I was put on this earth to help other people, and that was the best way that I could do it because there was no other way I could do it at that stage, I didn't have a university degree or anything like that”. Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021

“I think that's why I enjoyed the job that I was in so much. I was helping others win against bloody public servants”. Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021

“Researching in the Parliament and the things that big bosses made mistakes or the big employers and that. I was able to provide evidence of their mismanagement, or their mistreatment of others and I was able to stop it.” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021

What many people don't know is that through her work with the Whitlam government, Aunty Fran helped ensure that Western Sydney was given a hospital, a university, and a botanic garden. She explains:

“While I was working in parliament, I had this dream of having a botanic garden, a university and a hospital all working together to understand, develop and use the properties of our native plants, so that eventually, people could have their medicine cabinet growing in their gardens. The botanic gardens would have only native plants – we would

learn about their medicinal and environmental properties at the university and implement the results of that learning in the hospital". Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6

26/06/2018

Aunty Fran made her own dream come true and today, these places are known as Campbelltown Hospital, Western Sydney University Campbelltown campus and the Mt Annan Botanic Garden (Denham, 2023).

Wiritjiribin

Moolby toddled off on her shaky legs to find some other birds to hide amongst. She was lonely on her own and longed to find someone to travel with. She knew that if she could make it back to the forest, she could find other birds and travel with them to the next waterway. Just as she expected, Moolby soon came across another bird, Wiritjiribin the lyrebird who was scratching around on the forest floor. Moolby was so happy to find him as she remembered how kind and peaceful Wiritjiribin's Ancestors were, especially from her mother's Stories.

Wiritjiribin explained that he was lost too, and he was even further from his home, far off inland, where the fresh-waters ran over the rocks. He was sad because he couldn't remember all of his family's Stories of Country but he hoped that if he and Moolby could travel together, they could share their Stories and learn from each other. They soon realised that they felt safe together, and they sang to keep their spirits high on their journey. Walking side by side, they realised that by helping each other, they were helping themselves too. It wasn't long before the crashing of the salt-water waves could no longer be heard, and they began to see the beginnings of the swamps and mudflats of Bitterwater Country.

The character of Wiritjiribin (the lyrebird), represents Aunty Fran's husband of over forty years, D'harawal Nattai (sweet/freshwater) Elder, Uncle Gavin Andrews. It's hard to imagine the kind of man that could win over the young, feisty Aunty Fran. In fact, she tells stories of the people she worked with being concerned for her because she had not met anyone by the time she was forty years old, but she wasn't bothered. Aunty Fran explains, "*No, I wasn't hurried. I wasn't worried about it*" Fran Bodkin - *Yarning session #7 17/07/2020*. In fact, at that age, Aunty Fran admits that she was convinced she was going to die like many of her Elders who had died by the age of forty, including her mother, so marriage was the furthest thing on her mind.

It was around this time though, that she did meet someone special on a tropical island in the South Pacific (K'gari now known as Fraser Island). While it sounds like a typical, fairy tale romance, it begun rather uniquely, as would be expected for any story from such a remarkable life. When asked how they met, Aunty Fran states in a matter-of-fact manner, "*He was naked. Trying to hide in six inches of water*" Fran Bodkin - *Yarning session #7 17/07/2020*. She goes on to describe the night that love blossomed between the two:

"We were watching the sunset. It was so beautiful, so we decided we wanted to see the sunrise. We stayed up all night and the most remarkable thing? When you walked along the sand, along this beach, little, tiny spark things came out. It looked like little fairies flying everywhere and so we were running up and down the beach, watching these little things come out and that was remarkable. Then we saw the sunrise and that was so

beautiful, that sunrise. The sun went up, came up and it was most beautiful. And then it went behind a cloud and so we're standing on the beach, yelling out, 'Encore, encore.' And it went behind the cloud and then it came out, the same sunrise came up, this time with the cloud as the base rather than the sea. And it was so beautiful, and we were still high on that." Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020

Even in this important moment, while creating a special bond with a significant person in her life, Country featured prominently and played a major role in creating the magical spirit of this event. On this first night together, Aunty Fran and Uncle Gavin bonded over a shared wonder and appreciation of Country to create a foundation that went on to support the couple through decades of hard work, fighting for Country and culture.

The meeting of the two brought great healing and strength to each other's lives. At the time, Aunty Fran seldom spoke publicly about her Aboriginality, for fear that she might be punished as she had been when she was stolen as a child. From her position as a Hidden One, Aunty Fran had been fighting undercover for culture and Country, ensuring that the future would be better for the next generations. For Uncle Gavin, colonisation had severed many of his connections to the Stories and knowledges of Country that would have been passed on to him as his birth rite had colonisation never occurred.

Together, Aunty Fran and Uncle Gavin helped each other navigate the complexities of living culture and sharing Stories. They both dedicated their lives to working across many different industries and institutions to make meaningful change for D'harawal culture, and to ensure that, wherever possible, others who came after them did not have to suffer the same prejudice and racism that they had been

forced to endure. Today, it is beyond fascinating to hear them both tell Stories from decades ago, of Aboriginal kinship, Native Title, the clandestine meetings, the crazy characters, and the significant triumphs they were able to achieve over the years working surreptitiously behind the scenes.

Impacts of Colonisation

Moolby knew the smell of this Country, she was born into the smell of the mud, and she knew she was getting closer to home. She began to toddle even faster, spurred on by the sight of many huge Dabl'wah, the casuarina trees that stretched into the sky. In the distance were the big old grandmother gum trees, and Moolby knew that in one of them was her nest, and her mother and father.

Wiritjiribin noticed that little Moolby was getting bigger and stronger every day. Her feathers were changing, and he thought that soon she might be able to fly. Moolby didn't believe him, as she remembered the words of the foxes who convinced her that she was just a little white bird who would never fly. Wiritjiribin took Moolby to a calm pond to see her reflection, and she was amazed to see that she was beginning to grow big brown and black feathers just like her mum! Moolby was amazed to see that she was starting to look like an eagle and maybe, she thought, she might be able to fly like one? Every day, with Wiritjiribin's help, Moolby tried flapping her wings, but she just couldn't fly. She tried and tried and never gave up. She listened to her mother's voice, instead of the fox's and believed that one day her wings would work.

What she and Wiritjiribin didn't know was that the foxes had been following her. They had been watching little Moolby and were even more jealous of her feathers as they grew bigger and stronger. The foxes were still convinced that if they could take Moolby's feathers, then they would be able to

make their own wings and fly, so they devised a sinister plan. It was a cunning, but simple plan, they knew Moolby still didn't know how to fly, so they decided they would chase her to a nearby cliff and make her fall to her death, making it much easier to steal her feathers.

The horrible foxes hid in the undergrowth and waited for Moolby to walk into their trap. They didn't have to wait long before she wandered by and SNAP! The foxes pounced! Poor Moolby ran for her life fleeing over the grasses and shrubs, flapping her wings and wishing they would work. She ran as fast as her legs could carry her, all the while the foxes were snapping at her tail and chasing her towards the cliffs.

Moolby ran onto a clearing, and beyond it, she saw a huge valley that lay at the bottom of a steep cliff. Moolby knew that if she continued to run, she would fall to her death, but the foxes were running fast behind her and wouldn't dare stop. They were so close now, snapping right at her beautiful tail feathers as the cliff face approached. Moolby was so scared that she could barely think, but it was then that she remembered the image of her parents sailing through the skies, gliding across the currents. She closed her eyes as she ran, and despite the snarling and snapping of the foxes, she suddenly felt like they didn't matter. She could hear her mother's voice – "You will fly little one. You are a great eagle. Trust Country and you will be protected."

Moolby ran with all her might, and with every ounce of courage that she had she took one last great leap away from the foxes, and felt the ground disappear from underneath her feet. And then all the terror she had felt suddenly disappeared as well. Moolby knew that Country would protect her, so she stretched out her wings and a powerful gust of wind picked her up off the edge of the cliff. Moolby slowly opened her eyes and saw that she was flying! Moolby could fly! She was gliding high above Country, just as she had seen her mother do so many times. She called with delight and from high in the sky she heard Wiritjiribin call back; she knew that he was safe, and she would meet him again.

Moolby soared through the air, flying higher than any bird could ever fly. She sailed across the currents until she could see her nest in the distance. She was so excited that she made a bumbling, crash landing, for she might have learnt to fly, but she hadn't yet learned to land!

Moolby flew into her father's wings, falling into his relieved hug. He was so happy to see his little eagle, who wasn't so little anymore! Her father showed her two young birds in the nest, and Moolby realised with excitement that she now had a baby brother and sister. She was so happy to be back with her family, but someone was missing. Where was Moolby's mother?

Moolby saw the tears in her father's eyes as he wilted with grief. He explained that Burrumurring's heart had been broken and her spirit suffocated when Moolby had been taken by the foxes. Her mother was at her weakest when a flock of mynahs attacked the nest and whilst she managed to fight them off and protect Moolby's siblings, Burrumurring didn't survive. Moolby cried more tears than ever before when she realised that she would never see her mother again or hear her tell the Stories when she needed them most. How would she ever survive the devastation of losing her mother who meant so much to her? Her family had paid such a terrible price and she would never, ever forget what the evil mynahs and foxes had done.

Over the years, between the ages of three to twelve, Aunty Fran was stolen by the government a total of twelve times, and each time she escaped and found her way back home using the knowledge and Stories of Country to guide her. This took a severe toll not just on Aunty Fran, but her entire family. Her mother became very ill due to the trauma and stress:

"Mum, it was a great pity, she didn't last very long. They put her in an insane asylum.

She had a nervous breakdown because I had been taken away and they would give her my

photos and then give her electric shocks, so that she would learn to hate me. She didn't. It just made her love me more, I think.” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #6 26/06/2018.

Sadly, her mother passed away when Aunty Fran was just a teenager, and she can recall the anger she felt at the time of her mother's death, *“I was a teenager, a young teenager when she died. I was so angry then. God, I was angry. So angry” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #7 17/07/2020.* During her traumatic childhood, Aunty Fran became extremely shy and developed a stutter: a common symptom of children suffering under stress and trauma (Alm, 2014). She explains:

“I think I was afraid all the time that I would say something wrong because some of my foster parents, if I even spoke, I would be hit. The ones at Cronulla were the worst of the lot...” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021

“When I was a kid, I learnt not to say too much. It was only when I was about eighteen or nineteen that I actually stopped stuttering, and even then I hadn't talked very much. Then it was only after I finished uni that I started to, actually, I had the confidence to, talk.” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021

Aunty Fran's father was also, understandably, deeply affected by his wife's death as well as the trauma of losing his daughter multiple times over the years. When asked about her father, Aunty Fran explains, *“My dad was lovely. He missed mum so much that he tried to commit suicide twice after she died” Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021.* Some of the topics that we go to when we are Yarning together are so painful, but I always follow Aunty Fran's lead and keep space for her to decide what she feels comfortable discussing. When our Yarning turns to some of the devastating tragedies that have occurred

in her life, particularly during her childhood, she quietly adds, “*All those things - don't wake them up. They're terrible memories. You bury them*” and so, of course, we let them sleep.

Survival

It was then that Moolby heard the tiny squawks of her little brother and sister. They needed her to teach them their mother's Stories. The two tiny birds were connected to everything else here on Country, and they needed her protection. They needed to know the Laws of Country, and the responsibilities that they had to look after the skies and protect Country. Moolby made a promise to her mother's spirit right there and then, that she will share their Stories; making sure that everyone who lived on D'harawal Country knew the Laws and how to look after each other.

After many years of tireless work helping others and sharing Stories, Moolby eventually made her way back to the peace and tranquillity of Nattai freshwater Country to be with her old friend Wiritjiribin.

Today, you can still see the eagle spirits soaring high above Country, protecting the skies and keeping the Ancestor's Laws. Every time you see an eagle, think of Moolby and Burrumurring, and never forget that you too can be connected to these beautiful, brave birds. You can be just as strong and powerful as them, but only if you learn, and respect, the Stories of Country.

Despite the significant trauma of her childhood, Aunty Fran found the strength to resist the negative and destructive forces of colonisation, to survive and create a rewarding and fulfilling life for herself, helping others and most importantly, helping Country. She is incredibly humble and pragmatic when

she explains: *“I never saw that I had strength. I saw that I had cunning, and I used it, but not strength”*

Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021.

When asked outright, what made you want to go on – how did you survive what you endured? Her immediate answer is *“I felt as if I was put on this earth to help other people”* Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021. Across all the Yarning sessions, Aunty Fran consistently goes back to the one, prevailing idea; to help others is to help yourself. Listening to her story, it’s hard to disagree. Despite all the traumatic and devastating events that occurred during her life, Aunty Fran has created an incredible legacy not just for D’harawal peoples, but also for other Aboriginal people and the wider Australian community. It’s difficult to estimate the outcomes, and the full impact of Aunty Fran’s lifework; asking her outright will not get you anywhere when she indignantly (and humbly) answers, *“You don’t stand and boast about what you’ve done for Country”* Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021. Needless to say, her work spans over sixty years, countless publications, thousands of students and untold numbers of people that she has helped, that will continue to be helped, long after her work is finished. and at eighty-six years of age (at the time of this writing), she still isn’t finished.

Today, Aunty Fran is still mesmerising people with her boundless knowledge and amazing Stories of Country. After she read the Story of Moolby, I couldn’t help but ask what being involved in this research has meant to her. Her answer took my breath away: *“You know what it meant to me? It meant that somebody else understood what I went through. That it was written with care and, that’s it, it was that somebody cared”*, Fran Bodkin - Yarning session #8 01/03/2021. She goes on in more detail to describe the healing she has felt. This is not a healing from the colonial abuse she has survived, as the psychological

scars and painful memories are permanent, but rather she clarifies that it is *“healing that somebody understands....It was really soothing to be able to tell that somebody understood how I felt”* Fran Bodkin - *Yarning session #8 01/03/2021*. With those words, Aunty Fran has helped me understand the inherent power of Storytelling, and the Values of Indigenous Yarning.

Results: Yarning with The Circle

After analysing Aunty Fran’s knowledges and co-creating the Story of Moolby The Wedge-tail Eagle, the next stage of our D’harawal Storytelling methodology was to present the Story to the D’harawal Traditional Knowledge Holders and Descendants Circle (The Circle). Engaging with D’harawal Storytelling methodology and presenting the research to The Circle, creates vital space for our valued Elders and Knowledge Holders to contribute their voices to the work. Through their feedback and critique, we were able to develop and expand the research and have The Circle assess the Story as a potential D’harawal Narinya Law/Lore Story.

On 25th March 2021 I presented the Story of Moolby to The Circle (*The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021*). Once again, we engaged with Indigenous Yarning methods to discuss the Story of Moolby: the results of which I recorded and analysed to identify the main themes and discussion points that arose from The Circle’s feedback. Following is a thematic analysis of the discussion with the attendees referred to by their cultural pseudonyms, as selected by each individual: Beela, Bookerrikin, Burrumurring, Diruwan, Garraway, Kannabi, Marli, Wiritjiribin, and Wugan.

Country is an important theme in The Story of Moolby and The Circle members made clear how our Stories relate to, and correspond with, Country:

“The Stories are so attached to Country they help us remember Country, remember our stories, remember our Ancestors and most importantly the lessons that have been passed onto us.” Kannabi The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

“The letters you get nowadays don't have that wonderful information but it's easy to - if you can recognise the situation or the site of where the Story was you can go back there and you can find the information that you need and put it into the old Stories but people aren't doing that.” Burrumurring The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

The importance of learning *on* Country as opposed to learning *about* Country was also a topic of discussion that clarifies an important distinction:

“Not learning about but learning on [Country].” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

Learning *on* Country is an experiential and embodied experience whereby you need to be physically present *with* Country, to fully engage with the Stories and knowledges *of* Country.

An important theme within The Story of Moolby is the interconnectedness of all things which is a vital aspect of our D'harawal episteme:

“I love the way you wove in the whole concept of Country and your duty to it and its duty to us all. That interconnected cycle of continuing existence. I think that was beautifully done.” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

The difficulty in untangling the connections and distinguishing the individual overlapping themes and ideas presented in the Story was also acknowledged:

“It’s the Country and the Story and they’re not one but they’re so deeply entwined in that nest that you referred to early on.” Kannabi The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

The Circle Yarn also revealed the importance of engaging with the power of Stories and knowledges, to overcome adversity.

“So for me that was so evident when Burrumuring said what saved you from the cliff was knowledge. Then Wiritjiribin talked about the western learning and so forth and how important it was but still underneath all that were the D’harawal Stories and the teachings of a mum.” Kannabi The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

“That’s what’s so priceless. I think about all the Stories and the power that it gives us in the next generations because there’s a stark difference between people who may be on Country or of Country but they don’t have the Ancestral understanding and that understanding of Country and that connection and knowledge of Country. I think that’s what supports who we are and our identities and our culture so much and it sets you apart from the people who have to come in and look up the archival resources and quote colonial stuff about Bennelong and Barangaroo as opposed to well talking about the water and the Country and the place and the animals that have formed the laws and the rules here. It’s such a stark difference. So what’s been put in place and protected for the next generations is just - can’t describe how incredibly important that is. Incredibly.” Beela The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

Discussions of The Story of Moolby often centred on each individual’s personal interpretation of the Story and the symbolism used to represent different themes. An important aspect of this discussion was that each individual should decide for themselves what the Story means:

“the actual - almost the law of the Story and that shouldn’t be given. That should be discovered.” Kannabi The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

On this basis it was decided that the final line of the Story that clearly states one of the primary themes of the Story, that being: “look after Country and Country will look after you”, would be omitted from the Story to allow the individual reader or Story listener to find their own meanings.

For the members of the circle, the ideas and meanings emerging from the Story were understandably variable, particularly around the metaphor of the cliff:

“I feel that we all have a cliff in our lives and we all overcome it in different ways and we always come out better...I used to always see it was a mountain. You have to get over the mountain in life but Shannon showed me another thing with that Story. It’s a cliff.”
Garraway The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

“You don’t have to answer this Aunty Fran because it might be personal but I’d like to know what your cliff was?” Garraway *“Knowledge” replied Aunty Fran The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.*

“You can choose to fall or fly.” Kannabi *The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.*

“it’s culture and Story and knowing the power that comes with that and what it can instil in you and what it can bring to you and how it can help you do the things you need to do when you find it most difficult to do it.. Sometimes you have to take the leap.” Beela *The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.*

Other members of the circle saw parallels between the experiences of Moolby in the Story with their own lived experiences:

“the part that really resonated with me was when she returned back home and the younger siblings were there and mum was gone and she realised that it was on her to be responsible and educate the siblings and rear them up the right way and teach them the laws and all that. That’s so true with me, with my family.” Bookerrikin *The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.*

The use of metaphors in the Story was also identified as a powerful tool that provides the Story listener with clues for understanding the context of the Story:

“and I love the way it's not told in a contemporary Story way but the tells are there. So that was the myna birds only came post colonisation....Indian mynas and the foxes, post-colonial sort of invaders” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

“One of the things I took from it that thing - in the Story it's quite clear where you're talking about Story, where you're talking about reading Country, where you're talking about family. But Wiritjiribin's quite ambiguous and so the way it felt to me was the spirit of friends or her Mother being with her the whole time and calling to her as she took off and started to fly or the spirit of the Ancestors being there or something. I don't know if that was the intention but that's the thing I kept - the spirit of Wiritjiribin in the Story was really...” Marli The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

“Powerful.” Bookerrikin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

“Yes. Goosebumps.” Marli The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

“it brings back to how certain things we see in different aspects highlight - your actual Story is not as a bird. You're a human being but it's been moved around so the bird can be a representative of that and that's very important because that's our cultural stuff that we talk about.” Wugan The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

“I think it's powerful that anyone could read it and anyone could understand then relate to it because it's not the specific details of someone.” Beela The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

The themes of law/lore/lessons are key elements underpinning The Story of Moolby. As previously discussed, while the understanding of the law/lore/lessons is dependent on the interpretation of the individual Story listener, the Story was successful at embedding the concepts of these themes:

“Embedding the concept of that law, that human law, into a Story which is actually a contemporary Story embedding that law into a story to me was very successful and that to me alone is the worth of that Story if nothing else but there's a lot of other stuff in there. So I think you did that very well.” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

Through discussions of their own personal interpretation and understanding of the Story, The Circle members also engaged in a detailed discussion of the D’harwal laws and truths:

“when you know you have met your personal truths and come to terms and understood your truths it's when I think in life you come satisfied with who you are as a person. You are comfortable with who you are. You're happy to know yourself. I think that's the measure when you may have reached those truths or enough of them to know that you're pretty lucky. What arrival at that level does is make you eligible - and this is what I've always said - to sit at the law circles.” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

For some circle members, the Story provided clear and detailed lessons to live by:

“One of the lessons I picked up on was empathy. The empathy for I'm not the only sad person here. There must have been lots and lots and lots of sad people who cried all these tears. This is not good enough. What can I do to.....be better to overcome all this. But not forgetting that there are people who have gone before you and maybe people after you too that could be, or are you going to let that hold you down or you're going to fly like the eagle and that's what happens. So that's one of the lessons I picked up there too. Empathy.” Bookerrikin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

Identity is a theme that also arises in The Story of Moolby and the discussions surrounding it. The Story assisted in bringing some clarity and understanding around issues of identity for some of the members of The Circle:

“I was going to say I quite enjoyed the theme of identity as in I was born with fair skin and had difficulty identifying with our culture and when she looks through the water and seeing her reflection that her brown feathers are coming through it's just really nice to - it's finding that connection between your culture and you despite what other people have been telling you.” Diruwan The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

The Story was also identified as being successful in fortifying an individual's self-perception in the face of criticism:

“You know who you are and you will be challenged and that will be questioned.....and yet you believe you know who you are and you believe in that. You are who you are and you can fly. So the Story does that really well.” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

“at the same time there was the pride that Moolby had in who she was regardless of how she looked and the course of the teachings from her mother.” Kannabi The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

“I think that's an important theme in the Story is who you are and who you feel you are and what you know you are can be very different to what other people think.” Beela The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

The Story of Moolby addresses the impacts of many different types of racism including systemic racism, racism in education as well as physical and verbal acts of racism. Through the Story, members of the circle shared some of their lived experiences of racism:

“I had a boy in primary school when I was probably nine years old after saying that I was Aboriginal he told me at nine that I was born in the dirt.” Diruwan The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

“the mynas and their ridiculing, what you should be most proud of and ridiculing that and downgraded that and saying you're not that and the immense impact that had struck a chord with me.” Kannabi The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

The themes of systemic racism and racism in education were also addressed in the discussions, specifically detailing the lived experiences that underlie some aspects of the Story:

“Fran went to, it would have been Year 9 maybe in high school and she got told - this is after her mother's died - her father got told to take his daughter out of school because she wasn't fit for anything but menial duties.... That was the headmistress or headmaster's educated evaluation... Anyhow that gave her absolutely no confidence whatsoever. She could never get up and talk in front of people and she would very rarely even say anything.” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

Racist colonial storytelling and the denigration of our knowledges by outsiders were themes that also emerged during discussions of the Story:

“what she was challenged by was she remembered all her mother's Stories but in the real world that we all live in today - remember this is in the.... say the mid-'60s. They were just Stories. They were like fairy tales was what everybody said about that sort of stuff.” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

One of the main themes arising from The Story of Moolby is the Stolen Generations and the ongoing trauma associated with the Australian government taking Aboriginal children from their families, culture and communities to assimilate them into white communities. This was a theme that was discussed throughout the meeting especially in relation to using Storytelling as a way to share traumatic and painful experiences:

“the actual Storyline must have been very hard to hear. There was a lot of things that that type of thing brings it back out into those dark places that you've hidden it and bring it

back into. So that's why I say it must have been very hard to bring out.” Wugan The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

The Story brought to light new ideas and associations for some of the descendants of the victims of the Stolen Generations:

“I was aware that [Aunty Fran]'s mum passed away when she was around 15 years of age but I never put the two together. I've never put the two together where [Aunty Fran] being removed from the home only stopped when her mum passed away. Then with that came another awareness that [Aunty Fran] spoke to me about when we were discussing the Story was that she feels that maybe, just maybe, that may be why her mum passed away. From her being removed from her, so being taken away..... The Story brought that out and so thank you Shannon. I never put that together. It's like the Stolen Generations or being removed and the impact this has not only on the child which is a lot of what the Stolen Generation is about, but also on the parents which is... too often forgotten.” Kannabi The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

For others, highlighting the trauma and pain of the Stolen Generations through the Story helped nurture understanding and acceptance:

“It helps you understand the lengths that some people went to or were forced to go to keep family together as much as they did and the damage that splitting up a family did both to both sides.” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

An important theme in The Story of Moolby is resilience and survival in the face of great adversity. Members of the circle discussed ways in which they enact these themes, the challenges they face and the importance of resistance and survival in their lived experiences:

“If you persevere and you've got inner strength and you've got your spirit and your family and all these traditional laws around you I think it helps keep us going one foot in front of the other and never giving up. You just can't afford to. So many things at stake if

you just have that defeatist attitude like so many before you and I'm talking now personally family wise and even a little bit in community too. So it's a very important Story for me. So thank you for sharing it.” Bookerrikin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

Through the Story, connections to Country and knowledge were identified as strong motivators for resilience and survival:

“it shows inner strength too doesn't it? Inner strength and belief by remembering what mum said and how it made you - don't listen to that. This inner voice was telling you and driving you. So you're being protected by the Ancestors and by Country.” Bookerrikin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

*“The Stories and culture and Country can give you strength and can give you the power...”
Beela The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.*

Much of the discussion of The Story of Moolby centred around the actual creation of the Story and the ways in which it was a powerful way to share knowledge and law/lore:

“I'm in there. I'm in that image in my mind going through everything you're saying like it's a cartoon animation. Beautiful.” Bookerrikin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

*“That was a difficult Story to tell - well it was difficult to live I can tell you that much.”
Aunty Fran The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.*

“Look at our Stories - this is almost every Aboriginal Story. If you look at the way they were told in the old days - in the old days is...they all had information.” Burrumuring The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

“So that was I think - and please correct me if I'm wrong - a little bit of creative license happening there because we were trying to - or Shannon was trying to represent how mum's

dad, the merlin raptor, could have - and Burrumurring, mum's mum, could have taught her about Country if she was trapped in a nest the whole time.” Kannabi The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

“I'm hoping that through doing Stories like this that it can bring some sort of - it may not be healing but it might be soothing or it may just help that people can hear the Story but it's not personally about you.” Beela The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

“The other interesting aspect of the Story is people not knowing this process and this gets published and people read it they will know or should know that it's a Narinya Story. It's a Story of today.....Not of our ancient past. Albeit told in the old ways. That's what Narinya is about. What it will say to them is the values of the past are alive and well and at the end there's new values today as well.” Wiritjiribin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021.

Consensus

At the conclusion of the Circle discussion, conversation turned to whether or not the Circle agreed that Fran's Burrumurring Story could be considered a D'harawal Narinya Story. It was a powerfully affirming moment when complete consensus was reached, and it was decided that Fran's Story should also be seen as a D'harawal Narinya Story.

Summary

In this results chapter I summarised the Yarning data from three Yarns with Aunty Fran Bodkin and one Circle Yarn with The Circle about Aunty Fran's Narinya Story. I drew themes of Storytelling, Country, Interconnectedness, Identity, Colonisation, Stolen Generations and resistance from the Yarning Data and wrote these into the Narinya Story, as I worked from my D'harawal (Australian) Indigenous

Women's Standpoint and in collaboration with Aunty Fran. Finally I presented the themes as they emerged in the Yarning data with the Circle, and showed how a consensus decision on how the Story needed to change emerged as a result of collaboration with the Circle. In the next chapter, the Discussion, I synthesise the findings through the lens of the themes in my Literature Review and Methodology.

Chapter 7 DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this thesis I set out with the aim to uncover the ways on-Country Indigenous Storying about contemporary contexts might contribute to the *decolonisation* of D'harawal culture and knowledges. For me, this research process has been a dual exercise: firstly in cultural D'harawal Storywork practice that is connected to Country, and secondly in analysing and understanding the contemporary relevance of D'harawal Storytelling to speak to Indigenous discourses of colonisation and *decolonisation*.

In this Discussion chapter, I first revisit the themes of the literature review and methodology chapters through the lens of my findings and from my own Australian Indigenous women's standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). To begin, I return to the five stages of colonisation by Poka Laenui with Enriques (Laenui, 2000), drawing on transcripts of Yarning sessions with Uncle John Foster and Auntie Fran Bodkin to find alignment between their lived experiences and an established academic, Indigenous framework for the stages of colonisation. Yarning with my D'harawal Elders revealed that their lived experiences were profoundly adversely affected by the mechanisms of colonisation, and in particular colonial assimilation policies, commensurate with Laenui's (2000) categorisations.

Through the themes arising from the Yarning data, I then use this Discussion chapter to deepen my exploration of the five stages of *decolonisation* (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007, 2013, 2023). A critical outcome in the Yarning data is that we can understand how our D'harawal Elders have resisted the destructive forces of colonisation to ensure a stronger cultural future for those who come after them,

particularly through the *decolonising* strategies of community-up or ground-up research; mourning historical and contemporary trauma, D’harawal Storytelling methodology; and collective action as some of the key drivers of D’harawal resistance and survival in the face of colonial destruction.

Within the *decolonisation* section of this Discussion chapter, I also take the opportunity to interrogate how Indigenist research methodologies (Rigney, 1999), Tribal methodologies (Kovach, 2007, 2010, 2017, 2021) and my standpoint as an on-Country Australian Indigenous woman researcher (Moreton-Robinson, 2013) have impacted and facilitated particular aspects of the findings. In the *decolonisation* section I focus on revealing the agency of my Elders to perform *decolonial* recovery, mourning, dreaming, commitment and action, and therefore, rather than heavily ‘justifying’ their action through much of the scholarship that is ultimately outsider research, in this section I honour the voices of the Elders in The Circle. Their words ultimately also express the importance of their collective *decolonial* action for this Discussion. So, while I understand that this is a risk in a Discussion chapter, for me to enact my scholarship culturally, it is essential that I present my Elders’ words in a synthesis about *decolonisation*, the Elders and The Circle.

Finally, I summarise how the most striking outcome emerging from the findings is that I can now begin to accurately position our Narinya stories as knowledge creation and contemporary cultural practice that *we* create and document, not just for the preservation of our Knowledges, but also to forge connections to culture and Country for present and future generations. To position our Narinya stories in this way goes a long way towards answering my aim of uncovering ways to *decolonise* D’harawal

culture and knowledges, but I also how the findings can empower other Aboriginal people to articulate the importance of our Storywork that is anchored in Country to a *de*colonial discourse.

Stages of Colonisation and the Findings

At this point in the research process, it is valuable to revisit the topics of my literature review through the findings. First, I will look at the Stages of Colonisation and how they manifested in the Yarning sessions I conducted with Uncle John and Aunty Fran as well as The Circle. The Stages of Colonisation as described by Enriques with Laenui (Laenui, 2000) for Indigenous peoples are:

1. Denial/Withdrawal
2. Destruction/Eradication
3. Denigration/Belittlement/Insult
4. Surface Accommodation/Tokenism
5. Transformation/Exploitation

Although the lived experiences of my Elders are placed under the headings of each stage, I am cognisant of the fact that my findings emphasise more culturally interrelated and embodied experiences that are not readily separated into categories or phases. While the stages of colonisation (Laenui, 2000) provide a means to draw out and discuss particular themes in a Yarning context, within the Elders themselves and within each of their Stories, their experiences are far more complex, interrelated, culturally mediated, nuanced and embodied than either the stages or themes appear below.

Denial and Withdrawal

In the Literature Review I noted that denial and withdrawal are part of a deliberate act of colonial storytelling to overwrite Indigeneity, by denying the existence of Indigenous people or their culture; through homogenising narratives of pan-Aboriginality; and by creating the context for internalised racism (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007, 2014; Walker et al, 2013). Both Uncle John and Aunty Fran were born into the impacts of colonial storytelling that caused denial of, and withdrawal from, their lived experiences as D'harawal peoples.

Aunty Fran and Uncle John both spoke of denial that existed when they were born in the 1930s and 1940s, which I would add was upheld legislatively as they were not recognised as Aboriginal citizens by the Australian colonial government until the 1967 referendum. Uncle John spoke about his experiences of how the colonial government had almost completely withdrawn from the care of Aboriginal peoples, denying their existence and marginalising them to the missions. Uncle John's family was forced to live on the La Perouse mission, where he was born and spent his early childhood. The missions were substandard, basic shacks and as the number of families grew, there was less and less housing available. The evidence of this is revealed in Uncle John's Yarning sessions as he describes that the family were living in a tent in his grandmother's yard for the first three years of his life.

The conditions on the mission reflected the overall attitude of colonial society at the time: that Aboriginal peoples should be denied any kind of literal or conceptual presence in society. This withdrawal justified by the oft-published "...erroneous assumption that Indigenous people were a

[single] dying race” (Behrendt, 2003, p. 8) and it was just a matter of time before we were all gone or assimilated. The idea that Aboriginal people are a singular, homogenous group was reflected in the way the missions were populated, with Aboriginal people forced off their own Countries and thrown together in a new place as was the case with John’s grandmother, Worimi woman Eliza Foster (nee Clarke) who ended up in the La Perouse mission. This is evidence of the pan-Aboriginality narratives that are part of this phase of colonisation, denying our unique and complex connections to Country as if Aboriginal people were all the same, regardless of where they were from. As a direct result, missions became overcrowded with limited housing stock and Uncle John’s stories of tent living are played out as a consequence of both denial and homogenising narratives.

For many other Aboriginal peoples, it was safer to hide amongst the white community, as was the case for Aunty Fran’s family. Here they could find the benefits of potential employment and housing, but Aunty Fran’s family still experienced the violent denial of their right to a safe existence on their own Country, with Aunty Fran repeatedly removed from her family. Families like Aunty Fran’s experienced, and continue to experience, the internalised racism that this phase of colonisation set up - where some of those who remained on missions jealously guard their experience as the only authentic ‘Aboriginal’ experience, or those compressed into hot-spots like Redfern, overlook the dispersed experiences of on-Country Aboriginal people, like Uncle John or Aunty Fran. Frequently, the sites of urban Aboriginality, such as Redfern, are the only places addressed in the broader literature, with little to no mention of urban on-Country peoples (such as in Behrendt, 1995). This experience of colonisation as described by

both Aunty Fran and Uncle John is also closely related to survival strategies that their families employed for the next phase of colonisation.

Destruction and Eradication

In the Literature Review I noted that the second stage of colonisation is characterised by ‘Destruction and Eradication’ due to the colonial need to quash Aboriginal claims to sovereignty (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007, 2014, 2023). The tactics deployed by the state to enact eradication include violence, such as the forced removal of children in the Stolen Generations; racist assimilation policies; police brutality and deaths in custody as well as the destruction of our rights to culture and language. For both Uncle John and Aunty Fran, their families worked hard to use non-violent strategies of resistance, by holding strong to culture while hiding in plain view.

The findings from the Yarning sessions show that assimilation policies were a primary way that the destruction and eradication methods of colonisation played out in Uncle John and Aunty Fran’s lives. The Yarning sessions with both Elders revealed that they are from ‘mixed blood’ relationships meaning that they were specifically targeted by the colonial government for forceful assimilation into the white community, however, the tactics employed by the colonial government to assimilate them differed in both circumstances.

The mission was an incredibly unsafe place for young Aboriginal children at the time of Uncle John’s birth, and he cites how he was always at risk of being removed as part of the Stolen Generation. Yarning with Uncle John revealed that his family was deliberately manipulated into leaving their Aboriginal

community at the La Perouse mission and moving into government housing amongst a white community. The Literature Review revealed that this is an assimilation strategy arising from the 1937 Conference for the Welfare of Aborigines (AAPA, 1937) to assimilate mixed race children by all means possible. This strategy has become known as the salt and pepper, or checkerboard, technique of assimilation (Goodall & Cadzow, 2009); a reference to forcing Aboriginal families with one non-Aboriginal parent to live in white suburbs¹⁶ with the intention that, when separated from their Aboriginal community, culture and language, the Aboriginal family will have no option but to assimilate into the white community. Colonial Storytelling paints the picture that this was a benevolent act of generosity from the government given that Aboriginal families could have access to adequate housing, as well as ‘enjoying’ all of the educational and employment opportunities of their white counterparts (as opposed to the deplorable conditions on the missions). This same Colonial Storytelling neglects to consider the impacts for Aboriginal people of being taken from your community and manipulated into living in a foreign cultural context that was deeply racist. Uncle John also spoke about meeting his wife who was from the local white community, and the result was that his children have much fairer skin than his and for the government, it may seem they had successfully achieved the goal of their assimilation policies and ‘bred out the black’. In truth, they had only driven us to be stronger in spirit and culture, despite the effects of assimilation on our skin colour.

¹⁶ Note that this was the era of the ‘White Australia’ policy and before multi-culturalist policies were introduced into Australia.

It was the outcomes of the 1937 Conference for the Welfare of Aborigines (AAPA, 1937) that dictated the means by which the two Elders' lives were manipulated and significantly damaged by assimilation, racism, removal, and dispossession. For Aunty Fran Bodkin, the Yarning sessions revealed that she was taken from her family by government officials and placed into the care of white, settler colonial families twelve times by the time she was twelve years old. The policy of removing Aboriginal children from their families and placing them with white families or institutions for the purposes of assimilation became known as the Stolen Generations: a deeply traumatic and destructive aspect of colonisation, that in Aunty Fran's case, affected her entire family and contributed to the early death of her mother when Aunty Fran was just fourteen years old. Each time that Aunty Fran was stolen from her family during the course of her childhood, she drew on her knowledge of Country and her family's stories to find her way back home. By the time she was twelve and her mother was gravely ill, the authorities stopped taking her, presumably to permit her to look after her younger siblings. Aunty Fran's experience of being forcibly removed from her family twelve times, and the many other times she described of 'hiding in the long grass' when authorities came, ingrained in her and her family that culture, stories and language were only safe within their extended family and Aboriginal community. They began to identify as Dubyara'ora, meaning hidden ones, and took great care of concealing cultural business without alerting white authorities. While neither Aunty Fran nor Uncle John's families ever denounced their Aboriginality, the brutality of this phase of colonisation meant they had to be careful of how they practised culture in white suburbs. In that context, both Elders were already constantly bombarded with the impacts of the next phase of colonisation - denigration, belittlement and racist insults.

Denigration, Belittlement and Insult;

In the Literature Review I noted that the Denigration/Belittlement/Insult stage of colonisation is characterised by Indigenous cultures consistently being portrayed as inferior, absurd and deserving of destruction and colonisation (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007, 2014). Colonial storytelling, in this context, holds the capacity to form racist stereotypes and create biases that influence the entire society and its systems. The traumas of the third stage of colonisation, denigration, belittlement and insult certainly arose in the Yarning data from sessions with Uncle John and Aunty Fran.

In the Literature review, I shared the story of how, even before he was born, Uncle John's great grandmother Kate, experienced the denigration that led to the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board and relegation to the missions for all Aboriginal people. As a direct result of denigration of his family in previous generations, Uncle John found himself living in a tent on the mission and hiding from authorities as a toddler to avoid being stolen by the authorities.

John vividly recounted the first time he remembered the feeling of racism and discrimination at just three years old, while living at Salt Pan Creek, which happened to be the first time he was amongst the white community. To this day he will not eat vegemite, as the denigration was handed to him with a vegemite sandwich, through the racist volunteer's comments about his skin not needing any more colour. Later, after his assimilationist housing was provided, Uncle John found himself to be the only dark skinned child living in a white community and attending a white school. As a child, he was on the front line of this stage of colonisation every day and suffered unrelenting racism and abuse from teachers

and students, forcing him to end his formal education prematurely at around 13-14 years of age. It was then that Uncle John left school to work full-time as an unskilled labourer, working in factories for the next 30 years of his life. The massive impacts of the daily abuse and denigration on Uncle John's life and health are immeasurable. It was only during the course of my research that Uncle John learnt about the 1937 Conference for the Welfare of Aborigines (AAPA, 1937) and the deliberate strategies of assimilation that he had endured. It took some time for the magnitude of this information to be truly understood by Uncle John. He had always thought that it was just the luck of the draw, happenstance, that he ended up living where he did under government housing, but he now knows that it was all deliberately orchestrated by the colonial government to erase him, his children and their connections to their unceded, invaded lands. For the colonial government, our D'harawal culture was completely overlooked, and we were considered pan-Aboriginal people and seen as naïve, primitive and inferior to the western British colonial communities. As a result, it was wrongly assumed that they must save us from ourselves and turn us into them, the apparent superior race (Behrendt, 2003). The past two hundred years of the destruction, extinction and annihilation of Country (the very force that keeps us alive) provides for Aunty Fran and Uncle John, and many other Aboriginal people, powerful evidence of survival and cultural revival to undermine this supposed superiority.

For Aunty Fran, the denigration, belittlement and insult of colonisation arose when Yarning about being stolen from her family a dozen times throughout her childhood. It was insulting of the government to assume that D'harawal stories and knowledge of Country, as shared with Aunty Fran by her family, would not keep her safe. It was Country that took her back to her family every time she was

stolen. The Yarning sessions also revealed that during the times Fran was removed from her family she was inhumanely beaten, abused and forced to learn western religious texts. Aunty Fran was treated like an imprisoned animal, her culture and Stories were belittled and her family denigrated as if they were not capable of caring for her, yet the supposed 'care' she received as a ward of the colonial state, was far more uncivilized and brutal than anything she ever experienced within her own family. These vicious colonial experiences no doubt informed a sense of unsafety in colonial society and drove the need to take on the identity of Dubyara'ora, meaning 'Hidden Ones' (Bodkin, 2013).

"That was a difficult story to tell - well it was difficult to live I can tell you that much."

Aunty Fran (Yarning session #3, 1/3/2021)

Surface Accommodation and Tokenism;

In the Literature Review I noted that the fourth stage of colonisation, 'Surface Accommodation and Tokenism' (Laenui, 2000), reveals the colonial society's superficial acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples that intrinsically erases diverse cultural expressions, ways of being and connections to Country. In this stage, our sophisticated Aboriginal cultures are reduced to being understood as simplistic children's stories and pan-Aboriginal decorative art in total imagery that legitimises an 'Australian' white history as the only 'valid' history (but seldom its present or future). The Yarning sessions with Uncle John and Aunty Fran revealed that they both experienced surface accommodation and tokenism repeatedly throughout their lives, and that these had deeply felt and genuinely impactful consequences of marginalisation, grief and frustration.

Discussions of the surface accommodation and tokenism inherent in colonial storytelling arose during the Yarning sessions with The Circle when discussing Aunty Fran's Narinya Story "*The Story of Moolby*." Aunty Fran knew the importance and seriousness of the Ancestral Stories that her mother shared with her and how valuable they were for living with Country here, but she was frustrated that others outside her cultural group did not understand their relevance. They were only ever acknowledged tokenistically and superficially by white society. In the Yarning data 'Wiritjiribin' explains:

"Hidden in that is the story of sharing to revitalise society, to revitalise a cultural society... [but] what she was challenged by was, she remembered all her mother's stories but in the 'real world' that we all live in today ... they were [treated as] just stories. 'They were like fairy tales' was what everybody said about that sort of stuff." (The Circle Yarning #2, 2/7/2020)

In the Literature review I outlined how Uncle John's father and his grandfather performed a two-day Corroborree for the opening of the harbour bridge and John's grandfather made all of the arrangements to be the first to cross the harbour bridge at its opening, performing culture, dressed in skins, both father and grandfather playing the gum leaf. In media photographs John's grandfather is seen holding a boomerang aloft, leading the group from the middle of the pack. Stories of events like this were very real and present in John's early life, being told at home or at family gatherings, and have continued to be retold in the next generations. So too is the story of the Minister for the Protection of Aborigines swooping in at the last minute at the Harbour Bridge opening and taking credit for the Corroborree, walking out onto the bridge in front of the group. This rank-pulling by a white man over Aboriginal

business, and minimisation of the importance of the work the Aboriginal men had put into the event, drove resentment and anger into the Aboriginal community. This type of treatment by society being repeatedly enacted, caused the anger to become entrenched. In the Yarning data, Uncle John speaks of his father, Fred Foster, a revered man of culture, who in his early life had played gum leaves, made boomerangs, performed music and song, worked and performed with venomous snakes, spoke language and knew the Ancestral stories, but he encountered an assimilation pressure that regarded his depth of knowledge as superficial and irrelevant myth. Fred was reduced to a shadow of the cultural man he knew himself to be, becoming angry, because all that he held as meaningful and true was treated as nothing more than trifles. Contributing to Fred's trauma, was the early death of his father Tom, with whom he had shared cultural knowledge and practice for all of his life. Tom had died of cardiac disease at the approximate age of 50 which is still the most common (and preventable) cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today (ABS, 2021).

When asked about tokenism, Uncle John cut right to the heart of this stage of colonisation. Reflecting on his memories and experiences of government attitudes at all levels, he explains:

“Every program that I’ve been involved in, in the Aboriginal movement, the government’s made all these tokenistic changes. ... round about 1992 to 1993, the government decided to have Aboriginal people involved in all different government agencies, you know hospitals, police ... and schools, the railways, Centrelink and places like that... but they were all tokenistic, and when the agency was going to have a cutback the Aboriginal Liaison Officer [or employee] was the first one to go. Like the luxury item that was tacked on, isn’t it? What about the Howard government and Brendan Nelson ... he saved the government \$[142] million on Aboriginal health and

education and he got [rapidly] promoted the next year to Minister for Defence.” (Uncle John Foster, Yarning #4 4/2/2023)

John’s frustration at surface accommodations and token measures in this stage of colonisation is palpable and a lingering cause of resentment that is common across many Aboriginal communities (Bargallie, 2020). In the context of tokenism both Elders were simultaneously beginning to also encounter the impacts of the next phase of colonisation - exploitation and (colonially driven) transformation - as their connections to Country, culture and community were (and, I would argue, continue to be) at odds with the colonial agenda.

Transformation and Exploitation

In the Literature Review I noted that the fifth and final stage of colonisation (Laenui, 2000) occurs once reluctant acknowledgement has been made of the ongoing existence of Indigenous peoples, and in this stage, ‘permitted’ Indigenous cultural expression must become compatible with the colonial project and preferably open to commodification (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007, 2014, 2023). This stage is characterised by exploitation of culture by the colonisers to ensure it fits into a capitalist value system, and consequent transformation into something that can be metricised, owned and sold for money.

The Yarning sessions I conducted with my Elders revealed how the 1937 conference, with its imperative for assimilation, set out to exploit the labours of Aboriginal people, by making them ‘productive’

workers (AAPA, 1937). The Yarning data demonstrates this fifth stage of colonisation for both Elders, with Uncle John and Aunty Fran experiencing this exploitation in different ways.

Uncle John reported how, when working for the government as a Vocational Guidance Officer, the government introduced Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) roles, whereby any Aboriginal employee of the government could become an ALO. John reported on some positive outcomes from his time as an ALO, including the opportunity to address the United Nations on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities: a moment of pride for Uncle John, his family and the Aboriginal communities he is associated with. What is less immediately obvious from an outsider's perspective is that in these roles, deeper Aboriginal culture, language and ceremony is almost entirely overlooked, and John faced the judgment of the white system here too, where Aboriginal concerns were always reduced to pan-Aboriginal generalisations, deficit discourses and focuses on health outcomes and disability. The rich and nuanced understandings of culture that could have contributed genuine transformation were completely overlooked by the system that sought only to address the generalised metrics. The colonially-imposed 'transformation' in this stage of colonisation, as experienced by John, is clearly driven by the imperatives of the colonising power, and not by Aboriginal people seeking a positive or meaningful transformation. At this point, John noted, some Indigenous people began to enact the coloniser's transformations too.

Both Elders testified to their experiences of being dumped as Aboriginal employees into culturally unsafe workplaces. They both worked from within the colonial system, claiming a seat at the table to

contribute conversations about Aboriginality, colonial systems, and integrity. They each had to find ways to survive in those contexts that didn't get them labelled as 'too difficult' or 'upstart.' Each Elder acknowledged that to survive, concessions had to be made, and each developed their own coping mechanisms and techniques for survival.

Uncle John chose to try to educate his well-meaning, but often ignorant, colleagues about the extent of racism in broader society and how it mirrors racism in the workplace. Uncle John used considerable emotional labour to explain and justify his experiences. John had become the outsider's 'learning moment', whereby he was expected to provide the educational experiences for naive outsiders. For him, the hardest part of being 'included' "*...was people with their ideas of Aboriginality.*" (Yarning session #1 09/08/2018)

Aunty Fran, by contrast, set out to expose corporate and government corruption or exploitation, and to ensure perpetrators were brought to justice. She explains "*I was able to provide evidence of their mismanagement or their mistreatment of others and I was able to stop it.... I felt as if I was put on this earth to help other people and that was the best way that I could do it because there was no other way I could do it.*" (Yarning session #3, 01/03/2021). Fran describes being simultaneously "a sweet little thing" and a "tiger with claws," and by actively working the system to expose exploitative practices, she was able to bring perpetrators to justice and to find stolen Aboriginal children who had been taken all over the globe.

In many ways, this stage of colonisation necessitated the Elders respond with the work of *decolonisation*. The Yarning data begins to suggest that the stages of *decolonisation* are not chronological consequences of colonisation, or even separate concerns. Instead, the Yarning data suggests that the stages of *decolonisation* are simultaneous, interrelated and necessitated within Indigenous people who are working to care for Country and culture. This insight from the data leads neatly into the Stages of *Decolonisation* (Laenui, 2000).

Stages of *Decolonisation* and the Findings

After examining the Stages of Colonisation in relation to the findings of the Yarning sessions conducted with our Elders, it is vital to also revisit the Literature review to unpack how the Yarning data aligns with, or deviates from, the Stages of *Decolonisation* as developed by Poka Laenui (2000). The five stages of *Decolonisation* are:

1. Rediscovery and Recovery
2. Mourning
3. Dreaming
4. Commitment
5. Action

It is worth noting that for her doctoral thesis, Murri scholar Lorraine Muller (2010) introduced an additional sixth stage to the Stages of *Decolonisation*, which she named 'Healing'. In her subsequent book, *A Theory for Indigenous Australian Health and Human Service Work: Connecting Indigenous*

Knowledge and Practice, Muller's (2014) focus on facilitating positive health outcomes and well-being for Indigenous clients, led to an entire chapter dedicated to Healing as a stage of *decolonisation*. It is healing, alongside forgiveness, that logically forms a core component of a *decolonised* practice of social work and health care. While it may be self-evident that healing corresponds to the *decolonisation* process for Indigenous peoples in a clinical care setting, for my Elders outside this kind of context and situated within our unique kinship setting and deploying our own tribal (Kovach, 2007, 2010, 2017, 2021) D'harawal Storytelling methodology, healing was more enmeshed.

To further explain, from my D'harawal (Australian) Indigenous women's standpoint, all things are connected and relational (Moreton-Robinson, 2013) and this interconnected relationality (Martin, 2008) has had an impact on how I approached the stages of *decolonisation* in the Yarning sessions. In the Literature Review I explored the three main tenets of an Australian Indigenous women's standpoint as described by Quandamooka academic, Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2013). Australian Indigenous women's ontologies are centred on a relationship to Country, while our epistemologies are grounded in interconnectedness and relationality to all things, and our axiologies are the ways in which we operate in the world knowing that all things are connected. Moreton-Robinson (2013) explains the significance of relationality: "interconnectedness is the basis of Indigenous sovereignty" (p. 335), and it is at the heart of all that we do. In Yarning sessions, I always understood the stages of *decolonisation* as interconnected, and used them as prompts or facilitators for the conversations, while conceiving of them as a somewhat enmeshed system, rather than as truly discrete stages. While it has been incredibly challenging to analyse the Yarning data of this research and separate out the information into a set of defined categories such

as the five stages of colonisation and *decolonisation*, it has also been an extremely powerful way to understand the mechanics of colonisation: bringing appropriate terminologies and clarity to the scholarship and the findings of the Yarning sessions. From my D'harawal (Australian) Indigenous women's standpoint, I encountered the concept of healing as relating and foundational to all of the stages of *decolonisation*, and it did not emerge as its own separable stage. Thus, I would argue that, from a D'harawal (Australian) Indigenous women's standpoint, the Yarning data corresponds healing relationally to all of the stages of *decolonisation* and for the purposes of cultural Narinya Storying work, does not need to be separated out as a discrete, additional sixth stage of *decolonisation* in the same ways that Muller's (2014) scholarship for health care and human service work does. Through the Yarning data I have collated, I would argue that, within our own D'harawal cultural group, healing is inherent in, and inseparable from, all of the pre-existing five stages of *decolonisation* (by Laenui, 2000).

In this Discussion, analysing the findings of our Yarning sessions against Laenui's (2000) *decolonial* framework, a critical process to undertake is to avoid a focus on the deficit discourses of the colonial agenda and to counteract the negative impacts of the stages of colonisation for my Elders (aka healing). The Stages of *Decolonisation* (Laenui, 2000) operated as a productive scaffold for Yarning sessions, and in this discussion I unpack how they support the analysis and interpretation of my Elders' resistance and survival as D'harawal peoples. The Stages of *Decolonisation* provide a structure for interrogating the Yarning data and facilitating a more thorough understanding of the ways in which my D'harawal Elders have employed our connections to Country and Story, all to resist the destructive forces of colonisation

and keep our culture alive and strong - against all odds. My findings are supported by very recent scholarship of Lorraine Muller (2023), where she notes that:

“The decolonisation process ... aims to challenge the social structures centred on colonialist ideology; to increase and assert other ways of seeing and understanding the world besides western-centred ways and views” (p. 2).

In the following section, I have explored each of the Stages of *Decolonisation* in relation to my Yarning data. At each stage, I have included some of the strategies my Elders discussed or demonstrated in the Yarning sessions, and the key ways in which this research, and the overall work of our Elders, has contributed to the *decolonisation* and healing of our D'harawal stories, knowledges, peoples and cultures.

Rediscovery and Recovery

As I articulated in the Literature Review, the first stage of *decolonisation*, rediscovery and recovery, is the grounding for *decolonisation* and it is about important acts of reconnecting to our Stories and cultural protocols and the healing that comes with that (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007, 2014; Walker, Fredericks, Mills & Anderson, 2013). By celebrating our unique cultures through Story, language, song, dance and all of our cultural practices, we are defying the colonial systems that say we are extinct, or our cultures are gone. Our very presence alone is an act of resistance (Watego, 2021), and collective presence is healing (Uncle John Foster, *Yarning Session #3 4/2/2019*; Aunty Fran Bodkin, *Yarning session #1*,

26/06/2018; The Circle, *Circle Yarn #5* 2/7/2020). We are strengthening and redefining our connections to Country and culture not just for ourselves, but for future generations (Walker et al, 2013).

For co-researchers, Uncle John and Aunty Fran, being members of the D’harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle (henceforth referred to as ‘The Circle’) has been an important aspect of their own journeys to rediscover cultural connections and experience some sense of recovery from the painful loss and destruction of colonisation. The Circle has been long established and developed by a community of D’harawal Elders and Knowledge Holders, and is currently often attended by three generations of D’harawal peoples across many (upwards of six) different families. Meeting once a month, the Circle engages in Indigenous methods of Yarning to discuss a complex array of cultural issues and events that affect us as D’harawal peoples. Most importantly though, The Circle grounds our work in D’harawal Storytelling methodologies to help understand the meaning and significance of our Garuwanga Waduguda, or Ancestral Stories (Bodkin-Andrews, Foster, Bodkin, Foster, Andrews, Adams, & Carlson, 2022; Bodkin-Andrews, Foster, Bodkin, Foster, Andrews, Adams, Evans, Foster-Guadalupe, Carlson, and Paterson Kinniburgh, 2023b, in press).

One of the key priorities of The Circle is to share our Ancestral Stories and the cultural lore embedded within each one. In the Methodology chapter of this thesis, I explored the principles of Tribal Methodologies (Kovach, 2007, 2010, 2017, 2021), whereby methodologies should arise from the unique epistemologies of the individual cultural group doing the work. In the Literature Review, I outlined how standpoint theory asserts the same value: those best to tell the Stories or knowledges of a

cultural group are those who are from the unique standpoint or worldview of that group (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Nakata, 1998; Rigney 1999). The findings of the Yarning sessions with the Elders and The Circle, reveals that they have engaged with their own D’harawal Storytelling methodology, Bangawarra’o Waduguda, to tell their Stories and knowledges from their own unique perspectives and worldviews (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023).

The Circle engages with Bangawarra’o Waduguda (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023) to analyse and interpret our Garuwanga Waduguda, or Ancestral Lore Stories (Bodkin, 2013) as a means to establish a series of cultural protocols that reflect our unique priorities as D’harawal peoples (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023). Bangawarra’o Waduguda is a process that is guided by an important D’harawal epistemology of thirteen truths (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023; Bodkin, 2013): the first five of which can be discussed publicly by The Circle to facilitate understanding of D’harawal law and lore. The first truth is understanding your own place in reality (what I see); the second truth is seeking to understand the place of others (what you/they see); the third truth is concerned with the actual reality (what is), the fourth truth is understanding what came before (what was – that which lead to the current truth) and the fifth truth is what will come after or what are the consequences for the future (what will be) (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023; Bodkin, 2013). Understanding and working within the D’harawal thirteen truths (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023; Bodkin, 2013) has been an important act of rediscovery, recovery and healing for us as D’harawal peoples, particularly within our cultural practice and Storywork within The Circle.

In the next sections, I will continue to analyse the Yarning sessions from our Elders while also drawing on a recent chapter published by The Circle to help demonstrate the importance of our cultural work and the healing inherent in the following stages of *decolonisation*; mourning, dreaming, commitment and action. The following section is the mourning stage of *decolonisation* and I would first like to explore the findings of the Yarning sessions to understand the importance of The Circle to its members and how being a part of The Circle addresses the mourning stage of *decolonisation* and how, in this context, coming together as The Circle brings healing to its members.

Mourning

In the Literature Review chapter, it was revealed that mourning is an essential stage of *decolonisation* to engage with because without acknowledging our mourning and the traumas we have experienced, true healing cannot begin (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007:2014). Poka Laenui (2000) also believed that mourning can assist in the rediscovery and recovery phase of *decolonisation*, as practicing our cultural expressions can be a channel for the grief and loss of mourning. Most importantly though, Laenui warns of becoming stuck in this stage of *decolonisation* as holding on to the pain and grief can continue the damage of colonisation and can keep us distanced from our cultural practices (Burgess, 2000).

Coming together as The Circle, to Yarn and rediscover our Garuwanga Stories, has been integral to understanding some of the aspects of the mourning phase of *decolonisation* and the ways forward for healing as a group, and also as individuals. Muller (2023) argues that “Truth-telling in history, including such things as the uncomfortable truth about actions by individuals, communities, social structures, and government policies is crucial to *decolonisation* at a national level in Australia.” (p. 297). When The

Circle gathers, we are able to tell these Stories and share our lived experiences with others in a safe environment: we find strength in our shared experiences of the traumas and mourning associated with colonisation amongst those best to understand. This a powerful way to *decolonise* the research process, particularly in light of the colonial past, where research for so many members of The Circle has resulted in extractive, negative experiences orchestrated by outsiders (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2016a). D’harawal scholar, Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews, with some members of The Circle (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2016b), explains that Western research practices have demeaned our cultures and taken away our agency, treating us as “simply passive objects to be studied from Western perspectives that have invaded and attempted to dominate our peoples since the first wave of colonisation that began on January 1788” (p. 21). The findings from the Yarning sessions clearly demonstrate that in undertaking the work of this thesis, and also when we work as The Circle, we are not passive objects: we are actively working to heal the grief and damage of colonisation on our Country, Stories and peoples.

Throughout the Yarning sessions, Aunty Fran uncovered deep and painful memories of being taken by the government from her family multiple times throughout her childhood during what became known as the Stolen Generations. This had devastating impacts on her mother’s health, leading to her mother’s early death when Aunty Fran was in her teens. For Aunty Fran, D’harawal Storytelling methodologies enabled her to share her experiences, providing a powerful outlet for processing and mourning her trauma. When asked how it felt to hear the Narinya Story we co-created, Aunty Fran Bodkin explains:

“You know what it meant to me? It meant that somebody else understood what I went through. That it was written with care and that’s it, it was that somebody cared.... It was

really soothing, okay to be able to tell that somebody understood how I felt.” Fran Bodkin

Yarning session #3, 01/03/2021

For other members of The Circle, the Narinya Storymaking process revealed new associations, knowledge and understanding:

“I’ve never put the two together where Burrumurring being removed from the home only stopped when her mum passed away....It’s like the Stolen Generations, or being removed, and the impact this has, is not only on the child, which is a lot of what the Stolen Generation is about, but also on the parents which is... too often forgotten.” Kannabi,
The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

This is powerful evidence of the success of our D’harawal Storytelling Methodologies and the Narinya Waduguda creation process as an important aspect of mourning and healing for D’harawal peoples. Aunty Fran is correct when she explains that her Story was written with care, because it was. As an insider, Indigenous researcher, I understood the importance of this cultural work and the gravity of what it means to my Elders and The Circle. The results of Yarning with Aunty Fran, also clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of Rigney’s (1999, 2003) three principles of Indigenous/Indigenist Research Methodologies that is; that the research undertaken has an emancipatory imperative central to the work; that the knowledges and Stories shared uphold the political integrity of my Elders and their D’harawal cultural beliefs and concerns; and that this research privileges D’harawal Elders’ voices and centering Indigenous knowledges over those of ‘outsider’ voices (Rigney, 2003).

I found similar evidence in the reflections from Uncle John throughout his Yarning sessions. I asked Uncle John how our D'harawal Narinya Storying processes and insider research compared to other research he has been involved in in the past - research that has been led by other, outsider researchers - and he explained:

"I can say more to you than I could to them, because you understand me and know where I'm coming from and all that sort of stuff. I don't have to explain the ins and outs of a duck's arse to you, because you already know it all." John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.

In the findings of the Yarning sessions, Uncle John expressed the deep pain he felt at being dislocated from his wider Aboriginal family and community when his family moved to Narwee. Reflecting on his previous visit to La Perouse he explains, *"I felt so at home that day. I started crying tears of sadness for myself like, I've missed so much of my family.... it was so nice being there and hearing stories."* John Foster - Yarning session #1 09/08/2018. For Uncle John, Storytelling is a primary way of dealing with, and healing from, the mourning of colonisation. In the Yarning sessions, when asked, 'do you like telling your Stories? Does it help with processing the trauma and mourning?' Uncle John emphatically replies, *"ooh I love it ooh yeah"* and *"I find it very helpful"* John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018.

Other members of the Circle also found healing from mourning in our D'harawal Storytelling methodologies. Bookerrikin found strength and healing in understanding aspects of Aunty Fran's story through the Yarning process. She explained, *"...I'm not the only sad person here. There must have been*

lots and lots and lots of sad people who cried all these tears” Bookerrikin The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021 . This was a powerful moment for Bookerrikin, in realising that she was not alone in the pain and destruction of colonisation, others were experiencing the same pain and there can be healing inherent in not being alone in your suffering.

Aunty Fran has articulated that for us to know or imagine the future, we must first understand the past (Bodkin, 2013). Knowing and mourning the past is a necessary part of healing and of moving forward to dream for the future and this is more powerful evidence of the interrelatedness of the first-five D’harawal truths. The next section shows the ways in which The Circle has embraced the stage of mourning and moved forward to go on and publish their own scholarship as their legacy for the future.

Dreaming

Dreaming is the third stage of *decolonisation* explored in the literature review, wherein Indigenous peoples re-imagine a future for our own Indigenous cultures (Laenui, 2000; Muller, 2007, 2014). Laenui (2000) suggests that care is required when in the Dreaming phase, to avoid rushing in and devaluing our cultures by forcing them to fit into colonial systems and law. In the Dreaming phase, the Yarning data reveals that my Elders aim high for our D’harawal cultures and our specific ontologies, centring our own D’harawal needs and cultural values.. Through Dreaming, they are actively healing as they imagine our futures and the legacy we are to leave behind for those who come after us.

The Circle has done exactly that. Recently, The Circle engaged with the D’harawal Garuwanga Waduguda story of “Yandelora The Place of Peace Between Peoples” to co-create the paper, “*The*

Colonial Storytelling of Good Intent: Or the inspired erasure of our Ancestors?” (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023). This important piece of work from The Circle provides a practical example of how The Circle interprets and analyses our Garuwanga stories using the Bangawarra’o Waduguda (D’harawal Storytelling Methodology) and the first five truths of the D’harawal thirteen truths. This led The Circle to establish 25 cultural protocols that reflect our inherent values and priorities as D’harawal peoples including, responsibility, Country, mentorship, transparency, gifting, governance, consensus and resistance, to name a few.

For members of The Circle, these protocols and our collective Storywork is integral to their cultural identities and praxis in the present, and to how this allows them to contribute to dreaming for the future.

One member explains that, for them:

...it’s about trying to keep in touch with our Ancestors, to follow in their footsteps, to ask them for their wisdom and guidance, to try and be a strong Aboriginal woman, try and pass the knowledge on to my children, and particularly my grandchildren, so that our culture remains alive, true and honest with our Stories...our way – Bookerrikin Circle

Yarn (Bodkin-Andrews et al, 2023)

Through the inspiration of my PhD proposal, we have also applied for, and received, a consequent ARC Grant, ‘Shielding our Futures’ with my supervisor, D’harawal Knowledge Keeper and education scholar, Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews alongside Indigenous academic, Bronwyn Carlson as Chief Investigators. This grant has enabled us to engage with our D’harawal Bangawarra’o Waduguda

methodology to expand and develop the D'harawal Narinya Waduguda process to include the Stories and lived experiences of more of our Elders.

One of The Circle members succinctly and powerfully explains the importance and success of the Narinya Waduguda Story making process:

*“I guess that's what our Stories are about and one of the purposes of the Narinya stories is to continue on our Dreaming and our Ancestral stories; we can all relate to them in some way and so although there would've been a time when the Ancestral stories may have been about a particular individual or group of people's lived experiences, they speak to us all and they can speak to us in different ways. So yeah, I guess Wiritjirribin's point is to be very proud of what you, Uncle John and Shannon have done together. You two know the true secrets of the story, but it's still going to speak to all of us. Kannabi Circle Yarn #5
02/07/2020*

Commitment

In the literature review, I explained how the fourth stage of *decolonisation* for Laenui (2000) is Commitment. Ongoing cultural commitment contributes to processes of *decolonisation*, which cannot be about individualistic reward and recognition: rather, *decolonial* Commitment is to our community, Country and the future of our cultures (Muller, 2007, 2014, 2023). Commitment is required to see the goals and outcomes of the Dreaming phase, come to life and influence colonial systems and ways of being. Through commitment, we can create our own systems and ways of working without relying on

the colonial government or institutions to inadequately accommodate us (Laenui, 2000). Poka Laenui (2000) encourages us to team up with other Indigenous peoples to enact this phase of commitment, to wholly commit and create change for the future, thereby healing our communities.

The findings of our Yarning sessions reveal that one of the powerful and successful aspects of this research project has been the commitment, leadership and knowledge of my Elders and The Circle as integral to the methodology and outcomes. In analysing the Yarning sessions with the Elders it became apparent that the success of this project is that it is community led, or conceived from the bottom up. The Yarning data support the critiques I introduced in the Literature review, critiques of outsider research and government interventions not being initiated from the ‘ground up’ or within the community. ‘Success’ for Indigenous peoples in a colonised, Western world, has been dependent on learning the coloniser’s language, systems, protocols and bureaucracy in culturally unsafe spaces, all of which requires significant amounts of labour (both physical and emotional) for Indigenous peoples (Martin, 2008; Smith, 2005). In collaborative work with non-Indigenous Western researchers, the issues arise when it is the marginalised community that has to do all of the capacity building in order to meet the requirements of the outsider intervention (Martin, 2008; Smith, 2005). The onus has always been on the Aboriginal community to learn Western, European ways for us to be ‘included’ in their programs, research, or whatever the colonising government considers ‘in our best interests’ (Smith, 2005, 2006).

The concept of working from the ‘Ground Up’ has emerged from my findings and is therefore relevant to introduce in this Discussion chapter. I introduce the topic and its relevance here and unpack it in the

following section. “Ground Up Inquiry” is central to the work of the Contemporary Indigenous Knowledge and Governance (CIKG) team in Charles Darwin University’s Northern Institute (Verran, Spencer and Christie, 2022), where they describe this type of scholarship as “an established research method where Indigenous and academic knowledge authorities work together as equals under the aegis of the modern university system” (Verran et al., 2022, p. 3). Charles Darwin University’s non-Indigenous scholar Michel Christie (2013) defines the important distinction between ‘ground up’ and ‘top down’ research:

“Top-down work can be understood to parallel the work of hierarchical structures of government where policy and practice is seen as controlled, directed and instituted from the top level. Top-down research seeks for a general overarching theory. Ground-up research develops and deploys theory in the service of action on local problems” (p. 3).

Ground Up Inquiry is where the ‘frontline’ work of my Elders finds its academic home. The findings of the Yarning sessions with both Uncle John and Aunty Fran as well as The Circle reveal that they are committed to always being active in their work, sharing culture and Stories directly to communities (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous). They prioritise generative work that creates real world change and healing for our Country, Stories and futures. To this day, our Elders draw on our D’harawal cultural protocols and our connections to Ancestral Stories and Country to continue their work developing and sharing their knowledge, from the ground up, from within our communities (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023).

The concept of Ground Up Inquiry (Christie, 2013; Verran et al., 2022) also speaks back to Nakata's (2002, 1998) cultural interface of two or more different 'cultures,' which creates the binary of "Indigenous and academic knowledge authorities" (Verran et al., 2022, p. 3) as the two 'cultures' that are interfacing, and my critique of this approach is that it insinuates that the Indigenous authority would not (or could not) also be a (Western) academic knowledge authority. But what if we are not either one or the other? (McIvor, 2010). The point of difference with this research project, and I would argue, one of the strengths of the process, is that the doctoral researcher in the Western research academy is also a member of the community being researched, and as an insider researcher defies the binary categorisations of the cultural interface model. My D'harawal (Australian) Indigenous women's standpoint delivers methodology and perspective that is far more blurred and less binary than Nakata's distinct cultures - being D'harawal cultural epistemologies of The Circle (of which I am part) and a D'harawal researcher situated in, and navigating, the western academic world (me). Working 'Ground Up' at a blurred cultural interface necessitated finding and creating the interstitial, overlapping zones created when work is generated in a co-design or co-researcher process across competing priorities. The findings demonstrate that my work honours what Plains Cree and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (2007) describes as Tribal Methodologies in collaborative work, being generative in that it creates new knowledge, new methods, and new understandings. In the same ways, this research project is co-designed and co-researched with the commitment of our Elders and The Circle, and brings together our unique ways of working as D'harawal peoples while still conforming to the ideals of the Western research academy to create new knowledge, Stories and ideas.

In the findings of the Yarnings sessions, we found that my father, Uncle John Foster, committed to working hard his entire life to be a good father and to ensure that his children had better Western educational opportunities than his own. He encouraged and supported me through school, university and now, through this doctoral research project. Coupled with the D'harawal knowledges and leadership that he has been sharing with me since birth, he has (unwittingly) nurtured me to be an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper with some Western research skills, and I have proudly followed his lead into continuing our cultural practices and working within our communities on (and with) our Ancestral Country. For Moreton-Robinson (2013), it is not about the binary of being either Indigenous or an academic, but the epistemological advantages of being both; one does not negate the other; rather, they both contribute to the telling of our Stories and the sharing of our knowledges in our own ways, using our own unique standpoints. This is the missing piece from outsider research, and even missing from non-Indigenous or outsider collaborative research with Indigenous communities: our cultural epistemologies are deeply embedded in connection to Country, compelling us to work for our Country, culture and communities (Bodkin-Andrews et al, 2016a) . Our Elders have taught us, and modelled, cultural leadership that ensures that we are connected to Country and Story. Instead, we commit to continue the cultural work of our communities, from within our communities and on Country. Yawruru academic Pat Dodson (2000) explains, “It is part of intergenerational accountability and responsibility for our traditions, customs and values” (p. 9).

The commitment of our Elders and The Circle to *decolonising* our Stories and cultures speaks to Laenui's (2000) and Muller's (2007, 2014, 2023) descriptions of what commitment means in a

decolonising context: that this work is not an individual pursuit for reward and acknowledgement, it is much more than that. The work of our D’harawal Elders and The Circle demonstrates a deep commitment to *decolonising* our Stories, knowledges and culture, not for their own individual gain, but for healing our communities, Country and the future of our cultures (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023). In the next section we will look at how the Elders and The Circle have accomplished this aim through working as a collective group or community, and the power of this ‘collectivity’ in achieving effective, positive outcomes for healing, protecting and *decolonising* our D’harawal cultures and Stories.

Action

Action is the fifth stage of *Decolonisation* and in the Literature Review I discussed that in the context of *decolonisation*, for Action to be fundamentally *decolonial*, it should be pro-active, not reactive (Laenui, 2000). Action refers to cultural initiatives that respect Indigenous timings and avoid adaptation to suit a colonial agenda: *decolonial* action centres the needs of the colonised communities and Laenui (2000) rightfully argues that this kind of action should always be developed by, and with the consensus of, the colonised peoples themselves. Laenui (2000) also makes the distinction that while in the past action may have been required to physically overthrow the government, today though, with the internet and cyber opportunities connecting individuals to people all over the world at all levels of power, other types of action may be more relevant and accessible.

The findings of the Yarning sessions clearly demonstrate that the work of our D’harawal Elders is what Laenui (2000) describes as ‘pro-active’ in that it is wholly preoccupied with passionately sharing and

protecting D'harawal knowledges and ways of being.¹⁷ The Yarning data for Uncle John, Aunty Fran and The Circle, demonstrate the dedicated cultural work the Elders have been doing all of their lives. The Yarning sessions reference D'harawal Storywork, Bangawarra'o Waduguda, scholarship and publications that are ground up and generative, creating real world outcomes and healing. The Action of my Elders, as referenced in the findings, evidences social and structural moves towards *decolonisation* for our D'harawal Stories and cultural futures. One Circle member remarked, in relation to our Narinya Waduguda (Living Lore/Law) Storytelling process (whereby we tell Stories of our contemporary, lived experiences using the ways and embedded lore of the Ancestors Garuwanga Waduguda Stories), "*...at the end of the day, what do we want the reader, the young ones to pick up from this? What do we want them to take into their future? The old and the new mixed together perfectly, I think.*" – Bookerrikin, Circle Yarn #5 02/07/2020. In the Circle Yarn sessions another member adds:

"The other interesting aspect of the Story is people not knowing this process and this gets published and people read it they will know or should know that it's a Narinya story. It's a story of today.....Not of our ancient past. Albeit told in the old ways. That's what Narinya is about. What it will say to them is [that] the values of the past are alive and well and at the end there's new values today as well." Wiritjiribin, The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

In Christie's (2013) research of 'Ground Up' inquiry, he addresses the successful aspects of 'collective action', a term generally associated with physical acts of resistance such as riots, protests and strikes. In

¹⁷ This is the antithesis of 'reactive' work (Laenui, 2000) that responds only to cultural business as it exists in relation to the colonial agenda.

this context, even Uncle John explicitly states in the Yarning sessions: *“I don’t see myself as being a resistance fighter or something like that, you know. I’ve never marched down the street with a banner or anything like that, it’s always been a sort of passive resistance from me you know, ‘cause ah, that’s my nature”* Yarning session #3 04/02/2019. Relevant to this context though, Christie (2013) explains that collective action involves working collaboratively, as a group, to develop shared understandings and consensus for action, as we question our assumptions. This is how The Circle operates, particularly during the Bangawarra’o Waduguda process when we are guided by the first five of the thirteen D’harawal truths that ensure that we respect and honour other views and knowledges.

I would argue that cultural collective ‘Action’ or collectivity is a more appropriate way to describe the work of our Elders and The Circle. The concept of collectivity provides the opportunity for us to enact Behrendt’s (2019) claim that “we are strongest with ourselves when we are with each other” (p 186). To speak in an inclusive set of voices honours our 25 D’harawal cultural protocols whereby we are in community together: *our* voices, *our* perspectives, *our* standpoints creating the counternarratives.

D’harawal peoples have always worked collectively and this is demonstrated in the first five of the thirteen D’harawal truths, whereby we learn how to work with each other and respect our unique, individual contributions and worldviews (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2023; Bodkin, 2013). Uncle John’s Yarning data leads me to reflect on my childhood in a majority white, non-Indigenous community. John’s findings reframe the richest parts of that experience for me - particularly his work across the various Sydney, Aboriginal communities, as he drew in a collective, or community, of trusted Aunties and Uncles that we could connect to and learn from (Foster, 2018). This group included Aunty Fran,

and I remember many years ago when my father was having a Yarn with Aunty Fran and he ecstatically exclaimed “I remember my father telling me that Story!” I will never forget his beaming smile and eyes full of joy at hearing his family’s Stories again. Our work with Aunty Fran has continued over many decades and today Dad looks forward to his work with The Circle, he explains:

“I enjoy critiquing the [Garuwanga Waduguda] Stories. I love the Stories and I love relating them to life today. The spiritual side of the Stories - I wish that was a lot stronger within our communities. There’s a moral behind each Story and if we could live by those morals I think we’d be a much happier race. We’re always jealous of each other and stabbing each other in the back. I think that’s all from colonisation, designed to keep us divided. Divide and conquer. I really wish the spirits of the old days could be with us today..... The stories are absolutely brilliant” John Foster, The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

Working collaboratively as a collective also allows us to achieve outcomes as a group that we could otherwise not achieve as individuals. In the Yarning sessions, Uncle John, in relation to the Narinya Storymaking process, explains: *“I could never have done that by myself. My story wouldn’t be so holistic, including everything in it like that has. There’s so many aspects of me in that” John Foster - Circle Yarn #5 02/07/2020.* The importance of working in a collective with like minded individuals cannot be understated and Uncle John powerfully summarises how he feels to be amongst his own community and working with The Circle, *“With Aboriginal people definitely. I feel safe, I feel secure, I feel happy and content.” (John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018).* This is in stark contrast to the social exclusion he feels when he is with the white community and not amongst his own Aboriginal community, *“I don’t*

feel I'm part of the group. Even though I feel unique and all, I find it hard. If I'm a member of that team, it's hard for me to feel like I'm fitting in, it's hard to describe.” (John Foster - Yarning session #2 06/12/2018).

The data from the Yarning sessions clearly demonstrates our Elders' commitment to action in creating space for the continuation of our culture and Stories in *our* ways, teaching us valuable lessons and cultural lore as D'harawal peoples. Beela articulates healing through how, *“the stories and culture and Country can give you strength and can give you the power...”* Beela Circle Yarn #5 02/07/2020, while Bookerrikin explains the impact of the Stories on their own life experiences:

“If you persevere and you've got inner strength and you've got your spirit and your family and all these traditional laws around you I think it helps keep us going one foot in front of the other and never giving up. You just can't afford to. So many things are at stake if you just have that defeatist attitude like so many before you and I'm talking now personally family wise and even a little bit in community too. So it's a very important story for me. So thank you for sharing it.” Bookerrikin *The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9*
25/03/2021

The action and commitment of our Elders also influences and informs next generations. One of the younger members of The Circle, Diruwan, explains:

“I was going to say I quite enjoyed the theme of identity as in I was born with fair skin and had difficulty identifying with our culture and when she looks through the water and seeing her reflection that her brown feathers are coming through it's

just really powerful to - it's finding that connection between your culture and you despite what other people have been telling you." Diruwan The Circle, Circle Yarning session #9 25/03/2021

Coming together as The Circle is not only vital to the continuation of our culture and Stories, but also as a collective 'Action' of survival and resistance to, and healing from, the pressures of colonisation. Pat Dodson (2000) asserts that "If we lose our sense of value and meaning in the Aboriginal world, then we become a successful clone of what the assimilation policies and strategies sought to achieve" (Dodson, 2000). Through the Storywork of The Circle, we recognise the necessity to keep practising culture and being present as an act of resistance in, and of, itself. The Elders have led the way with their *decolonising* work rediscovering and recovering culture; creating safe spaces to mourn and heal; committing wholly to our D'harawal Storywork and to the processes of knowledge sharing and, importantly, knowledge creation, by ensuring that we all come together as a community, across the generations, to work together, with each other and with Country, as our Ancestors have always done.

Conclusion

In this Discussion chapter, I have revisited the scholarship of the Literature Review and Methodology chapters of this thesis through the lens of my findings and from my own D'harawal (Australian) Indigenous women's standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). The evidence from the Yarning sessions with the Elders, Uncle John and Aunty Fran, as well as The Circle clearly demonstrates a close alignment between their lived experiences and an established academic, Indigenous framework for understanding and interpreting, the stages of colonisation and *decolonisation*.

The Yarning data also reveals that the Elders' lived experiences were significantly impacted by the destructive forces of colonisation, particularly the colonial government assimilation policies. The strength and resilience of our Elders is also clearly evident in the Yarning data and the stages of *decolonisation* provides a powerful body of scholarship to support our cultural practices and D'harawal ways of being as integral to healing, and protecting, our cultures and Stories for the future.

In this Discussion chapter I introduced the scholarship of community-led research, or ground-up research as a successful mechanism for decolonising the research process with marginalised Indigenous communities. Understanding this way of working, I have concluded that engaging with our D'harawal epistemologies is the only effective way of undertaking healing research work that simultaneously prioritises the voices of the Elders and supports insider D'harawal researchers working within the Western research academy.

Finally, in this Discussion chapter, I have been able to accurately position our Narinya Stories as contemporary knowledge that has been created using the principles and values of our Garuwanga Waduguda, (Ancestral Lore/Law Stories). The importance of this cannot be understated: this is evidence of our continued cultural practice and the *decolonial* legacy that our Elders have committed to creating for future generations.

Chapter 8 CONCLUSION

Summary of Chapters

In this thesis, I set out with the aim to uncover the ways on-Country D’harawal Storytelling about contemporary contexts might contribute to the *decolonisation* of D’harawal culture and knowledges.

In this concluding chapter I will first summarise each chapter of the thesis, highlighting the important scholarship and concepts embedded within each section. After outlining the outcomes of each chapter, I will then revisit the initial objectives of this research as defined by the co-researcher Elders, Uncle John Foster and Aunty Fran. I will then provide an explanation of some of my overall findings and how this thesis adds to the scholarship of some key areas of research including a right of reply to the archives and an Australian Indigenous Women’s Standpoint. Based on the findings of this thesis, I will also make recommendations for further research in these areas in conjunction with Bangawarra’o Waduguda D’harawal Storytelling Methodology and The D’harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle.

In the introductory chapter of this thesis, I first explained my positioning and why positioning is important as a D’harawal (and I would argue overall Indigenous) cultural enactment. I also articulated my citation policy of choosing to privilege Australian Indigenous women’s voices as a priority. In the introduction chapter I also explained the process of British colonisation in Australia and the Indigenous perspectives of colonisation, here, and across the world. In the introduction, I also introduced the concept of colonial storytelling and an Indigenous right of reply to colonial storytelling (Thorpe, 2021) as a necessary and empowering agent of decolonising practices.

Chapter 2 of this thesis was the first part of the Literature Review in which I explored the five stages of colonisation and *decolonisation* according to the scholarship of Virgilio Enriques and Poka Laenui (2000; 2007), Lorraine Muller (2007; 2014) and the Women's Wellness Study (Walker, Fredericks, Mills & Anderson, 2013). This chapter was also a special chapter to write as a 'right of reply' to the colonial archives that hold so many of my family's Stories. I chose to weave in Stories of my own family, from our perspective, to demonstrate how colonisation has affected our lives in complex and multifaceted ways. Most significantly though, in Chapter 2 I introduced The Circle and their Storytelling work to reveal how we have resisted the destructive forces of colonisation and engaged with the Bangawarra'o Waduguda (D'harawal Storytelling methodology) to contribute to the *decolonisation* of our knowledges and cultures.

In Chapter 3, which is the second part of my Literature Review, I looked at Standpoint Theory and its value for a practice of Indigenous Storytelling. I began by tracing the history of Feminist Standpoint (Smith, 1974; Harding, 1987: 1992: 2004) into Indigenous Women's Standpoint (Behrendt, 1993) and then the subsequent Indigenous Standpoint (Nakata, 1998; Rigney 1999). Finally, I narrowed the focus down to an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013), the position from which I identify. I concluded Chapter 3 with the unique epistemological, ontological and axiological conditions of an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

In Chapter 4 I provided a study of the methodological framework and methods of this thesis. I explored Narungga, Kurna and Ngarrindjeri scholar Lester Irabinna-Rigney's (1999) three principles of

Indigenist/Indigenous research. This then led to an investigation of Tribal Methodologies as developed by Plains Cree and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (2007). Following this is a description of our own D'harawal Storytelling Methodology, Bangawarra'o Waduguda (Strengthening of Laws) (Bodkin, 2013; Bodkin et al., 2023) and the 'storywork' of Coast Salish, Sto:lo scholar Joanne Q'um Q'um Xiiem Archibald (2008a, 2008b). Chapter 4 also investigates the use of the Indigenous method of Yarning (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Walker, Fredericks, Mills, & Anderson, 2013) and how it more accurately aligns with our cultural epistemologies in contrast to Western research methods such as Narrative Inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Thorpe, 2017). Chapter 4 also includes an outline of the process I followed to create a Narinya Story from the research findings as well as the process I followed to gain approval from the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle (The Circle) for the Narinya Story to be considered a D'harawal Narinya Wadugudu (Living Law) Story. In Chapter 4 I also unpack the scholarship surrounding the ethics approval process including the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007). The successful application was given the ethics approval number of ETH18-2138. To conclude Chapter 4, I have included positioning statements from the Elder co-researchers, Uncle John and Aunty Fran, as well as my own reflections on the Elders and the impact they have had on my life as a D'harawal woman.

Chapter 5 is the findings of the Yarning sessions with D'harawal Elder, Uncle John Foster. In this chapter I provide a thematic analysis of the data from the Yarning sessions which I wove into the D'harawal Narinya Story, 'Garraway the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo', that has been co-created with Uncle John from these themes. In the last section of this chapter, I also provide a thematic analysis of

the Yarning sessions held with The Circle whereby I presented Uncle John's Narinya Story to The Circle for their analysis. The chapter concludes with The Circle's approval, and acceptance of, the Story as a D'harawal Narinya Waduguda (Living Law) Story.

In Chapter 6 of this thesis, I explored the results of Yarning sessions with the second co-researcher of this project, D'harawal Elder Aunty Fran Bodkin. In this chapter, I use the same approach as Chapter 5 and present a thematic analysis of our Yarning sessions as well as a D'harawal Narinya Story, 'How Moolby Became the Wedge-tailed Eagle' that has been co-created with Aunty Fran from these themes. The chapter concludes with a thematic analysis of the Yarning sessions held with The Circle for their analysis and interpretation of the Narinya Story. The Circle approved of the Story and unanimously decided that the Story is to be accepted as a D'harawal Narinya Waduguda (Living Law) Story.

Chapter 7 is the Discussion chapter where I provided a detailed analysis of the data from the Yarning sessions in relation to the knowledges arising arising from the Literature Review and Methodology chapters. I engaged with the stages of colonisation and *decolonisation* to provide a scaffold for interpreting and understanding the Yarning data. In the Discussion chapter I also identified the scholarship surrounding the effectiveness of 'ground up' or 'community up' methods of research and inquiry, in relation to this research and the findings from the Yarning sessions with the Elders and The Circle.

Future Directions

In concluding this thesis, I return back to the lives and work of co-researchers, Elders Uncle John and Aunty Fran as well as the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle (The Circle) to revisit the messages they wanted to impart through their Narinya Waduguda Stories. The generosity of the Elders in giving their heart and soul to this research cannot be underestimated. Their courage in revisiting traumatic memories and events so that others can learn and benefit from their experiences is evidence of their commitment to Country, community and their cultural identities as D'harawal Elders. For Uncle John, he wanted to ensure that people understood the colonially informed racism and discrimination he has endured as a D'harawal man, and the effects that this has had on his life. For Aunty Fran, she wanted to make sure that people understood that through helping others, she has been able to find healing and strength in the face of the significant colonial destruction she has encountered as a D'harawal woman. The Elders as co-researchers, wanted to ensure that they could create a Narinya Story that taught these invaluable lessons as well as impart an understanding of D'harawal values, and their deep and enduring connections to Country. The Elders' priority was to make sure that anyone, regardless of their lived experiences, could be inspired to find the strength to heal and survive in ways that the Elders' Stories of their lived experiences, may not have achieved.

The future potential for the Elders' Stories and this research project are immeasurable. The Elders' Stories provide invaluable insights on how to maintain cultural values and practices under the oppression of colonisation without resorting to violent or destructive tactics. Instead, the Elders have focussed on helping others. This knowledge can make significant contributions to the work of other

Indigenous groups and individuals wanting to negotiate the colonial archives to rediscover and recover their own cultural knowledges and practices without causing unintentional cultural harm.

The significant results of this research process, and the consequent consensus of The Circle for the Stories to be accepted as D'harawal Narinya Waduguda (Living Law) Stories is evidence of the success of the Elders' generous contribution to this research project. From our D'harawal cultural perspective, our Elders consensus and approval is of utmost importance and essential to the outcomes of this research. Based on the success of this thesis project, I would recommend that this research be expanded to include more Stories from D'harawal Elders and that further research be undertaken with the D'harawal Traditional Descendants and Knowledge Holders Circle (The Circle). In doing so, such future research should follow the Bangawarra'o Waduguda D'harawal Storytelling Methodology and Yarning methods as much as possible. But the significant contributions of the Elders and The Circle go beyond understanding just D'harawal Stories, knowledges and research.

With the development and implementation of the D'harawal Storytelling Methodology, Bangawarra'o Waduguda, the Elders and The Circle have also created a significant body of cultural scholarship that can support other Indigenous researchers and scholars wanting to do similar research work, especially in Storying and Yarning as cultural research practises. The work of the Elders, and The Circle, has laid down invaluable foundations for the success of Tribal Methodologies, in this case, specifically the D'harawal Bangawarra'o Waduguda Storytelling Methodology. This thesis sets out, tests and reports the success of our unique D'harawal ways of being and doing, which will provide a scaffold to support

the work of other Indigenous peoples who wish to research and document their own cultural methods. The distinction needs to be made here though, that other Indigenous groups should not adopt our specific D'harawal, place-based methodologies and protocols, but instead develop their own using the scaffold provided by Kovach's Tribal Methodologies, which acted as a foundation for this research project, and help strengthen the guidance by the Elders and The Circle. This thesis demonstrates a clear pathway to understanding and articulating, Indigenous epistemologies, axiologies and ontologies as a means to undertake research within our own communities.

On a more personal reflection, I recall the sense of relief I felt undertaking the research for this thesis, especially when I found the work of other Indigenous researchers and scholars who had laid down foundations for this thesis to anchor itself to. The culturally significant outcomes of the Elders' work in this thesis demonstrates how crucial it is to prioritise Indigenous authors when researching. The absolute necessity for this cannot be fully understood without a thorough understanding of Standpoint, colonial storytelling, and an Indigenous right of reply to outsider research and knowledges as a means to identify your own Indigenous worldview and values. This thesis, led by the Elders and The Circle, weaves together all of this scholarship and lived experience with the hope that one day, this research might influence and support other Indigenous authors and scholars in the future.

By drawing on the scholarship of Indigenous academics such as Lester Irabinna-Rigney, as in the case of this thesis, we can be guided by, and implement, the three principles of Rigney's Indigenous/Indigenist research methodologies to enact our own. Rigney's principles provide a foundation for developing

culturally safe and appropriate ‘best practice’ Indigenous/Indigenist research by ensuring that all research with Indigenous peoples contributes to the emancipation of the Indigenous peoples lives; that the research aligns with the political views, beliefs and concerns of the people undertaking the research and that the research actually prioritises and centres the voices of the Indigenous peoples themselves over outsider researchers and colonial storytelling.

Engaging with Indigenous Research Methodologies in this thesis then led to the need for engaging with Indigenous methods including Dawn Bessarab’s different types of Indigenous Yarning, and Stó:lō scholar Joanne Archibald’s Indigenous Storywork. Through engaging with these Indigenous research methods, this research project demonstrated the importance (and success) of working in our own ways, understanding our own epistemologies and developing (and revitalising) our own unique Tribal methodologies and methods. This is essential for decolonising research processes and reclaiming our stories and knowledges from the stranglehold of colonial storytelling. I will be forever grateful to my Elders and The Circle for persisting and continuing to tell their stories and developing ways for others to do the same in the face of the extreme trauma and destruction typical of colonisation. As a D’harawal woman, educator, artist and researcher, I am especially guided by the work of my Elders and The Circle in sharing and implementing the D’harawal Truths as the foundation for a D’harawal Storytelling Methodology, Bangawarra’o Waduguda, in particular, the first Five Truths. The first five truths are about understanding D’harawal law and lore ie: the first truth is understanding your own place in reality (what I see); the second truth is seeking to understand the place of others (what you/they see); the third truth is concerned with the actual reality (what is), the fourth truth is understanding what came before

(what was) and the fifth truth is what will come after or what are the consequences for the future (what will be) (Bodkin-Andrews et, al., 2022; Bodkin, 2013). By engaging with the Five Truths, I can understand the importance of acknowledging and holding space for other Stories, knowledges and ways of being, and that there is room for them all regardless of whether they conflict with each other. This has been vital to me in learning to stand in my own D'harawal strengths while honouring the Stories of other people who are also connected to Country here without succumbing to lateral violence and internalised racism by erasing their Stories in defence of my own.

The work of the D'harawal Elders and The Circle in this thesis, demonstrates that Indigenous knowledges, stories and epistemologies are nuanced and complex. When we embrace the D'harawal Five Truths, we realise that there are many sides to every aspect of Country and community, and our Stories and lives become richer, more layered, connected and contextualised despite - and in spite of - colonisation and colonial storytelling that wants to minimise, paternalise, and destroy our unique and diverse cultural ways of being. The government policy explored in this research project, through the lens of Lorraine Muller's work with the Stages of Colonisation, in conjunction with the Elders' lived experiences, revealed that a key tactic of colonisation was to degrade and belittle our lives and culture to increase the legitimacy of their own western eurocentric values and society. It was believed that once our cultures were destroyed, they could be replaced with the colonisers culture and society. In destroying us, they could empower themselves. Our very survival is an act of resistance here, and the gift that the Elders and The Circle have brought to us with this research project and thesis, is beyond even survival. The gift they have created is the evidence that our D'harawal ways of working, thinking, being and

doing, through Story, are a potent range of strategies for resisting colonisation and forging a stronger future for our culture, and those of Indigenous peoples across the world.

The Elders' and The Circle's work in this thesis will also provide an invaluable and enduring interdisciplinary resource for teachers and educators working at any level of education. Engaging with the Elders' Stories provides unique and compelling, first-hand accounts of a range of issues affecting Indigenous peoples and the real-world consequences of colonisation. This is a significant departure from current, western educational resources that prioritise the coloniser's worldview in culturally unsafe, teaching and learning environments, particularly for Indigenous students. The Elders' voices and stories in this research provides rare and invaluable content for the successful implementation of an Indigenous learning framework in a western education setting. The vision for a project like this would be to support Indigenous students in western education settings by contributing to culturally safe and meaningful bodies of knowledge and associated teaching methods. A resource such as the knowledge provided by the Elders and The Circle in this thesis project is a pioneering example of best practice in the areas of Indigenous, specifically D'harawal, research and Storying. Yarning has already begun with the Elders to workshop strategies for publishing their Stories in diverse ways to appeal to a wide audience. The Stories, the analysis, the methods and methodologies employed could potentially be packaged as an educational resource for teachers and educators. The Storytelling can be programmed across all stages of education, to be revealed in layers of age-appropriate complexity, across all key learning areas. As the student matures, more depth is explained and, in many ways, this mirrors our own D'harawal ways of teaching and learning Stories within our communities.

For example, in the case of Uncle John's knowledges, the entry point for young, Stage 1 students (approx 5-7 years of age) would be to engage with the Narinya Story of Garraway the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo to understand D'harawal ways of resistance and survival. As the student grows, by Stage 2 (8-10 years of age) some of the symbolism used in the Narinya Story could begin to be revealed with students examining how some of Garraway's life experiences could be aligned to real life experiences. By Stage 3 (10-12 years of age) students could then begin to understand the direct associations between Garraway's life and the complex conversations of colonisation, racism and dispossession and the traumas and destruction for Aboriginal peoples. By secondary education, Stages 4, 5 and 6, students can begin to engage with Uncle John's lived experiences and explore Australian government assimilation policies, resistance, survival and all of the many aspects of Uncle John's story that underpin the symbolism in the story of Garraway the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo. By tertiary and adult education levels, learners can begin to explore and understand the Indigenous research methodologies and methods that were used to research and write the Garraway story, and how these local Stories intersect with those of other Indigenous peoples across the world. Throughout all of these levels, story listeners and learners can explore the stories as key ways in which the Elders and The Circle want to communicate their values, principles, and ways of being as D'harawal peoples.

The Elders have also created a significant body of scholarship that can support other Indigenous scholars wanting to do similar research work, especially in Storying and Yarning as cultural research practises.

The work of the Elders has laid down invaluable foundations for the success of Tribal Methodologies,

in this case, specifically the D'harawal Bangawarra'o Waduguda Storytelling Methodology. This work sets out, tests, and reports the success of our unique ways of being and doing which will provide a scaffold to support the work of other Indigenous peoples who wish to research and document their own cultural methods

In undertaking this research, I also discovered a gap in several bodies of scholarship. For example, in the right of reply to the archive's scholarship, very little has been written from the perspective of on-Country urban Aboriginal people. This doctoral research provides invaluable evidence of the success of Indigenous Storytelling methodologies, specifically D'harawal Bangawarra'o Waduguda, to act as a right of reply to the deficit discourses of colonial storytelling and the colonial archives regarding the Sydney region. I would recommend that further research is undertaken specifically in this field, from a D'harawal worldview, to add to the scholarship and expand the perspectives of an Indigenous right of reply as described by the outstanding bodies of work by Worimi academic, Kirsten Thorpe (2021) and Wiradjuri scholar, Nathan Sentance (2022) and their colleagues.

Another area where this doctoral research contributes new knowledge to the scholarship is in the area of an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint as originally described by Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2013). This thesis was undertaken from what I now refer to as a D'harawal (Australian) Indigenous Women's Standpoint, taking the emphasis off 'Australian' and making it specific to my D'harawal identity. I have retained the (Australian) throughout this thesis though, as a nod to Moreton-Robinson's foundational and inspiring scholarship. I would recommend that further research be undertaken

specifically from an on-Country D'harawal women's standpoint. I will be returning to this work as soon as possible. Specifically for me from a D'harawal (Australian) Indigenous Women's Standpoint, I would like to investigate more fully, the Matriarchal structures inherent in D'harawal culture as evidenced in many of our Garuwanga Waduguda Stories. I immediately think of the Ancestral Story of Dahl'wah (casuarina) and her relationship with our women Elders and their role as Storytellers and Knowledge Keepers or Holders (Bodkin, 2013). I am highly anticipating undertaking further work in this area of research as an opportunity to honour and respect the amazing Indigenous women around me, as well as those who came before me, and those who will come after me.

Concluding Reflections

In my research, I have held dual accountability. On the cultural side, I have demonstrated the importance of on-Country, contemporary knowledge creation and cultural practice to strengthen and continue the evolution of Aboriginal knowledge systems, despite colonial attempts to eradicate them. On the other side of the ledger - the institutional side - I have found that if the academy is to keep up with the passion and pace of Indigenous researchers, it needs to adapt. My PhD journey has proven that there is a well-meaning desire within the academic institution to include Indigenous research, and there are support systems in place to encourage Indigenous researchers. At first glance, this appears to be an entirely positive and beneficial arrangement to enter into, but as I noted in my introductory chapter, the western academy only validates what can fit within a colonial/settler worldview, and as an Aboriginal Knowledge Keeper, I encounter culturally unsafe information reading the discourse; researching the archives; and participating in institutional activities. When I stand on-Country, enacting Country as enmeshed within our epistemological endeavours, this practice "inevitably means coming face-to-face

with settler colonial authority, surveillance, and violence, because this practice places Indigenous bodies in between settlers and their money” (Betasomake Simpson, 2017, p. 166). There is a point at which well-meaning ‘inclusion’ gives way to colonial structures, and either I had to justify my work through Western knowledge systems, or I had to give up on completing the doctorate. This might have been the biggest challenge to completion - the emotional labour and the consequent toll that this cultural interface has taken on the desire to pursue further research. This area needs much further research, from all perspectives.

In this PhD I have tried to walk, first and foremost, with cultural integrity, because that is what my D’harawal culture dictates. I have prioritised citing Indigenous authors, and largely Indigenous women; I have honoured our Indigenous knowledges as scholarship and the Elders as co-researchers; I have used layered Storytelling, to ensure uninitiated readers participate in a way that is culturally appropriate and I have withheld knowledges that require initiation to engage with them. Most importantly though, I have been given the privilege and honour to tell (and document) D’harawal Stories, many that have never been heard before. As D’harawal people, our knowledges and Stories are deeply connected to Country here in the now-Sydney Basin: they assert our sovereignty here and demonstrate our long and enduring connection to this Country in the face of colonial denial and (insider, Indigenous) internalised racism and lateral violence. The fact remains, that we are D’harawal people, we belong to Country here, we assert our right to practise and renew culture, Stories, language and song, as we have always done, and will always do, with Country, and for Country.

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APPENDICES

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

The Living Dreaming - A Study of Sydney's Living D'harawal Knowledges

(UTS Ethics Approval ETH18-2138)

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

My name is Shannon Foster and I am a PhD student at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), in the Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges (CAIK). My professional and academic knowledge is in the field of education and Indigenous Knowledges and my supervisor is Associate Professor Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews from the Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, University of Technology Sydney.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

This research is being conducted to document D'harawal Narinya Waduguda - the contemporary stories and experiences of Sydney based, D'harawal people.

WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?

You have been approached because you are a Sydney based D'harawal person.

IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

I will invite you to take part in three in-depth, informal, yarning sessions where you and I will share stories, and work together on ideas and themes of the stories you would like to pass on to our future generations. The yarning will be conducted by me but the overall themes and stories told will be entirely up to you. The location of the yarning sessions will be held in a place of your choosing and convenience. All yarning sessions will be audio recorded and transcribed, and your data will be stored securely for a period of five years within CAIK at UTS. It is estimated that each yarning session will take one to two hours including a session for you to validate and approve of your transcripts and stories. For this you will be offered a small gift of a \$50 gift card per session to compensate you for your time. You will also be offered the opportunity to be a co-researcher with me in a journal article/academic publication. You can choose to be anonymous in the research and your transcript and

the journal article/academic publication will be edited for anonymity. Whether you choose to be anonymous or identified, you will have the option to approve and/or remove any information in both the transcript and the finished journal article/academic publication. Collaboration with you in this study is important, and I aim to have this happen naturally, with feedback on how best you would like to participate.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

As an Aboriginal woman and a member of our family, I will be yarning with you about our stories, our struggles, and our futures, and I will aim to create a safe and empowering space by allowing you to decide on the direction of the discussion, and to check context and remove any information that you deem sensitive, upsetting, or identifying. If you choose to be de-identified, any identifying information will be kept confidential and will be removed from the stories. This includes any publication in news articles or academic articles. You are also free to withdraw at any time, and without giving a reason, and the stories you may have shared will not be used in any way.

DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?

Participation in this study is voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?

If you decide not to participate, it will not affect your relationship with me or the University of Technology Sydney. If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting me on [REDACTED]. If you withdraw from the study, your yarning session audiotapes will be erased, and your transcripts will be destroyed (you may retain a copy though).

CONFIDENTIALITY

By signing this form, you consent to me (Shannon Foster) collecting personal information about you for my research project. Your information will only be used for the purpose of this research project, and you will only be identified with your permission. All recordings, transcripts, and data will be treated confidentially and securely stored electronically in password protected folders/files on a computer in the Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges for a period of five years. You will have the option to become a co-researcher (which means you will be identified in the data and journal articles), or to be de-identified and given a pseudonym in the data. You will be given the opportunity to review your transcripts and withdraw any data that you deem identifying or unsettling. The final, published data may also be archived with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) so it can be available to any interested parties in the future (but only if you agree to this).

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me on [REDACTED] and shannon.e.foster@student.uts.edu.au, or my supervisor Associate Professor Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews on 02 9514 3951 and gawaian.bodkin-andrews@uts.edu.au. If you would like to talk to someone who is not connected with the research, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer on 02 9514 9772, and quote this number (UTS Ethics Approval ETH18-2138). Alternatively, if, for any reason, you feel the need for counselling services due to taking part in this project, it is recommended that you contact either the (*I will insert an appropriate Indigenous service, dependent on the location of the participant/co-researcher*), 24 hour Lifeline Australia (131114), Beyond Blue support (1300223243), or your General Practitioner.

NOTE:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee [UTS HREC]. If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the conduct of this research, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on ph.: +61 2 9514 2478 or email: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au], and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any matter raised will be treated confidentially, investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.



CONSENT FORM

The Living Dreaming - A Study of Sydney's Living D'harawal Knowledges (UTS Ethics Approval
ETH18-2138)

I _____ [*participant's name*] agree to participate in the research project The Living Dreaming - A Study of Sydney's Living D'harawal Knowledges (UTS Ethics Approval ETH18-2138) being conducted by Shannon Foster (PhD student) from the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges (CAIK), Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, University of Technology Sydney, P: _____, E: Shannon.e.foster@student.uts.edu.au.

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, or someone has read it to me in a language that I understand.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research as described in the Participant Information Sheet.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described, and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without affecting my relationship with the researcher or the University of Technology Sydney.

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

I agree to be:

- Audio recorded

Yes - No -

- To being included as co-author on academic publications containing my stories

Yes - No -

- To having my stories shared within the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies research archives

Yes - No -

I agree that the stories gathered from this project may be published/shared in a form that identifies me

Yes - No -

I am aware that I can contact Shannon Foster or her supervisor Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation (and stories) from this research project at any time.

Name and Signature [participant]

____/____/____
Date

Name and Signature [researcher or delegate]

____/____/____
Date

Yarning plan

The Living Dreaming- A Study of Sydney's Living D'harawal Knowledges

Yarning with members of the D'harawal Nation of the Sydney region

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study!

As part of this yarning session, we will discuss a number of topics, which you are free to answer and talk about at your own leisure. You will also be free to ask me any questions about the research and my experiences as a D'harawal Sydney woman working and studying within education and Indigenous Studies. Following are some of the ideas that we might have a yarn about:

- D'harawal values and culture
- Important values and principles to live by
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture; and
- Survival and resistance in D'harawal culture

Based on these themes, we can then have a yarn to answer the following questions:

- What is your name, age, and Aboriginal Nation/language group?
- In your eyes, what does it mean to be D'harawal?

Conversational cues may include:

- How is being D'harawal different to other Nations?
 - Have the D'harawal always been in Sydney?
 - What is your first memory of being D'harawal?
- What do you think is one of the most important rules to live by?

Conversational cues may include:

- What are some important values that emerging generations should know?
- How do you think your life now will differ from the lives of future generations?
- If you could pass on one story from your life to the future generations what would it be?

Conversational cues may include:

- What is an important story or event in your life?
- What would you really like a future D'harawal person to know?
- What can future generations learn about life from your experiences?

Thank you, again. At the end of the yarnning session, you will be offered a \$50 gift card to compensate you for your time.

During a follow up yarn we will discuss how your life and experiences can be re-written to create a story that can be used in education.