UTS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

Murungiyalinya: Wiradjuri Cultural Revitalisation and Its Socio-Political Significance to the Wiradjuri People

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Doctor of Philosophy

under the supervision of Larissa Behrendt, Daryle Rigney, Anna Clark

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Lachlan McDaniel, 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 document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Dedication

Babiin-dhi bunga-ny nguwan-gu.

Dedicated to my father.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners whose stories form the heart of this research. Mandaang guwu (thank you) to Uncle Stan Grant Snr, Aunty Lorraine Tye, Michael McDaniel, and Jonathan Jones for sharing.

I would like to express my gratitude to my primary supervisor, Larissa Behrendt, and my secondary supervisors, Daryle Rigney and Anna Clark. I am deeply grateful for your unwavering support, wisdom and guidance.

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Thank you to my family and friends for their endless love and support during the writing of this thesis and beyond. I am especially grateful to my parents. To my mother, Carol McDaniel, thank you for your unconditional love. To my father, Michael McDaniel, thank you for your kindness and wisdom.

Most importantly, I wish to thank my partner, Tayane Gebien, for your love, care, and support throughout the production of this thesis. It would not have been possible without you.

Contents

Language Index

Badhang:	cloak
Bagay:	emu egg spoons
Bargin:	boomerang
Bindugaany:	mussel shell
-galang:	Pluralises the preceding word
Galigal:	stone knife
Gurilgang:	the patterns that were marked onto the leather (non-fur) side of a wilay badhang (possum skin cloak).
Mandaang guwu:	thank you
Marga:	parrying shield
Dhalany:	spear head
Ngiyang:	language
Ngurambang:	country
Yindyamarra:	a Wiradjuri that translates into 'respect' in English. It is also the name of a code of conduct requiring a person to progress slowly, gently and politely (Grant & Rudder, 2005, p. 485).
Waybarra:	woven spiral
Wambuwuny-miilbang:	kangaroo awls
Wilay:	brush-tailed possum
Wilay Badhang:	Possum cloak
Wilay Badhang-galang:	Possum cloaks

List of Abbreviations

AIATSIS - Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

AGNSW – Art Gallery of New South Wales

ANU – Australian National University

COFA – College of Fine Arts

CSU – Charles Sturt University

HDR – Higher Degree Research

HoW – Hands on Weaving

ILUAs – Indigenous Land Use Agreements

NIAA – National Indigenous Australians Agency

NNTT – National Native Title Tribunal

QAGOMA - Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art

UTS – University of Technology Sydney

WoWW – Women of Wagga Weaving

Note to Readers

This thesis recognises that the Indigenous peoples of Australia and elsewhere use various terms to refer to themselves, and they have also been subject to a range of terms used by others to describe them. The author of this dissertation has attempted to use the most respectful terms possible in the relevant context, and he apologises in advance if any offence is inadvertently caused. The list below sets out the terms used and what they refer to:

- Wiradjuri/Wiradyuri: Both self-determined variations of spelling have been accepted for the First People of Wiradjuri ngurambang.
- Indigenous (capitalised): when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures originating from Australia and its associated territories.
- indigenous: when referring to indigenous peoples found collectively within Australia and abroad.
- Aboriginal: when referring to the Indigenous people of Australia, excluding Torres Strait Islanders.
- First Nations: depending on context, this term can refer to the Indigenous Nations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or collectively to the indigenous nations found in Australia and abroad.
- First Peoples: depending on context, this term can refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in particular or to indigenous people generally.

Warning

Members of Aboriginal communities are respectfully advised that several people mentioned in the text of this theses and depicted in its images have died.

Abstract

This thesis explores Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation, the process of revitalising the cultural practices of Wiradjuri people of Australia, whose observances were significantly disrupted by two centuries of brutal colonisation and attempted ethnocide. Its author is a Wiradjuri man.

The study utilised the Wiradjuri research methodology Yindyamarra Winanghana for three reasons: it centres on the Wiradjuri cultural philosophy of Yindyamarra, meaning respect; it was created by key research participants in this study; and because the cultural philosophy of Yindyamarra is itself undergoing a process of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

The word 'murungiyalinya' employed in the title of this thesis is a Wiradjuri verb meaning to 'be resurrected, revive, come to life again'. This word was aptly chosen because this thesis explores Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation by answering two questions: 'How and why are Wiradjuri people undertaking Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation?' and 'What is the significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to the Wiradjuri peoples' socio-political status?'

The first question was answered using Yindyamarra Winanghana by providing space for four Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners to report, in their own words, their motivations and processes for undertaking the regeneration of Wiradjuri cultural practices. Their stories led to the finding that Wiradjuri people are engaging in Wiradjuri cultural resurgence for a range of inspiring reasons and through remarkable means.

In regard to the second question, the findings show that cultural revitalisation is significant to the Wiradjuri people's socio-political status because it can both intentionally and unintentionally dispel the negative misrepresentations that have been applied to us, our culture and our identity in our own ngurambang (country) through colonial efforts to undermine our socio-political status. This thesis argues that the intentional dispelling of

these colonial notions through Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is a significant act of self-determination that allows the Wiradjuri to resume control over our representation and frees us from detrimental colonial misrepresentations. Furthermore, it explains how Wiradjuri people's use of cultural revitalisation for self-determination over our portrayal at the same time develops our identification as a First Nation.

Chapter 1:

Introduction to Murungiyalinya: Wiradjuri Cultural Revitalisation

1.1 Introduction

This chapter contextualises this thesis and sets out the approach taken in response to the study's following two research questions:

- How and why are Wiradjuri people undertaking Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation?
- What is the significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to the Wiradjuri peoples' socio-political status.

Section 1.2 outlines the Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation as the subject matter of this research. It also introduces and defines *indigenous cultural revitalisation* and *Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation* as terms that are not universally understood. It provides examples of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation whilst positioning it in the movement of indigenous cultural resurgence taking place globally. This section also briefly outlines the key concepts that will help to explain the socio-political significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

Section 1.3 outlines the significance of this research and its implications for further research on Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

Section 1.4 outlines my cultural position relative to this research as a Wiradjuri gibir (man). It is important to do this early in this thesis, both as a matter of Wiradjuri cultural protocol and according to Yindyamarra Winhangana, which is the leading research methodology for this thesis. This is discussed in Chapter 2.

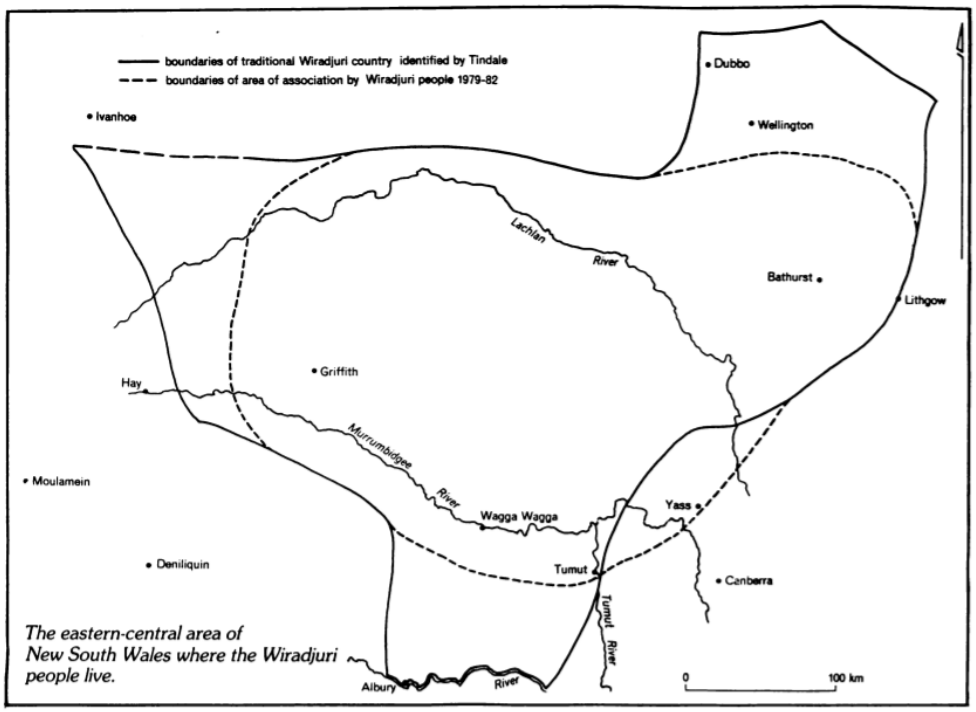
Section 1.5 outlines the structure of this thesis with a chapter-by-chapter breakdown of the research focus addressed in each section. It provides a glimpse into the overarching academic narrative of this thesis.

1.2 The Research Subject

This research explores Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation as a localised example of a global movement taking place amongst indigenous people and commonly referred to as indigenous cultural revitalisation. I have created the following definition of indigenous cultural revitalisation to use in this thesis:

> a global movement undertaken by indigenous peoples to reintroduce or increase their engagement with their cultural practices whose observance was disrupted, predominantly by colonisation.

Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is a specific example of indigenous cultural revitalisation involving the Wiradjuri People, the indigenous people of Wiradjuri ngurambang (Country), the geographical location of which is shown in the following map by Read (1988). Hence, for this thesis, Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is defined as a process involving Wiradjuri people reintroducing or increasing their observance of cultural practices whose observance was disrupted, predominantly by colonisation.



Map of the Wiradjuri Nation. Source: Read (1988)

It is important to note that the phenomenon referred to as indigenous cultural revitalisation is often referred to by other names. England (2003) used the terms 'revitalisation', 'revival' and 'reaffirmation' interchangeably and without a distinction when referring to the process of Mayas reengaging with their languages. Simpson (2004) discussed indigenous people re-engaging with their culture, defining this process as cultural 'recovery and maintenance' and 'renewal.' Corntassel (2012) used the terms 'resurgence', 'renewal' and 'regeneration' when discussing indigenous peoples reconnecting with their place in the natural world through engaging in their indigenous cultures and associated practices. All these terms generally refer to what I call here 'indigenous cultural revitalisation.' The shorter term, 'cultural revitalisation', is also used in this thesis because it is commonly used in the existing literature and by Wiradjuri people when referring to this process.

The examples of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation highlighted in this thesis were determined by the four Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners who were involved with this project as key research participants. The cultural revitalisation practices focused upon include speaking the Wiradjuri ngyiang (language) and the creation of several Wiradjuri cultural objects. These cultural objects include, but are not limited to, wilay badhang-galang (possum skin cloaks), woven objects like baskets and animals, the bagaay (emu-egg spoon), bindu-gaany bingal (bone awl), dhala-ny (spear point), galigal (stone knife), and walamwunga (grinding stone). My study relied heavily on these practitioners retelling their accounts of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to illustrate their motivations and processes of reintroducing these practices. This means that these practitioners themselves answered the first research question: How and why are Wiradjuri people revitalising our cultural practices?

The expression *socio-political status* is not widely used in the literature, and I have drawn it from the term 'socio political', which the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d) states is 'used to describe the differences between groups of people relating to their political beliefs, social class, etc.' As such, I use 'socio-political status' to refer to the position or status of an

individual or group within a society characterised by uneven enjoyment of sociological and political influences.

Later in this thesis I address the significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to the socio-political status of the Wiradjuri people by demonstrating how engaging in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation dispels detrimental misrepresentations that have been applied to the Wiradjuri to lower our socio-political status and further colonial interests in Wiradjuri ngurambang. I also show how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation intersects with a range of colonial concepts such as 'the savage' and 'the stadial theory of history', as well as with Wiradjuri self-determination and self-government.

1.3 Research Significance

My study is significant because it contributes to an understanding of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation, a phenomenon that is crucial to the continued existence of the Wiradjuri people and culture. It demonstrates how and why a localised example of indigenous cultural revitalisation is taking place and the positive impact that this revitalisation is having on the socio-political status of an indigenous demographic that is amongst the most disadvantaged in a settler-colonial state.

I dedicate an entire chapter of this thesis to instances of an indigenous people successfully revitalising their cultural practices in a settler-colonial state that has spent more than two centuries trying to systematically eradicate them and their culture. Many indigenous cultural practices across the globe are endangered due to the devastating impacts of colonisation, and this thesis demonstrates how such damage can be reversed. For example, the story of Uncle Stan's successful revitalisation of the Wiradjuri ngiyang (language) in Chapter 4 is presented against a backdrop of an international crisis regarding indigenous language loss. In fact, the risk of indigenous language loss is so disproportionately high that the United Nations (2019) passed a resolution to declare the decade between 2022 to 2032 the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. Perhaps

the greatest significance of this research is that it shares examples of successful indigenous cultural revitalisation that can inform and motivate other instances of indigenous cultural revitalisation.

This thesis is also significant because it recognises the true nature of colonisation in Australia as an inequitable process that persistently defines the socio-political relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as one of disparity. Recognising the continuing operation of colonisation as the root-cause of this disparity is a matter of grave urgency. The following statistics were drawn from Australian Government Productivity Commission's (n.d.-a) 'Closing the Gap Information Repository Dashboard' to quantify just how socio-politically disparate Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia are.

Nationally, Indigenous males in Australia are expected to live 71.9 years compared to 80.6 for non-Indigenous males (Productivity Commission, n.d.-b). Indigenous women are expected to live 75.6 years relative to 83.8 for non-Indigenous females (Productivity Commission, n.d.-b). Indigenous people commit suicide at a rate 2.5 times higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, n.d).

Indigenous children commit suicide at a rate 1.6 times higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Productivity Commission, n.d.-c). Indigenous young people are 27 times more likely to be in detention than non-Indigenous young people (Productivity Commission, n.d.-d). Indigenous children are 12.7 times more likely to be in out-of-home-care compared to non-Indigenous children (Productivity Commission, n.d.-e). A non-Indigenous person aged 20 to 24 years is 1.3 times more likely to attain a Year 12 or equivalent qualification compared to an Indigenous person of that same demographic (Productivity Commission, n.d.-f). An Indigenous person is 15.2 times more likely to be incarcerated than a non-Indigenous person (Productivity Commission, n.d.-g). An Indigenous child is 1.6 times less likely to be developmentally on track in all five Australian Early Development Census domains compare to their non-Indigenous counterparts (Productivity Commission, n.d.-h).

This thesis recognises that the disparities demonstrated in the above statistics are due to a colonial design that is systematically deployed through a range of practices. In considering the particular case of the Wiradjuri, this research focuses on how the disparities have been engineered through the colonial practice of applying detrimental concepts and associated misrepresentations to lower the socio-political status of the Wiradjuri, thereby furthering colonial interests in Wiradjuri ngurambang. This thesis also recognises that these detrimental concepts and misrepresentations have lingered in the non-Indigenous psyche long after Indigenous lands were forcibly seized, perpetuating the socio-political disparity between the Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people of Australia. I take the view that highlighting the sources of the disparity in socio-political status between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples within Australia is important if there is to be any real chance of addressing it.

This thesis is also significant because it demonstrates how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation can challenge and improve the socio-political status of the Wiradjuri people. In the first instance, it identifies the concept of 'the savage' and its associated misrepresentations that have suppressed the socio-political status of the Wiradjuri. It then demonstrates how the practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation incidentally and inadvertently challenges the applicability of this concept and its associated misrepresentations, thereby alleviating the downward pressure they place on our socio-political status.

A further element of significance is evident in how this research demonstrates how Wiradjuri people can use Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to *intentionally* challenge the detrimental concepts and misrepresentations that undermine our socio-political status. This differing element of intentionality is significant because it makes such use of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation an important act of self-determination that assumes control over how our people, culture and identity are represented in the Australian settler-colonial state. This is important because it furthers our socio-political aspirations for Wiradjuri nationhood and self-governance.

Finally, this research is significant because it indicates other ways in which Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is important, even if I was unable to explore these implications fully in this dissertation. For example, it was originally intended that this thesis would also articulate how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation could generate wellbeing amongst Wiradjuri on individual and collective levels, including by the amelioration of the negative factors, such as racism, that impinge on Wiradjuri people. However, during the writing of this dissertation I decided that these matters would be better explored in future research. Nevertheless, I will now briefly outline the importance of this research for Wiradjuri wellbeing.

1.4 Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and Wiradjuri wellbeing

This thesis contains numerous examples of how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation generates individual and collective wellbeing for the Wiradjuri people. Chapter 4 outlines the experiences of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners and how revitalising the Wiradjuri culture generates elements critical to cultivating a sense of wellbeing for the practitioners and the Wiradjuri people around them. A particular example is the excitement and joy that was generated amongst the Wiradjuri Council of Elders when they saw my father's revitalised *wilay badhang* (possum skin cloak) for the first time.

Claiming that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation generates wellbeing amongst the Wiradjuri people may not be unexpected, given the following observation of the Lowitja Institute (2020, p.30):

> Through colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices were actively banned, punished and prohibited … [and] this trauma of cultural suppression has had a profound effect on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's identity, sense of belonging and, critically, their health and wellbeing.

It would be natural to assume that the process of reconnecting to Indigenous ways of living, cultural practices and expressions would have reversed the impact that their

removal had on Indigenous wellbeing. There is a surprising amount of evidence of the effectiveness of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation ameliorating negative impacts on our wellbeing, such as racism.

Uncle Geoff Anderson is responsible for introducing Wiradjuri ngiyang (language) lessons into Parkes, NSW, which, like all cities and towns on Wiradjuri ngurambang, has a history of racist attitudes towards Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people spanning back to its founding. However, Uncle Geoff observed the following when he began teaching the Wiradjuri ngiyang (language):

> With the schoolchildren in Parkes East Public School speaking some language, we have a school boasting zero racism. The parents have accepted the language and we find that it's breaking down the invisible wall of racism within the community. The student representative council of the Parkes East Public School approached the Parkes Shire Council for Welcome to Wiradjuri Country signs to be placed on the road north and south of Parkes. The Council agreed to this request. (Anderson, 2010, p. 72)

This result is especially significant because reports of Indigenous people experiencing racism increased in Australia 1.4 times between 2018 and 2022, and reports of racism being experienced by Indigenous people in Australia are 2.4 times higher than those reported by non-Indigenous people (Productivity Commission, n.d.-i). Addressing such rising rates of racism is critical because the *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report* (2024, p.26) found: 'Racism negatively affects the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, increasing risks of anxiety, depression, self-harm, asthma, higher Body Mass Index, smoking and death by suicide'. The findings reported in this thesis indicate that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation improves Wiradjuri wellbeing and has the potential to ameliorate instances of racism and its effects, in particular suicide.

In their study of the cultural factors affecting Canadian Aboriginal youth suicide rates in British Columbia, Hallet et al. (2007) found that the language-use indicator proved to be

the best indicator in predicting rates of youth suicide in indigenous communities when compared with six other cultural continuity factors. They also found that Canadian Aboriginal communities that had 50% or more of their members speaking indigenous languages at a conversational level experienced low to absent youth suicide rates.

Gibson et al. (2021) undertook similar research to explore whether Hallet et al.'s (2007) findings were applicable in Australia. They found:

> The presence of Indigenous language use was associated with statistically significantly lower suicide rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, in addition to lower suicide rates in communities where there was greater involvement with culturally specific support services, attendance at ceremonies, cultural and community activities and broader community engagement. (p. 514)

These data point to the importance of my exploration of the socio-political significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. Cultural strength could potentially be our most important tool in improving the wellbeing of the Wiradjuri people.

In summary, my thesis is significant because it contributes to understanding Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation as a phenomenon that is crucial for the survival of the Wiradjuri people. It demonstrates how and why my Indigenous group is reintroducing cultural practices following an extensive period of colonisation, and it gives examples of the positive impacts this is having. These examples can be used to guide other communities. In addition, and more importantly, it demonstrates how the Wiradjuri people's practice of cultural revitalisation can challenge detrimental concepts and misrepresentations, thereby improving our socio-political status. It also outlines how cultural revitalisation can further Wiradjuri self-determination and self-governance. As such, it can be used to inspire and guide other communities. Finally, this research also shows that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation improves the wellbeing of Wiradjuri people and is therefore worthy of further research.

1.5 My Cultural Position Within This Research

Providing an outline of my cultural position relative to this research early in the thesis is important for the fulfillment of both the Wiradjuri protocol when speaking on Wiradjuri matters and the academic requirement of stating my positionality relative to this research.

I am a Wiradjuri gibir (man) connected to Wiradjuri ngurambang by approximately 2,000 generations through my father, Michael McDaniel. I can trace my Wiradjuri ancestry back to a woman whose only recorded name is Mary. Mary would have been born in the 1820s or early 1830s, and her existence is only documented on the death certificate of her daughter Mary Ann Brennan. This means Mary's birth would have taken place not long after the colonisation of Wiradjuri ngurambang took place. She might already have been born by 14 August 1824, the day NSW Governor Thomas Brisbane declared Martial Law on the Wiradjuri people surrounding the colonial town of Bathurst.

According to records, Mary was also the partner of a white labourer named James Brennan, and she gave birth to Mary Ann Brennan in the Condobolin District in 1847. Mary Ann later married an Englishman named James Tomlins Thorpe in Euabalong, NSW. This marriage marked the beginning of the 'Thorpe' Wiradjuri family name in the Euabalong, Lake Cargelligo, Condobolin, and the broader Lachlan Valley area. I am descended from the Thorpes of Euabalong.

The Thorpe family often identifies as members of the Kalari Clan of Wiradjuri ngurambang. However, there is a story suggesting that our Wiradjuri ancestry might originate from the area where the present-day town of Forbes is located. This would suggest a connection to the Bundaburra Clan of the Forbes area. However, determining such connections is very difficult to verify due to the impact of colonisation.

Our family history indicates we relocated from Euabalong to Forbes around 1900. My great-great-great aunt, Aunty Maude Hicks (nee Curtis), was born in 1901, and I have vivid memories of her from my childhood. She recounted leaving Euabalong as a very young child in a horse and cart around 1905. However, it appears some of my Wiradjuri family

were already in Forbes, as her first cousin, Pop (Bill) Smith, was born there in 1903. This suggests my family moved to Forbes in stages.

In Chapter 4 of this thesis, my father explains what life was like for my family following the move to Forbes. However, I will say that it was a precarious existence because the white inhabitants barely tolerated us, and we were always hypervigilant against drawing attention to ourselves for fear of attracting further racial discrimination. As with most Wiradjuri families, our knowledge concerning tens of thousands of years of Wiradjuri culture and practices was significantly disrupted as we adapted to the colonial circumstances that enveloped us.

In summary, I am connected to this research by virtue of my Wiradjuri genealogy and my ancestors who practised the culture whose revitalisation I explore in this dissertation. However, I am also connected to this research as a *practitioner* of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

For Distinguished Professor Graham Hingangaroa Smith (2014) of Aotearoa (New Zealand), there are five tests to ascertain the veracity of a Kaupapa Māori Approach when engaged in research. The first is the *test of positionality*, where the researcher demonstrates their positionality to the research 'against a backdrop of practical enactment.' This is the *ringa raupa* test, where the researcher demonstrates the 'blisters on their hands' acquired through their practical engagement with the subject matter they are researching. The remainder of this section will be my response to the *ringa raupa* test, where I declare how I am able to speak from a place of personal experience by outlining how I got my actual and 'positionality blisters' through engaging in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

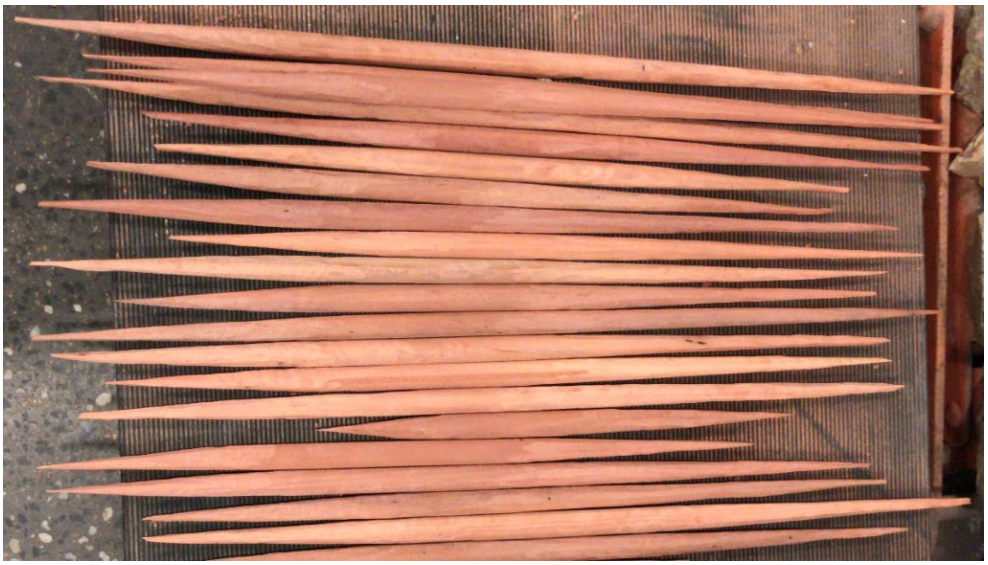
Firstly, this thesis is the result of my privilege to know remarkable Wiradjuri people who are revitalising our culture for varying reasons and by extraordinary means. Their dedication and hard work inspired me to participate in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation long before I enrolled in my PhD. My first true encounters of Wiradjuri cultural

revitalisation took place with the Wiradjuri practices of learning the Wiradjuri ngiyang (language) and the of making wilay badhang-galang (possum skin cloaks).

I enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts/Laws with Macquarie University in 2005 and graduated in 2011. As I was nearing the end of my degree, I approached the university with a request wear a wilay badhang at my graduation ceremony. My reasoning was that I had studied at Macquarie University as a Wiradjuri man and I would like to proudly graduate as one too. Macquarie University agreed and I made my first wilay badhang for the occasion under the guidance of my father. Stitching the cloak took several months and resulted in my hands acquiring my first actual 'positionality blisters' through Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. The following photograph was taken at the graduation ceremony. Being able to wear my wilay badhang at my graduation ceremony was a great honour and one of the most memorable occasions of my life.

My 2011 Graduation wearing a wilay badhang.

I first met Uncle Stan Grant Snr around the time I graduated from Macquarie University, when Dad was attending the Wiradjuri Council of Elders. Dad started learning the Wiradjuri ngiyang around this time by reading the *Wiradjuri Dictionary* Uncle Stan had published with Dr John Rudder, and he would teach me what he learnt. Since then, I have maintained my dedication to learning as much of the Wiradjuri language as possible. I enrolled and graduated from Charles Sturt University's Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language, Culture, and Cultural Heritage whilst I was undertaking this thesis. Undertaking both my PhD and the language course was a considerable academic load, but engaging in what is perhaps the Wiradjuri people's greatest example of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation whilst I researched the phenomenon provided me with invaluable insights and perspective. Finally, my positionality relative to Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and this research was further developed when I began engaging in the revitalisation of Wiradjuri carving in 2020. Dr Jonathan Jones is one of the four key Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation participants that I worked with in the development of this thesis, and I was given the honour of working on one of his major artworks titled *giran* whilst I was in the early stages of my PhD. The Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art (n.d.-a), which exhibited and purchased *giran*, describes it as 'made up of around 2000 small sculptures based on traditional tools', and my contribution was the carving of approximately 300 dhalany-galang (spear points) (see the following photographs). This endeavour took several weeks working alongside Jonathan in his workshop, and it gave me both literal and positionality 'blisters'. Deepening my engagement with Wiradjuri carving is a goal of mine following the completion of this thesis.



Unfinished dhalany-galang I carved for *giran*

The finished dhalany-galang on exhibition for *giran*. Source: https://selectionsarts.com/the-experimental-catalogue-geraldine-barlow/

In summation, my positionality relative to this research is deeply influenced by being a Wiradjuri man who is personally invested in the revitalisation of the Wiradjuri culture. I am connected to the Wiradjuri culture by more than 2,000 generations of ancestors. Furthermore, I am a practitioner of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation because I believe that it is the responsibility of Wiradjuri people to ensure our culture is regenerated and passed on to subsequent generations.

Finally, I recognise that some within the academy will view my cultural connection and position relative to this research as being too substantial, making my personal bias too strong or creating a conflict of interest. Such perspectives will argue that my previously discussed connection to Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation ultimately detracts from the objectivity and knowledge value of my commentary in this dissertation. However, I believe that too much of the academic literature on indigenous people has been produced by non-Indigenous authors with a negative bias based on condescending and discriminatory perspectives. As such, I am comfortable with their possible perceptions of my bias balancing out their own. We Wiradjuri people are the most, and perhaps only, relevant authorities to be discussing our people, culture, and identity.

In conclusion, I am writing this thesis as a Wiradjuri gibir (man) who has a deep connection to the culture that is the focus of this thesis and which has been practised by my ancestors since time immemorial. I practise Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and I believe that this practical engagement with the subject matter has given me the 'positionality blisters' required to comment on it. Finally, drawing on my cultural positionality, which might be viewed by some as flawed or biased, means my research was created through experience and participation, rather than through external observation.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced my topic and framed my research. Chapter 2 outlines the research methodologies and methodological perspectives that guided the selection of Yindyamarra Winhangana as the primary research methodology used in this thesis. I begin this chapter by outlining how I struck a balance between using a Wiradjuri research methodology and avoiding a decolonising approach to my research. I then describe Yindyamarra as a Wiradjuri cultural concept before outlining Yindyamarra Winhangana and articulating its seven key methodological principles alongside examples of how I adhered to them in my study.

Chapter 3 is a review of the literature that has influenced my research and its positioning relative to the relevant academic work that has gone before it. Unfortunately, much of the academic literature on Wiradjuri people, culture, and identity has not been authored by Wiradjuri people and misrepresents our people and culture. Therefore, I have balanced such literature by heavily relying on the experiences of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners, as expressed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 describes my substantive research by relaying the stories of four Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners in individual profiles. These profiles communicate some of the practitioners' life stories alongside the experiences and motivations that have informed their revitalisation of Wiradjuri culture. By sharing their stories, these Wiradjuri practitioners answer in their own words the research question 'How and why are Wiradjuri people undertaking Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation?' Their experiences also provide the foundational data I used in the production of the remainder of this thesis. I have relied on the voices of these four practitioners because they are the best authorities on the Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation, and privileging their voices adheres to Yindyamarra Winhangana as a research methodology.

Chapter 5 begins by addressing the socio-political significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and demonstrating how its practice *incidentally* challenges detrimental concepts and misrepresentations that have been applied to the Wiradjuri peoples' socio-

political status through colonisation. I use the cultural revitalisation practices of the key research participants featured in Chapter 4 to demonstrate how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation can incidentally challenge the detrimental concept of 'the savage' and its associated misrepresentation of Wiradjuri people. In doing so, I argue that Wiradjuri people can improve their socio-political status by alleviating the downward socio-political pressure that such detrimental concepts and misrepresentations place on the Wiradjuri.

Chapter 6 demonstrates how Wiradjuri people can also *intentionally* use Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to challenge the socio-politically detrimental concepts and misrepresentations our colonisers apply to us. Jonathan Jones's use of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to challenge Aboriginal people being labelled 'hunter-gatherers' under the Stadial Theory of History will be used as an example. This differentiation of intentionality gives Wiradjuri people a sense of agency that makes such use of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation an act of self-determination. I argue such self-determination counters our colonisers' undermining of the Wiradjuri socio-political status and reinforces Wiradjuri people's assertion of First Nationhood, which may lead to self-governance.

Chapter 2:

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

How you do indigenous research is even more important than what you find. Most indigenous people who have a history of being the subjects of academic research are aware of this from a young age. Finding and applying the appropriate research methodology for this study was therefore crucially important.

This chapter, describing my chosen research methodology, has many similarities the reader will find in comparable chapters in other dissertations. It mentions the research methodologies I considered and used in the design of my research and the writing of this thesis. However, it also outlines the challenges I experienced when exploring the applicability of each methodology and how I worked through them to produce this dissertation. Most of these challenges stem from being a Wiradjuri man undertaking Wiradjuri research who chose to use indigenous research methodologies whilst contending with the disempowering effects of colonisation and the poor legacy of non-indigenous research on indigenous people. It is common for indigenous higher degree research (HDR) students to find themselves in this challenging situation, and this inspired me to describe not only the research methodologies I was attracted to but also how I applied the one I chose. To assist other Indigenous HDR students, I also wanted to outline the issues I faced in this process and how I resolved them.

The next section outlines the research methodologies that I considered for my study. I discuss the challenges I faced in weighing the methodological perspectives I perceived to be conflicting and how I resolved them. I then introduce the indigenous research methodology that primarily underpinned the production of this thesis and how I adhered to its principles.

2.2 Indigenous Research Methodologies and Decolonial Theory

According to former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Dodson (1995), 'Indigenous peoples are the most researched group in Australian society' (p. 101). This statement could mistakenly be understood to reflect a positive sentiment. After all, this thesis is about Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation; and indeed, Chapter 4 illustrates how ethnographic documentation of Wiradjuri culture has been a useful tool in the revitalisation of our cultural practices. However, Lester Rigney (2017) has dispelled the notion that benefits naturally accrue to indigenous groups who are the subjects of research, by noting how the proliferation of non-indigenous research on indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges is generally a disempowering development that positions indigenous people as 'the objects of research and never the initiator, manager or co-investigator of research' (p. 32).

Drawson et al. (2017) have similarly identified that non-indigenous research on indigenous people has resulted in many publications 'written on', rather than 'with' them (p. 1). For Rigney (2017), the problem with this disproportionate amount of non-indigenous research on 'indigenous worldviews and realities' is that these perspectives have always been obscured by the 'cultural' and 'race' biases of their non-indigenous authors (p. 32). The consequence of such bias is that indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges are detrimentally misrepresented, causing indigenous people to mistrust universities and their researchers.

An opportunity to address the glut of problematic non-indigenous research came about when indigenous people began accessing the same universities where much of this culturally and racially biased literature was produced. We are now able to critically analyse the research and research methodologies of non-Indigenous academics and expose any malpractice. Drawson et al. (2017) explained that one means by which indigenous academics began criticising such culturally biased research was by highlighting how many non-indigenous academics would eagerly document indigenous worldviews, cultural values and knowledges, whilst failing to incorporate them into their research

methodologies and methods. In other words, non-indigenous researchers were viewing indigenous people, culture and knowledge as being fascinating enough for academic documentation but never valuable enough to influence their thinking or research methodologies. Indigenous researchers have responded by developing and introducing research methodologies, practices, and ethical standards that all researchers should adopt when engaging in indigenous research. One such development was the creation of indigenous research methodologies.

Lester-Irabinna Rigney's (1999) *Indigenist Research Methodology* is a liberationist account of research method and purpose, and it was among the first I encountered when undertaking this research. For Rigney,

> Indigenist research is research undertaken as part of the struggle of Indigenous Australians for recognition of the right of self-determination and de-colonisation. It is research that engages with the issues, which have arisen out of the long history of colonisation, occupation, and oppression of Indigenous Australians, which began in earnest with the invasion of Australia by Europeans in 1788. It is research that deals with the history of physical, cultural and emotional genocide. It is also research that engages with the story of the survival and the celebration of resistance struggles of Indigenous Australians to racist oppression. It is research that seeks to uncover and protest the continuing forms of oppression that confronts Indigenous Australians. Moreover, it is research which attempts to support the personal, community, educational, cultural, and political struggles of Indigenous Australians to carve out a way of being for ourselves in Australia in which there is healing from the past oppressions and cultural freedom in the future. (1999, pp. 116–117)

Indigenist research has three interrelated and fundamental principles (p. 116):

1. The involvement in resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research;
2. The political integrity of Indigenist research; and
3. The privileging of Indigenous voices in Indigenist research.

I was initially uneasy about the notion of indigenous research being produced as part of the struggle of Indigenous Australians for emancipatory decolonisation. I felt it was problematic to define indigenous peoples, and indigenous research, according to the colonisation others inflicted on us. My opposition to this notion came from my pride in the fact the Wiradjuri are amongst the oldest continuing peoples and cultures found anywhere on the planet. We existed for tens of thousands of years before we experienced colonisation, and I felt that centring our experiences as victims of colonisation in our research might disempower us and diminish the significance of our pre-colonial history. Ultimately, I was concerned that conducting research focusing on colonisation and discussing our aspirations through a decolonial lens might shackle our contemporary and future identities to the unconscionable practice of colonisation, rather than more accurately portraying our culture as the source of our unique identity.

My uneasiness with having the concepts of colonisation and decolonisation underpin my research has been better expressed by Kovach (2010), who drew on Steinhauer (2001) and Wilson (2001) to encourage indigenous researchers to adopt a 'paradigmatic approach' that is grounded in an Indigenous belief system with a 'relational understanding and accountability to the world ' (p. 42). For Kovach (2010), a decolonising approach can be complementary to an indigenous paradigmatic approach, but,

> paradigmatically speaking, a decolonising perspective and indigenous epistemologies emerge from different paradigms. Decolonising analysis is born of critical theory found within the transformative paradigm of Western tradition (Mertens, 2005). It centres the settler discourse, whereas an indigenous paradigm centres indigenous knowledges. While a

> decolonising perspective remains necessary and can be included as a theoretical positioning within research, it is not the epidemiological centre of an indigenous methodological approach to research. (p. 42)

I found Kovach's (2010) explanation reassuring. It absolved me of the need to further consider my unease with Rigney's first principle. The fact that other indigenous researchers held a similar perspective to mine when choosing an indigenous research methodology also aided my sense of relief.

Drawson et al. (2017) undertook a systematic review of Indigenous research methodologies used in studies across the world and found that indigenous researchers are increasingly developing methodologies that are consistent with Kovach's (2010) views on the centralisation of indigenous paradigms: 'A large number of studies utilised a specific indigenous method – one that originates from the indigenous group that is collaborating on the study and is unlikely to be translatable to another context' (Drawson et al., 2017, p. 8). Whilst the seminal *Kaupapa Māori* of Aotearoa New Zealand is cited more often than any other culture-specific method, several Indigenous research methodologies from Australia were noted to have been developed using Aboriginal cultural knowledge systems, philosophies, and worldviews.

One such Aboriginal research methodology based on Indigenous culture was developed by Karen Martin - Booran Mirraboopa. Martin developed an Aboriginal research methodology based on her Quandamooka culture by reasoning that her people have their own distinct cultural worldviews, constructs, Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing, and these can be translated into an ontology, epistemology and axiology for her Quandamooka research methodology. Using Kovach's (2010) terminology, Martin (2002) infused her culture's inherent belief system and its 'relational understanding and accountability to the world' to create a Quandamooka research methodology.

Reading Martin's work was inspirational, and it gave me the idea of creating a similar indigenous research methodology for the Wiradjuri people using the concept of Yindyamarra, a Wiradjuri word that roughly translates into the English word 'respect.'

However, Yindyamarra is also the name of a Wiradjuri cultural and philosophical concept that is far more complicated than the word 'respect' encapsulates. I excitedly phoned Jonathan Jones, who was a key research participant for this thesis, and explained that our concept of Yindyamarra was a 'relational understanding and accountability to the world' and this meant it could be used to create a Wiradjuri research methodology. Jonathan was just about to submit his PhD dissertation and responded by saying, 'Oh, yeah, I've already done that for my PhD with Uncle Stan [Grant]. We called it Yindyamarra Winhangana.'

Jones's and Grant's Yindyamarra Winhangana is ultimately the indigenous research methodology that I used to guide my research and produce this thesis. Later in this chapter, I outline how I utilised the concept of Yindyamarra and the seven principles of Yindyamarra Winhangana as a research methodology. Meanwhile, I shall now outline how I reconciled using an indigenous research methodology grounded in an indigenous 'relational understanding and accountability to the world' (Kovach, 2010, p. 42) with Rigney's Indigenist Research Methodology.

I was challenged by Rigney's (1999) Indigenist Research Methodology because, whilst I did not entirely agree with his first principle, his second and third principles resonated deeply with the approach I wanted to take with my research. Rigney's (1999, p. 117) second principle of 'political integrity in Indigenist research' states:

> Indigenist research is undertaken by Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians are indebted to the contributions many non-Indigenous people have made to the personal, cultural, and political struggles of our people. We are indebted to the research contributions of non-Indigenous Australians to this struggle. It is, however, inappropriate that the research contribution to the political cause should come solely from non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians have to set their own political agenda for liberation. To the extent that research contributes to that agenda, it must be undertaken by Indigenous Australians. There must be a social link between research and the political struggle of our communities. This link

> needs to be in and through those Indigenous Australians who are simultaneously engaged in research and the Indigenous struggle. Only in this way can research responsibly serve and inform the political liberation struggle.

I agree with Rigney's assertion that there is a place for non-indigenous researchers undertaking research on indigenous subject matter. However, I also agree that such non-indigenous researchers must be mindful of how their voices are positioned relative to indigenous voices when speaking on the same matter and whether they are leading discussion with assertions on behalf of indigenous people or, more-appropriately, supporting indigenous voices. The academy needs more indigenous-authored research if it is to balance the volume of harmful works by non-indigenous authors, and thus demonstrate how indigenous research can and should be valued.

I am also adamant in adhering to the concept behind Rigney's third principle, 'the privileging of Indigenous voices in Indigenist research.' This principle requires the Indigenist researcher to focus

> on the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations and struggles of Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians are the primary subjects of Indigenist research. Indigenist research gives voice to Indigenous people. Given the history of exploitation, suspicion, misunderstanding and prejudice, it is particularly appropriate that Indigenous Australians access and make public the voice and experience of other Australians. (1997, p. 117)

My thesis explores Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and relies heavily on the first-hand accounts of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners. Chapter 4 is dedicated to enabling these practitioners to answer the research question: 'How and why are Wiradjuri people revitalising our cultural practices?' I achieved this by relaying their stories and relevant experiences, with their express consent and

permission. In this sense, I was influenced by Archibald's (2008; 2019) work on indigenous storytelling as a research methodology. Furthermore, like Rigney, I believe indigenous voices are the most important voices when it comes to indigenous matters, and these voices must be both heard and privileged if any research on indigenous subject matter is to be both ethical and valuable. I conceptualised the construction of Chapter 4 and the relevant commentaries in subsequent chapters as a direct result of reading the harmful indigenous research published by non-indigenous researchers. This thesis is intended to be a contribution towards balancing its effects.

Before I outline Jones's and Grant's Yindyamarra Winhanganha, I would like to express mandaang guwu (thank you) to Wiradjuri academic Dr Sadie Heckenberg. In the process of collecting stories from the Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners, I quickly realised the significance of the practice to the Wiradjuri people's socio-political status, amongst other things. The stories of the practitioners made it clear that the Wiradjuri people's socio-political status was significantly coerced into a position of disadvantage through colonisation and that a significant feature of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation has been its ability to challenge this suppression. I understood this was something I would need to communicate through my research, and this brought me back to my discomfort with Rigney's first principle and Kovach's discouragement of using decolonising perspectives that 'centre the settler discourse' (Kovach, 2010, p. 32). Thankfully, it was at this point that I discovered Heckenberg's (2018) thesis, *Nothing About Us Without Us: Protecting Indigenous Knowledges Through Oral Histories and Culturally Safe Research Practices*.

Heckenberg created a Wiradjuri research methodology grounded in the Wiradjuri cultural concept of Yindyamarra for her PhD dissertation, and it was invaluable to me for two reasons. First, it modelled how to centralise Wiradjuri oral histories in my research. Second, it demonstrated how a thesis by a Wiradjuri author could use Yindyamarra to create a methodological approach that would sit comfortably between Kovach's and Rigney's approaches to indigenous research methodologies. Heckenberg's thesis

demonstrated to me that a Wiradjuri researcher can use a Wiradjuri research methodology based on Yindyamarra and still build from Rigney's Indigenist Research Methodology that acknowledges the significance of colonisation and decolonisation. In other words, Heckenberg's thesis is an example of Indigenist research that uses a Wiradjuri research methodology with a 'relational understanding and accountability to the world' but does not 'centre the settler discourse' (Kovach, 2010, p. 32).

My thesis goes into great depth explaining how colonisation has shaped the Wiradjuri people's socio-political status and how Wiradjuri people practising cultural revitalisation can counter it. I have come to the view that not acknowledging the profound impact of colonisation on Wiradjuri people would be a disservice to the achievement inherent in Wiradjuri reclaiming our cultural practices following a brutal experience of colonisation. However, when discussing colonisation, I have attempted to not 'centre the settler discourse' (Kovach, 2010, p. 32) by using a Wiradjuri research methodology that centres Wiradjuri culture and its 'relational understanding and accountability to the world'. Furthermore, I have emphasised that most Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is not undertaken to decolonise, but that decolonisation may be an incidental outcome of Wiradjuri people practising cultural revitalisation.

I do acknowledge that some Wiradjuri people intentionally use our cultural revitalisation to re-establish Wiradjuri self-determination over the shaping of our identity and our portrayal. However, I do not frame this as an act of decolonisation that 'centres the settler discourse'. Rather, I use a Wiradjuri-centric perspective that acknowledges the Wiradjuri have been self-determinate for tens of thousands of years and that our experiences of colonisation have been a disruptive, but relatively short, period in our history. As such, in the limited instances where Wiradjuri people are using Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation as an act of self-determination, I do not frame this as us 'decolonising'. I simply portray this as Wiradjuri people returning to the way we have always been. This, along with the use of a Wiradjuri research methodology, is how I have come to reconcile my uneasiness

between using Rigney's Indigenist Research Methodology and ensuring I do not 'centre the settler discourse'.

2.3 Yindyamarra Winhanganha (Respectful Thinking)

Dr Jonathan Jones belongs to the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi people, and he has collaborated with Wiradjuri Elder, Uncle Dr Stan Grant Snr, for many years. I have been privileged to have both Jonathan and Uncle Stan share their stories and experiences of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

As previously mentioned, Jonathan and Uncle Stan used the Wiradjuri cultural concept of Yindyamarra to develop a Wiradjuri Research Methodology for Jones's (2018) PhD dissertation titled, *Murruwaygu: Following in the Footsteps of Our Ancestors.* This methodology is called Yindyamarra Winhangana (Respectful Thinking), and in the remainder of this chapter I briefly outline the Wiradjuri concept of Yindyamarra, along with the seven principles of Yindyamarra Winhanganha and how I adhered to them in this study.

Jones (2018) described the concept of Yindyamarra in his dissertation by quoting Professor Michael McDaniel, who is my father and another Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioner who shares his story of cultural revitalisation in Chapter 4 of this thesis. The following quote is taken from an event in 2017 titled Bayala: Talking Culture, at which Jonathan, Uncle Stan and Dad all gave presentations. Dad is recollecting the response the Wiradjuri Council of Elders gave to him when he asked them to explain the meaning of Yindyamarra:

> [One Elder said,] 'It means honour and respect and it means to be respectful'. And then another Elder said, 'It means more than that. It means doing things in a thoughtful, human way, in a kind way, doing things slowly and taking everyone with you'. Then another said, 'Oh no, it means more than that. It means gently living in the world and understanding that all of your actions and all of your words

have impact beyond the immediate and even your own life.' ('Speaking out with Larissa Behrendt', 2017, 31.01)

Dad's recollection demonstrates the complexity of Yindyamarra as a cultural philosophy that requires an individual to act respectfully, with care and kindness, and to be mindful of how they are connected to the past, how the consequences of their actions impact all things in the present, and how their actions will impact all future things. It is an all-encompassing Wiradjuri exercise in mindfulness that Jonathan and Uncle Stan succinctly converted it into the seven principles of Yindyamarra Winhanganha. These principles are set out next, with an explanation of how they have been incorporated into the production of this thesis.

2.3.1 Dhulu-ya-rra-bu wudha-gar-bin-ya-bu yindyamal-dhuray-bu (talk straight, listen deeply and act respectably)

Dhulu-ya-li muwugama-li, nganha marambang. Yindyama-li midhang mayiny-bu mayiny-galang-bu, dhuluyali birandhi nginha gulba-la-bu. Wudha-ng-garrang-duray ngurang, miilgany-ba-dhi garraywa-li maldha-li-bu ngulumung-gu. Ngindi-dyu ngindhu-gu-bu mayiny-guwal. Wudhagar-binya-gu-bu yindyama-la. Wudha-ng garrang-garra-bu ngayiny-galang, marani-l-dhuray-bu winhanga-yi-dhuray-bu. Wiray waangangi yindya-mal-dhuray. Wudha-ng-garang-gal-dhuray-gu mayiny-guwal-ga. Dugu-winy-birra yindyamala-bu. Winhanga-duri-nya winhanga-yi-galang. Durrur buwulin, yindyamal-dhuray-bu. Winhanga-duri-nya mayiny-bu minya-lu. Maldhan nhu-dhuray-dhaany-dya-bu mayiny-galang

Communicate in clear and truthful ways. Conduct research in a respectful way that's best suited to the respective individual or community involved. Speak honestly and from your own position and knowledge base. Be open about the research process and outcomes intended for both you and the respective individual or community. Listen to others and respect their knowledge, position and opinion. Be constructive and mindful, not disrespectful, about the knowledge, position and opinion of others. Always act with respect

and be mindful of people and the impact of research on both the individual and community. (Jones, 2018, p. 67-68)

The first principle of Yindyamarra Winhanganha is Dhulu-ya-rra-bu wudha-gar-bin-ya-bu yindyamal-dhuray-bu, which requires the researcher to 'talk straight, listen deeply and act respectably.' I have communicated in 'in clear and truthful ways' by using a writing style that makes it accessible to as many Wiradjuri people as possible while still meeting the academic standards of a PhD dissertation. Striking this balance was not always easy, but I have done my best to achieve it.

This principle also requires the researcher to 'conduct research in a respectful way that's best suited to the respective individual or community involved.' The first way I met this requirement was by confirming the need for this Wiradjuri research and seeking my Elders' cultural permission to undertake it. Prior to commencing this study, I was acutely aware of the negative stigma that academic research on Wiradjuri culture has amongst our people – as I outlined earlier in this chapter. As such, I was also aware that this research was going to be written about Wiradjuri culture and must therefore abide by it. This meant I should obtain my Elders' blessing and permission before commencing my research.

I visited the late Aunty Flo Grant with Jonathan Jones before enrolling in the PhD and I discussed with her the research I wanted to undertake, including why I thought it would be a positive contribution to our people. Aunty Flo agreed that such research would be useful, but she instructed me on how I ought to conduct my investigation, including matters to be avoided. I have followed her instructions closely. Sadly, Aunty Flo passed away before I completed my study, and I am deeply grateful for her support. She was a strong Wiradjuri woman and a gracious Elder who worked tirelessly for her people. Her service included being Chair of the Wiradjuri Council of Elders. Beginning my PhD journey in this way exemplifies research done 'in a respectful way that's best suited to the respective individual or community involved.'

Another example of this quality was my engaging research participants in ways that best suited them and our culture. For example, Uncle Stan and Aunty Lorrainne's participation in this thesis involved them sharing potentially traumatic experiences of racism and the fear of forced removal as a child. Asking them to talk about these matters over the phone would have been disrespectful and culturally inappropriate. I had to make the effort to travel from Sydney to Wiradjuri ngurambang and speak to them in person if I was to be deserving of including their stories in my thesis.

A further example of how I conducted my research appropriately may be seen in how I quickly adapted it when I realised the needs of the participants did not align with my research design. I had originally envisioned having a close collaboration with each of these individuals throughout the production of this dissertation. This would have involved spending a considerable amount of time together discussing my research, developing points for critical analysis and so on. However, I soon realised the key research participants could not always be engaged so intensively for reasons ranging from health complications to family, work and other community commitments. It was my responsibility as a researcher practising Yindyamarra to adapt my research to my participants requirements. I give further examples of such adaptation later in this section.

The first principle also requires the researcher to 'be open about the research process and outcomes intended for both you and the respective individual or community.' This requirement was integral to ensuring I conducted my research in an ethical manner. I was transparent with the research participants in relation to all aspects of this research, including how I would personally benefit from it as an early-career researcher. I clearly communicated what I was asking of them in terms of their participation, how I would portray their stories in the thesis, and how I would use their stories in my critical analysis regarding the socio-political significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

Finally, Dhulu-ya-rra-bu wudha-gar-bin-ya-bu yindyamal-dhuray-bu requires the researcher to 'always act with respect and be mindful of people and the impact of research on both the individual and community.' In line with this, I was also clear with my

research participants about the intended benefits of my research for the Wiradjuri people. These were:

1. My thesis would demonstrate to Wiradjuri people how their culture could be revitalised by sharing the stories of some Wiradjuri people's successful efforts to do so.
2. The shared stories would inspire and guide contemporary and future Wiradjuri and other indigenous peoples to revitalise their respective cultures.
3. My thesis would assist Wiradjuri people in revitalising their culture by providing a supporting academic paper on the significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation in relation to the socio-political status of the Wiradjuri people.
4. My research would hopefully aid non-Indigenous people to reassess their negative perceptions of Wiradjuri and other indigenous peoples.

Earlier in this thesis I outlined how indigenous peoples, including the Wiradjuri, have had detrimental academic research written about them and their cultures. The claims in such research were often incorrect due to prejudice or to being heavily skewed by racist notions or differing cultural concepts, for example. Furthermore, certain information was unethically collected and shared without permission. As if this process was not damaging enough, publication of dubious information has been used to discredit indigenous peoples' attempts to be recognised as the First Peoples of their lands and to have their rights in relation to those lands officially recognised.

It is a daunting task to write about my own people and culture in an academic setting, knowing how such literature can be used against us. I am extremely grateful to my co-supervisors Larissa Behrendt and Anna Clark for assisting me in navigating the production of this thesis to ensure there is minimal chance that it is ever used against the Wiradjuri people. I am particularly grateful to my supervisor, Professor Daryle Rigney, for his great assistance in this matter.

2.3.2. Buram-ba-bi-rra ngayi-ny (share thought)

Nganha-dhuradhu-nhu-ganham-ba-la-bu ngaami-dhuray mulgabi-li gulbanha-bu barram-ayi-li-nya Wiradjuri gulbanha. Yindya-ma-ngidyal maldhan-nhu gudyiin murun-gi-ali-nya Wiradjuri gulbanha maldhan-dhuray-bu dugu-winy-birra gulbanha, ngum-buwu-wa-nha-gu Wiradjuri mayiny-gu giyira mayiny yal-bi-li-gi-dhuray. Yal biyanha, dhadhi gulbanha buwagayi, gariya-ndhu yali gulbanha, ngindhu-gu ngunha birra mayiny-gu-bu ngindhu yamayama li mayiny-guwal-bu bala-dhu. Yal-dhaany-gu gulaynan ganha-mal-dhaany. Ngindhu gulbali gulbanha wiray mayiny-galang-gu, ngay, ngungi-la-gi giyiragu mayiny.

Use your research process and outcomes to actively contribute to the cycle of knowledge. Retrieve Wiradjuri knowledge by honouring the work of your ancestors; revive Wiradjuri knowledge by being an active participant; and contribute knowledge back to the Wiradjuri community for future generations through education. Always acknowledge where knowledge comes from and never use knowledge without permission or without returning it back to community and individuals. Support and assist other researchers and community members and become an active advocate for younger researchers. Understand that knowledge is not owned by an individual or an institution but by the community, to be handed on to future generations. (Jones, 2018, p. 73).

The principle of Buram-ba-bi-rra ngayi-ny has a sub-requirement that requires the researcher to 'revive Wiradjuri knowledge by being an active participant.' I was an active participant in the knowledge associated with Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation prior to and during the production of this thesis. For example, I produced a second possum skin cloak and attended hands-on Weaving Group meetings with Aunty Lorraine to try my hand at weaving. I also assisted Jonathan Jones in the creation of his artwork titled *giran* by carving hundreds of spearheads from Red River Gum. Finally, I enrolled in the Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language and Cultural Heritage offered through Charles Sturt University. This course enabled me to experience how Uncle Stan's work with the Wiradjuri language was being taught in a tertiary academic setting, and I was proud to have completed the course.

The cultural requirement to contribute knowledge back 'to the Wiradjuri community for future generations through education' is at the heart of why I produced this thesis. It is a contribution to future generations of Wiradjuri and other indigenous peoples because it shares the stories of Wiradjuri people who successfully countered the devastation to various cultural practices brought on by colonisation. Even with our successes, colonial disruption to the Wiradjuri people and our culture is a constant and on-going threat. I conceptualised and created this thesis in the knowledge and hope that the stories and experiences shared in it by several Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners will aid future generations of Wiradjuri people if there is a need to repeat the process.

During this study, I took great care to adhere to the aspect of Buram-ba-bi-rra ngayi-ny requiring the researcher to 'always acknowledge where knowledge comes from and never use knowledge without permission or without returning it back to community and individuals.' Presenting the stories that form the heart of this thesis was guided by the storywork methods of Jo-ann Archibald (2008) and Smith et al. (2019). I can never take ownership over the Indigenous stories that have been shared with me; I have merely been given permission to share them for a particular purpose. An example of meeting this requirement took place shortly before I submitted this thesis. Uncle Stan's granddaughter Lowana Grant was creating a podcast titled 'Lowana Grant, Ngiyang Birrang: A Wiradyuri language journey' (2024) and it featured discussions with Uncle Stan about his experiences of revitalising Wiradjuri ngiyang. Lowana was looking for additional audio of her grandfather telling his story. I gave recordings of all my discussions with him, along with his Chapter 4 profile, which he had fact-checked on multiple occasions. I was obligated to do this, and happy to oblige, because his story does not belong to me as a researcher. It belongs to him and his family.

As a final note, I have been particularly careful with re-representing the stories of my research participants in Chapter 4. I returned their profiles to them on multiple occasions to ensure they could approve, review or rescind consent to my using them. I also checked in with them on multiple occasions to ensure they were satisfied with how I used their

stories in relation to my critical analysis regarding the socio-political significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

2.3.3 Marraga-la-dha (care for community)

Winhanga-duri-nya maldhan-gu muyulung-gu, guwiinyguliya-ba dhirr-ngal mayiny bu wudha-ng-garang-garra. Nga-ngaa-nha muyulung-bu nginhu maymy yandu ndhu marramarra-maldhan-nhu bunmali-ndhu-gu marang maldhan bala. Bamir-gal wayadan-bu ngunha-gan nganha yamayama-la-ndhu. Maldhan muyulung-dhuray yamayamali-nhu maldhan-bu yalbili-gi

Acknowledge the role of Elders, who are archivists, researchers and important knowledge-holders. Look after Elders and community members throughout the research process by causing no harm. Create meaningful research based on enduring relationships and connections that inform your approach and outcomes. Establish and work with an Elders' advisory committee to strengthen your research position and provide an appropriate learning structure. (Jones, 2018, p. 77)

This principle has a sub-requirement for the researcher to 'acknowledge the role of Elders, who are archivists, researchers and important knowledge-holders.' I ensured that most of my research participants are Elders with roles as Wiradjuri 'archivists, researchers and important knowledge-holders'. I have taken great care to acknowledge and honour them as such in this thesis. Marraga-la-dha also requires the researcher to 'look after Elders and community members throughout the research process by causing no harm.' This was the most important and challenging requirement of Yindyamarra Winhanganha throughout the production of this thesis, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit Australia not long after I had conducted the first round of interviews with my research participants. I was living in Sydney, where mandatory lockdowns and travel restrictions prevented me from further engaging with half of my key research participants. Even after these restrictions were lifted, senior people and Indigenous Australians were recognised as

being among the most at-risk individuals in terms of serious illnesses and fatalities due to COVID-19.

These circumstances placed my research in an extremely precarious position. On the one hand, I had designed it as a close collaboration between me and my research participants, and, as mentioned earlier, the only culturally appropriate way of engaging with Uncle Stan and Aunty Lorraine was by visiting them on Wiradjuri ngurambang. On the other hand, to do so would have created a serious risk of me infecting these Elders and the community with a potentially fatal virus. Naturally, I prioritised their safety by restricting my engagement with them. This made the production of my thesis far more complicated. When the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, I safely re-engaged with the Elders, although not as closely as we had originally envisioned. They expressed their satisfaction with the work I had produced, and this gave me great relief. Given the circumstances, I'm confident I took the correct approach.

Finally, the principle of Marraga-la-dha' has a sub-requirement for the researcher to 'create meaningful research based on enduring relationships and connections that inform your approach and outcomes.' An example of how I did this can be found in my relationship with Aunty Lorraine. Before undertaking my research, I knew of Aunty Lorraine by reputation. Jonathan Jones introduced me to her when I was planning my study and she graciously agreed to participate in the context of the Wiradjuri revitalisation of weaving. During my research I developed a cultural relationship with Aunty Lorraine as though she is my grandmother. When I found out my university was conducting a review of a local Indigenous youth arts program she had participated in, I offered to be part of the team of assessors involved. And when she needed assistance with creating an animation based on Wiradjuri cultural stories, I connected her with an Aboriginal creative agency.

I visit Aunty Lorraine for dinner whenever I am in Wagga Wagga. I bring her a meal and we talk about culture, our lives, our friends and our families. We also chat often on the phone between visits. Sometimes we talk about my research, but mostly we are so busy catching

up that we forget to discuss it. Ours is not a regular relationship that you would find between a researcher and a participant; it is a cultural relationship based on mutual respect, trust and care for one another. It is the antithesis of the extractive relationships that have underpinned so much indigenous research produced by non-indigenous academics.

2.3.4. Gulba-ngi-dyili-nya (know yourself and your position)

Gulba-ngi-dyili-nya-bu gari-ga-rra nginhu maldhan-gu-bu mayiny-ndhu. Maldhan gu, gulbala-nhu maldhan-bu gulbarra walanmala-nhu-bu wala-gagag. Ngaa-bi nya galbaa maldhan-nhu-bu gulbarra dhaga-nhu maldhan nginha-gu. Winhanga-duri nya ngindhu-bu maldhan-nhu bandalang. Girra-girra-bang-dhuray-maldhan-nhu yabang ngindhu maldhan nganha marambir-gu yamayama li-nhu maldhan-dhuray. Winhanganha nganha-ndhu-bu maldhan-nhu yamayamal-dhuray Wiradjuri winhanga garar-garra

Know yourself and be true to your research and your community or the people you represent. Know your research position and understand your strengths and weaknesses. Appreciate the limitations of your research and understand where your research is located. Be mindful of how both you and your research are connected. Be comfortable with your research path; you can only do research that is relevant, connected and meaningful to you. Know that you and your research can and will contribute to a network of ever-growing Wiradjuri and Indigenous knowledge. (Jones, 2018, p. 81)

The principle of Gulba-ngi-dyili-nya has been particularly important in the inception, design and data analysis of my study. In the introduction to this thesis, I clearly declare my Wiradjuri identity and how this influenced my research on Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and its significance in relation to our socio-political status and wellbeing. I selected my key research participants principally due to my personal relationships to them, and I believe this is a strength of this research. My declaration of my position in relation to my research ensures it is 'relevant, connected and meaningful to [me].'

However, the most important engagement with the principle of Gulba-ngi-dyili-nya was in the writing of this methodology chapter. My interpretation of the principle is that it requires the researcher to be open, humble, self-reflective, and mindful of their abilities. This understanding is taken from the following sub-requirements:

- Know yourself and be true to your research,
- Appreciate the limitations of your research,
- Be comfortable with your research path; and
- Know that you and your research can and will contribute to a network of ever-growing Wiradjuri and Indigenous knowledge.

This chapter reflects my comfort with being at the start of my academic career and my acceptance of the limitations of my research. Nevertheless, I hope this outline of how I have come to navigate indigenous research methodologies 'can and will contribute to a network of ever-growing Wiradjuri and Indigenous knowledge' by demonstrating how other indigenous people undertaking indigenous research can similarly understand, select and apply these research methodologies. I recognise that my research is located at the end of a long line of detrimental indigenous research authored by non-indigenous people and disseminated through academic institutions that were openly hostile to the presence of indigenous people within them. This makes understanding, creating, and applying indigenous research methodologies difficult. However, I hope that by expressing how I grappled with my challenges I can help future indigenous PhD candidates develop networks of 'ever-growing Wiradjuri and Indigenous knowledge'.

2.3.5. Walan-ma-ya Wiradjuri mayiny-galang (Wiradjuri self-determination)

Maldhan-gu wambi-gu-bu yamayamali Wiradjuri wirimbirra guyulgang yamayamali Wiradjuri widya-nha-bu wirimbirra murun-gi-nya. Maldhan marang buram-ba-birra ba mayiny-gu. Nginha maldhan-gu nga-ngaa-nha mayiny widyanha, murradambirra mayiny-

gu yandul-bu mayiny-gu buwa-ga-na-li. Dyiramadilinya-dhu mayiny-dya-nhu, maldhan-bu gulba-ngi-dyi-li-nya-bu.

Research in order to support and promote Wiradjuri self-determination, in order to reinforce Wiradjuri culture, aspirations and identity. Research should be relevant to and shared for the improvement of community. This involves conducting research for the maintenance of cultural practices, and the improvement of community now and for generations to come. Take pride in your community, research and knowledge, and celebrate Wiradjuri heritage and culture. (Jones, 2018, pp. 84–85)

The Yindyamarra Winhanganha principle of walan-ma-ya Wiradjuri mayiny-galang, requires the researcher to promote Wiradjuri self-determination to reinforce our 'culture, aspirations and identity.' I have accomplished this by identifying Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation as an act of self-determination we can use to leverage greater self-determination and self-government through the Nation Building approach outlined in Chapter 6.

Walan-ma-ya Wiradjuri mayiny-galang also requires research to be relevant to and shared with the community for its improvement. This thesis is a vehicle for sharing the positive impacts of cultural revitalisation on the Wiradjuri community. In addition to making the full version available to the community, I will provide an executive summary so that relevant information can be more easily accessed.

Finally, this principle requires the researcher to maintain Wiradjuri 'cultural practices, and the improvement of community now and for generations to come. Take pride in your community, research and knowledge, and celebrate Wiradjuri heritage and culture.' This is the very reason my thesis has Wiradjuri stories of cultural revitalisation at its heart – tales of Wiradjuri culture, aspirations and identity being reinforced. It is my privilege to share these stories so that contemporary and future Wiradjuri people can know them and use them as a blueprint for the further revitalisation of Wiradjuri culture.

2.3.6 Wama-rra Wiradjuri gulbanha (build Wiradjuri knowledge systems)

Wama-la-bu walan-marra-bu Wiradjuri gudyiin gulbanha, yamayama-li Wiradjuri. Mayiny, nginha dhagu-ndhu maldhan-dhuray muyulung-bu Wiradjuri mayiny-bu. Gulama-la-ba Wiradjuri-gu ngayiny. Ngindhu-gu yindyama-la Wiradjuri maldhan-bu. Winhanga-duri-nya widyunggalung-ndhu yamayamal-girri, muwugama-li gulamarra ngayiny-nhu yingiyan muyulung-nhu.

Build on and strengthen Wiradjuri ancestral and living knowledge systems to reinforce Wiradjuri epistemologies. This includes working within Elder and community networks and being open to Wiradjuri spirituality and cultural contexts. Respect Wiradjuri research process, think creatively, be flexible and keep an open mind like your ancestors. (Jones, 2018, p. 90)

The sixth principal is Wama-rra Wiradjuri gulbanha, which means to 'build Wiradjuri knowledge systems.' I have met this requirement by basing my research methodology on Yindyamarra, a Wiradjuri ancestral epistemology. As guided by Elders, Wiradjuri spirituality and cultural contexts appear throughout this thesis. I hope my research will also strengthen Wiradjuri ancestral and living knowledge systems through the practitioner profiles shown in Chapter 4.

I have previously discussed how I put the needs of elders and the community before my research when necessary and respectfully accepted denials of permission when given. This further demonstrates how I met the requirement to 'respect Wiradjuri research process, think creatively, be flexible and keep an open mind like your ancestors.'

2.3.7 Nganga-dha nguram-bang (look after country)

Ngurambang, nganha-guliya-gu Wiradjuri-gu mayiny, ngandhi nga-ngaa-nha yambuwan. Yindyamali-ba, maldhan marra-mayi-gu-ba nganha nga-ngaa-nha ngurambang, yandy-ndha ngurambang-ga. Winya-nha-bu maldhan wiray ngurambang ga maldhaany bala

yindyama-ngidyal-bu yindyamala mayinyguwal ngandhi widya-nha guwiiny-guliya-la-gu ngurambang-ga.

Country, including its traditional owners, resource management and local ecosystems, needs to be respected. Research needs to be conducted in a way that acknowledges, respects and enriches country. If living and researching off country, researchers need to be responsible caretakers by respecting and acknowledging the local traditional owners. (Jones, 2018, p. 93)

The seventh and final principal of Yindyamarra Winhanganha is Nganga-dha nguram-bang. Aunty Lorraine's profile in Chapter 4 is particularly noteworthy for demonstrating how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practices connect Wiradjuri people to country and can manifest the Wiradjuri duty to 'care for country.'

2.4 Conclusion to the Chapter

This chapter began with the recognition of the harm and negative stigma created by non-indigenous researchers when conducting indigenous research. A consequence has been the development of indigenous research methodologies by indigenous academics. I have reflected upon and evaluated several indigenous research methodologies and have considered how indigenous researchers have expressed their views on how such methodologies ought to be constructed and applied. I have discussed the challenges I faced in reconciling some of these methodologies and perspectives, and how it is my hope that being open about how I worked through them will aid other indigenous HDR students.

Ultimately, I had to reconcile my uneasiness between using Rigney's (1999) Indigenist Research Methodology and not 'cent[ring] the settler discourse' (Kovach, 2010, p. 32). I concluded that my research is Indigenist research because it deals with the liberation of Wiradjuri people from colonisation through self-determination. Furthermore, it was produced by a Wiradjuri gibir (man) and it privileges Wiradjuri voices.

I then introduced Yindyamarra Winhangana as the Wiradjuri research methodology that best underpinned my research design and the production of this dissertation. I began by outlining the Wiradjuri cultural concept of Yindyamarra as an all-encompassing philosophy that requires an individual to act respectfully with care and kindness and be mindful that they are connected to the past and the consequences of their present actions affect the future.

Finally, I outlined the seven principles of Yindyamarra Winhanganha that Jonathan Jones and Uncle Stan Grant drew from the Wiradjuri concept of Yindyamarra, and I explained how I incorporated these principles into the design of my research and production of this thesis.

Chapter 3:

Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the research conducted on and by Wiradjuri people. To explore the origins, characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of the various articles and books, I classify them into three distinct waves associated with three distinct historical periods. My thesis contributes to the third and most recent wave of the literature. This chapter also contextualises Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation amongst the international movement of indigenous cultural revitalisation.

This thesis is about Wiradjuri people and culture. It examines cultural revitalisation in a Wiradjuri context and considers how these practices affect Wiradjuri socio-political status. It is not a thesis about Indigenous cultural revitalisation in general. For this reason, the literature review focuses on works about Wiradjuri people and culture, with attention to cultural revitalisation and its political effects. A review limited only to publications on Wiradjuri revitalisation would be very short, while a survey of Indigenous cultural revitalisation more broadly would be too general to support a Wiradjuri-focused study. This approach provides the balance needed to ground the thesis in Wiradjuri studies while highlighting the cultural revitalisation practices that underpin the broader analysis.

3.2 The First Wave of Literature on the Wiradjuri: The 1880s to the 1950s

The colonisers belief that Aboriginal people would eventually/inevitably become extinct was known as the 'doomed race theory.' This belief took root in the early 19th century, just when Australia's colonisers were encountering and suppressing the Wiradjuri; and was widely held until the inter-war years before gradually being abandoned around the 1950s.

Although these non-Indigenous people were resigned to the extinction of Aboriginal people, European and North American scientific journals were clamouring for details of Aboriginal cultures, which they claimed offered valuable insights into 'pre-historic origins of humankind' on matters like 'language, religion, art, marriage and other social institutions' (Reynolds, 1972, p. xxix). I propose the timeframe of the first wave of the literature on Wiradjuri people coincides with non-Indigenous peoples' subscription to the doomed race theory and the ethnographical contest to academically 'capture' our cultures before we perished.

Given these motivations, such ethnographic publications on indigenous peoples are widely considered deeply problematic by modern research standards. Stocking (1991) critiqued the methodologies and ethnographic works of the Victorian-era, non-indigenous authors and anthropologists who set out to document the world's indigenous cultures before these peoples became extinct. Stocking saw these works as problematic because they tended to rely on second-hand accounts from people who claimed to have engaged with the indigenous peoples and cultures in question. Furthermore, these ethnographic anthropologists made superficial observations that frequently misrepresented the complexity of indigenous cultures. Shaped by European cultural biases, they served to justify the power dynamics of race and empire.

An example of one such ethnographic account is Etheridge's (1918) publication on the Wiradjuri and Gomeroi practice of carving trees to demarcate burial sites and burial markers. Etheridge explored aspects like the selection of such trees, their positionality relative to others, and their spiritual significance. He also considered a possible explanation that the patterns carved into the burial trees were reflective of the buried person's girilgang on their wilay badhang. However, he ultimately concluded there was no link.

Even if we exclude the ethical problems arising from his visiting potentially sacred sites without permission, Ethridge's work is deeply flawed. Consistent with Stocking's (1991) critique of ethnographic anthropology in this period, Ethridge made a plethora of

assertions regarding the Wiradjuri practice of carving trees and frequently did so on little more than his personal perspectives as an outsider to our culture. The views of Aboriginal people are entirely excluded from his work, other than when being mentioned in the second-hand accounts by non-Indigenous men claiming to have spoken to Aboriginal people. This reflects the typical coloniser's self-appointed sense of being in possession of a singular intellectual authority and cultural superiority.

Ethridge's work, like other first wave ethnographic accounts, is not entirely without merit, however. For example, Ethridge provides useful information about the locations and designs of carved trees in New South Wales. But this valuable information is hidden amongst unethically sourced information, unsupported claims regarding our culture, and other misrepresentations. I strongly advise that all first wave literature regarding Wiradjuri people be approached with acute scepticism and criticality, and only be reproduced following a judicious assessment alongside Wiradjuri Elders. Such works remain influential, and they are frequently cited long after publication, thus perpetuating their misrepresentation of our people and culture. For example, McCarthy (1940) cited Ethridge as his only source when producing an article on carved trees for the Australian Museum.

The problems associated with first wave texts mean that, while noteworthy, they are of limited use for the purposes of this thesis. Readers should note that much of this literature relays aspects of pre- and early-colonial Wiradjuri culture that many Wiradjuri people believe should not be known universally due to their sacredness. For this reason, I have not read these articles in full, and I give only a superficial summary for to substantiate my critique.

Edward Curr's (1887) work is an early example of an ethnographic account documenting traditional Wiradjuri (or 'Wiiratheri' as he spelt it) culture. It is clear Curr's study was influenced by Western perspectives regarding the linear and hierarchical progression of human civilisations:

> What is noteworthy about the Wiiratheri tribe is, that though they were a people who numbered several thousand souls, have a common language, an inhabited a

> country of 450 miles in length by 300 in breadth, throughout which communication was easy, yet with these advantages they never get beyond tribal life which limits cohesion to persons nearly related by blood, or made a single step in the direction of a national existence. (p. 364)

Curr's book is a useful source for researching Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation as it contains important information on the geographical size and population of the Wiradjuri nation. As well, his 35 pages of Wiradjuri words that illustrate the dialectic differences between clans have been used by people like Uncle Stan to revitalise our ngiyang. However, Curr's Eurocentric perspective on Wiradjuri culture exemplifies the problematic perspectives that Stocking (1991) identified regarding 19th century sources of information. A thoroughly critical indigenous perspective should be utilised when reading or citing this source.

Mathews' (1905) article in *American Anthropologist* focused on traditional Wiradjuri spirituality and ceremony. Many Wiradjuri people have expressed doubt about how much of the information contained in his work was intended to be shared universally through publication. Furthermore, a reader should question how useful his interpretations of deeply Indigenous cultural practices might be.

Finally, McKeown's (1938) *The Land of Byamee* was published when both the non-Indigenous belief in the doomed race theory and the popularity of first wave publications were declining. It was described as documenting the 'nature legends ... that are all genuine productions of the aboriginal mind' (1938, p. xi), and it had a particular focus on the Wiradjuri. However, Carey (1988) criticised this book, noting McKeown drew heavily from earlier sources such as works by David Uniapon and Katherine Langloh Parker. Consistent with other first wave ethnographers, McKeown does not appear to have conducted any fieldwork involving Wiradjuri people. Carey identified the connections between *The Land of Byamee* and the doomed race theory, claiming McKeown and other writers were perpetuating the notion that the Aboriginal people of South-East Australia were extinct:

> This is particularly regrettable, because a few inquiries would have located many informants who could have provided other accounts of indigenous beliefs. *The Land of Byamee* is cast resolutely in the imaginary past and bears no relationship to the contemporary peoples whose folklore McKeown romanticized with the names and terms borrowed from Parker. (Carey, 1988, p. 216)

In summation, the first wave of authorship on Wiradjuri people is deeply problematic by the standards of modern research methodologies and ethics. Most first wave publications were motivated by the doomed race theory, relied on superficial observations that were tainted by Eurocentric biases, and produced through unreliable second-hand accounts. Furthermore, they were shaped by and served to justify harmful colonial ideologies. Their intended audiences were non-Indigenous people already convinced that Aboriginal people would become extinct and therefore unable to provide future academics with insights into their 'primitive cultures'. While not without merit, these publications should only be read with a critical eye and their findings should only be reproduced following a judicious assessment alongside Wiradjuri people.

3.3 The Second Wave of Literature: Late 1980s to early 2000s

The second wave of literature on Wiradjuri people was produced in alignment with the Australian History Wars, which occurred between approximately the 1980s and the early 2000s. A decade prior to this period, the anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner had delivered his 1968 Boyer Lecture titled *After the Dreaming*, in which he identified the absence of Indigenous people's negative colonial experiences in Australia's documented history. Following this, Clark (1971) and Henry Reynolds (1972) wrote books on uncomfortable subjects like non-Indigenous colonial violence against Aboriginal people and the forceful seizure of our lands.

Politically conservative historians like Keith Windschuttle and Geoffrey Blainey published responses that opposed this revision of Australian colonial history, thus beginning the

Australian History Wars. Windschuttle (2000, 2003) attempted to counter the efforts of historians like Clark and Reynolds by challenging the historical evidence for violence against Indigenous people. Blainey (1993, 1994, 2015, 2021), in speeches and books has argued that the negative aspects of Australia's colonisation were being focused on disproportionately by progressive historians.

I propose the progressive call for more Indigenous voices in Australian literature and the politically charged backdrop of the Australian History Wars led to the second wave authors departing so sharply from the research methods of their first wave counterparts. The degree of agency and voice Wiradjuri people had in second wave authorship is what distinguishes it from the culturally biased and unfounded misrepresentations of the first wave literature.

The literature produced by second wave non-Indigenous authors Peter Read, Peter Kabaila and Gaynor McDonald is so distinct from the first wave because they were willing to directly engage with Wiradjuri people and incorporate indigenous voices and lived experiences into their research. This reduced the likelihood of Eurocentric and colonial perspectives distorting their understanding and representation of Wiradjuri people and culture. Furthermore, it demonstrated that the doomed race theory that inspired the first wave research was a false prediction.

Peter Read's (1983) PhD thesis examined the modern history of Wiradjuri people, ranging from first contact with Europeans to 1979, with a particular focus on their experiences of colonisation and state policies between 1880 to 1969. Even though Read reported on the subjugation of Wiradjuri people, he presented their history as a testament to their resilience. Read struck a balance between referencing archival records and the oral histories of Wiradjuri people. Read's (1984) second publication was an article titled 'Breaking Up These Camps Entirely: The Dispersal Policy in Wiradjuri Country 1909–1929'. It followed a similar theme to his thesis and considered Wiradjuri experiences of NSW governments' attempts to break up Wiradjuri groups in the early 20th century under the Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (NSW).

Read's (1988) *A Hundred Years War: The Wiradjuri People and the State* is a more accessible book based on the same themes as his PhD thesis: state control and Wiradjuri resistance. He documented his extensive personal experiences of engaging with Wiradjuri whilst researching his book, and he reproduced verbatim the Wiradjuri peoples' accounts of our history. Again, this is a significant departure from the first wave authors' methodologies. This book has been invaluable to my thesis as it gives a rare snapshot of the precarious state of the Wiradjuri ngiyang at the time it was published. Read noted that knowledge of the Wiradjuri language had sharply declined over the period of several generations and he was unable to find a fluent speaker of the Wiradjuri ngiyang whilst collecting data.

Read's body of work provides a comprehensive insight into the lives and experiences of Wiradjuri people from first contact to 1979. Reflecting the progressive shift amongst historians of the time, he sought to amplify the words of Wiradjuri people alongside other historical sources. The outcome is a notable departure from first to second wave non-Indigenous Wiradjuri research.

Peter Kabaila first met Read when he was undertaking study to complete his University Honours degree. His three-part series titled *Wiradjuri Places* is an equally important contribution to the literature on Wiradjuri people and their experiences because his research was also informed by extensive personal engagement with members of the Wiradjuri nation. Like Read, he frequently dedicated considerable space to relaying verbatim statements regarding the historical sites he researched.

Kabaila also adopted Read's use of visuals when documenting Wiradjuri history. Kabaila's (1995, 1996, 1998) books are filled with maps of historical Wiradjuri sites, drawings of what life was like for them, photos of relevant people and their ancestors, and sketches of cultural objects found through archaeological assessment (see also Kabaila & Radclyffe, 2011). The impact of such imagery is threefold. First, it humanised his written Wiradjuri history by visually reminding the reader that these places were experienced by real people. Second, it enabled the Wiradjuri people to better connect with his work; for

example, Kabaila's photographs allow Wiradjuri people to see what our ancestors looked like and to view the things they would have seen. Third, Kabaila's books contain genealogies arranged according to families' points of origin on Wiradjuri ngurambang. This has enabled us to reconnect with other Wiradjuri people and rebuild relationships lost throughout colonisation.

In Volume 1 of his series, Kabaila (1995) focused on the Wiradjuri people of the Murrumbidgee River and included some insights into the Ngunnawal people. This publication covers several significant sites for Wiradjuri history such as the towns of Narrandera, Leeton and Griffith, as well as their surrounding regions. It also extensively covers life on Warangesda Mission, which Kabaila identified as the precursor of the Cootamundra Girls Home. In Volume 2, Kabaila (1996) drew on the oral histories of Wiradjuri people from the Lachlan River areas of Cowra, Forbes, Condobolin and Murin Bridge, as well as archaeological evidence, to recreate an insight into Wiradjuri life there following colonisation. In Volume 3, Kabaila (1996) detailed the lives of the Wiradjuri people connected to the Macquarie River. Locations include Wellington, Dubbo, Peak Hill and their surrounds.

All three books were later compiled into Kabaila and Radclyffe's (2011) *Survival Legacies: Stories from Aboriginal Settlements of Southeastern Australia*. Along with the original volumes, this compilation serves as exemplary non-Indigenous research done with Wiradjuri people and for Wiradjuri people.

Gaynor Macdonald is the third and final contributor recognised here as a second wave author on Wiradjuri people. Macdonald was an anthropologist at the University of Sydney who passed away in 2021. Written between the 1980s and early 2000s, her work focused heavily on Wiradjuri people, culture, identity and the challenges caused by colonisation. Consistent with other second wave authors, she relied heavily on her personal interactions with Wiradjuri people.

Macdonald's (1998) article 'Master Narratives and the Dispossession of the Wiradjuri' challenged colonial and anthropological perspectives of the Wiradjuri as a people

disconnected from our culture. She argued that many non-Indigenous Australians don't recognise Wiradjuri connections to land and culture because these don't necessarily resemble the mystical constructs our colonisers have come to expect of us and because the Wiradjuri have adapted to their colonial environment. She also recognised that Wiradjuri people exercise agency through social, economic and political practices, and that our cultural continuity and resilience ought to be recognised as part of a greater reassessment of how Aboriginal histories are constructed.

Macdonald's (2001) article 'Does "culture" have "history"?: Thinking About Continuity and Change in Central New South Wales' extended her earlier commentary by analysing Wiradjuri cultural practices and beliefs, demonstrating how they have adapted to colonisation whilst maintaining a sense of continuity of identity. She criticised the non-Indigenous portrayals of the Wiradjuri as a static people defined by a static culture. Rather, she considers Wiradjuri culture, like any other, should be viewed as dynamic and responsive to its environment. This article is particularly relevant to this research as some of the Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners in this thesis noted their practices have changed from precolonial expressions and techniques, and they are entirely comfortable with this.

Finally, Macdonald's (2003) article 'Photos in Wiradjuri Biscuit Tins: Negotiating Relatedness and Validating Colonial Histories' is particularly relevant to this research. She explained how Wiradjuri photographs of family members are used by Wiradjuri people to develop and maintain kinship whilst remembering personal and collective histories. She examined how these photos can act as an aid in storytelling by maintaining intergenerational connections and preserving cultural identity in the face of colonisation. This article is relevant to this thesis because cultural objects created through cultural revitalisation can also fulfil the same function for Wiradjuri people.

The value of Macdonald's work is that her personal engagement with Wiradjuri people enabled her to observe and express insights into Wiradjuri people, culture and identity that far exceeded the work of the first wave authors. Her knowledge that Wiradjuri people

and culture can and do change provides an insight that was well ahead of its time in non-Indigenous academic scholarship.

In summation, the works of these three second wave authors mark a drastic and positive shift in the methodological and ethical practices of non-Indigenous people researching Wiradjuri subject matter. Unlike their first wave predecessors, this research did not rely on superficial non-Indigenous observations tainted by Eurocentric perspectives, marred by cultural distance, or produced through unreliable second-hand accounts of Wiradjuri people. Instead, by listening to Wiradjuri people and relaying their voices, they produced personal fieldwork typified by respectful first-hand engagement. The second wave literature was not shaped by colonial ideologies and colonisation; rather, it was part of a movement to give Wiradjuri people a sense of self-determination in how their histories and identities were told and viewed.

It is clear that this sense of self-determination would be enhanced if we Wiradjuri people were to write about ourselves, rather than have our stories recorded by non-Indigenous authors. This has begun to happen with the third wave, which is where I position my thesis.

3.4 The Third Wave of Literature: The 2010s to the Present

The third wave of literature on the Wiradjuri is identified as Wiradjuri research produced by Wiradjuri authorship. This wave started in the 2010s. Before outlining the third wave literature, it is important to clarify that defining this category is not meant to exclude sound non-Wiradjuri authorship of Wiradjuri research. Stephen Gapps's (2021) *Gudyarra: The First Wiradjuri War of Resistance – The Bathurst War, 1822–1824*, for example, is non-Indigenous authored research on Wiradjuri people that is extremely welcome and valuable. However, the rise of Wiradjuri academics producing Wiradjuri research demonstrates a remarkable shift from the first and second waves and deserves independent recognition.

Wiradjuri Elders Mary and Isabell Coe's (1989) book *Windradyne: A Wiradjuri Koorie* is an outlier in terms of the timeframe given for third wave authorship. I view it as a third wave publication that was produced during the second wave era. Their book covers the history of Wiradjuri resistance fighter Windradyne and the colonisers' Declaration of Martial Law on the Wiradjuri in 1824. I believe this is the earliest example of Wiradjuri research written by and for Wiradjuri people.

Profiled in Chapter 4, Jonathan Jones (2018) is a Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi man whose own doctoral thesis is titled *Murruwaygu: Following in the Footsteps of Our Ancestors.* His thesis explores the artistic use of linework amongst South-Eastern Aboriginal male artists since colonisation. Jones practises Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation in his thesis by dividing the featured artists into categories using a system inspired by South-Eastern Aboriginal kinship. Furthermore, he utilises the Wiradjuri ngiyang to name the generational categories in this system. For example, the first generation of artists creating pre-contact South-Eastern material are categorised as mumla, being the Wiradjuri word for grandfather. Jones gives 19th century South-Eastern Aboriginal artists the title babiin (father) as they are the generation to follow mumla. The next generation of artists are self-taught mission artists like Wiradjuri man H. J. Wedge. They are given the title of wurrumany (son). Finally, professional and tertiary-educated South-Eastern Aboriginal artists are given the title warunarrung (grandson). Ultimately, Jonathan's *Murruwaygu* is not only literature that documents Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation, it also serves as a demonstration of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation itself.

Wiradjuri author Jessica Russ-Smith's (2023) doctoral thesis is called *Balayanhi Wiradyuri Garingundhi. We are Sovereign My Granddaughter: Embodying Wiradyuri Women's Sovereignty Through Wiradyuri Knowing, Being and Doing.* It outlines how Russ-Smith herself embodies Wiradjuri sovereignty as a Wiradyuri Wambuul woman. Beyond practising Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation by using Wiradjuri ngiyang in her thesis, Smith draws on Wiradjuri cosmology and reinforces the relationship between Wiradjuri grandmothers and granddaughters as a matter of cultural sacredness. In producing a

doctoral thesis using Wiradjuri ngiyang and honouring the importance of grandmothers, granddaughters and Wiradjuri sovereignty, Russ-Smith undertakes a self-determined act of Wiradjuri ceremony.

Sadie Heckenberg (2018) is the Wiradjuri author of *Nothing About Us Without Us: Protecting Indigenous Knowledges Through Oral Histories and Culturally Safe Research Practices*. Her doctoral thesis explores Indigenous oral history and its intersection with community narratives, customs, beliefs, and valuing our ancestors. She emphasises the importance of the intergenerational transfer of knowledge and how this process generates cultural connectedness. Heckenberg's dissertation is particularly relevant to my thesis because it privileges a Wiradjuri perspective whilst engaging with the revitalised Wiradjuri philosophy of Yindyamarra to explore the strengthening of ethical research practices based on traditional value systems.

Anita Heiss has published fiction and non-fiction books that examine Wiradjuri issues from a Wiradjuri perspective. An example of her third wave authorship is '*Am I Black Enough for You?'* (2012), in which she draws on her experiences to explore themes of Wiradjuri and Aboriginal identity, growing up off-country, and encountering racism. Heiss (2022) also edited *Growing Up Wiradjuri: Stories from the Wiradjuri Nation,* which is another example of third wave Wiradjuri authorship. This book is a compilation of stories told by Aunties Lorraine Tye, Elaine Lomas, Cheryl Penrith, Mary Atkinson and Isabel Reid and Uncles Stan Grant, James Ingram and Norman Little. The stories focus on these Elders' experiences growing up as Wiradjuri and include important cultural aspects like the Wiradjuri ngiyang, as well as the meaning of connection to family and ngurambang. This publication has many parallels with Uncle Stan Grant's (1999) book *Stories Told By My Grandfather and Other Old Men*, which contains Wiradjuri stories and histories ranging from pre-colonial times to Uncle Stan's childhood.

Finally, there is a growing body of third wave literature on Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation itself. This literature is particularly important for locating where my thesis belongs. Grant and Rudder's (2010) *A New Wiradjuri Dictionary* is largely responsible for the Wiradjuri

ngiyang being revitalised and for increasing the number of Wiradjuri speakers. The story of how this dictionary came to be is outlined in Chapter 4. Furthermore, Grant and Rudder (2014) also produced an accompanying grammar book that aids in the correct use of Wiradjuri words and syntax. The initial pages of this grammar book also provide insights into how Wiradjuri ways of thinking inform the structure of the Wiradjuri ngiyang. As such, this book is also an example of the revitalisation of Wiradjuri knowledge systems.

Uncle Geoff Anderson (2010) has a chapter in Hobson et al.'s (2010) compilation *Re-Awakening Languages: Theory and Practice in the revitalisation of Australia's Indigenous Languages*. Called 'Introducing Wiradjuri Language in Parkes', this chapter is a valuable insight into a Wiradjuri Elder introducing the Wiradjuri ngiyang into schools within Parkes, a town on Wiradjuri ngurambang. Uncle Geoff was a student of Uncle Stan, and his chapter provides insights into the challenges Indigenous people face when including their language in non-Indigenous education systems. It is also significant because Uncle Geoff outlines the profound impact the language introduction has had on the entire community, including a reduction in racism.

Jesse Hodgetts (2020) article in *Musicology Australia* analyses the reclamation of Ngyiyampaa and Wiradjuri songs from archives and the implications of such reclamation on their respective traditional owners. Hodgetts claims such songs are more than just music because they act to carry and promote aspects of our culture like spirituality, law and language. An implication of their revitalisation is their tremendous potential for promoting wellbeing by strengthening Ngyiyampaa and Wiradjuri identities.

Nicole Reilly's (2024) doctoral thesis is titled *Waganha Winhanga-gigu: Dancing for the Purpose of Remembering.* Whilst Reilly focuses on the revitalisation of Wiradjuri dance, she also makes extensive use of the Wiradjuri ngiyang. She provides valuable guidance to Wiradjuri and other Indigenous people about having the confidence to revitalise cultural practices and adapt them to contemporary contexts. Reilly asserts Wiradjuri people should revitalise all the interconnected aspects of their culture to promote Wiradjuri wellbeing and self-determination.

Michael McDaniel is my father. His *Wilay Badhang: An Analysis of Past and Present Relationships With and Around Possum-Skin Cloaks* (McDaniel, 2024) is another a Wiradjuri-authored doctoral thesis. Drawing on historical documentation and his own experience as a Wiradjuri cloak-maker, Dad explores the decline and revitalisation of the South-Eastern Australian Aboriginal cultural practice of making wilay badhang-galang (possum skin cloaks). Ultimately, he found the potential for revitalisation of wilay badhang-galang in the South-East is a result of the connectedness of its various Aboriginal peoples, greater access to resources, the retention of cultural knowledge, and determination to keep our cultures alive.

3.5 Global literature regarding Indigenous Cultural Revitalisation

In addition to the emerging research on Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation I outline above, the international literature is significant and growing. While the cultural and geopolitical distinctiveness of specific indigenous cultural revitalisation cannot be overemphasised, the transnational nature of this literature confirms that cultural revitalisation is global and transnational, as well as uniquely reflective of individual First Nations communities. As such, the field functions both as a transnational movement for indigenous rights and activism, as well as contributing to regionally specific First Nations political and cultural agendas.

For example, within Asia, the indigenous Ainu people of Japan have been undergoing a process of cultural revitalisation in relation to their language and creation of cultural objects. There have is a substantial body of academic literature documenting the Ainu people's efforts that predominantly focuses on their work revitalising their language. This is indicative of an international trend where most indigenous peoples are focusing their revitalisation efforts on language revitalisation and most academic articles reflect this focus. For example, Anderson and Iwasaki-Goodman (2001) consider the challenges the Ainu are facing in the language revitalisation of their language due to the growing impact of globalisation and education policies privileging teaching students English in Japanese

schools. This literature review will demonstrate the Ainu challenges of revitalising their language in the face of colonisation, globalisation and the international privileging of English are common themes for most indigenous people and this is in the scholarly articles.

Uzawa (2019) also focuses on the engagement of the Ainu language in the Japanese education system by examining an Ainu cultural revitalisation program at Sapporo University. The program is described as one were Ainu and non-Indigenous Wajin young people are immersed in Ainu history, language, dance, songs and storytelling. The impact of such combined engagement is argued to be both a promotion of Ainu cultural revitalisation and the development of reconciliation between the two people.

As noted previously, there is a focus by indigenous peoples and academic articles on indigenous language revitalisation. However, Tsuda (2018) provides a concise and personal insight into her establishment a cultural revitalisation program at the Hokkaidō Center for Ainu People. The programs taught Ainu craftsmanship by focusing on the production of woven objects like baskets and mats.

Ting, C. J. (2019), (2021), (2022), (2023a), (2023b), (2024) has extensively researched and critically analysed the revitalisation of Indigenous languages in Taiwan, with a particular focus on the intersection of indigenous efforts and governmental initiatives. Ting's various articles are too numerous to outline for the purposes of this literature review. Ting is frequently critical of the Taiwanese government regarding their involvement with indigenous language revitalisation and advocates for more substantial government efforts that support of indigenous self-determination on linguistic revitalisation initiatives.

Yeh et al (2021) also examines cultural revitalisation amongst the Indigenous people of Taiwan. However, their analysis demonstrates a break with the academic norm of documenting indigenous cultural revitalisation by examining an indigenous reengagement with food, weaving, knowledge systems, ceremonies, land and so on. The authors use six case studies of indigenous cultural revitalisation and how they are being used as pathway to sustainable development.

The revitalisation of Indigenous culture in North America faces similar challenges to those mentioned above regarding Asia. As with other continents, indigenous language loss is a looming crisis for the indigenous peoples of North America. Krauss (1992) undertook a comprehensive study of indigenous language retention globally and found:

> For the whole USA and Canada together, a similar count is only a little less alarming: of 187 languages, I calculate that 149 are no longer being learned by children; that is, of the Native North American languages still spoken, 80% are moribund. (p.5)

Consistent Krauss, Khawaja (2021) recognises that most indigenous languages in Canada are at risk of extinction. The author identifies this decline is largely because colonisation and assimilationist government policies and it has a detrimental impact on indigenous health and wellbeing. Again, colonisation and the governments that sprung from it are identified playing a substantial role in the decline in indigenous languages. However, the author stresses the revitalisation of indigenous languages in Canada is time-critical as the number of fluent speakers are declining. Cardwell (2010) verifies Krauss and Khawaja's observations regarding the revitalisation of indigenous languages in Canada being moribund , noting:

> survey found that of the 32 indigenous languages in B.C., three have no known living speakers. It also revealed that a meagre five percent of the 100,000 aboriginal people in B.C. are fluent in an ancestral tongue, and most of them are over 65. [pg.14]

Indigenous peoples and scholars in Canada have placed a strong focus on language revitalisation, with Gormashie's (2019) account of the Kanien'keha/Mohawk people's language revitalisation serving as one such example. However, Cowan's (2005) examination of the Inuit people's revitalisation of grass basket making provides an important example of Indigenous cultural revitalisation beyond language renewal.

The work of Cherokee Professor Jeff Ganohalidoh Corntassel of the University of Victoria, Canada, should also be noted regarding indigenous cultural revitalisation in Canada beyond languages. Corntassel is responsible for several papers that have been influential in on the influence of indigenous cultural revitalisation culturally, socially and politically. Corntassel (2012) acknowledges that 'being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one's relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization' [pg.88.] However, he proposes that such reclamation can take place through 'everyday acts of resurgence' where indigenous peoples revitalise their engagement with cultural practices in addition to speaking the language. This includes the growing, harvesting and eating of traditional foods, engagement with indigenous spirituality and participation in ceremonies. Corntassel calls such cultural revitalisation 'everyday acts of cultural resurgence' and explains they are an important act of decolonisation and self-determination.

The indigenous people of the United States of America are facing similar challenges to the first peoples of Canada when it comes to cultural revitalisation. Hinton and Meek (2018)'s analysis use useful as an overview of indigenous language revitalisation in the USA since the 1960's. Their articles provide an insight into the language's revitalisation efforts taking place across the USA and multiple indigenous fronts including the communities, schools and homes. Again, the authors note the common observation that such language loss stems from colonisation and not how the frustrations involved with trying to revitalise a language whilst experiencing frequent changes in government policy and funding systems.

Lee and McLaughlin (2001) provide an insight into Navajo language revitalisation and identify several factors impeding its intergenerational transfer, including the primacy of English in educational, employment and governmental settings. Such challenges with an English hegemony mirror the issues being faced with the Ainu people of Japan, as outlined by Anderson and Iwasaki-Goodman (2001). However, Lee and McLaughlin provide useful

tables outlining the actions individuals, pairs, families and communities can undertake to contribute to the revitalisation of the Navajo language.

Durazzo (2024) outlines the efforts of the Tuxá people of Brazil and their to revitalise their language. The article explains most Tuxá people speak Portuguese as a first language due to colonisation, but they are reintroducing the language to their young people in indigenous schools. Nelson (2018) also notes the risk of language loss the indigenous people of North East Brazil. Her dissertation explores the intersection of race and indigeneity by focusing on the language revitalisation efforts of the Pataxó Hãhãhãe people as a sovereign act that reasserts their identity.

Whilst the state of Indigenous languages in Oceana is similarly dire, there have been instances of great success in language revitalisation in Hawaii and New Zealand. For example, Kawai'ae'a, K. et.al (2017) provides a concise summary of the progress the First Peoples of Hawaii have made in establishing educational institutions that teach and teach in the Hawiian language. This journey began with the 'first pilot Pūnana Leo (Language Nest) pre-school opened on the island of Kaua'i' and 'Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo became the first Hawaiian Language College' in 1997 (pg.79). The impact of this movement is profound, with the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009-2013 American Community Survey and finding 18,610 Hawaiians using their indigenous language at home.

Indigenous cultural revitalisation is an international phenomenon because colonisation and its impacts are. The indigenous peoples of the world are collectively to revitalise their cultures and the academic literature suggests an overwhelming focus of those efforts is being spent on the revitalisation of indigenous languages. The above literature indicates that whilst indigenous efforts are substantial, success is sparse. Universal challenges for indigenous peoples appear to be a substantial loss in cultural knowledge with each passing generation, as well as ineffectual or obstructionist interventions on the part of colonial governments. Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is but one small people amongst millions contributing to the indigenous cultural revitalisation movement internationally. However,

our success in the cultural revitalisation, particularly regarding the Wiradjuri nyiang, is significant on an international level.

3.6 Conclusion to the Chapter

This literature review has demonstrated the positive shift that has taken place relatively recently in the literature written on and by Wiradjuri people. The first wave of literature on the Wiradjuri consists of predominately ethnographic and anthropological accounts that arose from the non-Indigenous subscription to the doomed race theory and the belief that Indigenous cultures, if not Indigenous peoples, would become extinct. This literature remains deeply problematic because it typically involved unethical methods and superficial Eurocentric accounts of indigenous cultures that were second-hand and poorly researched. Whilst the first wave literature has merits, it should be read judiciously and only reproduced in consultation with Wiradjuri or other Indigenous people.

The second wave literature stretched approximately from the 1980s to the early 2000s and included non-Indigenous authors Read, Kabaila, and Macdonald. These authors informed their research through extensive consultation with Wiradjuri people and the direct inclusion of Wiradjuri voices. A product of the Australian History Wars, the second wave's research methods and outputs demonstrate a remarkable improvement in the quality of the knowledge produced, relative to those of the first wave.

The third wave of authorship covers Wiradjuri-authored work with and by Wiradjuri people from approximately the 2010s to the present. It represents an important counterbalance to the detrimental aspects of the first wave literature. The high number of doctoral dissertations by Wiradjuri authors suggests a promising future for Wiradjuri research. I am honoured to position my thesis within this group of Wiradjuri authors.

The international literature confirms that Indigenous cultural revitalisation is both global and locally grounded. Despite differing contexts, Indigenous peoples share common challenges of language loss, cultural disruption and colonial influence. Yet their collective

efforts demonstrate resilience and renewal. Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation forms part of this broader movement, contributing to a global resurgence of Indigenous identity, knowledge and self-determination.

Chapter 4:

The Processes and Motivations Behind Wiradjuri Cultural Revitalisation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first research question of this study: 'How and why are Wiradjuri people undertaking Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation?' This simple but important question will be answered by retelling the stories of four remarkable Wiradjuri people who have been involved with the revitalisation of Wiradjuri cultural practices. These practitioners will tell how and why they have participated in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

The first Wiradjuri profile will focus on the most influential man in my personal and cultural development, my father, Emeritus Professor Michael McDaniel AO. His knowledge of our people and history is matched only by his deep personal commitment to all indigenous people, as demonstrated through his long and distinguished career in the field of tertiary education. Whilst fulfilling his commitment to the improvement of Indigenous Education in the tertiary sector, Michael McDaniel has taken it upon himself to revitalise the Wiradjuri cultural practice of making wilay badhang-galang (possum cloaks).

The second profile features Aunty Lorraine Tye. I was introduced to her by Jonathan Jones, who features in the fourth profile. Aunty Lorraine is an extraordinarily warm, generous and resilient woman who has been involved with the revitalisation of Wiradjuri weaving in the city of Wagga Wagga, on Wiradjuri ngurambang. Though she came to the practice of Wiradjuri weaving later in life, she has demonstrated an extraordinarily high degree of passion and skill for the art.

The third profile features the story of Uncle Dr Stan Gran Snr AM. Uncle Stan is widely known among the Wiradjuri and beyond for his crucial role in the revitalisation of the

Wiradjuri ngiyang (language). His work spans an excess of three decades and the story of his successful revitalisation of the Wiradjuri language is a rare instance of triumph during an international crisis concerning the extinction of indigenous languages. I first met Uncle Stan as a young man and remember seeing him as a cultural figure whose contribution to our people was legendary. It has been a privilege to hear and retell his story for the purposes of this thesis.

The final profile is on Dr Jonathan Jones, a Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi artist, scholar and maker. I first met Jonathan when I was a teenager. His comprehensive knowledge of both Wiradjuri and South East Aboriginal history, culture and art has been a treasure in my personal and cultural life. His guidance and support throughout the development of this PhD has been invaluable. Jonathan represents a new generation of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners, and he is a positive indicator for the future of the Wiradjuri people and culture.

What follows is an insight into the lives of these four Wiradjuri people for the purposes of understanding how each came to the Wiradjuri cultural practice they are revitalising, why they became involved with its revitalisation, the process they followed, and how the revitalisation has changed during their involvement. Each profile concludes with how the practitioner would like the Wiradjuri cultural practice they have been revitalising to progress into the future.

It is my hope that these stories will act as guides for all indigenous peoples looking revitalise their culture, not just the Wiradjuri. I hope these stories will help those who are looking to ameliorate the impact of colonisation on their people and culture and to reconnect with the cultural practices that resonate with them.

4.2 Michael McDaniel's Revitalisation of Wilay Badhang-galang (Possum Skin Cloaks)

'[It] felt as though there was a memory in my flesh.'

Michael McDaniel wearing a wilay badhang. Source: https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/naidoc-2019-professor-michael-mcdaniel-wins-scholar-of-the-year/46436nxd7

Michael McDaniel's first recorded Wiradjuri ancestor is of a woman named only as Mary, who was probably born around the 1820s to early 1830s. The fact that Mary was born around this time would mean she would have grown up seeing the early impact of colonisation on the Wiradjuri people and their culture. It also would mean that she lived when Wiradjuri people were still making and wearing possum cloaks, a practice Michael has come to revitalise.

Mary took James Brennan, a white labourer, as her partner and had a daughter named Mary Ann Brennan. Mary Ann Brennan was born in the Condobolin district in 1847 and married the Englishman James Tomlins Thorpe at Euabalong, where she had two daughters. This 'started the association of the Thorpe family name in the Euabalong, Lake Cargelligo, Condobolin and broader Lachlan Valley area.'

Michael explains:

> Today's Thorpe family and descendants claim to be members of the Kalari Clan of the Wiradjuri nation, the Kalari clan being a sub-group of the Wiradjuri Nation who's traditional country (or ngurambang) is the country of the western or lower Lachlan river (known as the Kalari bila or river in the Wiradjuri language). In short, we are people of the Kalari bila – the Lachlan river.

However, there are oral traditions connecting Michael's family back to Forbes:

> Uncle Wayne Kelly, (a son of Daisy Thorpe, who was herself a granddaughter of Mary Ann Brennan), was of the belief that either Mary Ann Brennan or her mother Mary, came from Forbes to Euabalong (Condobolin being on the way between the two). As Mary Ann is recorded as being born at Condobolin, it might be referring to her mother Mary. It's not impossible that Mary travelled with her husband, James Brennan from Forbes, to Condobolin where their daughter Mary Ann was born, who later lived in Euabalong. If it is correct that Mary came from Forbes, then Mary was not a member of the Kalari Clan, but the Bundaburra Clan of the Forbes area. The name "Bundaburra" survived as a pastoral property name near Forbes and owned by Josiah Strickland; and in the name of historical figure, Bundaburra Jack (1829 – 1909), a Wiradjuri Elder who as a youth was employed by Josiah Strickland (Josiah Strickland being an ancestor of the Molloy branch of the family).

The connection to Forbes, outlined by Uncle Wayne Kelly, may explain why Michael's family moved to Forbes around 1900. Michael's grandmother, mother, and much of his immediate family were born in Forbes and live there to this day.

Michael was born at Crown Street Hospital in Sydney on 12 June 1962 and moved to Forbes with his parents shortly thereafter. Michael cannot remember much of his early childhood in Forbes. He moved from Forbes to Sydney when he was approximately seven years old and would return to Forbes for short periods, mainly during school holidays. Looking back on this period of his life, Michael remembers that although his family were

always Aboriginal identifying, they did not discuss their Wiradjuri identity openly. Michael suspects that older generations of people he knew, like his great grandmother, may have known that they were specifically Wiradjuri and had elements of cultural knowledge. However, it was never discussed with Michael or his generation.

Michael believes that lack of discussion about being Wiradjuri or of pre-colonial Wiradjuri culture may have been done to protect him and younger generations from racism and the risk of forced removal. The 1915 amendments to the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (NSW)* gave the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board the power to remove any Aboriginal child at any time for any reason. This included removal solely based on race. The reinforcement of a child's Aboriginality through the transmission of Wiradjuri cultural knowledge would have been more than enough for Michael to be removed during those first seven years of his life in Forbes. Although the policy of removal under the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (NSW)* was abolished in 1969, the fear of having children removed because of their perceived Aboriginality has remained in Elders' minds long after the policy was abolished.

Furthermore, like most small towns at the time, Forbes was racist, judgmental and often cruel. For example, shortly after Michael's ancestors came to Forbes, a 'clearance' of the Aboriginal population by the local council took place. According to Read (1988), the 'clearance' of Forbes was most remarkable; the Aboriginal population of the town 'dropped between 1911 and 1915 from seventy-eight to one' (p. 59). The criteria the council used to classify an individual as an Aboriginal person may have affected Michael's family members and their ability to avoid the clearance, but such attitudes and actions no doubt had an impact on how they later conducted themselves. He explained his family 'kept quiet, were well-behaved, were good people and went to church', and this increased their chances of avoiding additional hardship beyond what they were experiencing through poverty at the 'lower end of the town's social scale'.

Michael attended school in Sydney until he left at the age of 14 to work in unskilled roles. He enlisted in the Australian Army at the age of 16 and served until he was 23 years old.

He was working as a security guard and mail sorter at the National Australia Bank during nights when my mother, Carol McDaniel, drew his attention to a newspaper advertisement for a bridging course being offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the University of Western Sydney. The course aimed to develop academic skills and provide a pathway into their courses.

Michael doubted he would be able to meet the academic requirements of his chosen degree. This doubt was based on the fact he had been placed in classes for migrant children when he was at school and had only written three to four letters in the Army since then. To his surprise, he excelled at university, obtaining a high distinction average and receiving the University Medal. This was a pivotal experience that started him on an academic career in the tertiary education sector. However, it was also a pivotal time in his life in terms of his Aboriginality developing into a political identity:

> Coming through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entry program meant all the students were Indigenous. I think we were all in the same position in our lives despite our varying ages. It was a time of growing political awareness and it meant we were analysing politics and the politics of identity.

Michael's academic achievements led to him being offered teaching positions with the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), the University of Sydney, and the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association Dance College. He then progressed as the Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs in the School of Adult Education at UTS. He was later appointed as one of the two full-time Aboriginal members of the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT) in 1996. This body is established by the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)* to assist and mediate between parties on Native Title Claims and Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs).

Michael saw what he describes as a 'strengthening of Aboriginal people's identities' in the South-East of Australia during his term with the NNTT. He noted that when he was younger, Aboriginal people would identify with their traditional groups by referring to them more commonly as 'tribes', 'language groups' and 'clans'. However, during his

appointment to the NNTT he noted that people in the South-East of Australia, including the Wiradjuri, increasingly started referring to their traditional groups as *nations*, a much more empowering term. He believes that this use of the word 'nation' reflects our knowledge of how indigenous peoples in the United States and Canada refer to themselves as 'nations'.

Michael returned to academia after his term with the NNTT. He spent three years in an academic role before taking up an associate professorship at Macquarie University and filling the role of Director of Warawara – the Department of Indigenous Studies. His next role was as Dean of Indigenous Education at the University of Western Sydney, and it was at this point he had the inspiration to make wilay badhang-galang (possum skin cloaks).

Michael was attending the 2005 World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education at the University of Waikato and noted the degree of proficiency with which 'Māori academics and leaders would commence and finish their presentations in their language, or some would present their entire paper in their language.' He watched how the Māori 'navigated the Māori and Western world perfectly' and noted how this navigation was not only demonstrated with their transition between Te Reo Māori (the Māori language) and English, but how it was also 'symbolised by the fact that they would be wearing immaculate Western clothes with beautiful cloaks of flax and feathers over the top.' It was this moment that inspired Michael to turned to his Wiradjuri friend, Anita Heiss, and say, "when I go back to Australia, I am going to learn some language and make a cloak."

Michael began preparing for his revitalising of Wiradjuri wilay badhang-galang by attending an exhibition of The Tooloyn Koortakay Collection at the Melbourne Museum in Victoria and the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. The Tooloyn Koortakay Collection contains several objects related to the revitalisation of possum skin cloaks, including a reproduction of the Maiden's Punt, Yorta Yorta possum skin cloak collected in 1853; and a reproduction of the Lake Condah Gunditjmara possum skin cloak collected in 1872 (Reynolds, et al. 2005, p. 60). This opportunity to see the cloaks in person allowed Michael for the first time to 'visually inspect them and see how they were constructed'.

Following his attendance at the exhibition, Michael began accumulating as much information as possible on the contemporary production of cloaks. He read Reynolds et al.'s (2005) *Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak*, a book written by the first women to start remaking possum skin cloaks in Victoria. The book described the cloaks' traditional use, the steps the authors took to construct the pre-colonial and revitalised cloaks, and the importance of consulting their Elders for permission to make their first cloak.

Michael's next step was to obtain permission to make the cloaks from the Wiradjuri Council of Elders, who were meeting in Parkes. The night before the meeting he met with his mother's cousin, Uncle Ralph Smith, a Wiradjuri Elder and member of the Wiradjuri Council of Elders. Michael told Uncle Ralph of his intentions to make a wilay badhang and that he was attending the meeting to seek the Elders' permission to do so. Michael explained what a wilay badhang looked like to Uncle Ralph, as he had never seen one before. Michael was surprised when Uncle Ralph went into another room and fetched a kangaroo patchwork rug made by his non-Aboriginal grandfather. Michael confirmed that the cloaks looked similar and borrowed it as a visual reference for his presentation to the Wiradjuri Council of Elders the following day.

When Michael attended that Wiradjuri Council of Elders meeting, Aunty Flo Grant, Chairperson of the Council, invited him to speak. He began by introducing himself and explaining who he was and his Wiradjuri family's history. He then explained that he wanted to seek the Council's permission for him and other Wiradjuri people to start revitalising the creation of wilay badhang-galang. Michael recalls their response:

> There was some discussion amongst the Elders, and it was clear that some did, and some did not, know what a possum skin cloak was and I suspect that maybe no one had ever seen a cloak in their life. So, I pointed to the kangaroo rug and I remember people looking at it and being impressed. I remember Uncle Stan Grant saying something about them and used the word badhang. He said, 'Badhang, he wants to make a badhang. He wants to make a possum skin cloak.' One of the

> things I said was that I will use Wiradjuri designs but I will not copy any images. I will do them in a Wiradjuri style. And people approved of that.

The late Aunty Flo expressed her concern about the acquisition of the possum pelts, stating that she did not want Michael to go out 'slaughtering possums' to make the cloak. Michael noted the environmental and ethical concerns and explained that the possum pelts he would use were imported from New Zealand, where possums had been introduced by the British in 1837 to establish a fur trade. He explained that the possum had since become New Zealand's most ecologically damaging introduced pest and that the harvesting of the possum pelts used to make the cloak preserved New Zealand's natural habitat. Satisfied with this answer, the Council of Elders gave Michael permission to make his first wilay badhang.

The first step Michael took was to find a supplier of the possum pelts. He searched online and found a leather importer who acted as a third party to engage with the suppliers in New Zealand. Once the skins arrived, he noticed that the leather side of the skin looked significantly different to the images of the old cloaks he had seen. The leather was stripped and treated with chemicals that made the leather turn a colour that was 'white to light grey.' Michael noted:

> I had seen pictures where people had burnt straight onto the bleached skin ... But as I studied pictures of old cloaks, you could see they had a smoky, dusty, slightly oily colour about them. They weren't clean white things at all. There was a warm, earthy richness, a brownness, a goldenness, to it. They weren't like white pieces of paper. So, I tried experimenting with processes to replicate that. The process I used on the first cloak was to use tannins and the first and easiest way to get tannins was from tea. So, I got tea and boiled it up and painted it on the cloak. But later on, I started using bark, and I found Willow bark created a more intense colour than tea could.

It is important to note that Michael made this tannin wash for the pelts with water from the Lachlan River, the river his people had lived near for tens of thousands of years. In his words, this was done 'as a way of imprinting "country" onto and into the cloak'.

The next challenge Michael faced was designing the gurilgang, the decorative pattern that traditionally marks the leather, non-fur, side of the cloak. Before colonisation, these patterns were inscribed into the leather with 'sharp tools such as stone, shell, bone, and later glass and metal as they became available', before charcoal and ochre were rubbed into them (Reynolds et al., 2005, p. 17). Contemporary cloak makers commonly use a pyrography tool, often referred to as a 'burner' to mark gurilgang on modern cloaks. Michael discussed how he went about tackling the challenging process of making new Wiradjuri patterns for his gurilgang, while also fulfilling his promise to the Wiradjuri Council of Elders to not copy pre-colonial ones:

> The designs were a challenge when starting to make cloaks. I had seen a lot of Wiradjuri carvings and our artworks were generally geometric or fluid lines. So, the first was using very fluid designs. I practiced on paper and it was a bit of a conversation in terms of not having any intention in what I was drawing with the lines. But as I drew the lines, thoughts came to me that made me think about particular things. The process of doing designs led to meaning.

Michael gave an example of how these initial lines would take on cultural meaning:

> I was also aware of patterns in nature. The flow of rivers as they cut in and out of nature and if you look at old fallen wood, you can see lines like they have been carved. There are circles in circles. And then for me, that began to symbolise water. And that's really important for us as Kalari [Lachlan River] people because we define ourselves in terms of our relation to our waters. So water has always been important to the cloaks that I have done. But my designs were much simpler and not as full or as complex as they later became.

Once these lines took on a cultural meaning, the designs would then be altered to greater reflect that meaning. Michael describes the creation of the process as a 'conversation' between himself, the cultural meaning he was reminded of, and the pattern.

> I would just start doing lines and then the lines would make me think of something, and then I would change the lines based on what I was thinking. I didn't start with an intention in my mind. I started with creating lines and images and then my mind being stimulated by that. It was a very unintentional, unstructured way of doing it. In some ways you could describe it as a spiritual process. In the old days, these symbols were called gurilgang, which were about your identity. Because I had no one to give me these images, and no one had the authority to give me images from the past, in some ways, they came to me through the process and then I kept those images and embellished on them while using them consistently.

Michael also improvised with the materials he used to stitch the wilay badhang together.

> I used kangaroo leather thonging on the first cloak I made because I was aware that the original cloaks were made with kangaroo sinew and I wasn't in a position to get it. I was aware that people were sewing cloaks with thread but I thought I'd try kangaroo leather because it was a similar product to the sinew. So, I made a cloak with kangaroo leather which you can sew. You have to punch holes around the edge of the skins in advance and then lace two skins together. It was difficult because the holes don't always align and the leather thonging tends to stretch.

In total, Michael had to engage significant innovation to create this first cloak, in comparison to the traditional practices.

> The source of the possums is not the same, the tools are not the same. Everything from a pair of scissors to bulldog clips to hold the skins while you burn the pattern on, the use of an electric burner, the designs were not handed to me the ways patterns were given to people in the past, the materials used to sew including the

> metal needles or the hole punch was not the same as the past. Applying tea or tannins was not as it was in the past. There is an incredible amount of change in the way I did a possum skin cloak compared to the past.

However, Michael also points out that such innovation was a practice of Wiradjuri people when making cloaks following the time of first contact with Europeans.

> My understanding is that by the 1840s people started using cotton to start sewing possum skin cloaks together. People were innovating as soon as they could with needles and so forth. Even people in the past were not locked into remaining static with what they did.

In making this first cloak, Michael found that designing the patterns for the cloak's gurilgang was not the only element of the process that was experienced spiritually. Whilst Michael describes himself as a rational person, he acknowledges that some things in his world cannot fit a scientific or rational model. As such, he explains that he 'felt as though there was a memory in my flesh' when making the cloak and it was as though his hands knew the possum and the process to follow. In other words, he felt as though the making of the cloak with his hands was more like a reunion between them and the materials rather than an experimentation.

After months of work, Michael returned to the Wiradjuri Council of Elders to present his completed wilay badhang. This was the first time they had seen the cloak since giving their permission to make it, and he remembers being nervous, primarily 'out of respect for their opinion.' He was also concerned that somehow his work may 'have offended in some way that I wasn't aware of. I checked everything beforehand, but I still didn't know.' To his surprise, the general response of the Elders was elation:

> They rushed forward and grabbed it, and put it on themselves, and hugged it, and put it on each other. And then we spent the rest of that morning just with the cloak. Forget the agenda, everything was forgotten. Everyone was happy, everyone was laughing, getting their photograph taken. People saying, 'I have never seen

> one of these'. 'I never thought I would see this in my life'. 'I've never touched that before'. And everyone started talking about memories. 'I remember... I remember lying on something when I was a little child that was like this.' Or talking about people. Or remembering culture that was lost. Or wishing that other people were here who've passed on, to see this day, and so forth.

It is interesting to note how engaging with the wilay badhang generated a similar sense of familiarity with the Elders, as it had with Michael when making the cloak and designing the gurilgang. Neither the Elders nor Michael could remember touching a cloak prior to the creation of this one. However, the presentation of the cloak instantly triggered a sense of familiarity and a reminder of connections to other cultural memories, along with memories of Wiradjuri people who had passed away. In some sense, the cloak was received as a reminder and actual proxy for Wiradjuri people of the past.

Michael was surprised to discover the close relationship he had formed with his badhang, and its strength was not apparent to him until the National Gallery of Australia acquired it for their collection. He recalled the experience:

> It’s a cultural object, it’s a sacred object. I don’t think they should be treated lightly or disrespectfully. To me, they have a personality. They become like a person. I remember when I left my cloak at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra and I was incredibly sad. I felt like I’d left a friend behind. Someone had come into my life and I had left them behind. That was a really hard thing to do. They said you can come and visit it. You can come and see it. Which I haven't but it’s nice to know it’s the case. You have a relationship with it.

Michael's skills at making possum skin cloaks were further developed with the production of his second wilay badhang. Michael sold this cloak to a private art collector, and he was surprised to see how the treatment of the cloaks by those who acquired them could also impact on their status as a cultural object. Commenting on the cultural status of the wilay badhang, Michael said:

A cloak is not just an object. When a cloak is disrespected, and treated like an object, it sort of dies. It becomes empty. I did sell a cloak to a private collector and then I found that they just wanted to throw it over the lounge like a fur throw. At that moment to me, that stopped being a cloak. It stopped being anything special. They clearly didn't have enough respect for it and it had just become a furniture decoration. That was an interesting experience. If I ever did make a cloak and sell it, I don't think I would ever sell it to someone who didn't deeply respect it. That was interesting, in my mind how it stopped being a cloak and special. Physically the object remained the same, but its status was taken away from it.'

Michael wearing the second wilay badhang he made

One of the reasons Michael began making wilay badhang-galang was that he hoped to encourage other people to take up the practice of cultural revitalisation. That ripple-effect took place as I was coming to the end of my undergraduate degree at Macquarie University and he suggested I graduate in a cloak the same way Māori students would graduate in their traditional flax cloaks. Dad guided me through the slow process of making my first wilay badhang and I wore it on my graduation day, proudly becoming the first Aboriginal person to wear a wilay badhang for their university graduation. Since then, the same cloak has been worn by several Wiradjuri people for their graduations, including Susan Green, Mayrah Sonter and Jonathan Jones. It is wonderful to see Aboriginal people increasingly wearing cloaks in their graduation ceremonies. Furthermore, both Mayrah and Jonathan have purchased possum skins and are currently making their own wilay badhang-galang. Dad later taught my sister, Emily McDaniel, how to make a wilay badhang that she has also made available for friends and family.

Michael teaching me to make my first wilay badhang. Image by Sarah Rhodes

By the time Michael had made his third cloak he had been appointed as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Leadership and Engagement) at UTS. He introduced the role of 'Elder in Residence' at the Jumbunna Indigenous Student Support Unit, a role first filled by Aunty Joan Tranter. Michael decided to make a wilay badhang for Aunty Joan as the inaugural Elder in Residence at UTS and to honour her and her life's work. Michael recalls that Aunty Joan was reduced to tears when he gave the cloak to her and said, "I've never felt so loved." Aunty Joan was so moved by receiving the cloak that she chose to wear it for an oil portrait that was painted of her by Jane Nicol. This painting is currently hanging in the foyer of the main building of UTS. The wilay badhang and painting will be moved to UTS's Indigenous Residential College once construction is complete.

The wilay badhang Michael made for Aunty Joan Tranter alongside her portrait by Jane Nicol.

Source: https://artoncampus.uts.edu.au/artworks/portrait-of-aunty-joan-tranter/

It is also important to note that Michael transitioned to using upholstery thread for Aunty Joan's cloak. Whilst kangaroo leather thonging was closer to kangaroo sinew as a material, its tendency to stretch meant it was not suitable for bearing the weight of a cloak that would be worn as frequently as Aunty Joan's. Before coming to use upholstery thread, Michael experimented with strips of kangaroo rawhide as a substitute for the leather thonging. However, he found it was abrasive when dry and this would result in it cutting through the possum leather it was binding.

Image of the upholstery thread stitching Michael used of Aunty Joan's wilay badhang.

In his role as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Leadership and Engagement), Michael also modified the UTS Indigenous Education and Employment Policy to ensure that 'all Indigenous graduates, with UTS approval, are able to graduate wearing elements of academic dress that have Indigenous cultural relevance and which celebrate their Indigenous identity.' Michael explains how the inclusion of that provision was inspired by the cloaks and the rationale behind it:

> I had been in enough graduation ceremonies to see, particularly Polynesian students, wearing tapa cloth or elements of traditional costume. I was also aware of the fact Māori graduates often graduate in cloaks that were given to them or inherited. I thought it was important that our people do that in the midst of this celebration of medieval Western tradition that did not originate in Australia. I thought it was important for us, as a people who had been here for tens of thousands of years, to partially hijack it and do something that puts us at the centre and the marvellous thing is that I've now seen a number of people graduate wearing cloaks.

Michael's production of the cloaks has progressively become more widely associated with him in recognition of his identity as a Wiradjuri man. A portrait of Michael painted by Kate Gradwell was entered into the 2019 Archibald Prize, where it was placed amongst the finalists for the award. He also received the 2019 NAIDOC Scholar of the Year Award, and the image displayed while he was accepting the award was of him wearing a wilay badhang. Reflecting on the choice to portray him in his cloak, Michael observed:

> It's interesting when you think of those moments when someone is trying to define an image of me, why those cloaks are in there. It wasn't me that decided that I'd be wearing the cloak in either of them. It was others that decided that. Again, I think that's about the impressiveness and power of the cloak. But yes, a cloak does define us differently. Not only has it changed how I express my identity but it has also changed how others choose to represent you.

Portrait of Michael McDaniel painted by Kate Gradwell for the 2019 Archibald Prize.

Source: https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/2019/30112/

However, Michael's involvement with the revitalisation of wilay badhang extends beyond his practical production of them. Michael completed a PhD at UTS in 2024 titled, *Wilay badhang: an analysis of past and present relationships with and around possum-skin cloaks.*

Reflecting on the cultural revitalisation of the wilay badhang-galang, Michael considered their state at the start of his lifetime. When he was born, most Wiradjuri people had not heard of the cloaks; they did not know what they looked like and had certainly never touched one, let alone worn one. For all functional purposes, 'they had become extinct. This most beautiful object that we had, it just became extinct for probably more than a hundred and twenty years.' However, now he lives in a time where he believes 'every

Wiradjuri adult has seen a wilay badhang-galang. Many in real life. Many have been involved with making cloaks, many are now owning and wearing cloaks.'

His belief regarding the future of wilay badhang-galang and their relationship with the Wiradjuri is that the momentum behind their revitalisation will continue alongside other Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practices:

> I think that cloaks will continue to become a greater part of our people's lives. One of the defining elements. As I'm seeing it, apart from our relationship to country and knowledge of kinship, Wiradjuri language and weaving and cloak-making seem to be the strongest expressions of Wiradjuri identity. I think all of those things will grow.

4.3 Aunty Lorraine Tye's Revitalisation of Wiradjuri Weaving

'It was just waiting to be woken up again.'

Aunty Lorraine Tye standing before her artwork, *Guya-gu Marraanba Yinaa: One Woman Fish Net*. Photo by: Kieren L.Tilly. https://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/5046088/weaved-wiradjuri-wonders-at-the-wagga-art-gallery-photos/

Aunty Lorraine Tye understands that prior to colonisation, Wiradjuri weaving was primarily the responsibility of Wiradjuri women, who would teach Wiradjuri children their initial lessons in the practice. When the boys became older, they would go with the Wiradjuri men to be taught male elements of the weaving practice separately. The Wiradjuri girls would stay with the women and continue to learn weaving from them.

Prior to colonisation, weaving was an important practice for the Wiradjuri as it would turn fibres processed from plants found on Wiradjuri country into numerous objects such as nets, rope, string bags, baskets, and water carrying vessels. These objects would be left on

the ground to be reabsorbed into Wiradjuri country when they had become too aged or worn.

Like most Wiradjuri cultural practices, Wiradjuri weaving was impacted by British colonisation, which led to a decline in engagement with the cultural practice. As Aunty Lorraine explains, 'The old people couldn't move freely because of colonisation, and this meant that they were unable to access the grasses they required to weave as they once did.' Additionally, British objects and materials filled the void left by Wiradjuri woven vessels as Wiradjuri people began to labour on farms and stations.

Aunty Lorraine's father was amongst the first Aboriginal people to move back to Wagga Wagga during the 1930s. She was born in Wagga Wagga in 1950 and cannot remember if Wiradjuri people were weaving in the area during this period. She only spent a short time there as she was diagnosed with polio on Christmas Day, 1952. She was only two years old.

Polio was a common and feared contagious infection in the Western world until mass vaccination programs were introduced in the late 1950s. The symptoms of the infection vary drastically amongst those affected. According to Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2023), approximately three quarters of people contracting polio do not exhibit any visible symptoms and the other quarter of people will develop flu-like symptoms that will tend to go away two to five days later.

Aunty Lorraine was in isolation for three-and-a-half months whilst she received treatment for polio at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. She began to develop the very rare paralytic symptoms only approximately one in 200 to 2,000 people affected by polio will manifest (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023), and Wagga Wagga Base Hospital was not adequately equipped to treat her symptoms. Aunty Lorraine was subsequently sent to Royal Far West in Sydney via train and without any family to accompany her. Royal Far West is a medical institution that was established in Manly in 1924 to provide children from rural areas with otherwise unavailable medical attention. Unlike many Aboriginal children in broader society at the time, Aunty Lorraine does not remember racism as a

feature of her time at Royal Far West: 'There was black, white and brindle. We were just kids and there was no discrimination.'

Aunty Lorraine is grateful for the medical treatment she received from Royal Far West. However, being sent there as a young child to be treated for polio was an extremely difficult experience for her. Aunty Lorraine was paralysed in her legs and was not allowed to be contacted by her family for the first three months. She said children were kept from their families during the initial phase because those who administered the Royal Far West 'said [contact with family] would make you fret.' Besides the stress that being isolated from family would ordinarily place on a child, it meant that she was not being exposed to her Wiradjuri culture either.

Royal Far West's treatment of Aunty Lorraine's paralysis involved increasing the utilisation of her hands by engaging with arts and crafts. Unbeknownst to her at the time, this treatment would provide Aunty Lorraine with the skills necessary to quickly learn Wiradjuri weaving later in life:

> They would do weaving with me using cane and I have always been using my hands. Being a maker. By the time I got older and went down the track of traditional weaving, I was used to making things and it became a passion.

Aunty Lorraine returned to Wagga Wagga from Sydney when she was four-and-a-half to attend St Joseph's Primary School. This was the first time she had seen her family since she was sent to Royal Far West for treatment. She recalls having forgot who her mother was and feeling emotionally distant from the other members of her family:

> I never forgot Dad but I forgot Mum. To me, she was a 'sister', a nurse. Because that was the role she played in my life. Mum said she was bathing me once and I said 'Gee, you're a nice nurse', which would have been heartbreaking for her. I've only realised this as I got older.

This emotional distance was further compounded by the fact that Aunty Lorraine's father was a sheep shearer and often away from home with work. Reflecting on her return to

Wagga Wagga, she recalls that Wiradjuri culture immediately became part of her life, even if in subtle ways:

> It wasn't until I was older that I realised how much [my father] had actually taught me. It was done in a subtle way. Like, when you would go to the river for fish, you would only catch as much as you needed, which I found out later was a cultural practice. But I had no idea at the time.

The significance of this lesson from her father on sustainable Wiradjuri harvesting of fish from the Murrumbidgee River is reflected in the subject matter Aunty Lorraine chose to weave later in her life.

Although Aunty Lorraine was subtly taught Wiradjuri culture by her father, she recalls how Aboriginal people were viewed in Wagga Wagga when she was a child and how this impacted on Wiradjuri people:

> [Dad] went to great pains to protect us kids. Whenever I would get a photo when I was at home from the Far West, you could never see him. I have a photo where you can just see his shadow in the door. And he never visited me at the Far West. It was always just mum. He was always in the background.

Aunty Lorraine believes her father would avoid being seen with her because he was worried her safety would be compromised if people knew she too was Wiradjuri:

> I think Dad experienced a fair bit of discrimination because he was so strict on us carrying money. He said you couldn't leave the house without some form of money on you, otherwise you'll be picked up for vagrancy. I asked Joyce [Hampton] about that and she said that was true and you were. You didn't feel safe and there was a lot of stigma around being Aboriginal.

In addition to the above challenges Aunty Lorraine experienced in her early life, her schooling was frequently disrupted by her moving between Sydney and Wagga Wagga. She attended school in Wagga Wagga for Kindergarten and part of Year One before returning to Royal Far West in Sydney for treatment. Her treatment commonly consisted

of having surgery, having her legs fitted with callipers and receiving occupational therapy. Aunty Lorraine completed most of her primary education in Sydney at Royal Far West with teachers who were primarily university students who volunteered for a term or two. Whilst Aunty Lorraine believes the quality of the education she received from these volunteers was high, she notes that it was frequently disrupted by the need to undergo surgery to treat her polio. Towards the later part of primary education, Aunty Lorraine's mum enrolled her in schooling by correspondence. Aunty Lorraine remembers:

> I did really well at correspondence. I just enjoyed it. I've always been a very independent person. If I woke up at 2am and felt like doing maths, I would do it. That meant the following day, I could do what I like.

Aunty Lorraine returned to Wagga Wagga for Year Six and part of Year Seven before briefly returning to Sydney and then coming back. She felt socially isolated from her peers at school, and this led her to decision to leave secondary education at the age of 14. She cannot recall whether her social isolation was due to her Aboriginality, her disability caused by polio, or the fact she had not grown up with her peers in Wagga Wagga:

> It's hard to say if I was treated differently because I was Aboriginal or because I had a disability. When you have a disability, you are treated differently anyway.

Despite the racism that existed in Wagga Wagga at this time, and the exclusion faced by people with a disability, Aunty Lorraine met one man who she recalls as showing her great generosity. She met Dr John Dewey when she was 14. He approached her after noting the difficulty she had walking down the main street of Wagga Wagga and insisted she come to his practice for treatment of her disability. Dr Dewey provided her and her family with decades of medical treatment and refused payment every time she offered. The impact of his generosity on Aunty Lorraine's life at this point was profound, as his care enabled her to stay in Wagga Wagga and to not return to Royal Far West Home when she needed treatment. In 1965, at the age of 15, Aunty Lorraine enrolled in The Commercial College in Wagga Wagga. She undertook an office administration and management course that

taught skills such as bookkeeping and shorthand writing. It was also about this time when she met Uncle Ron Tye, who would later become her husband.

Aunty Lorraine continued to feel as though she was not 'part and parcel of the family' because she had grown up in isolation from them and decided she 'couldn't settle in Wagga'. This led her to moving back to Sydney and working there for 12 months. She worked packing eggs at a chicken farm near Blacktown before securing an office job. Uncle Ron came from Wagga Wagga to visit Aunty Lorraine in Sydney and they later married. Aunty Lorraine and Uncle Ron had three boys, one of whom she lost in his infancy. She says of her two other sons:

> Brae was born in 1975 and prematurely. He weighed less than a pound when he was born and he was so small I had to feed him every three hours. Brae is totally dependent with cerebral palsy caused by a lack of oxygen when he was three months old. Kable was born in 1978 and he has been a mainstay in my life. I went to the doctors when he was two years old because I was worried something was wrong with him and the doctor had to explain that nothing was wrong with him and that I was getting used to a child who moved around so much. I was used to Brae, a child you would dress and put in a place and he'd stay there. So that had some challenges in itself.

Uncle Ron was working as an interstate truck driver while the rest of his family was in Sydney. This meant Aunty Lorraine was unable to work and would spend most of her time raising their boys. Despite these challenges, she always found time to continue her arts and crafts. She enjoyed a range of practices, including cake decorating, porcelain doll making, and box making.

Aunty Lorraine and her family moved back to Wagga Wagga in 1980 as she had a greater support network with family there, and the medical attention Brae required had become available there too.

> You could get good doctors and good treatment in Wagga Wagga. From the time I was a child needing treatment to the time Brae needed treatment, the medical system had improved a lot in Wagga Wagga. It was a city now.

Being back in Wagga Wagga also meant Aunty Lorraine was back on Wiradjuri country and had greater access to her culture. A consequence of this was that her artistic creations began developing a greater focus on Wiradjuri culture. Initially, Aunty Lorraine began carving emu eggs with Uncle Tunny Murry.

> He taught me to carve with a shearing cutter. Apparently, years ago, the old people would use a bone. But as colonisation occurred, people got access to other tools and started using shears.

Aunty Lorraine's practice of carving eggs then introduced her to Aunty Pat Dacey, who would frequently encourage Aunty Lorraine to 'come to the Elders'. The 'Elders' Aunty Pat was referring to were a collective of women revitalising the practice of weaving as part of the Wingadhan Waggadha Wayburra: Women of Wagga Weaving (WoWW Project).

The catalyst for the WoWW Project was a touring exhibition being shown at the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, a cultural facility of Wagga Wagga City Council. The exhibition was titled *Women with Clever Hands: Gapuwiyak Miyalkurruwurr Gong Djambatjamla*, and it featured weaving by Yolngu women from Gapuwiyak in North-Eastern Arnhem Land. It was decided by gallery-employee Linda Elliott and Cath Bowdler that the Yolngu women ought to be introduced to the Wiradjuri community whose lands were hosting them and their art through the exhibition. According to the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery (2010), the WWoW project had grown out of what began as

> [a] meeting and sharing of craft created by Gapuwiyak women with the local Aboriginal Elders and community on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River in April 2009 … [It was] driven by the local community, with support from the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, to create fibre craft of significance and to contribute to the

> revival of weaving techniques in the Riverina area for all women and to support the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. (p. 3)

The participants with the WWoW project would gather at the Girl Guides Hall on Jack Avenue every Monday from 9.30am to 12.00pm, with an open invitation to anyone to attend. Whilst weaving was the focus of the WWoW project, it also involved engaging in various other cultural practices, workshops with schools, and artists visiting from other communities.

Aunty Lorraine casually wove with the WWoW project when she was able to. However, finding the time to participate was difficult. Uncle Ron was still driving trucks, and this meant that she was primarily responsible for Brae's care. Nevertheless, Aunty Lorraine did occasionally manage to find time to weave with the Aunties of the WWoW project, and this is when her passion and practice of Wiradjuri weaving began.

The WoWW project ended as the Wagga Wagga City Council decided to partially withdraw their support for it. Despite this setback, some of the women that were involved with WoWW were determined to continue their weaving as a group and decided to develop into another weaving collective. Hands on Weaving (HoW) was established in 2013 as the successor to the WoWW project. Along the way, the less committed weavers from the WoWW project 'dropped off and the more-committed members continued with HoW.' Aunty Lorraine remembers the HoW group included herself, Aunty Joyce Hampton, Aunty Sandy Warren, Aunty Deb Evans, Linda Elliott, Trish Harris, Julie Christian, Christine Scott, Kerrie Sulivan and others who dropped in regularly. As with the WWoW Project, the HoW group would meet at the Girl Guides Hall on Jack Avenue on a weekly basis. However, this group had more of a specific focus on weaving, whereas the WWoW project group had a broader focus on cultural practices.

In the beginning, the HoW weavers would come together as an informal, open and welcoming weaving collective. This mode of operation was a reminder of the open invitation extended to all by the WWoW project group. Despite most of their participants being Wiradjuri women, Aunty Lorraine and the other weavers continue to open their

arms to attendees irrespective of age or gender. Furthermore, whilst they do weave on Wiradjuri country, ‘it’s open to everyone. Wiradjuri, non-Wiradjuri, Indigenous, non-indigenous.’

The members of HoW decided they needed to incorporate as a collective to be eligible for funding through grants. This requires them to do tax returns, track finances and conduct a certain number of meetings and so on. Whilst this is an administrative burden, Aunty Lorraine’s training with office administration and bookkeeping has proved invaluable. The process of incorporation did result in the weavers securing a small grant, but they found it was not entirely necessary as they were ‘largely self-sufficient' through the proceeds they obtained running weaving workshops and selling their creations. The generosity of the other weavers towards one another and newcomers is a feature of their collective that has allowed the group to operate for over a decade. As Aunty Lorraine says:

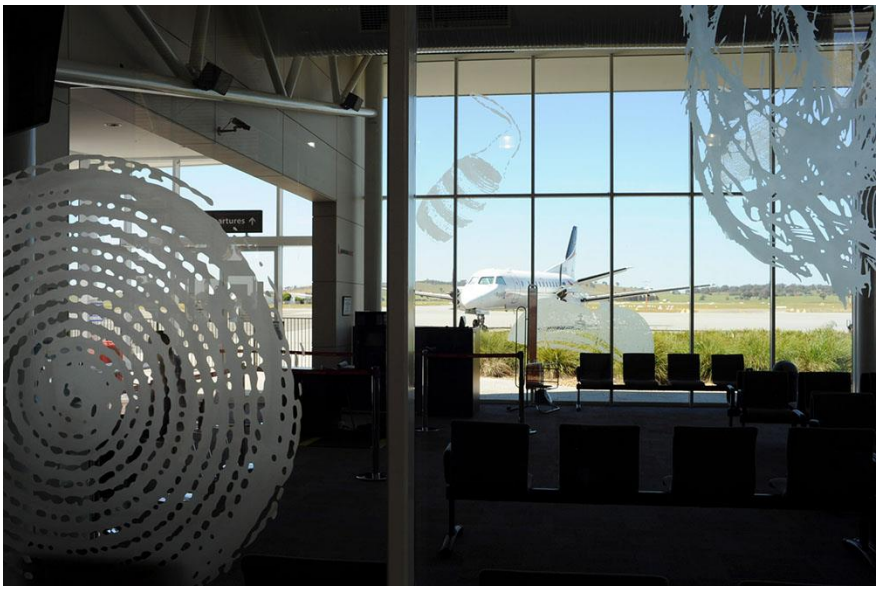
> We were very lucky because we share. If I buy a hank of raffia and Aunty Joyce needs raffia, I will just hand it over. We have always been that way inclined. We got a grant so that if someone comes along and wants to start we can give them some materials and say, “OK, here you go. You can start”, and after a month they can get their own. But to start with we provide some raffia and a needle and sit with them so they can have a go.

In addition to highlighting the generous nature of the HoW participants, the above quote by Aunty Lorraine also highlights the two patterns of attendance the participants have fallen into since the collective's inception. There is a core group of women who regularly attend and have maintained a deep passion and commitment to weaving over the years. These ‘die-hards’ meetings, as Aunty Lorraine refers to them, are also frequented by numerous people, predominantly women, whose attendance and practice of weaving is irregular. Aunty Lorraine explains that some people will attend several HoW sessions during their annual trips to Wagga Wagga from elsewhere, and the core weavers won’t see or hear from them again until the following year. Others will come and weave for a few weeks and then move on:

> Some girls will just come to talk. Not to weave. I think they come for the cultural way we all sit together. Over the years we have had different stages. At one stage we had a lot of kids who didn't fit in at school that would come. Some would weave, others would just sit and talk. If they have problems, we don't make them talk about them. If they want to talk about them, we'll talk, and that's great too.

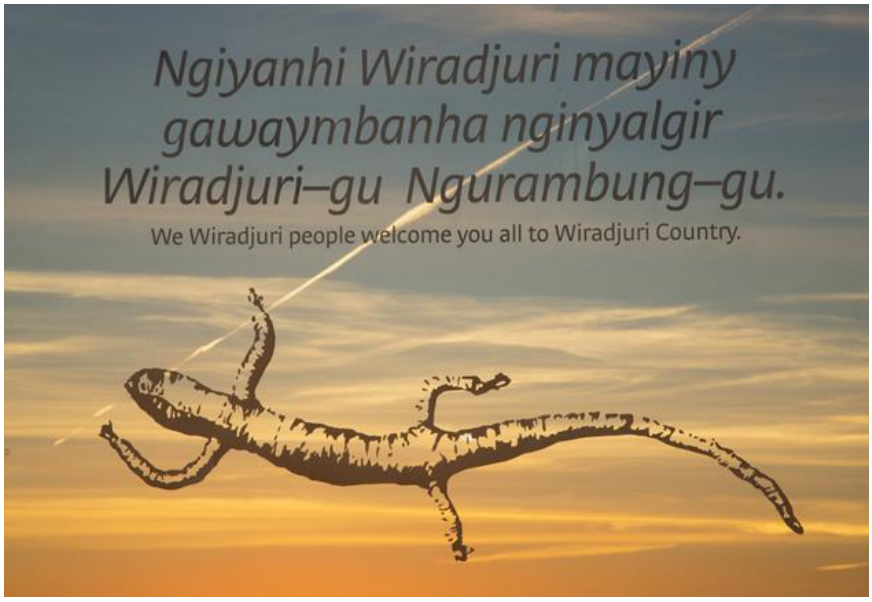
This transitory style of attendance is welcomed by Aunty Lorraine. She simply enjoys the time and interaction she has with those who come and go. But she believes a deep passion for weaving is the difference between those that regularly attend as 'diehards' and those that pass through.

In addition to meeting on a weekly basis, Aunty Lorraine and the other weavers have been involved in the creation of public art and submitting their weaving to art exhibitions since HoW's inception. In 2013, the year the collective was established, HoW weavers, including Aunty Lorraine, Ngiyampaa Elder Aunty Joyce Hampton and Wiradjuri Elder Aunty Sandy Warren, were involved in a collaboration with Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones and Wiradjuri Elder Uncle Stan Grant Snr, both of whom are also key participants in this research. Their collaboration resulted in an installation titled *Wagga Wagga Weaving Welcome*, which was commissioned by the Wagga Wagga City Council. The artwork features objects woven by the HoW members, as well as images of their work that have been etched into the airport's windows. These images are accompanied by a written Welcome to Country by Uncle Stan.



Some of the glass etched images in *Wagga Wagga Weaving Welcome.* Photo by: Bernard Sullivan and Nives Zalokar.

Source: https://mgnsw.org.au/articles/airport-art-welcomes-you-wagga-wagga/



Uncle Stan's Welcome to Country in the Wiradjuri ngiyang*, Wagga Wagga Weaving Welcome*. Photo by: Bernard Sullivan and Nives Zalokar.

Source: https://mgnsw.org.au/articles/airport-art-welcomes-you-wagga-wagga/

Aunty Lorraine's weaving was featured in a Wagga Wagga Art Gallery exhibition titled *Wuurran: Open, Doorway*, held December 2012 to February 2013. Whilst most of the other artists produced woven items in the form of baskets or mats, the exhibition's handbook shows Aunty Lorraine's unique woven animals. In the handbook (Evans, 2012), Aunty Lorraine elaborated on the cultural and personal significance of these woven animals to her:

> My love for animals comes from my yearning for connection with country. Because I grew up in the Royal Far West Home, away from country, life was void of experiences such as fishing down the river or sitting by the campfire with family. The way I found how to reconnect is through animals and using natural products or found objects wherever possible. I didn't consciously choose the animal; it just came to be through the making process, similar to my baskets. (p. 3)

Aunty Lorraine completed what is arguably her most ambitious weaving project, *Guya-gu Marraanba Yinaa: One Woman Fish Net*, in 2017. Consisting of a 4.5-metre high Wiradjuri fishing net accompanied by a school of woven fish, her piece was commissioned for the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery's annual installation program titled *The Point*. Aunty Lorraine was assisted by fellow artist Jonathan Jones in exhibiting the artwork:

> I was making fish and things and Jonathan said to me, 'Why don't you approach the gallery and ask them if you could put something in The Point?' He mentored me through the whole process. Before that, I made small fish but the biggest fish in *Guya-gu Marraanba Yinaa* was one metre. He mentored me on the process of approaching the gallery as an artist. I love what I do but I would have never thought of approaching a gallery like that.

Marraanba Yinaa: One Woman Fish Net. Photo by: Kieren L.Tilly.

Source*: https://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/5046088/weaved-wiradjuri-wonders-at-the-wagga-art-gallery-photos/*

> I have found how to reconnect is through animals and using natural products or found objects whenever possible. I didn't consciously choose the animal; it just came to be through the making process.

The media release issued by the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery elaborates on the cultural and environmental significance of Aunty Lorraine's artwork:

> Wiradjuri people are often known as the people of three rivers, the Wambuul (Macquarie), the Galari (Lachlan) and the Murrumbidgee. These rivers and their tributaries are the lifeline of the Wiradjuri country and people. Wiradjuri carefully managed these resources including the cultivation and sustainable harvesting of guya (fish). Wiradjuri carefully select the correct size, sex and type of fish to collect in order to manage this valuable resource. This work is based on a hand net, which enabled this process where the small fish were left to grow, and large fish were left to continue to breed. This work acknowledges the knowledge of Wiradjuri ancestors who looked after the rivers and the guya. (Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, 2017)

Put simply, Aunty Lorraine sees *Guya-gu Marraanba Yinaa: One Woman Fish Net* as a way of connecting to and caring for Wiradjuri country.

> With how the river and the fish are at the moment, I just think it's a kind of way of preserving them. It's a connection between the weaving, the river and country.

A consequence of these exhibitions has been an increase in the demand for Aunty Lorraine and the other Hands on Weavers to conduct weaving workshops. This is particularly the case amongst schools in the region surrounding Wagga Wagga.

> We do as a HoW group visit schools and talk to the kids about weaving and teach them very basic stuff. But just to show them. The boys like to twine if they aren't into weaving but some of them are. It's a continuation of what happened traditionally with the mums teaching the kids how to weave.

However, Aunty Lorraine and the Hands on Weavers are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the schools appetites for their workshops:

> I think there is a lot more demand on our time than there was a few years ago. A few years ago, you would weave and then you would go to a school if you wanted to. Now, the schools want more, which sometimes we're not able to give. Which is really, really sad.

Despite the challenge of meeting the increased demand for weaving workshops in schools, the weavers' work in classrooms positively impacts on them as much as on the students:

> We do notice the impact on the children. It's quite lovely when you walk down the street and you see these kids and they come up with their mums and say, 'Ohhhhhh, Aunty Lorraine! Now Aunty Lorraine taught me how to weave. You remember that broach we brought home? This is Aunty Lorraine. Aunty Lorraine, this is my mum.' And there is a lot of respect which kids are losing. But once you've sat with them and you have woven together and talked to them, they seem to get that respect back again. It's quite amazing to see.

Even with her ever-increasing skill at weaving and the attention it attracts, Aunty Lorraine and the HoW weavers do face challenges in their practice. Many of these relate to the intergenerational transmission of weaving as a skill and the love for Wiradjuri country that underpins her practice.

> Aunty Joyce and I went to Tarcutta School the other day and the kids were absolutely beautiful. There were 19 kids in the whole school from Kindy to Year 6. The questions they asked were just great. Kids in Wagga schools, their questions and interests are just different. Out [at Tarcutta] they talk more about country. This was an Indigenous and non-Indigenous school. But it was fantastic. In Wagga they don't seem to talk about [country] as much.

Aunty Lorraine does not think weaving's failing to resonate is exclusively restricted to children. She notes how adults are increasingly becoming time poor and how this is affecting their patience and mindfulness, which are key requirements for weaving. As a result, the transfer of the practice from one generation to the next is also affected.

> I think we don't have as many members. We do still have a lot of people calling in. But I think people are busier and it is a lot harder for people to slow down and just weave. A lot of people can't understand why you can't have a weaving done yesterday. Or why it's not going to be there until tomorrow. They can't seem to focus on going slowly and deliberately. They can't appreciate how much time and effort it takes.

The lack of younger people getting involved with the practice of weaving in Wagga Wagga has a flow-on effect when it comes to the collection of natural materials from Wiradjuri country for weaving:

> Traditionally, it was all grasses. Because of mobility and our age we find it very hard to get them. Also, storing grasses is very hard. So we mainly use raffia. We use material. I think there is one girl out there at the moment weaving using rope. Whatever we can get our hands on at the time.

Aunty Lorraine elaborates on the challenge of accessing native grasses and suggests collecting them would be an opportunity for younger people to engage with Wiradjuri country. However, having native grasses that have been collected presents her with other challenges:

> For me to actually collect the grasses, dye them, and store them here, it's impossible. We really need the young ones. We talked about getting them to collect, but then again, where do we store them?

Aunty Lorraine is optimistic about the future of her practice, despite the challenges in getting younger generations involved. She notes that some younger people are keen to inherit their Elders' skills and their underpinning appreciation of Wiradjuri country:

> Aunty Sandy attended and now her daughters are attending. As we are getting older, I am finding Aunty Sandy's daughter, Nita, is part of our group now. Aunty Sandy's daughter Cate comes when she can, because she lives so far away. I know I take my granddaughter, Krystal, with me every chance I get in the school holidays and we also weave at home.

Aunty Lorraine has a remarkably clear vision of the future she would like to see for HoW and the practice of Wiradjuri weaving in Wagga Wagga:

> We need a cultural centre where we can have a place that we can go to store what the young ones collect. Keep the tradition going. The whole tradition. Not just the weaving part of it but the whole of it. It would be fantastic. That's my dream.

Whilst she doesn't believe the practice of Wiradjuri weaving is at risk of disappearing any time soon, she does think that there is room for improvement and foresees the benefits a cultural centre would provide to the Wiradjuri community and the practice of weaving:

> I think it will never be completely lost. I think you will always have an element of it there. I don't think it's as popular as it should be in our culture. I think if we had a cultural centre that would change. People would drop in and see it more. Where we are now is one hub of four in Wagga. We can't go to every hub. So, one place would mean everyone would go there and it would keep it alive much better. But I don't think it will ever be completely lost. It never was. It was just waiting to be woken up again. A cultural centre will keep weaving alive.

4.4 Uncle Dr Stan Grant Snr's Revitalisation of the Wiradjuri Ngiyang (Language)

'The language was never dead, it was just sleeping.'

Uncle Dr Stan Grant Snr. Source: https://www.naidoc.org.au/awards/winner-profiles/dr-stanley-grant-snr-am

Stanley Vernard Grant was born in 1940 at Myall Street, Dubbo. His parents had moved to Dubbo from Condobolin to look after his father's father, Bill Grant, who passed away shortly after Uncle Stan was born. With his grandfather gone, Uncle Stan's parents took him to Condobolin as a baby and that is where he spent his first few years.

After leaving Condobolin, Uncle Stan and his extended family often moved between towns during his childhood. He remembers this period was difficult for several reasons, but predominantly due to poverty that was brought about by racism. When it was time for his family to move they would use any means available to them. They would walk, use horse and sulky, ride pushbikes, and travel by horseback. When they found a place with access to water they would build humpies out of scrap tin and timber. Sometimes they stayed in one spot for a while and other times they would be quickly moved on by the local

authorities for no other reason than they were Wiradjuri. Despite their hardships, Uncle Stan also remembers these years fondly as he got to spend time with his family and other Wiradjuri people travelling with them. It provided him with the opportunity to learn elements of Wiradjuri from his Elders.

Uncle Stan's father was absent for much of Uncle Stan's early childhood as he was fighting for Australia throughout WWII. Uncle Stan's maternal grandfather, named Budyaan and Wilfred Johnson, took responsibility for looking out for Uncle Stan and his family whilst his father was at war. Uncle Stan describes his grandfather as a quiet man who was kind and incredibly intelligent, 'despite the fact the greater education system said that he was uneducable':

> To us he was a professor. He had everything we needed – he had culture, he had language, he had knowledge of the land, all wrapped up in that one man. He was a marvellous old man.

As Budyaan was caring for Uncle Stan and his siblings, he began teaching him and his brother, Wongamar/Ces, 'everything he could about Wiradjuri culture.' Uncle Stan explains how his grandfather 'would talk in Wiradjuri and I learned just like you learn English.' Wiradjuri was just one of the seven Aboriginal languages Uncle Stan's grandfather knew, the other languages belonging to the Aboriginal nations surrounding the Wiradjuri nation.

Uncle Stan also remembers that his grandfather was a strict teacher when it came to the Wiradjuri language. He would be told a word in Wiradjuri by his grandfather, and if he did not remember the word, he would be allowed to ask it again and he would be told. If Uncle Stan were to ask his grandfather to repeat the word again he would be told, 'No, boy. You weren't listening to me when I spoke. Go away and find the answer out from someone else.' It would then be up to Uncle Stan to take the initiative to go away and find someone else who knew the language to hear the word again. This taught Uncle Stan to listen closely when his grandfather spoke, quickly memorise what he heard, and when he failed to do so, recommit to his education by seeking answers elsewhere.

In hindsight, Uncle Stan realises the great risk his grandfather took in educating him about the Wiradjuri culture and language. He explains, 'If the welfare or the authorities had known that my grandfather was even contemplating teaching us language, we'd have been gone, he would have been locked up, and we'd have been put in a home.' He tells the following story to illustrate how Wiradjuri people, culture and language were treated in his youth:

> I remember once [my grandfather] got arrested. I think I was about eight or nine years old, and me and my cousins were playing in the park in Griffith. My grandfather called out 'Barrayanha! Barrayanah!' ['Come quick, we're going home, come quick!']. And as he was speaking, a young police officer was walking past and heard him. They arrested him, locked him up; the excuse they used is they thought he was swearing. When he came out of jail the next day, he said, 'Stan, I will never use that language with you in the street again, because they won't let us use it. They want our language to die out.'

It would be understandable if this experience intimidated Budyaan into no longer teaching Uncle Stan about Wiradjuri culture and the language. Thankfully, Budyaan decided on another course of action, despite the great risk it presented to himself and his family. He opted to continue Uncle Stan's education regarding Wiradjuri culture and language in secret whilst he, Uncle Stan and Uncle Stan's father were out bush. Like many young boys, Uncle Stan often did not entirely appreciate the importance of what his grandfather was seeking to do when he was teaching him what he knew. Uncle Stan just wanted to play football with his friends instead. However, when he protested to his father about going to the bush for his cultural education he was firmly told, "No Stanley, you are coming with your grandfather and I." In hindsight, Uncle Stan is very grateful he was forced to do so.

Uncle Stan's cultural education took place prior to and during his Western education, which was problematic for him for several reasons. First, it meant English was his second language. Uncle Stan recalls, 'I grew up with more Wiradjuri than English. When I would go to schoolteachers [they] would say, "I can't understand you, Stanley."' Second, school

was challenging because of the racism he experienced. He would often get called derogatory names by other students because he was Wiradjuri. These experiences often made him feel ostracised from his peers. Third, his Western schooling would occasionally conflict with the teachings of his grandfather. Uncle Stan recalls times when his teachers would mispronounce Wiradjuri words or prescribe an incorrect meaning to them and to other aspects of Wiradjuri culture. Initially, Uncle Stan would respectfully attempt to correct the teacher, but his attempts were often dismissed simply because the teacher thought they knew better than him or thought the book they were reading was the greater authority in such matters. This greatly frustrated Uncle Stan but he quickly realised that attempting these corrections regarding his culture was a futile exercise with people who were wilfully ignorant, condescending and dismissive.

Uncle Stan left school at the age of 15 and began working a range of jobs. He was working on the railroads when his grandfather, Budyaan/Wilfred Johnson passed away in 1957. However, Uncle Stan clearly recalls a conversation in which Budyaan told him, 'What I've taught you will be very good for you one day.' Uncle Stan also remembers his grandfather often telling him to 'look and see, listen and hear.' When Uncle Stan now 'looks' and 'listens' to what his grandfather said to him regarding his lessons in the Wiradjuri language and culture being useful to him one day, he 'sees' and 'hears' Budyaan indicating that Uncle Stan would go on to teach these things to Wiradjuri people in the future. It took several decades, but Budyaan was proven correct.

Uncle Stan had several jobs following his railroad work, including as a timber saw mechanic in sawmills across Australia. This suited him as the jobs attached to the sawmills tended to come with a home for him and his family. Uncle Stan was also a boxer for a while and came to Sydney to try out for professional football. During these decades, Uncle Stan did not have much opportunity to practice speaking the Wiradjuri ngiyang (language). Very few people had the level of proficiency that he had with the language, and the only person he could occasionally converse with was his brother, Wongamar/Ces.

Uncle Stan identifies his work revitalising the Wiradjuri language as beginning at a meeting of the Wiradjuri Council of Elders in West Wyalong in 1985. Attendees included himself, his brother Wongamar/Uncle Ces Grant, his sister Aunty Flo Grant, Aunty Aggie Coe as the Chairperson, Uncle Ray Kead, and Uncle Bill Rutter. Uncle Stan remembers:

> [Aunty Aggie Coe] turned to me and said, 'Stanley, you and your brother have this language, right?' I said, 'Ah, yeah.' She said, 'Well, what are you going to do with it?' I said, 'I don't know, what am I going to do with it?'

The Elders then told Uncle Stan to work with Wongamar and undertake the revitalisation of the Wiradjuri language because 'they wanted the kids to learn something that was theirs.'

From the outset, the request from the Council of Elders presented several challenges. The first was raised immediately by Uncle Stan, who did not know how the Wiradjuri language could be written; it was not written prior to colonisation. As such, there was no alphabet that was entirely suitable to record the phonetic sounds of the Wiradjuri language. Furthermore, even if another language's alphabet were to be used, there was no standardised spelling for the Wiradjuri words Uncle Stan had retained. He remembers the conversation that took place at that initial meeting with the Elders where he raised these points:

> They said, 'You gotta write it.' I said, 'No, you can't write it.' They said, some white fellas tried writing it,' and I said, 'Nah, they say stuff I wouldn't agree with. They don't even look like our words. I've got no alphabet to write it with.'

Several non-indigenous people had previously attempted to record the Wiradjuri language using the English alphabet during the early decades of Wiradjuri colonisation. Examples include Baylis (1927), Günther (1838) and Mathews (1904). These sources would prove useful for Uncle Stan in complementing his knowledge of the Wiradjuri language. However, they were problematic. The early colonial authors were not fluent in Wiradjuri and were using the English alphabet to document words from a language that was

completely foreign to them. Uncle Stan foresaw that he would also face similar issues, despite his fluency with the language.

Uncle Stan and the Wiradjuri Council of Elders agreed upon a solution to the challenge of spelling Wiradjuri words using the English alphabet:

> Aunty Aggie Coe, Ray Kead and Bill Rutter said, 'Well, we can help you'. I said, 'How are you gonna help me?' They said, 'We'll have another big Elders meeting. If you start using some of the words from the language you've got, we'll work out how we want it written.'

With this course of action set, Uncle Stan went away with his brother and began recording all the Wiradjuri words they could remember being taught by their grandfather. Uncle Stan did find spelling Wiradjuri words with the English alphabet challenging, but he persisted documenting as many words as he could. He would then reconvene with the Wiradjuri Council of Elders and they would listen to the Wiradjuri words Uncle Stan had documented and would come to a consensus on how the Wiradjuri sounds would be represented with the English alphabet. Uncle Stan recalls, 'So we did that, and we loosely formed what you'd call an alphabet.' Uncle Stan has since used this new Wiradjuri alphabet he created with the Wiradjuri Council of Elders to rewrite the words he had already documented and to continue his work recording the Wiradjuri language.

Word of Uncle Stan's work documenting the Wiradjuri language began to spread throughout the Wiradjuri people, and this brought a new and very personal challenge for him. There were some Wiradjuri people who began to question Uncle Stan's knowledge of the language and the legitimacy of his work. Predominantly, he was challenged on whether he knew the language at all. Uncle Stan recalls:

> Opposition, I had a lot of it. I had a heck of a lot of it in the early days. People said, 'What the hell do you know about the language?' I said, 'What are you talking about?' They would say, 'I'm older than you and I don't know nothing about it.

Uncle Stan responded by asking them if they had anything better to contribute to their people than what he was attempting to achieve:

> When they used to say, 'You don't know anything about the language', I would say, 'Maybe, maybe not. Have you got something you want to teach your people?' and they would walk away with their head down, because they don't. They had nothing better to give their people.

Uncle Stan would also respond to these challenges by standing his ground and explaining to his opponents that the reason he had the knowledge was:

> I was fortunate enough to have the grandfather I had. A man that stood tall, walked clearly with pride and culture and had a couple of grandsons to pass that onto ... That's why we have it and you don't.

Nevertheless, being attacked by opponents whilst working so hard did take its toll on him. He was recording an entire language he had not used extensively since his childhood while working full-time and providing for his family. About his state of mind at the time, he says:

> I thought, 'What the hell am I doing this for? I'm doing this because my grandfather wanted me to do it.' But I did feel in the early days, 'Maybe I am not on the right track, maybe I am not the right person to do it, maybe I'm not old enough' … I was never getting paid for it and I'd think, 'What am I doing this for?'

Thankfully, Uncle Stan persisted with support he received from the Wiradjuri Elders:

> But somewhere along the track something changed. Something clicked. The older people came along and said we appoint you to do this. And that's where this changed. They said you're the man to do this. Things got easier after that. I think it made a heck of a difference.

Opposition decreased over the years, and Uncle Stan rarely faces such criticism today:

> Now, it's pretty well accepted that Stan Grant Snr seems to know what he's talking about. It's the stuff that was taught to me. I'm not a professor and I didn't make

> this up myself. It's been there for thousands and thousands of years. I didn't start it.

Uncle Stan was eventually in a position to teach the Wiradjuri language after he had completed some foundational work recording the Wiradjuri ngiyang (language). He thought that he might begin by teaching the Wiradjuri ngiyang to Wiradjuri children, who would have an inherently greater aptitude to learn languages, and because the Wiradjuri Council of Elders had told him to record the language because they "wanted the kids to learn something that was theirs." When Uncle Stan approached the Wiradjuri Council of Elders for permission to start teaching the language to Wiradjuri children exclusively, there was a brief disagreement:

> When I first started, I said to all the Elders, 'I want to start by teaching all our own kids.' Aunty Aggie Coe [said], 'Oh why do you want to only teach our kids?' I said, 'Well, I want to give them a head start.' She said, 'Stanley, are you saying our kids can't learn as good as other kids?' I said, 'No, no, no, no,' and she said, 'Yes, you are.' She said, 'You will teach everyone and anyone that comes along. Because our kids can learn the same as anyone and we can learn together.' And I agree. Our Elders had a vision.

Uncle Stan first started teaching the Wiradjuri ngiyang in a Canberra School. Uncle Stan's son, Stan Grant Jnr, was approximately 16 at the time and a student there. Stan Grant Jnr has since become a renowned journalist and TV presenter in Australia and abroad.

In 1995, Dr John Rudder, a linguistics professor with the Australian National University (ANU) got in contact with Uncle Stan's sister, Aunty Flo Grant, to ask her if she could give a lecture to his linguistics class on the Wiradjuri language. Aunty Flo said that Uncle Stan would be a much better person to contact, given he had undertaken a decade of work revitalising the language at this point. A month later, Uncle Stan received a call from Dr Rudder, and he agreed to present a lecture to his class at ANU. Discovering that Dr Rudder had previously worked with the Yolngu to document their language, Uncle Stan thought the linguist's experience would be very useful in his endeavour to record the Wiradjuri

language. Uncle Stan announced in the middle of his lecture that Dr Rudder was generously going to help him in his efforts to record the language. Uncle Stan is still amused about the fact he sprung this announcement on Dr Rudder without him being aware. Thankfully, Dr Rudder generously consented to Uncle Stan's conscription. This was the beginning of a dear friendship and partnership that Uncle Stan is grateful for to this day.

Uncle Stan was living with his wife, Elizabeth 'Betty' Grant, and their children in Canberra whilst he was working at the Department of Education as the regional director of Aboriginal Education for Central NSW. Dr Rudder also lived in Canberra, and following their day jobs they would work late into the evening producing the first Wiradjuri dictionary. Whilst Dr Rudder did not know the Wiradjuri language, his fluency in Yolngu Mata (the Yolngu language) meant he understood what Uncle Stan describes as the 'workings of Aboriginal languages.' Uncle Stan recalls: 'He said to me, "You say some words and I'll show you where the grammatical structures fit."' This is how the Wiradjuri dictionary began, and Uncle Stan and Dr Rudder worked like this for a number of years, eagerly anticipating its completion. People would ask Uncle Stan,

> 'When's the dictionary coming out?' and I'd tell them, 'It's coming soon, it's going to happen and when it comes you'll get the shock of your life.'

Uncle Dr Stan Grant Snr and Dr John Rudder with the Wiradjuri Dictionary. Source: https://www.areanews.com.au/story/7811484/uncle-stan-grant-snr-celebrated-with-lifetime-naidoc-award/

The first *Wiradjuri Dictionary* took over 13 years to produce, and it was released in 2005. Although the publication of the book was one of the most significant moments in his life, Uncle Stan knew his work wasn't done. He said to Dr Rudder, 'We've got to have teaching material, teaching tools, otherwise they are just words' (Grant, 2016, p. 84). The dictionary was soon accompanied by a range of language education resources, including a CD and song, colouring-in, and grammar books.

The dictionary and the educational resources would be used by Uncle Stan and Dr Rudder (pictured above) over the next 15 years as they travelled across Wiradjuri ngurambang to teach the Wiradjuri language. The towns they visited included, Bathurst, Wagga Wagga, Parkes, Dubbo and Griffith. Uncle Stan and Dr Rudder also taught the Wiradjuri language in Canberra schools, including at Charnwood and Belconnen. Uncle Stan recalls how teaching his people a language they had been denied was challenging for himself and Dr Rudder:

> To get a group of people together and teach them about this language that they have missed out on is very hard. But they lapped it up in droves.

The process of travelling to teach the language was also a financial burden for both Uncle Stan and Dr Rudder, who would pay for their own fuel and accommodation:

> John and I weren't getting any money. We put an application into ATSIC and we were knocked back because they didn't think I knew enough at the time. But we kept plugging away and people started realising that I did know the language and ATSIC came on board and gave us some money. From that, the first dictionary was made. It also helped us out. I was able to pay John a little bit for his help and it helped me too.

Uncle Stan found the classes enormously rewarding, despite the time and money it took to run them. He warmly remembers the following story from one of his lessons:

> Every week people would come in and we'd teach them. There were these two young girls. One night they were giggling and mucking around and I said, 'Girls, we're trying to teach and you're disrupting the class.' But after the lesson they came up to me and they said, 'Unc, we weren't mucking around, we wrote this', and they had written 'Heads, Shoulders Knees and Toes' in Wiradjuri for me. I was very proud in that moment, proud of the fact they had listened and learned enough to write that little song.

These classes seeded the first generation of Wiradjuri language teachers, including Uncle Christopher Kirkbright, Aunty Diane Riley-McNaboe, and Lloyd Dolan, who established language in their local communities through schools, TAFEs and Aboriginal organisations.

When Uncle Stan and John Rudder were in desperate need of funding, they took the initiative of approaching the Canadian company Barrick Gold Corporation at their Canberra Office, because it operated a mining site on Wiradjuri ngurambang. They requested financial support and Barrick agreed to give it. In Uncle Stan's words: 'They

didn’t scrape their feet. They paid up front, and I said to John, “We have to make the second dictionary from this.”’

It was only after several decades of work that Uncle Stan received the recognition he deserved for revitalising the Wiradjuri ngiyang. In 2009, he was awarded a Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia for 'Service to Indigenous education and the preservation and promotion of the Wiradjuri language and culture, as a teacher and author, and to youth.'

Uncle Stan was later awarded an honorary doctorate from Charles Sturt University (CSU) in 2013 for the outstanding contribution he has made to CSU’s regions and for the intellectual contribution of his work with the Wiradjuri language. CSU Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Andrew Vann acknowledged:

> [Uncle Stan’s] deep involvement in the introduction of the University's new Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage program in 2014 is a clear demonstration of his work.

The four course subjects offered in CSU Graduate Certificate are ‘Wiradjuri language’, ‘Wiradjuri Culture and Heritage’, ‘Rebuilding Australia’s Indigenous Nations’ and a ‘Professional Study in Wiradjuri Community Development’. Uncle Stan has been recognised as

> central to the development of the CSU Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage. He has had a number of advisory roles in the design of the course and has been primarily responsible for the design and development of the language subject. (Charles Sturt University, 2013)

Uncle Stan is adamant that the Wiradjuri language must be taught alongside Wiradjuri culture and Nation Rebuilding to ensure its significance is understood: ‘Culture, language, Nation building. It all goes together. If we don’t work together, we go back to how we were.’

Uncle Stan is proud of his decades of work revitalising the Wiradjuri ngiyang:

> It's really been a labour of love. It's been a dedicated process but I wanted to do it. Not because I had to. There was a bit of that because my grandfather said, 'All that I have taught you will be very good for you one day,' and I read into that as 'You have to do this boy.' It's been good for me because I have been given something to give back to our people. It's been good to me, the fact that I have been able to mobilise the language and now I can die happy knowing my language and my culture will keep going for ever and ever.

When asked why the Wiradjuri language is returning now, and who is behind it, Uncle Stan says:

> Why bring it back? Because it belongs to us. It belongs to our country. If we don't bring it back now, I don't think it will ever come back. Everything is there. Opportunity and time. The time is right now. It's Biame, the creator of all this, he created the time for this. He has said, 'You will do this now,' and he is master, he is the creator, he is the man that is making it all happen for us.

Uncle Stan is confident that his work will be continued by others and that engagement with the language will continue to grow:

> I did have a fear that our language would go so far and then it would die out. But I don't have that fear anymore. It will get stronger and stronger and stronger. I don't think it will go again now. I think I can go peacefully because of the young people coming up that are going to make this happen.

He also has a clear vision for how he would like to see the revitalisation of the language grow:

> I think the university is good. It's fabulous. But I would like to see a university that belongs to us. We need a couple of rooms and put a big sign up saying 'Wiradjuri University.' It would be in Charles Sturt University, but it would be the Wiradjuri

> University. We have people that can do it and we have the teachers. That's what I see in the future. That's way down the track but it will come.

Ultimately, Uncle Stan's vision for the future requires present and future generations to carry on what he started. He wants to see a future where Wiradjuri people live according to who they are and put Wiradjuri culture and language first:

> I would like to see kids in 15 years' time speak Wiradjuri as a first language and English as a second language. I grew up with more Wiradjuri than English. When I would go to school teachers would say, 'I can't understand you Stanley.' Well, that's too bad. I want these things to happen in the future. That's a dream. But it's a little dream to have for a long time in the future.

4.5 Dr Jonathan Jones's Revitalisation of Wiradjuri Objects

'There is a cultural philosophy embedded in the Wiradjuri language and that philosophy can be engaged to produce art.'

Jonathan Jones

Source: https://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/unsettled/jonathan-jones

Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones was born in Sydney in 1978. In addition to living in Sydney, Jonathan spent time growing up outside of Tamworth. Like the other Wiradjuri people profiled in this thesis, Jonathan did not enjoy school and his aversion for it grew throughout his childhood and into his teenage years. His attendance became sporadic and by Year 8 Jonathan was completely disengaged from his education.

Jonathan travelled back and forth from a small town outside of Tamworth to Sydney, where he would live with his great grandmother, whom he calls 'Nan.' A Wiradjuri woman from Bathurst, Nan was in her 90's when Jonathan came to live with her. She had lived on Kamilaroi country for a long time, and Jonathan describes her as someone who was 'relaxed with her Aboriginality.' Jonathan explains: '[I] got to absorb a sense of that [Aboriginality] from her, and probably more from her than from my grandfather or my mother'.

Jonathan's grandfather and mother had not developed as strong a sense of a Wiradjuri identity because his grandfather moved to Sydney for work at the age of 14. Jonathan also believes that a shift in the social stigma regarding being Aboriginal played a role in Jonathan being reconnected to his family's Wiradjuri identity:

> The world has changed so much between when my pop was a child and when I was spending time with [my nan], that she was much more open about talking about Aboriginality, although she would never use that word. I was so young then and I wish I was the person I am now to know to ask the right questions. I didn't really connect with what was being said. Then I would relay these things back to my grandfather who had never heard them. So, there was a generational shift at play, which I think really challenged the family.

Jonathan was still a teenager and working on rural properties near Tamworth when Nan passed away. Jonathan describes this as a disruptive time and acknowledges that he was fortunate to meet Associate Professor Christine Evans, a Wiradjuri academic, who was running a TAFE course designed to work with people who had disengaged from the mainstream education system. Dr Evans saw Jonathan's potential and became a tireless

advocate for him, successfully supporting him through TAFE and eventually encouraging him to pursue his interest in fine arts at university:

> Chris Evans took me to universities, encouraging me to apply for fine arts courses through Indigenous direct entry programs. She drove me to interviews, coached me through it. She was so helpful. I went to the College of Fine Arts (COFA) at the University of New South Wales, which is now called UNSW Art and Design. I couldn't take photos, so I took one of my metal sculptures. Peter McKenzie was one of my interviewers and he really loved them and put them into one of his exhibitions he was doing at the time. I studied at the university until the start of my third year and then my mum got sick and I didn't complete the degree.

Although Jonathan didn't complete his degree, his passion for art remained as he began his early professional career. Peter McKenzie introduced Jonathan to Boomalli, an Aboriginal artists' cooperative established in 1987. Jonathan began working as an assistant curator and soon moved into a curator's position. Jonathan views his time at Boomalli as an influential period that challenged and informed his perceptions of what it means to be Aboriginal and how that translates into an artistic practice.

One challenge Jonathan faced was personally doubting whether his art was 'authentic' Aboriginal art. This doubt arose because his art did not confirm to the styles, techniques and designs that were being used by the other artists at Boomalli. Gradually, he witnessed his artwork having an impact on Aboriginal people, particularly those from the South East of Australia:

> There was this artwork I had that was made from scrap corrugated iron that was lashed together. Light bulbs were dropped into the middle of them and because the iron had holes in it, the light would spill out in different ways. I think it was an artwork from my second year of uni. I showed it at the front of Boomalli and three Aunties from the south coast came in. I was self-conscious because I thought my artwork was weird and so different from some of the dot paintings surrounding it. But then the Aunties started crying and I had to reluctantly go up because I

> thought I had done something wrong. But they were emotional because they had grown up in tin humpies and the artwork reminded them of the way the sunlight would come through those humpies when they were young. That was an interesting moment for me because it was a strange artwork but obviously it had spoken to someone.

Jonathan's time at Boomalli further influenced his perceptions of Aboriginal art and identity in the South East by introducing him to senior artists and their views:

> At Boomalli, you also got to meet amazing people like Uncle Badger and Michael Riley, who were focusing on the South East. I guess I was just really lucky to have those thinkers around who were focusing on that part of Australia. Not everyone gets that and go down other roads of looking to other regions of Australia to inform their ideas around Aboriginal culture.

Jonathan particularly notes how the prominent Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri artist, Michael Riley, influenced him:

> I connected with Michael Riley at Boomalli. He was really useful because he was interested in weird ideas like me. He was making artworks with cows floating in the sky. And, he was Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri too, so I really connected with him and thought he was amazing. He was a grump, which I really liked as well. He was really focused on the South East and that really sculpted me and my ideas of what it meant to be Aboriginal and from the South East region of Australia. He showed me that we have valid culture and artistic practices without the need to be using dot paintings. He really mentored me through those issues.

Having developed an interest and focus on South Eastern Aboriginal culture, including the Wiradjuri, Jonathan approached the Australian Museum and connected with Phil Gordon, who oversaw the museum's Indigenous collection. Jonathan describes him:

> [He was] another person who was extremely helpful. He would give me access to the collection whenever I needed it and would take me through the items and was

always sending me interesting information about South East Aboriginal cultures. I was really lucky with that.

Hetti Perkins, one of Australia's most prominent Indigenous art curators, recruited Jonathan to the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) in 2002. He began coordinating public programs and worked within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art curatorial team. This experience was invaluable because he got to work with artists from all over Australia whilst being grounded by his South East knowledge and culture. Jonathan points out that his experiences went beyond comparing stories, processes and practices with artists from other regions; engaging with them also enabled him to challenge notions about indigenous cultural practices:

> For instance, I got to see how Tiwi carvers carve with chainsaws and thought, 'Well it's OK for us mob down south to be doing that too then.' Mind you, I think there are a few audience members that would prefer all Aboriginals to use a stone axe. I also got to see how the South-East weaving technique has travelled through Arnhem Land and into the desert. But most importantly, I got to see and understand how our carved designs are really unique and different from anywhere else.

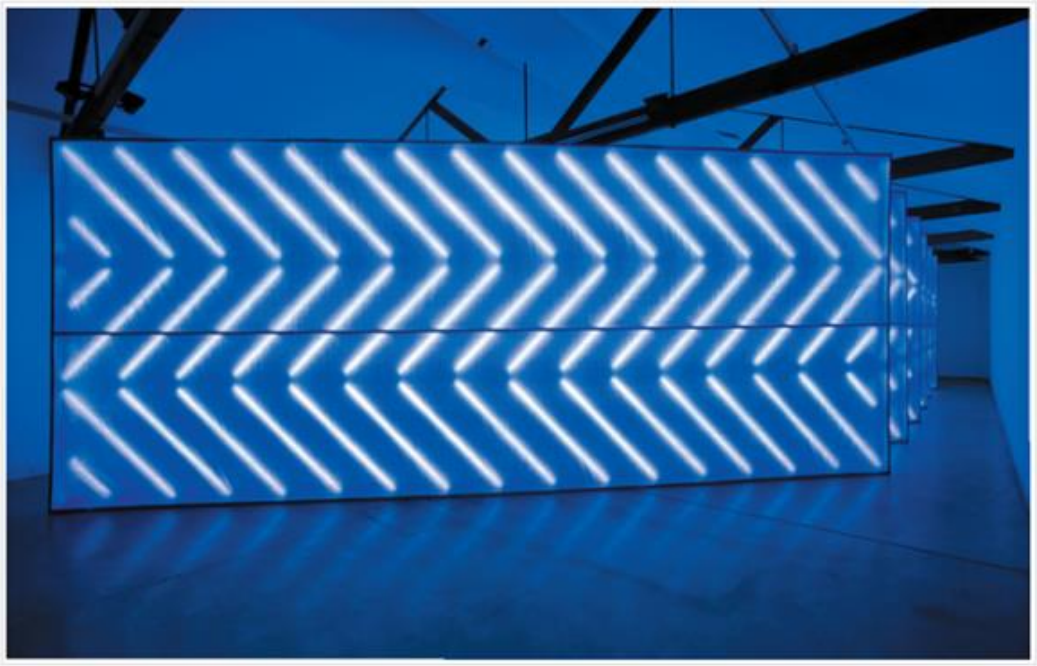
Following a decade at the AGNSW, Jonathan left to focus on working as an independent artist unattached to institutions. His artwork explored concepts of Aboriginal communities and cultures whilst he was exploring where he, his identity and his understandings of culture fit together. His artwork was formed by his interactions with other Wiradjuri people. He told me:

> Those works with lights were also connected to your Dad's idea that if you drew a circle around all the aspects that make up Aboriginal cultures, and then you did the same for non-Indigenous cultures, you would find the two circles overlap on a lot of aspects. And for me this was how light worked. If you had one source of light, it would create a sphere. If you had two lights that were separated, their light would combine to make one body of light. And you can keep doing this to make

> increasingly complicated structures that are linked and that's a way you can map community.

However, what is most significant for this dissertation is how Jonathan's artistic use of light displays the common patterns he had been observing on old Aboriginal items during his visits to the Australian Museum:

> At the same time, I was looking at old objects and the patterns that were on them and reimagining them as cultural maps. So, the lights were an overlay of those two concepts. A desire to map community and the understandings I had acquired and recognising what communities were trying to make with those old objects and the patterns on them.



untitled (the tyranny of distance) 2008
aluminium, tarpaulin, fluorescent tubes and fittings
6 walls, each 3.4 × 1.9 × 8.27 m
Commissioned by Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney

Source: https://seriouslyonline.wordpress.com/2012/10/29/jonathan-jones/

Jonathan's use of these old patterns in his artworks signifies a deepening of his interest in, and knowledge of, South East Aboriginal culture as it existed prior to and during the early phases of British colonisation and that he was also engaging with 'cultural revitalisation' at this time.

When asked why he didn't simply begin revitalising the carving of the objects he was inspired by and engraving them with their traditional patterns, Jonathan explains:

> I never felt I had the cultural authority to carve wooden objects and put designs on them. I thought I was slipping through the cracks by making the designs out of fluoro lights but now I see that the designs are the designs regardless of the material. Another key moment was showing Uncle Roy Barker my work and him identifying straight away that the lights were like the white ochre that fills the carved lines on shields and other objects.

Thankfully, Jonathan overcame the notion that he did not have the cultural authority to carve cultural objects after receiving the encouragement of several Elders who were renowned carvers:

> Although I had watched a lot of people carve, like Uncle Badger, Uncle Laddie Timbery, etc., it was Uncle Roy who really encouraged me. In fact, he gave me a set of six or eight boomerangs all at different points of completion and told me to finish them off. Carving is a great thing to talk to old fellas about. Everyone has tips and tricks for carving.

Jonathan's interest in renewing old Wiradjuri cultural practices through contemporary cultural revitalisation was then further reinforced by his production of the *Wagga Wagga Weaving Welcome*. Jonathan collaborated on this artwork at Wagga Wagga Airport in 2013. His collaborators included Wiradjuri Elders Aunty Sandy Warren and Aunty Lorraine Tye, and Ngiyampaa elder Aunty Joyce Hampton. Jonathan considers this artwork to be of particular significance because:

> [It was] celebrating South East objects and ways of making things. But more than that, it was celebrating the Indigenous people of South East Australia coming together to share knowledge.

Wagga Wagga Weaving Welcome is also significant to this thesis because it relates to all four of the key Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners profiled in this chapter.

The artwork came into being as the result of a competition held by the Wagga Wagga local council. In his initial discussions with the local council, Jonathan suggested that the project needed to involve local Aboriginal artists from Wagga Wagga because:

> I had met some of the Wagga weavers by being introduced to the Wiradjuri Council of Elders through your Dad. He was particularly close with Aunty Sandy and then I became close with her too. She is such an amazing woman and she was telling me about all the weaving they were doing.

Jonathan was surprised when he was told by the Wagga Wagga local council during his initial discussions about the artwork that there weren't any local Aboriginal artists. Knowing this was not the case, Jonathan was determined to address this false perception through the artwork:

> I sat down with Aunty Sandy and we devised the structure. In addition to Aunty Sandy, we decided Aunty Lorraine should be involved because of her long and deep connection to Wagga Wagga. We also decided we should include Aunty Joyce because, as a Nyampa woman, she represented all the other Aboriginal nations that had come to Wagga Wagga.

Between them, Jonathan and the weavers came up with three concepts for artworks that were submitted to the public art competition. The Wagga Wagga council decided to award the prize to *Wagga Wagga Weaving Welcome*, which is now featured in the airport building. In terms of how this artwork was created:

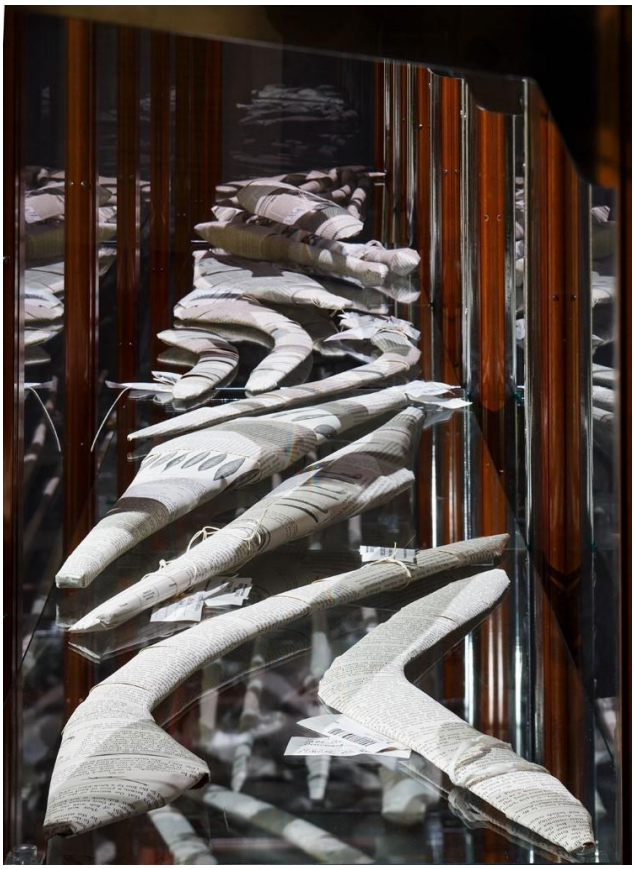
> The process involved taking [the weavers'] existing works, getting them professionally photographed, which hadn't been done before, and then taking the

> photographs to architects who would guide us on how to get those images on the airport's glass.

Those photographs of the weaver's creations were then sandblasted onto the glass panels looking out onto the airport's runway and the Wiradjuri countryside beyond. These images on the glass are accompanied by physical examples of the women's weavings exhibited on plinths. Given the airport is how many people arrive at Wagga Wagga, the artists decided that it would be appropriate to extend a Welcome to Country to them. Jonathan had also met Uncle Stan Grant Snr through the Wiradjuri Council of Elders, and he agreed to provide Jonathan with some Wiradjuri words for the artwork.

Reflecting on the collaborative nature of the project, Jonathan views it as

> one of those projects where people just came together. There was something really special about it. It captured people's attention and made them understand that there was some amazing Aboriginal art being created locally.



mugugalurgarra (conceal) by Jonathan Jones.

Source: https://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/unsettled/jonathan-jones

Jonathan's engagement with the notion of cultural revitalisation was expanded with his 2015 artwork titled *mugugalurgarra (conceal)*, which drew attention to one of the principal challenges the Wiradjuri people face in revitalising their culture: how ethnographical and anthropological assumptions regarding South Eastern Aboriginal peoples and cultures underpin the way their objects are viewed and treated in museums.

In terms of composition, this artwork features a range of South East Aboriginal objects from the National Museum of Australia collection. Those objects were wrapped in pages from R. Brough Smyth's 1879 book, *The Aborigines of Victoria, with Notes Relating to the Habits of the Natives of other Parts of Australia and Tasmania*, which greatly influenced how Aboriginal people and culture were perceived and treated at the time of its

publication. These obscured Aboriginal objects were then placed in historical glass display cabinets originally from the Museum of Anatomy.

mugugalurgarra is significant for this study for several reasons. First, it highlights how Aboriginal people in the South East of Australia were disconnected from elements of their physical cultural heritage through institutions that were established by colonisation and underpinned by Western academic notions that promoted their inferiority. Second, it demonstrates that the same historical process of disconnecting Aboriginal people from elements of their physical cultural heritage is continued by those institutions today. Third, it highlights how this process has caused significant damage to the social and cultural fabric of those people who were and are disconnected from their objects by such institutions. According to Jonathan:

> Throughout the process of colonisation, south east communities have faced a number of obstacles in connecting to our ancestral objects housed within museums, including those within the British Museum and the National Museum of Australia. Anthropology has played a complex role, often impeding and disenfranchising south east communities and causing untold harm. (National Museum of Australia, n.d.)

The artwork also draws attention to the fact that the collection of these objects of significant cultural heritage was accompanied by a misappropriation of their meaning:

> Within the south-east a handful of historical anthropological texts dominate how we understand and interpret museum objects and, in turn, our cultural heritage, often obscuring our ability to see our objects and claim them as our own. (National Museum of Australia, n.d.)

This quotation by Jonathan is significant for understanding how and why Wiradjuri people are revitalising our cultural practices. It illustrates how acts of colonisation are more than historical events. The damage caused by the unethical acquisition of Indigenous peoples' objects echoes through generations and is experienced by descendants in very tangible

ways. Indigenous people who wish to revitalise elements of their culture often need access to cultural objects that are in Western museums as points of reference. They are aware that many of those objects were acquired through unethical, hurtful means that were driven by notions of their racial inferiority and subservience. To revitalise aspects of their culture that were stripped from them, Indigenous people must now approach these very institutions to request permission to access these objects. It is in this sense that *mugugalurgarra* portrays one of the universal hurdles indigenous people from across the world must negotiate when they seek to revitalise tangible aspects of their culture that are isolated in Western institutions.

The next artwork by Jonathan of significance for Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation was produced in 2016 and titled *barrangal dyara*, which means 'skin and bones' in the language of the Eora. The artwork was funded as a Kaldor (Art Projects, n.d.) public art project and featured 15,000 white shields scattered around the former footprint of the Garden Palace, located in what is now Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens. Jonathan's focus on the Garden Palace is connected to his artwork m*ugugalurgarra*, as the building was used by the colony as a store house for the countless Aboriginal objects that were acquired as the colonial frontier moved across Australia. As was the case with many colonial collections, the Garden Palace also housed the human remains of Aboriginal people. Tragically, the Garden Palace caught fire in suspicious circumstances on 22 September 1882 and burnt to the ground. All the Aboriginal human remains and objects housed inside the building were destroyed.

Photo of colour lithography by Gibbs, Shallard and Company, *Burning of the Garden Palace*, Sydney, 1882, detail.

Source: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

Jonathan originally heard the story of the destruction of the Garden Palace when he first began inspecting the Australian Museum's collection. He asked to see items from the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi nations and realised

> that there wasn't that much. When I asked why that was the case, Phil Gordon told me of the Garden Palace fire and explained that it was the reason why. That was the real wake up moment for me and that story. I recognise that collections had been gathered during the forceful colonisation of Aboriginal people, mainly by men who were obsessed with weapons and portraying Aboriginal identity in a particular way, which makes them a flawed collection. But it was a collection

> nonetheless and then to have these collections destroyed was such a kick in the guts for anyone. So, I was mindful of finding a way to grow from that story, of being able to draw strength from it and not continuing the trauma.

The story of strength Jonathan was seeking sprouted from a conversation he had with Uncle Stan Grant regarding the Wiradjuri cultural significance of fire and how the word 'fire' translates into the Wiradjuri language that Uncle Stan had spent the past few decades revitalising:

> The real breakthrough moment for that story was when I was talking him through my ideas for the artwork and he said, 'You know the Wiradjuri word for fire is wiiny, and the Wiradjuri word for thinking and knowing are all based on that word.' So, fire is really essential in terms of our culture [and] how we learn and know things. It makes complete sense when you think about how people sit around a fire and share ideas and stories. But I acknowledge that in that moment, Uncle Stan gave me an insight that fundamentally shifted my mindset from viewing the fire as a destructive construct to looking at the fire with a Wiradjuri lens. And the language was the vehicle for that. Rather than seeing the fire as a destructive endpoint that we should all be lamenting, he flipped it on its head and showed it's a way of knowing, of understanding and of remembering. That becomes a powerful act. That moment, that switch that he flipped, became central to how the whole project unfolded. It made me think Wiradjuri with a Wiradjuri lens.

Uncle Stan's sharing of this knowledge of Wiradjuri culture and language led to a dramatic shift in how Jonathan perceived and executed not only the delivery of *barrangal dyara*, but all of his future artworks. In the instance of *barrangal dyara*, the interplay between remembering, revitalisation and transmission of Aboriginal culture was positioned at the core of his artwork because of this conversation. For instance, the artwork featured soundscapes of Aboriginal people listing the items that were destroyed in the fire. However, these lists were spoken in eight Aboriginal languages (including Wiradjuri) that are all at various stages of cultural revitalisation. In addition to each speaker listing the

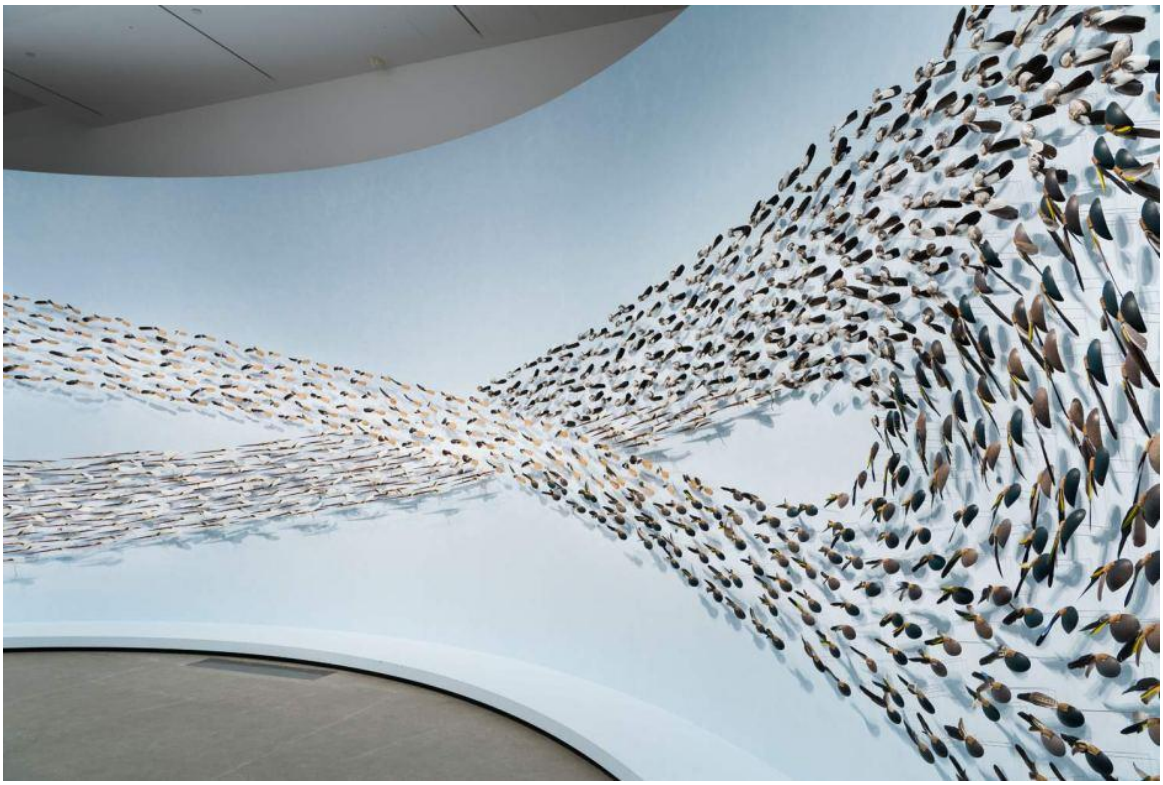
names of the objects that were lost in the fire in their Aboriginal language, the speaker also asked the listener to remember them.

This theme of 'remembrance' and 'reminding' resonated throughout *barrangal dyara* alongside the notion of fire. The *Guardian* noted Jonathan reminded visitors to the artwork of the significance of the cultures that were impacted by the Garden Palace fire:

> People don't know that the world's oldest ceremonial burial happened here in New South Wales. People don't know that Australians were the first breadmakers by 15,000 years. (Sebag-Montefiore, 2016)

Importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, Sebag-Montefiore (2016) noted Jonathan planted a kangaroo grass crop in a sunken sandstone plot that serves as a pioneer memorial garden and marker for where the palace's great dome once stood. It was placed there as a 'symbolic rebuttal of the myth that Indigenous people were agriculturally unsophisticated before the British arrived'.

But most importantly of all, the act of remembering was significant for the Aboriginal nations Jonathan consulted and asked to participate in his creation of *barrangal dyara*. When a community member asked why they should assist Jonathan to produce *barrangal dyara*, another community member replied, 'Because our ancestors are buried there. Our ancestors need to know we haven't forgotten them.'



Jones, J., & Grant, S. G. Sr. (2018). *untitled (giran)* [Installation]. Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia.

Jonathan's artwork, ***giran***, is his most prominent demonstration of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. It was produced in 2019 and exhibited at the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial at the Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art.

Arranged into a mobius strip that was designed to represent a flock of birds in flight on the wind, *giran* consists of approximately 2,000 examples of six Wiradjuri tools. Barlow (2019) noted the tools included are the bagaay (emu-egg spoon), bindu-gaany (freshwater mussel shell), waybarra (weaving start), bingal (bone awl), dhalany (spear point) and galigal (stone knife). Feathers were attached to these objects using kilometres of handmade string. According to Jonathan, the concept behind adding the feathers was to represent wings and that 'knowledge is on the wind'. However, the cultural significance of

the feathers representing birds on the wind had deeper cultural significance. Jonathan explains:

> The Wiradjuri word for bird is budyaan, which is also the name of Uncle Stan's grandfather. The process of attaching feathers also talks to the process of attaching feathers to precious things, and each one of the objects we made are precious. The third concept for the feathers also came from Michael Riley's work which shows a feather in the sky, and he talks about feathers being messengers. The Mobius strip emerges from trying to record and capture air/wind as a breath. Gribble stated that 'The soul, the Waradgeri people say, is like the breath.'

Whilst the visual impact of the final artwork is stunning, the inspiration and process Jonathan engaged with to deliver *giran* is extremely valuable to this study of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

The catalyst for the concept of *giran* was the above-mentioned conversation Jonathan had with Uncle Stan Grant during the development of *barrangal dyara*. Uncle Stan's insight into the cultural meaning of fire for the Wiradjuri fundamentally shifted Jonathan's perception of the Garden Palace fire and led him to the realisation that 'there is a cultural philosophy embedded in the Wiradjuri language and that philosophy could be engaged to produce art.'

Having completed *barrangal dyara,* which was centred around fire, Jonathan and Uncle Stan discussed undertaking a series of artworks that examined Wiradjuri cultural understandings and relationships with the other elements of the natural world. Following *barrangal dyara* they had initially intended to do an artwork examining Wiradjuri understandings of water, but that project ran into complications. Subsequently, Jonathan began working with Uncle Stan on an artwork focusing on Wiradjuri concepts and understandings of the wind:

> The wind one was an idea that was not as well developed but we started looking at the word for wind, *giran*, and the word for fear, and the play between the two

> words. We were wondering if those words were translated oddly and whether 'getting windy' was less about being spooked and more about being in a heightened sense of awareness. The project emerged from that.

Jonathan progressed his initial conceptual conversations with Uncle Stan using archival research and historically documented cultural connections between the Wiradjuri and the wind:

> I went away and did some more research and found some writing by a Keith McKeown, who doesn't say who he spoke to, but he said that they were Wiradjuri. He documents a whole Wiradjuri story where there are six Wiradjuri winds, three that are male and three that are female.

Jonathan was aware that the accuracy of the early documentation of Wiradjuri culture is often problematic, so he sought out Uncle Stan's insight as he had the linguistic skills to identify the words that were recorded and also decades of experience gleaning Wiradjuri language from early ethnographic accounts of questionable accuracy. Uncle Stan examined the Wiradjuri words McKeown purported to have recorded and, whilst he found some discrepancies with the words he knew, he ultimately found that there were sufficient matches.

> Uncle Stan was convinced that it was a Wiradjuri story even though he didn't know it. It became a good starting point to create six Wiradjuri objects that evenly represented the male and the female.

Jonathan also had another inspiration for the *giran* project. Jonathan points out that Uncle Stan became very ill at the time *giran* was in development and this led both of them to reflect on the social and cultural shifts that had occurred over the span of the Elder's life. Jonathan explains:

> [*giran*] was a homage to Uncle Stan and the wind of change that has taken place in his life, in terms of his grandfather being locked up for speaking Wiradjuri and having to learn Wiradjuri in secret to him saving a language, to being made a

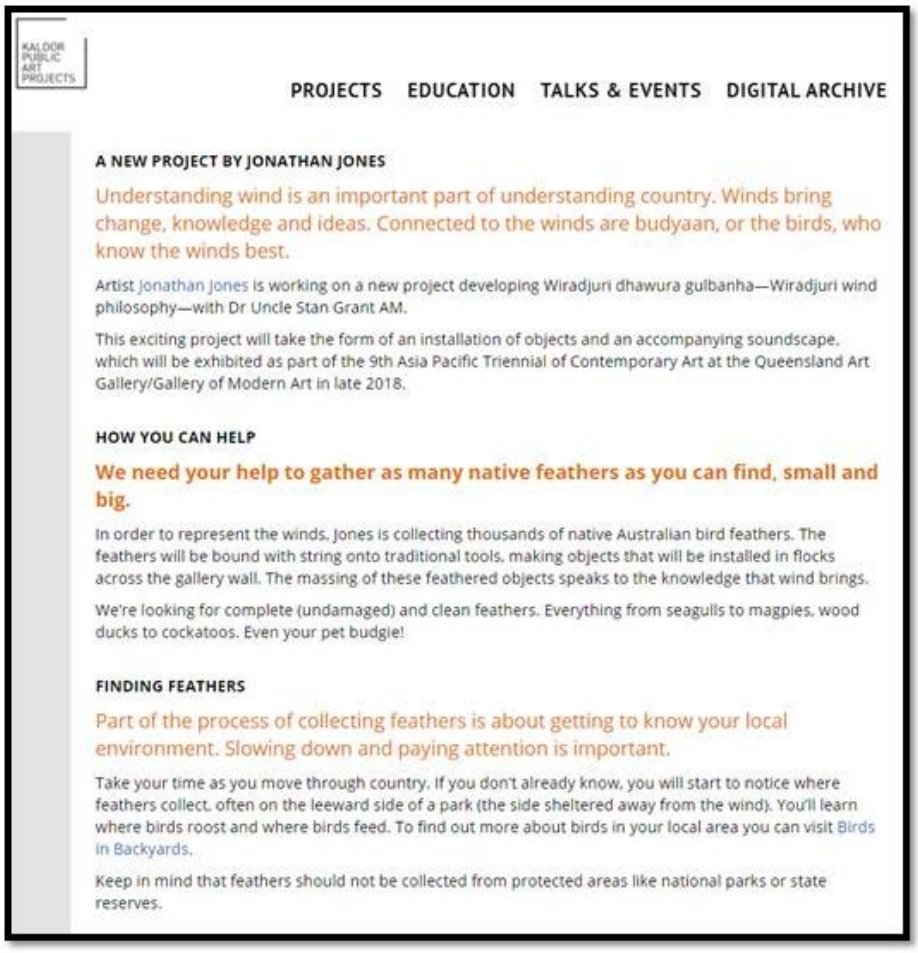
> doctor and teaching the language. So, it represented that cultural awakening that seems to be emerging through all sorts of Wiradjuri making and doing and thinking and being.

Jonathan and Uncle Stan turned their minds to how the artwork would be physically created to represent the cultural concepts underpinning it. Jonathan came up with the idea to have six Wiradjuri objects represent the six Wiradjuri winds mentioned in the story McKeown documented. As with the winds in that old Wiradjuri story, three of the objects would be dedicated to the male and three would be dedicated to the female.

The next step of the process, and arguably the most difficult, was to select and produce six Wiradjuri objects that would be created for the artwork in a process of cultural revitalisation. Jonathan calculated that he would need to create 2,000 of these items in total and needed two to three feathers to attach to them. He soon realised he would need assistance to collect enough feathers and spoke to Uncle Stan about doing a call out to the public to collect and send feathers, and Uncle Stan was wary of this process:

> Uncle said that you couldn't just collect things that you needed collected. You need to be aware that you may be collecting on other people's country and what that means, and how that impacts on Yindyamarra.

Uncle Stan's insight is an example of what Jonathan describes as 'an interesting exercise on teaching people about Yindyamarra and the respectful way of doing things.'



KALOOR PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

PROJECTS EDUCATION TALKS & EVENTS DIGITAL ARCHIVE

A NEW PROJECT BY JONATHAN JONES

Understanding wind is an important part of understanding country. Winds bring change, knowledge and ideas. Connected to the winds are budyaan, or the birds, who know the winds best.

Artist Jonathan Jones is working on a new project developing Wiradjuri dhawura gulbanha—Wiradjuri wind philosophy—with Dr Uncle Stan Grant AM.

This exciting project will take the form of an installation of objects and an accompanying soundscape, which will be exhibited as part of the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art at the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art in late 2018.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

We need your help to gather as many native feathers as you can find, small and big.

In order to represent the winds, Jones is collecting thousands of native Australian bird feathers. The feathers will be bound with string onto traditional tools, making objects that will be installed in flocks across the gallery wall. The massing of these feathered objects speaks to the knowledge that wind brings.

We're looking for complete (undamaged) and clean feathers. Everything from seagulls to magpies, wood ducks to cockatoos. Even your pet budgie!

FINDING FEATHERS

Part of the process of collecting feathers is about getting to know your local environment. Slowing down and paying attention is important.

Take your time as you move through country. If you don't already know, you will start to notice where feathers collect, often on the leeward side of a park (the side sheltered away from the wind). You'll learn where birds roost and where birds feed. To find out more about birds in your local area you can visit Birds in Backyards.

Keep in mind that feathers should not be collected from protected areas like national parks or state reserves.

The callout Jonathan used to obtain feathers for *giran*

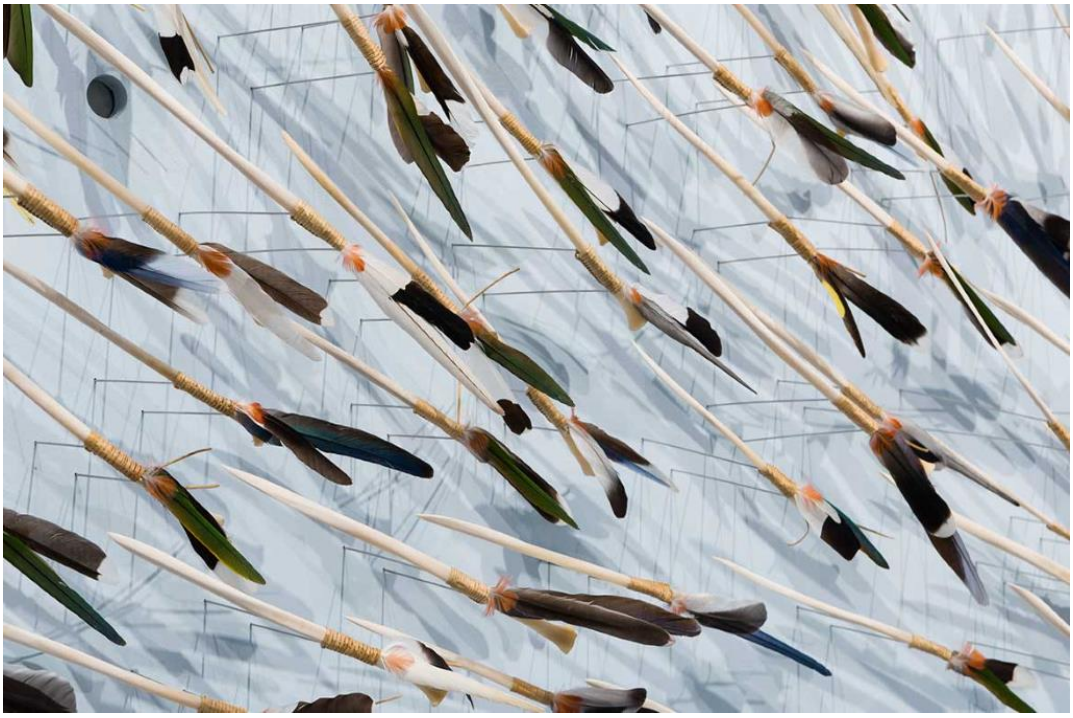
Source: http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/blog/jonathan-jones-call-out-for-gawuraa-feathers

Jonathan also sought help in constructing the six objects that would be featured in *giran*:

> In deciding which six objects to make for *giran*, we were looking at different materials, ways of working and objects. It was also a matter of being practical and seeing who is out there and who wants to make stuff. So, it was about playing to the strengths and interests of community. For example, I know you were really interested in carving and the project provided an opportunity to engage with that.

However, there was a reason beyond pragmatism that guided Jonathan's selection of the six culturally significant Wiradjuri objects he decided to include in *giran*: promoting Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. The six objects were also selected on the basis that they were tools that could be used to make other Wiradjuri objects that were neither represented in *giran* nor being revitalised.

> I have been to the Australian Museum and there are bags and bags of kangaroo bone awls, and I always thought that was strange because those tools make and do other things. You would use bone awls to poke holes in things and you would use stone knives to scrape things. So the chosen items for *giran* came together as little keys or tools to help everyone wake up all those other items.



Wambuwuny-miilbang-galang on exhibition in *giran*.

Source: https://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/stories/jonathan-jones-untitled-giran-is-a-murmuration-of-winged-sculptures-australia

Jonathan mentions the wayburra, a small spiral woven out of a rush, as an example of a *giran* object that could be used to make other tools:

> I have been doing weaving workshops with Aunty Yvonne Koolmatrie for years and because her workshop only lasts an hour, I only ever get the starting spiral done. But she says, 'If you can make that starting spiral, you can make anything.' So again, that little starting spiral that I have never gone beyond making can be used to make anything like a basket, an eel trap and so on.

Waybarra-galang on exhibition in *giran*

Source: https://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/stories/jonathan-jones-untitled-giran-is-a-murmuration-of-winged-sculptures-australia

The inclusion of the bagay (emu eggshell spoon) is a particularly important object for the purposes of this research because it "had completely fallen out of peoples memory", according to Jonathan. He explains:

> [It] was one of those things where we have the word for it, but I have never seen it in any collections or mentioned in any documentation. So that one was more about waking up an object that no one living has ever seen. So that one was really about sitting down and reimagining that object from scratch, which was a really interesting way of working. So, each object had a different way of working and a different thing it was doing.

Bagay-galang on exhibition in *giran*

Source: https://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/stories/jonathan-jones-untitled-giran-is-a-murmuration-of-winged-sculptures-australia

In conclusion, *giran* serves as a highpoint for the culmination of Jonathan's decades of passion for South East Aboriginal art, culture and its revitalisation. It is a demonstration of not only how Wiradjuri cultural objects can be revitalised, but how Wiradjuri knowledge and cultural significance can be imbued in cultural objects for future generations. But more than that, *giran* is a gift to current and future generations of Aboriginal people in that it gives them the tools to revitalise much of the cultural heritage that is not featured in the artwork.

Jonathan Jones's *untitled (walam-wunga.galang)* Photo: Christian Capurro.

Source: *https://www.theage.com.au/culture/art-and-design/i-was-spellbound-by-the-grindstones-then-i-found-out-what-they-meant-20220702-p5aylh.html*

Jonathan also created a subsequent artwork in collaboration with Uncle Stan Grant titled *walam-wunga.galang* (grindstones). Displayed in the Emu Skys Exhibition at Melbourne University in 2022 and the National Gallery of Australia in 2023, the artwork featured the revitalised practice of making grindstones, albeit on a far larger scale than their pre-

colonial counterparts. In total, the artwork comprised four gigantic grindstones accompanied by a soundscape featuring Beatrice Murray singing Uncle Stan's words in Wiradjuri. These words guided listeners on how to be connected to country and told them that, if we care for country, it will care for us. In the gallery documentation, Jonathan explained the meaning of the Wiradjuri words Beatrice Murray sang. He explained they:

> [remind] us of the cultural significance of the links between our creative processes and caring for country, for our grasses, our objects, which have sustained our communities for thousands of generations. These stories and how we tell them are what makes a nation. (National Gallery of Australia, n.d.)

Jonathan described *walam-wunga.galang* as a celebration of

> the south-east cultural practice of collecting seeds, grinding them to make flour, to make bread, feeding our families' and of the Wiradjuri people being amongst 'the world's oldest breadmakers. (National Gallery of Australia, n.d.)

However, Jonathan also explained that the artwork is an acknowledgement that 'like most Aboriginal stories, that's not part of Australia's history' (National Gallery of Australia, n.d.):

> In many ways this project is about bringing those stories to light. Making these oversized grindstones to celebrate these big stories – these stories that are about our history. (National Gallery of Australia, n.d.)

To that end, *walam-wunga.galang* 'has drawn on the work of Uncle Bruce Pascoe and Bill Gammage, key thinkers within the conversation about how south-east Australia is understood' (National Gallery of Australia, n.d.).

Jonathan continues to connect with other carvers and work on the revitalisation of the practice in his spare time, as he believes 'carving and wood are important in the south-east. It's very much one of our cultural strengths'.

Reflecting on the progress of his collaboration with Uncle Stan, Jonathan can identify the positive shift his art has received amongst Aboriginal communities, and he hopes it will continue:

> It has taken a while to get to this point. I think if you just walked into a community and said I need you to collect as many kangaroo thigh bones and feathers as you can, they would just look at you like you were an idiot. But I think that is one of the things about working with Uncle Stan. When people hear he is working with you, it changes the conversation and the way people respond to you and your idea. These projects have built up enough steam that people want to get involved and want to support them, which is fantastic.

Jonathan is particularly interested in how indigenous knowledges will evolve in the future. He is enthusiastic to see how cultural revitalisation and its associated knowledges will branch out and be translated into other fields:

> It's nice to see objects being brought back but what I'm really interested in is seeing objects, and the skills and ideas developed with them, being used in new and innovative ways. We don't want to be always echoing the past. I think we want to be making new things and asking how practices can start informing other practices.

For example, Jonathan notes how the medical industry is looking to the use of obsidian, a type of volcanic glass that was used by many indigenous people to make cutting implements, to make surgical scalpels with cutting edges many times finer than steel scalpels:

> For me, that's really interesting. Where old knowledge can nestle in with new ideas. How can we feed the world facing climate issues? Can some of our grasses help? There is the idea of regaining what we had so that young people don't have to do what we do with revitalisation. They can take those objects and their ideas and generate new knowledge systems and ways of working.

Whilst Jonathan is excited about the possibilities for how Indigenous knowledges will evolve through his passion of cultural revitalisation, he does not wish to turn his mind to how the artistic expression will develop in relation to it. He simply points out: 'It would be sad if you knew what people were going to create.'

4.6 Conclusion to the Chapter

This chapter has answered the first research question of this thesis: 'How and why are Wiradjuri people revitalising our culture?' It did so by relaying the remarkable stories of four Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners, who shared them for the purposes of this thesis.

Chapter 2 outlined how indigenous research methodologies were developed in response to unethical non-Indigenous research on indigenous peoples. It explained how they encourage the privileging of indigenous voices in indigenous research and the use of storytelling. This chapter has responded by privileging the voices of four Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners, letting them explain how and why they went about their revitalisation practices in their own words.

When asked *why* he is revitalising Wiradjuri wilay badhang-galang, Michael McDaniel, my Dad, said it is because he wants to share in the cultural pride he saw Māori people exhibit when they wore their cloaks. Aunty Lorraine Tye began revitalising the Wiradjuri practice of weaving because she wanted to reconnect with the Wiradjuri ngurambang and to family she was estranged from as a child whilst in Sydney receiving treatment for polio. Uncle Stan Grant Snr revitalised the Wiradjuri ngiyang because he had the knowledge and was told to do so by the Wiradjuri Council of Elders. Jonathan Jones is revitalising the creation of various Wiradjuri objects as part of an artistic career.

Although the motivations of these practitioners may vary considerably, it could also be said the reason they undertook their various instances of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is because they are Wiradjuri and have a deep passion for Wiradjuri culture. Each has

demonstrated both a desire to reconnect with the culture our ancestors were forcibly disconnected from, and a passion for passing on culture to future generations of Wiradjuri people.

The responses to precisely *how* the practitioners went about revitalising Wiradjuri cultural practices also varied. Dad essentially taught himself how to make wilay badhang-galang using examples of other work as references. Aunty Lorraine learned weaving from being part of collectives that honed the artistic skills she had been developing since she was a child. Uncle Stan revitalised the Wiradjuri language by remembering what he had learned as a child, consulting with the Wiradjuri council of Elders, teaming up with the linguist Dr John Rudder, and consulting old lists of words from ethnographers. Jonathan's various instances of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation were achieved through diverse means too. Sometimes he would ask someone to teach him how to make an object. However, his revitalisation of the bagay (emu eggshell spoon) as part of *giran* is a particularly poignant example of not having a teacher to learn from, as it is an object that 'had completely fallen out of people's memory', and no physical versions of it remain.

It can also be said that the practitioners' answers to the research question of 'How are Wiradjuri people undertaking Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation?' also share similarities. Each demonstrated a considerable degree of grit and determination, often succeeding without access to abundant funds or support, and sometimes with little or no guidance.

In conclusion, this chapter has privileged the voices of four Wiradjuri revitalisation practitioners to exemplify why and how Wiradjuri people are undertaking cultural revitalisation. Allowing them to tell their own stories, in their own words, accords with Yindyamarra Winhangara, the Wiradjuri research methodology chosen for this study.

Chapter 5:

Wiradjuri Cultural Revitalisation's Socio-Political Significance - The Unintentional and Incidental Dispelling of Detrimental Concepts and Misrepresentations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the second research question: What is the significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to the socio-political status of the Wiradjuri people? I argue that an answer to this question lies in the ability of cultural revitalisation to incidentally and inadvertently challenge prevailing detrimental concepts and misrepresentations, which originated with colonisation and continue to threaten the Wiradjuri socio-political status. The practice of cultural revitalisation subverts and corrects these conceptualisations and false depictions of Aboriginality by presenting an alternative and more positive representation of Wiradjuri people that contrasts with those negative colonial constructions, bringing their applicability into question.

The practitioner profiles in Chapter 4 remain crucial to this chapter, as they are my primary sources of data. As outlined in Chapter 2, privileging Wiradjuri voices is significant to my chosen research methodologies of Yindyamarra Winhangana and the Indigenist Research Methodology defined by Lester-Irabinna Rigney (2017). Understanding how detrimental concepts and misrepresentations have been used to subordinate the Wiradjuri socio-political status is important for understanding the ability of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to challenge these effects of political subordination and re-empower Wiradjuri. This chapter begins by outlining the significance of applying the derogatory concept of the 'savage' to Aboriginal people as justification for Australia's colonisation. It will then give several historical examples of a specific misrepresentation associated with

the concept of the savage: that we were a people 'without complex social bonds and familial ties'.

Section 5.2 shows that the application of detrimental concepts and misrepresentations to Aboriginal and Wiradjuri people is not a practice relegated to Australia's past. It shows that such concepts and falsehoods continue to be regularly applied to Aboriginal people, including the Wiradjuri, to ensure our continuing socio-political subordination in contemporary Australia.

Section 5.3 responds to the research question by demonstrating how Wiradjuri people practising Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation are incidentally and inadvertently challenging those specific concepts and their political effects. The experiences of the Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners detailed in Chapter 4 will be drawn on to make this point.

Section 5.4 examines the limited but important evidence indicating improvements in Wiradjuri socio-political status have arisen due to Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. In addition to the accounts of the cultural practitioners in Chapter 4, it will feature an account by Uncle Geoff Anderson regarding the introduction of teaching Wiradjuri ngiyang in Parkes schools.

In summary, this chapter identifies how the concepts and misrepresentations about Aboriginal and Wiradjuri people initially applied by our colonisers continue to undermine our socio-political status. It also demonstrates how the practices of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation described in Chapter 4 unintentionally and inadvertently alleviate the downward pressure these denigrating colonial ideologies place on the Wiradjuri socio-political status, thereby improving it.

5.2 How Detrimental Concepts and Misrepresentations Have Historically Impacted the Wiradjuri Socio-Political Status

'Western civilisation' has a long history of subordinating others through the creation and application of denigrating concepts and misrepresentations. The Ancient Greeks, for example, applied the demeaning label 'barbarian' to foreign people who were not fluent in their language (Williams, 2012, p. 4). During the Age of Colonisation/Discovery, a much more influential and detrimental concept was developing in the minds of Europeans at the time: that of 'the savage'. Williams (2012, p.1) explained that Westerners employed many misrepresentations of indigenous peoples to stereotype the 'savage' as:

> a distant, alien, uncivilised being, unaware of either the benefits or burdens of modernity. Lacking in sophisticated institutions of government and religion, ignorant of property and laws, without complex social bonds or familial ties, living in a state of untamed nature, fierce and ennobled at the same time, the savage has always represented an anxious, negating presence in the world, standing perpetually opposed to Western civilisation.

In this section, I demonstrate how our colonisers applied some of these distortions to Aboriginal peoples to undermine our socio-political status and further their colonial interests in our respective lands. I first examine the false claim that we were 'savages' because we were 'ignorant of property and laws' and 'living in a state of untamed nature'.

Buchan and Heath (2006) undertook a similar analysis to Williams, focussing on the British application of the concept of 'the savage' to the First Peoples of Australia. They found the Western concept of the 'savage' was integral to the British, and later Australian, legal claim of sovereignty over the continent now known as Australia. Australia's colonisers labelled Aboriginal people 'savages' by misrepresenting us as 'living in a "savage", pre-civilized state: the state of nature' and thus having 'no property rights' (Buchan and Heath, 2006, p. 9). This enabled the application of the doctrine of Terra Nullius to Australia.

Terra Nullius is the legal doctrine whereby Western nations could claim sovereignty over the supposedly uninhabited lands they encountered. It is undisputable that Australia was already occupied by the First Peoples of the continent for tens of thousands of years when James Cook sailed up the east coast in 1770. Even so, the colonisers argued that the doctrine of Terra Nullius allowed them to declare it 'unoccupied' because the original occupants were deemed too 'savage' (Buchan & Heath, 2006). This concept of the savage was so pivotal to the colonisation of Australia that it literally underpinned the legal justification for colonial sovereignty for more than two centuries. This application of Terra Nullius to the Australian continent was maintained until the High Court of Australia overturned it in *Mabo No.II* [1997].

Another critical misrepresentation of Australia's First Peoples that was applied to undermine our socio-political status was that we were supposedly 'without *complex social bonds or familial ties*' (Williams, 2012, p.1, emphasis added). This specific falsehood will remain a focus for the remainder of this chapter.

Similar perceptions of weak Aboriginal social bonds and familial ties are reflected in an 1842 lecture given by Richard Windeyer, a lawyer and leaseholder who 'was to become the most outspoken opponent of a notion that Aboriginal people had rights of property in land' (Attwood, 2020, p. 550). Consistent with Williams's articulation of the concept of the savage, Windeyer proposed there had been a complete lack of governing institutions amongst the First Nations of Australia prior to and since colonisation:

> There is no bond of union between the families, one is not greater than the other, every man is independent of every other and although with notions of savage life derived from the American experience we have dubbed some of them Chiefs and others Kings they themselves know of no such distinctions. (Windeyer, 2011, p. 173)

Edward Curr (1887) made a similar observation to Windeyer, specifically regarding the Wiradjuri:

> But what is most noteworthy about the Wiratheri tribe is, that though they were a people who numbered several thousand souls, had a common language, and inhabited a country 450 miles in length by 300 in breadth, throughout which communication was easy, yet with these advantages they never get beyond tribal life which limits cohesion to persons nearly related by blood, or made a single step in the direction of a national existence. (p. 364)

To use Williams's (2012) terminology, Curr's quote misrepresents the Wiradjuri people as 'savages' 'lacking in sophisticated institutions of government' and 'without social bonds or familial ties' of any note. But more than that, such views portray the Aboriginal family as the most senior governing institution amongst the various First Peoples of Australia, including the Wiradjuri. I propose that those colonisers perceived families as the foremost indigenous institutional threat obstructing their colonial ambitions, and this is a significant reason the Aboriginal family has been systematically targeted, attacked and forcibly dismantled since colonisation began in 1788. Where colonisers couldn't succeed in completely eradicating the Aboriginal people by dismantling our families, they settled for quashing our socio-political status to the extent that we could never challenge the sovereignty they sought to establish on our lands. The remainder of this section provides historical examples of how our colonisers sought to diminish and suppress our socio-political status by systematically attacking our 'familial ties' and misrepresenting Aboriginal people as neglectful, abusive and dysfunctional caregivers of children.

The propensity of the colonisers to actively undermine the social bonds and familial structures of Wiradjuri people began decades before Curr portrayed our families as the premier Indigenous governmental institution threatening the establishment of colonial sovereignty. For example, the widespread massacre of Wiradjuri families during the 1824 Declaration of Martial Law in the Bathurst region was a genocidal act that devastated social bonds and familial ties. However, a more covert attempt to dismantle Wiradjuri families followed shortly afterwards in the nearby Wellington Valley, and it was underpinned by the concept of the 'savage.'

In the year 1830, a Christian mission was established in the Wellington Valley to 'educate' the Wiradjuri in Western culture and Christianity. The mission was beset by problems from the outset. It was located too far from water, and the nearby Wiradjuri adults' own culture and spiritual beliefs made converting them to Christianity extremely difficult (Read, 1989, p. 13). This meant that Wiradjuri adults were only interested in engaging with Christianity if the missionaries compensated their participation with the basic provisions they needed to survive. The provisions quickly dwindled and so the missionaries increasingly focussed their efforts on the more impressionable Wiradjuri children.

Initially, the mission was presided over by two missionaries, William Watson and Johann Handt, who often clashed. Handt left and was replaced by Jakob (James) Günther. Watson and Günther then shared the responsibility of educating the Wiradjuri children at the mission about Christianity and Western civilisation. Günther would frequently try and turn the children to Christianity by demonising the Wiradjuri people, culture and spiritual beliefs. This is reflected in the following account by Günther of a conversation he had at the mission with a Wiradjuri boy named Fred:

> What is a sinner?
>
> > The natives are sinners
>
> But why, what makes them sinners?
>
> > Because they are wicked.
>
> Do you know what it means to repent?
>
> > Yes, to feel we are bad.
>
> I hope you will become better than the wicked old fellows. (Read, 1989, p. 16)

Jakob Wilhelm Günther, 1832

Source: http://missionaries.griffith.edu.au/biography/g%C3%BCnther-jakob-wilhelm-1806-1879#_ednref2

The 'wicked old fellows' Günther was referring to were Wiradjuri Elders, who were also teaching the Wiradjuri boys, but about their own culture, society and spiritual beliefs.

After clashing with Günther, Watson abandoned the mission, taking the Wiradjuri children in his care with him. Watson then established another mission in the Wellington Valley. Tensions between Watson, Günther and the Wiradjuri completely broke down following a horrible event on 16 December 1839. Read (1988) described the event:

> In the hot mid-afternoon Watson went down to the camp to remove a two year old child from her mother who, he claimed, had sold her to him for eleven pounds. Polly Plunkett, the mother, refused. Her relatives rushed to her aid as Watson tried to snatch the child. Pandemonium ensued as Watson struck out at all within reach. Quick as a flash, one of the onlookers grabbed the screaming child and made off

> with her to Gunther's house for protection. There he thrust her into the arms of Poll Buckley. Poll retreated inside while Watson went for the constables and presently arrived at a run. Scarlet with anger, he demanded that the child, whose screams could clearly be heard from the Gunther's bedroom, be handed to him. Gunther refused. 'A fine thing', stormed Watson, 'a Christian missionary being opposed by his fellow labourer'. His features grew 'quite disturbed', his mind 'hardly able to hear a word of reasoning'. After several minutes Watson forced his way inside, seized the child and decamped to his station. The uproar was profound. Polly Plunkett, and all the women present, were 'screaming bitterly' (p. 17).

This event is perhaps the earliest documented example of our colonisers deliberately attempting to dismantle Wiradjuri families through the forcible removal of Wiradjuri children. Gunther and Watson's actions demonstrate the little regard our colonisers had for the Wiradjuri people's social bonds and familial ties early in our colonisation. Tragically, the removal of Aboriginal children from their families happened time and time again over the following centuries. These actions were not only undertaken to dismantle Aboriginal peoples and cultures. They were intended to destroy what our colonisers saw as the greatest and most threatening governmental institution we possessed, the Aboriginal family. Furthermore, they did it to ensure the Aboriginal socio-political status was in such a state of dependent disadvantage that, should we survive, we would never be able to oppose the settler colonial-state being established on our land.

By the turn of the 20th century, the states of Australia were manoeuvring to create legislation that would legally enable them to remove Aboriginal children from their families on a greater scale. The cruel inclination of our colonial authorities to remove Aboriginal children from their families around this time can be found in the following statement by C. F. Gale (1909), who was 'Chief Protector of Aboriginies' [sic] in Western Australia:

> The half-caste is intellectually above the aborigine, and it is the duty of the State that they be given a chance to lead a better life than their mothers. I would not hesitate for one moment to separate any half-caste from its aboriginal mother, no matter how frantic her momentary grief might be at the time. They soon forget their offspring. (p. 9)

Gale's above comment demonstrates our colonisers' clear belief that Aboriginal people were 'savages' 'without complex familial bonds.' This is evident in his erroneous certainty that Aboriginal mothers quickly forgot their children when they were forcibly removed from them. This belief couldn't be further from the truth. Much of the intergenerational trauma that Aboriginal communities experience today can be traced to this false claim that Aboriginal families would quickly forget their children when they were forcibly removed from them. These children are known as the Stolen Generations. The grief, anguish and sadness of having infants stripped from their families still reverberates through our people, as it would for any other. Gale's statement also shows that the colonial authorities who sought to remove and forcibly assimilate Aboriginal children were claiming to do so as an act of benevolent welfare that was in their best interests. Arguably, this supposed benevolence whilst removing children continues to pervade governmental policy practices to this day.

In the same year of Gale's statement, The Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (NSW) established a 'Board for the Protection of Aborigines' with statutory powers, including allowing it to apprentice 'the child of any aborigine or the neglected child of any person apparently having an admixture of aboriginal blood in his veins, subject to the Apprentices Act 1901.' The Aborigines Protection Amending Act 1915 (NSW) altered the 1901 Act by removing 'the requirement that an Aboriginal child must be found to be neglected before the Board could remove him/her'. It also provided that 'the Board may assume full control and custody of the child of any aborigine, if after due inquiry it is satisfied that such a course is in the interest of the moral or physical welfare of such child' and 'remove such child to such control and care as it thinks best.'

The Aborigines Protection Act was amended several times until 1939, with each iteration giving the Board for the Protection of Aborigines more powers to control the lives of Aboriginal people and to dismantle their families, thus depressing their socio-political status. The Aborigines Protection Act would eventually be repealed with the introduction of the Aborigines Act 1969 (NSW). However, in New South Wales by this time, the Wiradjuri and all other Aboriginal people had been subject to generations of traumatic experiences that would create lasting social, physical and emotional damage. Importantly for this thesis, the decades of Aboriginal child removal under the guise of welfare would also ensure that Aboriginal caregivers were dehumanised and perceived as neglectful, abusive and dysfunctional with our children. This has been a heinous stigma to bear for a people that had fought so hard to keep and care for their children throughout the poverty imposed on them through colonisation.

This section has so far pointed to several historical examples of how the detrimental concept of the savage and associated misrepresentations were applied to Aboriginal and Wiradjuri people to undermine our socio-political status throughout our colonisation. However, it is crucial to understand how these concepts, false ideological constructs and historical events impact on an individual level to cause harm to Aboriginal and Wiradjuri people. Following, the next part of this section briefly highlights these impacts as reflected in the practitioner profiles discussed in Chapter 4.

Uncle Stan Grant's profile demonstrates the impact of the Aborigines Protection Act 1909 and its amendments, which legalised practices of forced population relocation and child removal. His family was forced from one town's outskirts to another. As a child, he and his family were in constant fear of him being removed from his parents; Budyaan told him in the Wiradjuri ngiyang to quickly come to him whilst he was playing in the park so that the police would not take him. Uncle Stan then had to learn the Wiradjuri ngiyang in secret because cultural teachings could result in his removal. Similarly, Aunty Lorraine's father would never let himself be seen with her in public lest she be identified as Wiradjuri and

forcibly removed. Also, Dad suspects our family's transmission of Wiradjuri culture from one generation to the next declined because they were similarly fearful of child removals.

Wiradjuri families were relentlessly terrorised by the thought of having their children forcibly removed from their loving care for no other reason than being Aboriginal. All examples of poverty, discrimination or cultural disconnection shown in Chapter 4 can be traced back to the application of damaging concepts and falsehoods to suppress Aboriginal people for the purposes of destroying our culture and thus significantly lowering our socio-political status until such a point that we were no longer a threat to our colonisers and their political ambitions. As an additional twist of cruelty, Wiradjuri parents also had to live with the stigma of being deemed neglectful parents because of their portrayal as savages. This kind of trauma would be unimaginable to the average contemporary Australian family.

In summation, the Wiradjuri socio-political status has historically been impacted by negative concepts and distortions applied to us through colonisation, an example being the concept of the savage and our caricature as "living in a state of untamed nature … ignorant of property and laws … without complex social bonds or familial ties" (Williams, 2012, p. 1). This misrepresentation was crucial to the colonisers' justification for their seizure of the Aboriginal lands now known as Australia through the concept of Terra Nullius. The next section demonstrates how such portrayals of Aboriginal and Wiradjuri people as savages continue to diminish the Aboriginal and Wiradjuri socio-political status in modern Australia. This analysis is necessary to demonstrate how current practices of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation challenge and overturn this representation.

5.3 How Detrimental Concepts and Misrepresentations Continue to Impact the Wiradjuri Socio-Political Status

Unfortunately, the demeaning misrepresentation of Aboriginal social bonds and familial ties under the concept of the "savage" continues to be deployed by non-Indigenous people at the highest levels of political authority to undermine the socio-political status of all Aboriginal people, including the Wiradjuri. These characterisations are still undertaken to portray Aboriginal and Wiradjuri people as being 'without complex social bonds and familial ties.' An example can be found in the public statements of conservative politicians regarding a proposal put to the Australian people by the Commonwealth Government in 2023 to enshrine an Indigenous Voice to Parliament in the Australian constitution via a referendum. In practice, this Voice was intended to be an advisory body comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives who would be required to consult with First Nations to determine Indigenous-related policies and initiatives. Many supporters of the Voice believed that it would significantly improve the socio-political status of Indigenous people by ensuring mandatory Indigenous consultation on federal legislation and policies that affect us. One Wiradjuri person who argued the Voice would improve the socio-political position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was the then Commonwealth Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Linda Burney.

Burney expressed her support for the Voice during a speech she gave to the National Press Club on 5 July 2023. She said the Voice would focus on four key areas: health, housing, jobs, and education. These are all areas that unquestionably impact on the socio-economic and socio-political status of First Peoples in Australia, including the Wiradjuri. To emphasise the impact the Voice would have on the socio-economic and socio-political status of Indigenous people, Minister Burney gave "the latest statistics on the entrenched disadvantage forced on Indigenous people around the continent … and encouraged people to remember the lives behind the numbers" (Burney, 2023). Importantly for the purposes of this thesis, Minister Burney appealed to Australians by reminding them, "This is about … real people with families and loved ones." (Butler, 2023)

The conservative Federal Opposition Leader, Peter Dutton, also asked Australians to take Aboriginal families into consideration when considering whether to support the Voice. However, his approach was drastically different from Burney's appeal. Dutton engaged the age-old colonial tradition of undermining the socio-political aspirations of Aboriginal people, represented here by the proposal for the Voice, by portraying us as savages 'without complex social bonds or familial ties.' Dutton did so by travelling to Alice Springs shortly after backflipping on his party's in-principal support of the Voice and announcing it would instead officially oppose the proposal. Dutton held several press engagements in Alice Springs where he attacked the familial ties of local Aboriginal people by claiming "young Indigenous kids are being sexually assaulted on a regular basis" (Butler, 2023). He also said, "There are stories that we've heard today as we've walked the streets about the dysfunction, the desperation of young Indigenous kids who are being sexually assaulted, still, on a regular basis – that hasn't stopped" (Allam, 2023). Dutton reiterated this allegation, claiming police and social workers were taking Aboriginal kids "back into homes where they've been sexually assaulted and six-year-olds [were] grabbing onto their legs begging not to be left there" (Perera, 2023).

Kate Worden, the Northern Territory Police Minister, responded to these allegations by highlighting the fact the Northern Territory had mandatory reporting legal requirements if someone has knowledge of children being sexually abused. She said, "If Mr Dutton has evidence of these claims that he's made around child sexual abuse in Alice Springs, he needs to come forward" (Allam, 2023). When pressed by the media about whether he had reported specific instances of Aboriginal children being returned to homes where they had been sexually abused, he said he had not (Butler, 2023).

Following Dutton's accusations, Linda Burney, Kate Worden and Graeme Smith (Perera, 2023; Allam, 2023) stated Dutton was using Alice Springs as a "political football" to undermine the Voice and thus harm the socio-political aspirations of Indigenous people. Smith, an Arrernte man and CEO of the Lhere Artepe organisation that represents the Arrernte owners of Alice Springs, described Dutton's comments as "insulting" and said he

could not see any reason for Dutton's visit to Alice Springs "other than to campaign against the Voice" (Allam, 2023). Examples of Dutton conflating his allegations with the discussion of the Voice are evident in the following quotations:

> I don't believe that a 'Canberra Voice 'of 24 people who predominantly come from capital cities is going to be the solution to the problems here on the ground. If I did, I'd embrace it straightaway ... We will be consulting with people about the Voice but the urgency of what's happening here now needs to be understood. (Dutton, quoted by Morse, 2023)

> You look at what the kids and women, the rates of domestic violence we're seeing in Alice Springs at the moment. It's appalling and you'd sign up tomorrow to anything to resolve that situation. But what the [Prime Minister] is saying at the moment is just vote for [the Voice] on a vibe and [he'll] tell you the detail afterwards. I don't think Australians will support that. (Dutton, quoted by Wood, 2023)

Unfortunately, Dutton was not alone in attempting to undermine Australian citizens' support for the Voice by misrepresenting Indigenous people as savages without complex social bonds and familial ties. The following allegation was echoed by Nationals senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price. Price is a Walpiri woman who had recently been appointed by Dutton as the Shadow Affairs Minister for Indigenous Affairs (Butler, 2023). Price joined Dutton in publicly conflating unfounded claims of Aboriginal child abuse and the proposed Voice:

> The only sort of referendum I would support right now is if we put the lives and the responsibility of children into the federal arena ... That's a referendum I could get behind because I think we absolutely need a review of how that is, or isn't, working across the board. (Price, quoted by Hurst, 2023)

The Voice referendum took place on 14 October 2023 and was defeated with 60.7% of the Australian population voting against it. The Dutton-led opposition ended the

parliamentary question time following the failed referendum by calling for “a royal commission into alleged child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities and an audit of spending” on programs servicing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Karp, 2003). Our social bonds and familial ties were still being attacked by our colonisers during the event experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the most damaging to our socio-political aspirations in recent decades .

Dutton’s and Price’s unfounded allegations of child sexual abuse amongst the Aboriginal people of Alice Springs is but one of many contemporary examples of the attempted diminishment of our socio-political status and exertion of extraordinary control over our lives using the concept of the savage. Allam (2023) noted how Graeme Smith identified this same tactic being used to justify the rollout of the Northern Territory National Emergency Response, which was described as “an oppressive package of legislative measures thrust upon remote Aboriginal communities in the same region and across the Territory’s remote communities in 2007” (Latimore, 2023).

Latimore (2023) drew attention to how the former Howard Coalition government’s frontbench, of which Dutton was a member, previously attempted to undermine the socio-political status of Aboriginal people by claiming that ‘organised paedophile rings operated in remote Aboriginal communities in the NT.’ Mal Brough, the Minister for Families, Communities and Indigenous Affairs at the time, attempted to justify the Coalition’s stance towards Aboriginal people by claiming several Northern Territory Indigenous communities ‘were riddled with alcohol, cigarettes, pornography and gambling … [and] there was an urgent need to stabilise the situation and save neglected and abused black children’ (Latimore, 2023). However, their allegations have never been substantiated. Moreover,

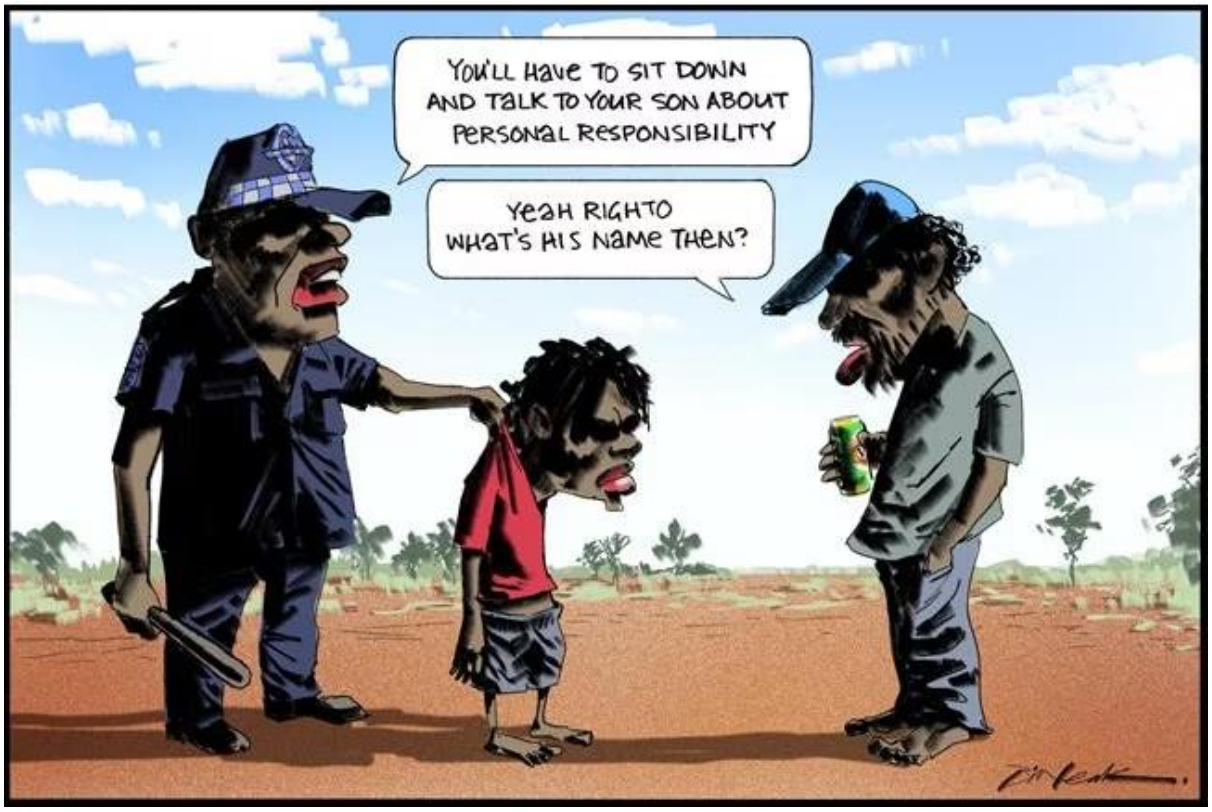
> The findings of the Northern Territory board of inquiry into the allegations were misrepresented by the Howard government in the lead-up to the 2007 federal election. They were the catalyst for its oppressive emergency response. (Latimore, 2023)

Another contemporary application of the concept of the savage can be found in the response the political cartoonist Bill Leak (1956–2017) gave to a 4 Corners investigation aired on the Australian Broadcasting Commission (2016), titled ‘Australia’s Shame’ which has been described as

> [A] program centred on the treatment of children in the Northern Territory’s youth detention system. It outlined a system plagued by regular failure and institutionalized cruelty. Among the footage were stark images of a boy shackled to a chair, his head covered in a spit hood and children being held in segregation for extended periods with no access to natural light, ventilation or running water and subsequently being teargassed. (Grant et al., 2017, p. 118)

The airing of the investigation drew widespread shock and outrage. Following the airing of the treatment of children at the Don Dale detention facility, the then Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, announced a Royal Commission, saying he was ‘deeply shocked ... and appalled’ at the graphic footage of abuse at the centre (Karp, 2016).

Leak responded to ‘Australia’s Shame’ with a drawing he had created for *The Australian* newspaper on 4 August 2016, which coincided with National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day. Carlson et al. (2017) described the cartoon as depicting ‘an Aboriginal policeman holding [an Aboriginal] teenage male and telling the youth's father that he needed to teach his son about personal responsibility [whilst] the father, with a can of beer in hand, replies, “Yeah, righto, What's his name then?”’ (p. 3).



Bill Leak's cartoon published in *The Australian*. Source: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-04/cartoon-an-attack-on-aboriginal-people,-indigenous-leader-says/7689248

The cartoon drew widespread condemnation and international attention. Leak was admonished for drawing the cartoon and *The Australian* was criticised for publishing it. Leak responded:

> I was trying to say that if you think things are pretty crook for the children locked up in the Northern Territory's Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, you should have a look at the homes they came from. Then you might understand why so many of them finished up there. (Leak, quoted by Meade, 2016)

Leak's statement is important for the purposes of this thesis. Even though the images shown in 'Australia's Shame' depict Aboriginal children being subject to neglectful, abusive and violent mistreatment as a direct result of systematic dehumanisation justified through the application of detrimental concepts and misrepresentations, Aboriginal parents are still blamed and portrayed as neglectful and abusive. The cartoon is a

testament to how deeply ingrained within the Australian psyche is the false characterisation of Aboriginal people as being 'without complex social bonds and familial ties'.

In summary, this section has demonstrated how the ideological construction of Aboriginal people as "savages" 'without complex social bonds and familial ties' continues in contemporary Australia. It was seen in the 2023 conservative politicians' opposition of the Voice to Parliament and the Howard government's Northern Territory Intervention and earlier in Leak's defence of his 2016 cartoon. This misrepresentation is so persistent that even when the Australian settler-colonial state is filmed neglecting, abusing and assaulting Aboriginal children, Aboriginal parents and caregivers are still the party deemed accountable whilst being dehumanised and demonised as uncaring, unloving, neglectful and abusive.

Despite the bleakness of the initial sections of this chapter, the following section will demonstrate how the practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation departs from the concepts and misrepresentations that were applied to us to subordinate our socio-political status and enable the colonisation of our lands.

5.4 The Socio-Political Significance of Wiradjuri Cultural Revitalisation in Challenging Detrimental Concepts and Misrepresentations

This section uses the practitioner profiles developed in Chapter 4 to demonstrate the significance of cultural revitalisation to the Wiradjuri people's socio-political status. I explain how practices of cultural resurgence incidentally and inadvertently challenge the applicability of the concept of the "savage" to the Wiradjuri people and culture and thus disavows this concept as a cause for lowering the Wiradjuri people's socio-political status. I argue that the practice of cultural revitalisation produces an alternative political effect by inadvertently presenting an alternative and more positive representation of Wiradjuri

people that contrasts with detrimental concepts and misrepresentations, bringing their applicability into question.

The final part of this section will demonstrate the efficacy of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation in improving the socio-political status of the Wiradjuri people. Whilst largely anecdotal, there are sufficient indicators to suggest Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is proving to be very effective in improving the socio-political status of Wiradjuri people and that further research is required to measure this phenomenon.

5.4.1 Yindyamarra and Wilay Badhang-Galang: Demonstrating Complicated Wiradjuri Familial Ties

As stated in the methodology chapter, Yindyamarra is an all-encompassing Wiradjuri philosophy that requires an individual to act respectfully, with care and kindness; and to be mindful of how they are connected to the past and how their actions impact both the present and the future. Again, Dad's recollection of having Yindyamarra described to him for the first time by the Wiradjuri Council of Elders went as follows:

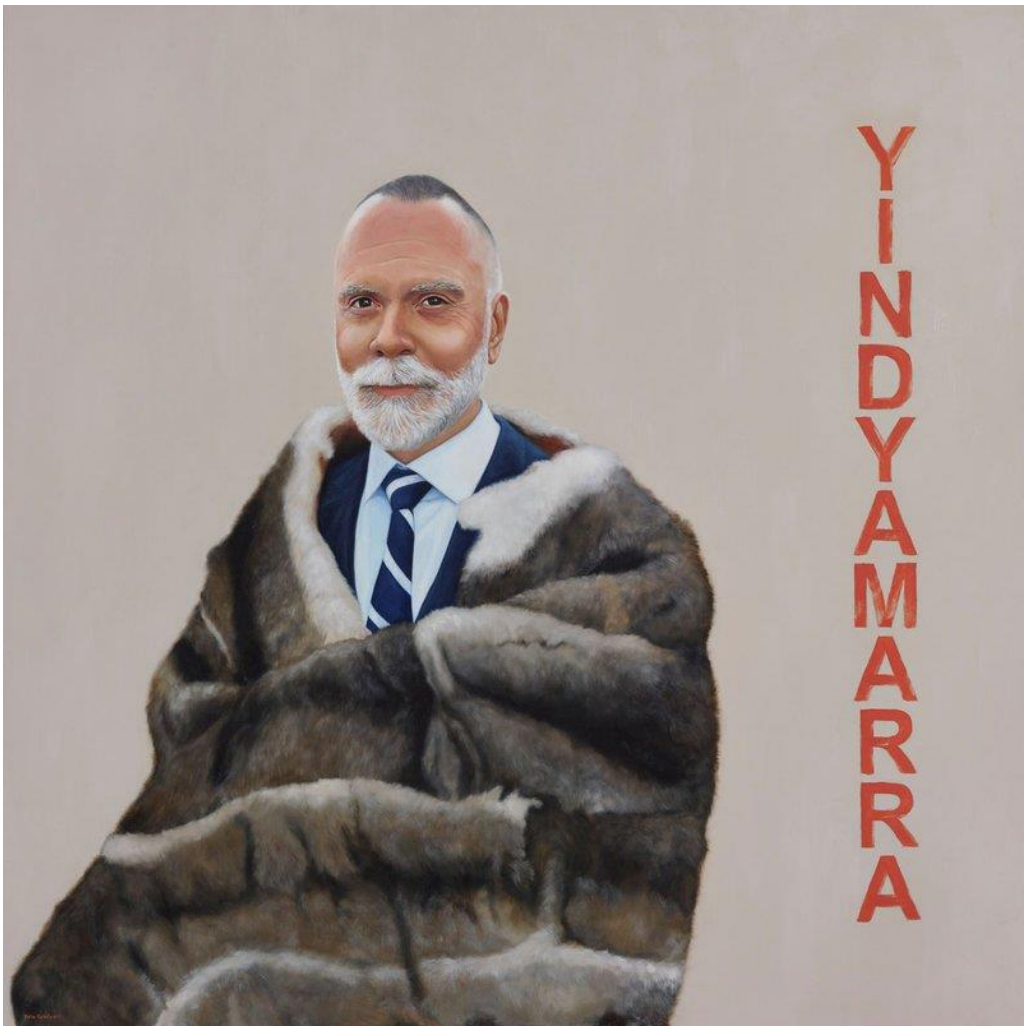
> [One Elder said,] '[it] means honour and respect and it means to be respectful.' And then another Elder said, 'it means more than that. It means doing things in a thoughtful, human way, in a kind way, doing things slowly and taking everyone with you'. Then another said, 'Oh no, it means more than that. It means gently living in the world and understanding that all of your actions and all of your words have impact beyond the immediate and even your own life.' ('Speaking out with Larissa Behrendt,' 2017, 31.01)

Wiradjuri re-engagement with the Yindyamarra philosophy is itself undergoing a process of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. Examining it and its practice by Wiradjuri people demonstrates how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation can unintentionally challenge the abovementioned detrimental concepts and misrepresentations that have been applied to Wiradjuri people to subordinate our socio-political status.

Wiradjuri people often strive to embody the philosophy of Yindyamarra when engaging with non-Indigenous people. Conducting ourselves with honour, respect, compassion, and mindfulness towards all things contrasts sharply with our misrepresentation as 'savages.' Experiencing such a contrast in our depiction can prompt non-Indigenous people to question the applicability of the concept of the savage to our people and reject it. Doing so mitigates the harm such misrepresentations inflict on our socio-political status. These shifts in perceptions are achievable with other Wiradjuri cultural practices undergoing revitalisation, too.

Dad's practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation through the creation of wilay badhang-galang embodies the philosophy of Yindyamarra. As previously discussed, this philosophy inadvertently challenges the stereotype that the Wiradjuri are 'savages.' The following quote from Dad about his stitching of wilay badhang-galang clearly illustrates how Yindyamarra is reflected in the creation of them:

> If you look at the traditional stitching and if you see how [our ancestors] sew, they weren't just interested in the patterns. They were interested in, and proud of, the stitching. They were real craftspeople. The stitches are tiny and precise. But now if you look at it, people are often more interested in the decorating of the cloak with patterns, and the stitching is secondary, and is often done a lot more quickly and not as tightly. Sometimes much more loosely than traditionally sewing was. For me, the sewing of the cloak is as important as the decorating of the cloak. In part that's because, for me, there is an element of beauty in the sewing. The sewing is not just there to keep the skins together. It's there to add to the beauty of the pattern and reflect the consistency and spacing of the lines, and cross hatching lines in it.



Yindyamarra: a portrait of Professor Michael McDaniel, by Kate Gradwell

Source: https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/2019/30112/

Dad's meticulousness when stitching a wilay badhang-galang demonstrates his belief that their making should be a practice and product of Yindyamarra and its requirement of an individual to conduct oneself in a slow, deliberate, mindful and respectful manner. This is clearly the antithesis of savagery. However, Dad's above quote also hints at how his creation of wilay badhang relates to our Wiradjuri familial ties too.

Dad stitches the cloaks with the 'tiny and precise' stitches of our ancestors because the shared tactile experience of making a cloak with such focus connects him to our ancestors

more deeply. For him, creating wilay badhang-galang in the slow, steady, thoughtful and precise method of our ancestors is a means of honouring and connecting to them. In other words, the cloaks are a symbol and means of us connecting to our ancestors who made cloaks in a similar way stretching back tens of thousands of years. Nurturing this connection to our ancestors through the creation of wilay badhang-galang challenges the Wiradjuri people's misrepresentation as savages without complex familial ties.

This is evident in the following quotation:

> I think, for me, the cloak is a tribute to our ancestors and its deserving of us honouring their pride and precision in doing the stitching. There is almost a Western immediacy when people quickly want a cloak and rush through the sewing, but spend a lot of time in the pattern. It shows you something of our people's thinking in the past.

The cloaks are imbued with Yindymarra through their slow, steady and mindful creation, which respects their complicated connection to all things past, present, and future. This includes family. But more than that, the cloaks also reflect Yindymarra's required understanding 'that all of your actions and all of your words have impact beyond the immediate and even your own life.'

Dad's cultural revitalisation of the wilay badhang-galang also demonstrates how the Wiradjuri people strengthen familial ties with family members through the sharing of a cultural revitalisation experience and the conversation that takes place during it. This notion is captured in the following quote from Dad:

> The other thing I have learnt, is that you spend time talking [when making cloaks]. You're talking as much as you're physically doing anything. So, when you and I made a cloak, that was one of the longest periods of time that you and I did something constantly, all the time. You talk about things, you talk about things related to the cloak, you talk about identity, about family history. So, there are multiple layers of learning that are happening when you're making a cloak. You're

not just bringing the past into the present along with relationships to country and people from the past, you're making and cementing relationships in the present and into the future when you make a cloak together.

Dad teaching me to make my first wilay badhang. Image by Sarah Rhodes

There are three points to make from Dad's above quotation.

First, making cloaks whilst discussing our Wiradjuri family history is a practice of Yindyamarra that connects us to our ancestors by bringing 'the past into the present along with relationships to country and people from the past.' This process is similar to Mcdonald's (2003) explanation of how Wiradjuri people use photographs of past family members to develop and maintain kinship and intergenerational connections.

Second, sharing in the practice of cultural revitalisation with families deepens the meaningful relationships we share with one another during our lifetimes. Macdonald (2003) also explains how Wiradjuri photographs of family members are used by Wiradjuri

people to develop and maintain kinship whilst remembering personal and collective histories. In other words, the wilay badhang-galang, like the photos, strengthen our familial ties by highlighting our connections through shared culture, history and ancestors. This brings the Wiradjuri people making the wilay badhang closer together.

A personal example of the above point is my memory of being taught by Dad how to make my wilay badhang for my graduation. This memory is just as significant as wearing the wilay badhang at the graduation ceremony itself. This time spent together is amongst the most cherished memories I have of being with my Dad, and it has deepened our already strong familial connection as father and son. I also believe this experience is so cherished because I am keenly aware of just how many generations of Wiradjuri parents and children could not share similar experiences due to colonisation.

I cannot help but compare my experience learning how to make wilay badhang-galang with my Dad to the previously mentioned cartoon by Bill Leak demeaning Aboriginal fathers. Such a gross misrepresentation of Aboriginal familial bonds becomes glaringly obvious when my experience of making my wilay badhang with Dad is placed alongside Leak's depiction of Aboriginal fathers. I believe someone who thinks Wiradjuri people lacked complex and meaningful familial ties would likely abandon that notion if they understood Dad's conceptualisation of wilay badhang-galang and how Yindyamarra simultaneously connects us to family members past and present.

The third point relates to how Dad explains that when he makes wilay badhang with Yindyamarra he is connecting family and culture in a way that involves ‘making and cementing relationships in the present and *into the future*’ [emphasis added]. What he is actually saying in that quotation is that his making of wilay badhang-galang creates relationships between the relatives producing the cloaks in the present and, because the cloak has a life into the future, it connects with future generations of family.

The concept that Wiradjuri people use our cultural revitalisation to develop and cement relationships with future generations of Wiradjuri family who are yet to be born may sound mystical and difficult for a mind schooled in Western rationality to fathom or

accept. This is understandable and Yindyamarra Winhangana, the primary research methodology of this study, does require the researcher to be 'open to Wiradjuri spirituality and cultural contexts.' However, Dad's understanding is much simpler to grasp once the following quote is taken into consideration:

> The other thing for me about the sewing is that it is done with a sense of the passing of time and a sense of intergenerational responsibility. So, when I sew a cloak or show someone how to sew a cloak, I sew it with an intention that 'this will last more than one lifetime'. This is a strong thing that we are sending into the future so that it can wrap itself around people that I will never get to wrap my arms around.

This quotation is not referencing something mystical. However, it is profound and especially so for this thesis. Dad rightly believes by making cloaks with family we share our lives with, and using Yindyamarra to guide the stitching is an act of Wiradjuri devotion that makes our wilay badhang-galang last longer. This ensures the devotion that he put into the wilay badhang-galang through the stitching will carry into the future and connect him with as many future generations of family as possible. This is neither the thoughts or actions of a neglectful father, nor representative of a savage people without complex familial ties.

In summary, Dad's conceptualisation and creation of wilay badhang-galang using Yindyamarra makes his cloaks a symbol of a philosophy that is distinctly not 'savage.' The meticulous care that he takes when stitching with Yindyamarra is a way of simultaneously connecting to ancestors and descendants using an understanding of familial ties that span tens of thousands of years into the past and future. This is all done whilst developing and cementing relationships with contemporary family members we are fortunate enough to share our lives with. Presenting an example of such intergenerational devotion to familial ties unintentionally and inadvertently creates an alternative portrayal of Wiradjuri people that challenges the reductive depiction that has been attributed to the Wiradjuri through the concept of the savage. Inadvertently and unintentionally conveying such an

alternative understanding of Wiradjuri culture and identity through the practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is how we challenge our colonisers' suppression of our socio-political status.

As with their pre-colonial production, the creation of wilay badhang-galang also remains a means of developing, symbolising and deepening the complex and meaningful *social bonds* between Wiradjuri people too. As Dad explains in the following quotation, the current high financial cost of making a wilay badhang-galang means it is more common for them to be both collectively made and owned by Wiradjuri families and communities, rather than by individuals. Nevertheless, they are, and always have been, a cultural object created through the utilisation of social bonds that are strengthened through that process.

> In the past, cloaks would have always been made collectively. It's unlikely any individual got all of the skins and did all of the processes [alone]. We know that didn't happen. But my understanding is that cloaks were an individual object. Everyone had a cloak. But now, because of the expense of cloaks, they are often a community project or a family project. Or a nation project. So, cloaks are much more about collective identities because of the simple fact of the exclusive cost of them. So, they are now a communal project where they were once an individual object. Even when you make a cloak individually, its communal. You have to talk about designs, you have to get permission, you've got to be supported.

Dad's above quote demonstrates how the contemporary process of making wilay badhang-galang continues into modern day as an activity that develops and deepens Wiradjuri social bonds too. This quotation demonstrates how the contemporary manifestation of wilay badhang creation and ownership has become a process even more conducive to the development and strengthening of social bonds between Wiradjuri people.

The ability of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to demonstrate and create strong Wiradjuri social bonds through the creation of cultural objects will be further demonstrated in the following discussion regarding Jonathan Jones's creation of *giran*.

5.4.2 *giran* – Demonstrating Complex Wiradjuri Social Bonds and Familial Ties Whilst Facilitating Non-Indigenous Participation in Wiradjuri Cultural Revitalisation.

Jonathan Jones's artwork, *giran,* is another instance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation that demonstrates strong and complex Wiradjuri social bonds and familial ties.

However, Jonathan's creation of *giran* also demonstrates that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation doesn't just incidentally and unintentionally challenge detrimental depictions of Wiradjuri people by providing non-Indigenous people with glimpses into the Wiradjuri, thereby contradicting the concept of the savage. *giran* demonstrates how non-Indigenous people can directly participate in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and gain firsthand experience with, and insight into, Wiradjuri people and culture, rather than merely observing. Such active participation is a more effective means of challenging detrimental concepts and misrepresentations that suppress the Wiradjuri socio-political status.

giran on display at QAGOMA

Source: https://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/stories/jonathan-jones-untitled-giran-is-a-murmuration-of-winged-sculptures-australia

My personal connection to *giran* came from my familial ties to Jonathan Jones. I have known Jonathan since I was a teenager and am fortunate to have him as part of my family, even though we are not biologically related. I was in the early stages of my research for this thesis when Jonathan asked me to carve 300 dhalany-galang (spear points) for *Giran* in his workshop. It took me several weeks to carve these dhalany-galang, and the experience was significant for three reasons.

First, carving 300 dhalany-galang was excellent participatory research for someone investigating how and why Wiradjuri people practice cultural revitalisation. Second, it was an exercise in the revitalised practice of Yindyamarra. Learning how to make wilay badhang-galang from Dad already meant that I was mindful of going slow, being thoughtful and honouring my ancestors by duplicating their meticulous craftmanship when making the dhalany-galang. Third, and perhaps most importantly, I was mindful that this period of working on *giran* with Jonathan was the most amount of time he and I had

spent working on something together, and this would significantly deepen our familial ties in the same way working with Dad on my first wilay badhang had done.

While seeing *giran* as a completed project centred around Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation was immensely satisfying, the deepening of my familial ties with Jonathan was the most rewarding aspect of this process. Non-indigenous people observing how such shared practice of revitalisation can impact Wiradjuri familial ties incidentally and inadvertently challenges the Wiradjuri people's false portrayal as 'savages without complex familial ties.'

The development of *giran* involved much more than the revitalisation of cultural objects in Jonathan's Sydney workshop. It required him to call on his many Wiradjuri social bonds throughout Wiradjuri ngurambang (Country) to access the relevant audio recordings and materials that went into making *giran*. Collecting these aspects of the artwork required long trips across Wiradjuri ngurambang, meeting and reconnecting with other Wiradjuri people.

I joined Jonathan on some of these collecting trips where we recorded Wiradjuri Elders I was familiar with. The first Elder we recorded was Uncle Geoff Anderson of Parkes. It was a long time since I had seen him, but we reconnected our social bonds through our shared participation on *giran*. Jonathan recorded Uncle Stan Grant speaking Wiradjuri ngiyang during this trip, too. This occasion was also the first time I had seen Uncle Stan in a long time, and it was during this visit to Narrandera that he agreed to participate in my PhD by sharing his experiences of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

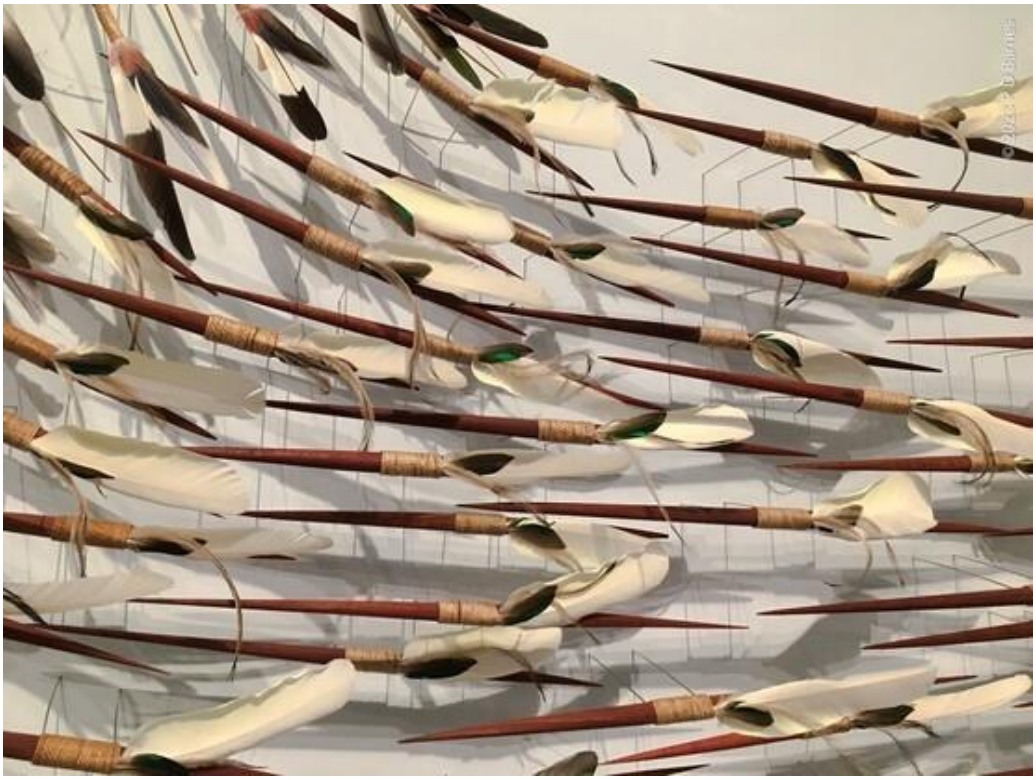
These collecting trips also involved developing new social bonds and familial ties with Wiradjuri people I had not met before. For example, Jonathan introduced me to Aunty Lorraine Tye during one of these collecting trips for *giran*. This was when she generously agreed to be part of my research as well. Aunty Lorraine has subsequently become more like a member of my family than a social acquaintance or research participant. I visited her whenever I was in Wagga Wagga for my Wiradjuri Graduate Certificate at Charles Sturt University. We frequently catch up on the phone between my visits to Wagga Wagga,

talking about our families, our work, and so on. Again, this demonstrates how the process of engaging in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation through *giran* established social bonds and familial ties that made both *giran* and this thesis possible. It also demonstrates how our Wiradjuri social bonds and familial ties are not the inadequate, uncomplicated connections our colonisers portrayed them to be through the concept of the savage.

Jonathan recording audio for *giran* on Wahluu (Mt Panorama)

giran was not only a remarkable artistic achievement upon completion, it was also a testament to the breadth and depth of the social bonds and familial ties that are an integral part of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. My familial ties to Jonathan led me to carve 300 dhalany-galang for *Giran*. The strong social bonds between Aunty Lorraine, the Hands on Weavers, and Jonathan led to the Aunties collectively making 2 metres of hand-woven string to bind feathers onto each of the 2,000 culturally revitalised objects constituting *Giran* (QAGOMA, 2019). Altogether, the Aunties collectively made

approximately 4 kilometres of hand-woven string for Jonathan. The collective effort it took to make *Giran* highlights how the practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation incidentally and inadvertently challenges such detrimental concepts and misrepresentations as the 'savage without complex social bonds and family ties', while the social bonds that are (re)formed also work to alleviate the colonial erosion of the Wiradjuri socio-political status.



giran's dhalany-galang featuring the Aunties hand-woven string. Photographer: P.D Barnes. Source: https://aus.social/@infinite8horizon/109684588954967633

giran also provided non-Indigenous people the opportunity to participate in Wiradjuri cultural practices and their revitalisation. Each of the approximately 2,000 objects in *Giran* required at least two or three feathers to be bound to it by the previously mentioned string made by the Aunties. This gave the objects the appearance of birds in flight.

Jonathan was concerned about collecting feathers in such quantities and spoke to Uncle Stan as his key collaborator about issuing a public call out to Australians asking them to collect feathers and to mail them to him. Uncle Stan was supportive of this idea but warned Jonathan that having people hastily gathering as many feathers as they could from country, without consideration for what they were taking, was contrary to the mindfulness inherent in the Wiradjuri concept of Yindyamarra. Jonathan listened to Uncle Stan and ensured the public call out for feathers instructed Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to collect the feathers slowly and with mindfulness, and to pay attention to Country, particularly the birds. Jonathan's instructions inadvertently had the contributors practice Yindyamarra whilst contributing to an artwork that was a monumental act of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

Sulphur-crested cockatoo feathers I collected for *giran* from the banks of the Murrumbidgee River.

Jonathan was inundated with hundreds of generous packages of feathers from across Australia. However, these packages contained more than just feathers. Jonathan was surprised to find

> these beautiful notes that we got [from] people who said that they slowed down for the first time in a park they lived next to and they paid attention, and that they looked at the bird, and that they spent some time in country ... that's what those feathers in some ways represent. Really getting you to slow down and think about some of those stories.

We cannot know how many of the people who wrote letters to Jonathan were non-Indigenous or whether any of those people who did practice Yindyamarra whilst collecting feathers experienced a change in a perception of Wiradjuri people as 'savages'. However, it is reasonable to assume that the cultural experiences of the non-Indigenous letter writers whilst engaging with Yindyamarra would be inconsistent with how our colonisers portrayed us as 'savages.' It is in such simple but significant ways that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation enhances the Wiradjuri socio-political status. In doing so, it creates an opportunity for our non-Indigenous counterparts to critically analyse the applicability of such socio-politically subordinating concepts to the Wiradjuri.

As with the revitalisation of wilay badhang-galang, *giran* is an example of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation that reflects and develops complex Wiradjuri social bonds and familial ties, challenging our socio-political misrepresentation. Engaging Wiradjuri people to make *giran* created additional Wiradjuri social bonds that did not exist before, whilst renewing others. This is also a challenge to our negative misrepresentation. However, inviting non-Indigenous people to collect feathers using the culturally revitalised practice of Yindyamarra incidentally and unintentionally challenged the detrimental socio-political depictions they may have had of us in a more efficient manner.

5.4.3 Weaving – Demonstrating Complex Wiradjuri Social Bonds and Familial Ties Whilst Engaging and Socially Bonding with Our Non-Indigenous Counterparts

This section examines how Aunty Lorraine's revitalised practice of weaving supports the points previously made regarding Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation's ability to unintentionally and inadvertently challenge the harmful portrayal of the Wiradjuri as 'savages lacking complex social bonds and familial ties'. Like Dad's creation of wilay badhang-galang and Jonathan's *giran,* Aunty Lorraine's weaving is a means of strengthening Wiradjuri social bonds and familial ties. Also like *giran,* Aunty Lorraine's weaving is an example of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation that builds connections with the non-Indigenous people who participate in it. The result is an unintentional alternative portrayal of Wiradjuri people that challenges our harmful misrepresentations and improves our socio-political status.

Aunty Lorraine's weaving serves as a cultural representation of her desire to develop and strengthen the familial ties she was unable to build due to the long period she spent away from her family whilst receiving treatment for polio in Sydney. Evans (2012) recorded her saying:

> My love for animals comes from my yearning for connection with country. Because I grew up in the Royal Far West Home, away from country, life was void of experiences such as fishing down the [Murrumbidgee] river or sitting by the campfire with family. The way I found how to reconnect is through animals and using natural products or found objects wherever possible. I didn't concisely choose the animal; it just came to be through the making process, similar to my baskets. (p. 3)

Aunty Lorraine's weaving is thus a culturally revitalised practice that has deepened her familial ties, as well as her connection to her Wiradjuri culture, ngurambang, and the Murrumbidgee River. Fishing on the Murrumbidgee River is clearly a cherished memory of her father sharing Wiradjuri culture with her. This is indicated in the following statement she gave to me:

> It wasn't until I was older that I realised how much [my father] had actually taught me. It was done in a subtle way. Like, when you would go to the river for fish, you would only catch as much as you needed, which I found out later was a cultural practice. But I had no idea at the time.

Aunty Lorraine perceives fishing in the Murrumbidgee River with family as a quintessential representation of the Wiradjuri culture and family life she was unable to have due to her polio treatments. Since then, Aunty Lorraine has woven fish as a way of developing and strengthening the connections to family, culture and ngurambang she couldn't maintain as a young girl. Following, it is understandable that her most ambitious solo artwork to date is a 4.5 metre-high fishing net accompanied by a school of woven fish, titled *Guya-gu Marraanba Yinaa: One Woman Fish Net.* Like Dad's wilay badhang-galang, *Guya-gu Marraanba Yinaa* demonstrates how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation enables us to develop and strengthen relationships with family, even when they have died and become ancestors.

Aunty Lorraine's desire to build and maintain these connections to family after they have died and her expression of love for family, culture and ngurambang are not reflective of Gale's (1909) portrayal of Aboriginal familial ties being weak and soon forgotten after separation occurs. Her Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation incidentally and inadvertently demonstrates how the practice unintentionally presents an alternative portrayal of the Wiradjuri that can challenge the demeaning concepts and misrepresentations that have been applied to Wiradjuri people to suppress our socio-political status.

Guya-gu Marraanba Yinaa: One Woman Fish Net. Photo by Kieren L.Tilly. Source: https://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/5046088/weaved-wiradjuri-wonders-at-the-wagga-art-gallery-photos/

Further evidence of Wiradjuri familial ties being maintained through weaving, despite a relative dying, can also be found in Aunty Lorraine's profile of Aunty Sandy Warren, who was a kind and fiercely intelligent Elder and a talented weaver I had the privilege of meeting when I initially attended the Wiradjuri Council of Elders. Sadly, Aunty Sandy passed away several years ago, and she is sorely missed by her family, the HoW collective, and the Wiradjuri people more generally. Aunty Lorraine noted:

> Aunty Sandy attended [HoW] and now her daughters are attending. As we are getting older, I am finding Aunty Sandy's daughter, Nita, is part of our group now. Aunty Sandy's daughter Cate comes when she can, because she lives so far away.

I was thrilled to see two of Aunty Sandy's daughters, Libby and Cate, enrolled in the same year as me for the Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage at Charles Sturt University. It made me even happier to see them weaving in class and carrying on their mother's legacy and passion for the cultural practice. Like Aunty Lorraine's weaving of fish, Libby's and Cate's adoption of weaving is a way of continuing their familial ties to a relative long after they have passed on and become an ancestor. As with Dad's creation of wilay badhang-galang, such use of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation demonstrates the inapplicability of the concept of the savage to Wiradjuri familial ties and this unintentional act of challenging colonial misrepresentations incidentally improves the socio-political status of the Wiradjuri people.

Aunty Lorraine's profile also demonstrates how weaving can better represent the Wiradjuri people and our *social bonds* too. The profile begins with an acknowledgement that Wiradjuri weaving was a social interaction that involved the development and strengthening of Wiradjuri social bonds prior to colonisation:

> Wiradjuri women … would teach Wiradjuri children their initial lessons in the [weaving] practice. When the boys became older they would go with the Wiradjuri men to be taught male elements of the weaving practice separately. The Wiradjuri girls would stay with the women and continue to learn weaving from them.

This quotation outlines how weaving was always a practice centred around Wiradjuri social bonds and interactions. However, it fails to convey just how socially enjoyable weaving with Aunties can be. I have been lucky enough to have attended several HoW sessions, and they have always been filled with conversation, jokes, laughter, as well as caring enquiries into attendees' lives, wellbeing and so on. The historical evidence suggests that our colonisers knew just how socially enjoyable and engaging weaving was for our people too. Smyth was an ethnographer responsible for publishing much of the detrimental colonial misrepresentations of Aboriginal people. However, in 1878 he wrote:

> It is a very amusing sight to see a group of native women employed in basket-making … They chatter and sing continually as the business goes on, and they seem to enjoy the labour, and to pursue it as mechanically as an old woman knitting a stocking. (Smyth, 1878, p.LII)

The social enjoyment that is derived from weaving is not directly mentioned in Aunty Lorraine's profile, but it is evident in her following remarks regarding how younger Wiradjuri people attend HoW sessions without necessarily engaging in the practice of weaving:

> Some girls will just come to talk. Not to weave. I think they come for the cultural way we all sit together. Over the years we have had different stages. At one stage we had a lot of kids who didn't fit in at school that would come. Some would weave, others would just sit and talk. If they have problems, we don't make them talk about them. If they want to talk about them, we'll talk, and that's great too.

The fact the young women would attend HoW sessions for 'the cultural way we all sit together' and not necessarily to weave suggests that some Wiradjuri people find the social bonding is more important than the actual practice of weaving itself. In other words, for many of our people weaving is a medium for the creation and maintenance of social bonds. Understanding and observing this challenges the false depiction that we are a savage people without complex social bonds.

Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is equally effective at challenging other detrimental socio-political concepts and misrepresentations, too. This claim is supported by the fact that the Aunties at HoW would host 'a lot of kids who didn't fit in at school.' Like many of the young women who attend HoW sessions, some of these kids would engage in weaving but 'others would just sit and talk.' If these kids needed to talk about the problems they were facing, the Aunties would always be available to listen attentively and give advice whilst diligently weaving their objects. This provision of such loving care and attention towards Aboriginal children by the Aunties inadvertently challenges suggestions we are a people who are neglectful and abusive towards our children. Wiradjuri weaving is a culturally

revitalised practice that facilitates our Aunties' critical roles within our communities as the providers of wisdom, comfort and loving care to all found therein. It is also another unintentional way of challenging the misrepresentations of Aboriginal people that Peter Dutton, Jacinta Price and Bill Leak were shown to foster earlier in this chapter.

It is also important to note that Aunty Lorraine was introduced to Wiradjuri weaving through a social invitation from Aunty Pat Dacey to 'spend time with the Elders' and become more socially engaged with the Wiradjuri community in Wagga Wagga. Aunty Lorraine had only recently returned to Wagga Wagga at this point in her life and was experiencing a degree of social isolation because she was the sole carer for her fully dependent son, Brae, whilst Uncle Ron was away driving trucks. Although Aunty Lorraine was not able to attend the WWoW sessions as frequently as she would have liked, being able to attend and engage in weaving through the WoWW Project gave her a valuable sense of Wiradjuri social inclusion and connection during a challenging time. This again demonstrates how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation develops reflects and deepens Wiradjuri social bonds in a manner that is caring and distinctly not 'savage.'

Like *giran*, Aunty Lorraine's practice of weaving is also a means by which non-Indigenous people can participate in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and develop social bonds with Wiradjuri people. This is another way the cultural practice enables non-Indigenous people to critically assess any negative perceptions of us. Aunty Lorraine's profile highlights how her sessions take place in an entirely open and welcoming environment:

> In the beginning, the weavers would come together as an informal, open and welcoming weaving collective. This mode of operation was a remainder of the open invitation extended to all by the WWoW project group. Despite most of their participants being Wiradjuri women, Aunty Lorraine and the other weavers continue to open their arms to attendees irrespective of age or gender. Furthermore, whilst they do weave on Wiradjuri country, "it's open to everyone. Wiradjuri, non-Wiradjuri, Indigenous, non-indigenous." (Chapter 4)

Non-Indigenous people who attend the weaving sessions for the first time find the Wiradjuri Aunties to be extraordinarily generous hosts who provide hot drinks, cakes, and welcoming conversation. They also provide each other and anyone else attending with the materials and instruction needed to begin learning the practice of weaving.

> We were very lucky because we share. If I buy a hank of raffia and Aunty Joyce needs raffia, I will just hand it over. We have always been that way inclined. We got a grant so that if someone comes along and wants to start we can give them some materials and say, "ok, here you go. You can start" and after a month they can get their own. But to start with we provide some raffia and a needle and sit with them so they can have a go.

Being so open, inclusive, generous and welcoming of non-Indigenous attendees to HoW sessions is simply how our Aunties operate culturally. It is important to note they do not intentionally do this to challenge detrimental concepts or misrepresentations that erode the Wiradjuri socio-political status. They do not have an agenda or ulterior motives; they simply weave because it is part of their culture and being inclusive is culturally appropriate.

However, as with the collection of feathers for *giran* using Yindyamarra, the friendly, warm, and welcoming atmosphere that the Aunties foster during HoW sessions also helps build social bonds between Indigenous and non-Indigenous weavers. The welcoming of non-Indigenous people into HoW sessions encourages them to both engage with Wiradjuri culture first-hand and critically analyse whether colonialist concepts and misrepresentations they have been taught to apply to Aboriginal people are applicable, and also encourages them to appreciate the social strength and empowering quality of Wiradjuri community.

The remainder of this section will demonstrate how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation breaks down the conditions and ignorance that allowed detrimental representations of Wiradjuri people to develop. In doing so, Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation creates a better socio-

political dynamic between us and our non-Indigenous counterparts in country towns. This inevitably flows over towards improving the Wiradjuri socio-political status.

Most of the practitioner profiles in Chapter 4 feature Wiradjuri individuals reflecting on the country towns of their youth, describing them as places where social bonds between Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people were rare. These towns are rightly portrayed as environments where non-Indigenous residents often displayed open hostility toward Wiradjuri people and our culture. For Wiradjuri individuals, life in these towns was marked by rigid physical, social, and economic exclusion; underpinned by racism, discrimination, and classism. The lack of social connection between the two peoples fostered a widespread ignorance regarding the Wiradjuri among non-Indigenous communities and allowed the socio-politically harmful and uninformed depictions of Wiradjuri people to develop and spread.

The first exhibition by the HoW collective is an example of Wiradjuri weaving that both inadvertently challenged negative perceptions of the Wiradjuri, whilst building social bonds between the Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous residents of Wagga Wagga. This exhibition was titled *Marrambidya Dabaamalang: Murrumbidgee Gathering: Reconciliation through weaving, sharing and caring for one another*, and the media release for this exhibition described it as promoting

> reconciliation at a local and personal level, featuring several Aboriginal artists, recent migrants and non-Aboriginal artists who have assisted and collaborated together. Each member of the Hands on Weavers Inc. has interpreted their environment through weaving, reusing and exploring the use of found materials. At the heart of the exhibition is the weaving circle, which visitors are invited to join – to sit and work side by side with members. This provides an opportunity for visitors to contribute to the exhibition and become part of the journey of working together towards reconciliation in our community. (City of Wagga Wagga, 13 May 2013, Media Release)

Marrambidya Dabaamalang brought Aboriginal artists, recent migrants and non-Aboriginal artists together to weave an exhibition that would promote a 'journey of working together towards reconciliation' in Wagga Wagga. Moreover, as with the open and welcoming operation of HoW sessions, these social bonds were further encouraged by asking the gallery visitors to sit and work with the weavers.

Perhaps the most important example of how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation unintentionally and inadvertently improves the Wiradjuri socio-political status by building Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous social bonds is demonstrated through the HoW collective's engagement with local children via weaving workshops in schools. This engagement focuses on the social and familial bonds we have with children, an aspect of Wiradjuri social and familial life that was shown in the previous two sections of this chapter to have been ruthlessly attacked by our colonisers through the concept of the 'savage.'

Aunty Lorraine's profile outlines the HoW collective's practice of engaging with local school children:

> We do as a HoW group visit schools and talk to the kids about weaving and teach them very basic stuff. But just to show them. The boys like to twine if they aren't into weaving but some of them are. It's a continuation of what happened traditionally with the mums teaching the kids how to weave.

There are three important points to take from this quotation. First, it reiterates how weaving facilitates the development and strengthening of social bonds between the Aunties, other weavers, and children. This has taken place among the Wiradjuri since time immemorial. Such bonds challenge the detrimental depictions of Wiradjuri people as lacking meaningful familial ties and social bonds. It also challenges our misrepresentation as being uncaring or neglectful of children.

Second, the quotation reiterates the point made earlier in this chapter that many Wiradjuri people place higher value on the practice of developing and strengthening social bonds between each other that happens during weaving, than on the creation of woven

items. For Aunty Lorraine, the most important aspect of these weaving sessions is the opportunity for her to socially connect with the young Indigenous and non-Indigenous people attending them. These are not the views of a savage Wiradjuri person that is uncaring towards children, and thereby challenges this misrepresentation.

Third, and most importantly for the purposes of this section, the quotation demonstrates how the Aunties extend their Wiradjuri cultural responsibility to show love, care and attention to Wiradjuri, other Aboriginal and non-Indigenous children equally.

The following quote by Aunty Lorraine adds to the colloquial evidence that teaching weaving to non-Indigenous children is an effective means of developing social bonds between Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people in Wagga Wagga:

> We do notice the impact on the children. It's quite lovely when you walk down the street and you see these kids. They come up with their mums and say, “Ohhhhhh, Aunty Lorraine! Now, Aunty Lorraine taught me how to weave. You remember that broach we brought home? This is Aunty Lorraine. Aunty Lorraine, this is my mum.” And there is a lot of respect, which kids are losing. But once you’ve sat with them and you have woven together and talked to them, they seem to get that respect back again. It's quite amazing to see.

This quotation demonstrates the ripple effect that weaving has in terms of building social bonds between the Wiradjuri and the broader non-indigenous community. Aunty Lorraine’s weaving workshop developed social bonds between her and the presumably non-Indigenous child. However, that process rippled out to unintentionally challenge some negative depictions of Wiradjuri people the child’s mother was likely taught to believe and apply. For example, this scenario directly challenges the portrayal of Wiradjuri people as being neglectful, abusive and uncaring towards children: a gross misrepresentation that was outlined earlier in this chapter.

In summation, the revitalised cultural practice of Wiradjuri weaving is significant because it incidentally and inadvertently challenges negative conceptualisations of Wiradjuri that

have contributed to the subordination of the Wiradjuri socio-political status and the notion that we are a 'savage' people 'without complex social bonds and familial ties,' including to family members who have passed away. Aunty Lorraine's weaving is centred on creating social and loving bonds between Aunties and other members of the community by encouraging them to participate in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. This has a ripple-effect, breaking down negative perceptions of the Wiradjuri more broadly amongst the non-Indigenous community and thereby improving our socio-political status.

5.4.4 The Efficacy of Wiradjuri Cultural Revitalisation in Challenging Detrimental Depictions of the Wiradjuri and Improving the Wiradjuri Socio-Political Status

Continuing with the practitioner profiles of Chapter 4, this section demonstrates the efficacy of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation in challenging detrimental depictions of the Wiradjuri and improving our socio-political status.

For example, when Uncle Stan was a boy, it was dangerous for Wiradjuri people to exist, let alone practice or revitalise our culture. He spent decades revitalising and teaching the Wiradjuri language with no interest or support from non-Indigenous people, other than Dr John Rudder. His contribution was eventually recognised when he was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia from the Commonwealth and an honorary doctorate from Charles Sturt University. It can confidently be asserted that Uncle Stan's revitalisation of the Wiradjuri ngiyang both influenced and signified an improvement in the socio-political status of Wiradjuri people.

Similarly, Aunty Lorraine's father would not be seen in public with her when she was a little girl because he feared she would be identified as Wiradjuri and subsequently removed from her family as part of what later became known as the Stolen Generations. Aunty Lorraine is now acknowledged as a Wiradjuri Elder and her weaving is publicly displayed all over Wagga Wagga in recognition of the unique status of the Wiradjuri people in relation to Wiradjuri ngurambang. As with Uncle Stan's work with the Wiradjuri

language, Aunty Lorraine's culturally revitalised practice of weaving can be said to influence and signify a drastic shift in the socio-political status of the Wiradjuri from when she was a little girl.

When Dad was a child in Forbes, our family were still keenly mindful of the Wiradjuri people's low socio-political status there. Forbes had a history of being a racist, judgmental and often cruel place. For example, non-Indigenous people attempted to forcibly remove all Aboriginal people from it in 1901 (Read, 1988).

Today, numerous elements of Wiradjuri culture can be found across the town and its outskirts. For example, there is a Wiradjuri Dreaming Centre to 'promote Wiradjuri culture and stories', host 'cultural events, meetings and workshops' and serve as the keeping place of a fallen Wiradjuri scarred tree (Forbes Shire Council, n.d). Along the shore of Lake Forbes, a series of Wiradjuri signposts shares the stories and artistic patterns of the Wiradjuri people.

A photo I took of one of several Wiradjuri signposts along the shore of Lake Forbes that features the stories and artistic patterns of the Wiradjuri people. Artists: Brett Mon Garling, Scott Sauce Towney.

The shore of Lake Forbes also features a bronze statue by artist Brett 'Mon' Garling entitled *Family Matters* (Forbes Shire Council, n.d). It features two Wiradjuri women and a child returning from gathering food. The inclusion of this artistic representation of Wiradjuri people and culture is certainly inconsistent with historical depictions of Aboriginal people as savages, without complex social bonds, familial ties and care towards our children.

Bronze statue by artist Brett 'Mon' Garling titled "Family Matters". Source: https://www.forbes.nsw.gov.au/community/wiradjuri-culture

On Thursday 16 July 2020, a 20-metre gugaa (goanna) sculpture was revealed just outside the town. In the Condobolin Argus, Blewitt (2020) noted 'the significance of gugaa to Wiradjuri people, as a totemic animal as well as an important food source.' This public artwork demonstrates a vast improvement in attitudes towards Wiradjuri people and culture relative to our family's historical experience in Forbes.

Equally interesting for me during my visit to the gugaa were the several scarred trees surrounding it. These were signs that the Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation concerning the practice of carving is also happening in and around Forbes. I am confident that the prevalence of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation locally has significantly influenced this regional shift in the Wiradjuri's socio-political status.

A photo from my visit to the gugaa sculpture in Forbes.

One of the several scarred trees I saw when visiting the gugaa sculpture in Forbes.

A cluster of scarred trees I saw when visiting the gugaa sculpture in Forbes.

There are other examples of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and the associated improvement of the Wiradjuri socio-political status throughout Forbes too. The revitalised Wiradjuri ngiyang is now taught in Forbes's schools and there are dedicated Aboriginal medical and legal services in town. Other indicators include the multiple acknowledgments of the Wiradjuri people as the traditional owners of the Forbes Shire and the Aboriginal flag being flown outside the Council Chambers where Acknowledgements of Country are conducted. Again, such symbolic improvements to the Wiradjuri socio-political status strongly suggest their causal connection to the wider recognition of Wiradjuri cultural strength achieved through contemporary practices of cultural revitalisation.

A photo I took of one of the many signs around Forbes acknowledging the Wiradjuri people.

A photo of public art I saw in Hughes Lane when visiting Forbes. It features the gugaa as the totem of the Wiradjuri people.

Finally, alongside the Wiradjuri practitioner profiles of Chapter 4, I want to introduce additional evidence of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation improving the socio-political status of the Wiradjuri people by building social bonds between the Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people. The following quotation is Uncle Geoff Anderson's account of his introduction of the Wiradjuri ngiyang to the schools in Parkes, a town on Wiradjuri ngurambang just 30 minutes northeast of Forbes.

> The language has turned out to be a wonderful thing in Parkes. And, with the schoolchildren in Parkes East Public School speaking some language, we have a school boasting zero racism. The parents have accepted the language and we find

> that it's breaking down the invisible wall of racism within the community. The student representative council of the Parkes East Public School approached the Parkes Shire Council for Welcome to Wiradjuri Country signs to be placed on the road north and south of Parkes. The Council agreed to this request from the school and the signs that are 4.5 metres high and 1.5 metres wide are seen by 5,500 cars per day. So from the humble beginnings of 'Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes', the children of Parkes are now showing the Wiradjuri Elders and people respect. And they are returning the respect. (Anderson, 2010, p. 72)

As with Aunty Lorraine's practitioner profile, Uncle Geoff's account demonstrates how the ripple effect of inviting non-Indigenous people to participate in our practices of cultural revitalisation can challenge detrimental depictions of Wiradjuri and improve our socio-political status by building social bonds within a community.

A Welcome to Country sign requested by the student representative council of the Parkes East Public School to the Parkes Shire Council. Source: https://www.firstlanguages.org.au/ideas-for-councils

The development of Uncle Geoff's social bonds with the school children led to them lobbying the local government to make changes in Parkes that both create and signify an improvement in the Wiradjuri socio-political status. In summary, Uncle Geoff's account supports my contention that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation unintentionally and inadvertently improves the Wiradjuri sociopolitical status by challenging detrimental depictions of the Wiradjuri people whilst building social bonds with non-Indigenous people.

5.5 Conclusion to the Chapter

This chapter has addressed the research question: What is the significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to the Wiradjuri people's socio-political status? It did so by demonstrating how the practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation unintentionally and inadvertently challenges detrimental depictions our colonisers have applied to us to undermine our socio-political status.

Section 5.2 demonstrated how Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people have had their socio-political status supressed since colonisation through the non-Indigenous application of detrimental socio-political concepts and associated misrepresentations. The 'savage' was identified as a concept used in such a way. The first misrepresentation highlighted under the concept of the 'savage' was our colonisers' depiction of us being 'ignorant of property and laws' and 'living in a state of untamed nature.' This misrepresentation was used to underpin justifications for colonising Australia under the concept of Terra Nullius until Mabo II (1997).

Section 5.2 also explored the misrepresentation that Aboriginal people were 'savage' because we were 'without complex social bonds or familial ties.' This misrepresentation was identified as the focus of this chapter and historical examples of it being applied to undermine our sociopolitical status were provided.

Section 5.3 demonstrated how Aboriginal and Wiradjuri people continue to have our contemporary socio-political status undermined by depicting us as 'savages without complex social bonds and familial ties.' It examined how Aboriginal social bonds and familial ties were misrepresented during the visit of Peter Dutton and Jacinta Price to Alice Springs. The politicians' unfounded claim of widespread sexual abuse against children by Aboriginal people was identified as an attempt to undermine support for a referendum on the Voice to Parliament, a proposal that many Aboriginal and Wiradjuri people believed would improve our socio-political status. Dutton's and Price's misrepresentations were shown to be a continuation of the Coalition's similar false claims and negative ideological constructions made to justify the Northern Territory Intervention 16 years earlier. Finally, Bill Leak's cartoon response to the 'Australia's Shame' investigation was shown to be a particularly egregious illustration of how our colonisers still detrimentally misrepresent Aboriginal social bonds and familial ties to undermine our socio-political status.

Section 5.4 drew on the practitioner profiles of Chapter 4 to illustrate how the culturally revitalised philosophy of Yindyamarra is at the heart of what it means to be a Wiradjuri person and the very antithesis of 'savagery.' This contrast was used to demonstrate how Wiradjuri peoples practice of cultural revitalisation unintentionally presents an alternative portrayal of us that contradicts our harmful misrepresentations, thereby challenging them and potentially causing them to be abandoned.

This section then demonstrated how Dad's conceptualisation and creation of wilay badhang-galang using Yindymarra has also subtly challenged non-Indigenous peoples' socio-politically detrimental perceptions of us as 'savages without complex familial bonds.' Dad's practice of making wilay badhang-galang did so by providing an understanding of the complexity of Wiradjuri familial ties and how the practice of making them connected him to our ancestors, to present-day family and to future generations of descendants who have not been born yet.

The analysis of Jonathan Jones's *giran*, which was created through the extensive efforts of many Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people, also contradicted our misrepresentation by demonstrating the effects of strong Wiradjuri social bonds and familial ties.

Jonathan's callout for all Australians to collect feathers using Yindyamarra was also examined as an example of non-Indigenous people participating in, rather than simply observing, Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. It was argued that personal experience with cultural revitalisation encourages non-Indigenous people to abandon detrimental perceptions they may have, thereby also improving our socio-political status. It was also argued this process of non-Indigenous participation in cultural revitalisation was more effective than merely observing Wiradjuri people practicing it.

Like Dad's wilay badhang-galang and Jonathan's *giran*, Aunty Lorraine's weaving was a means of developing and strengthening Wiradjuri social bonds and familial ties internally between Wiradjuri people. Demonstrating this creates an alternative portrayal of Wiradjuri people that challenges our misrepresentation. However, her weaving with non-Indigenous participants was shown to also create social bonds with non-Indigenous people, whose improvement of the Wiradjuri socio-political status is magnified through what she identified as a ripple effect.

It was argued that although there is a lack of quantitative research measuring the impact of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation on the Wiradjuri socio-political status, the profiles in Chapter 4 demonstrated how the non-Indigenous reception of Wiradjuri people and culture vastly improved during the lifetimes of the practitioners, and this improvement coincided with the practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. This is evidence of the positive correlation between Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and improvements in the Wiradjuri socio-political status.

Finally, Uncle Geoff Anderson's introduction of the revitalised Wiradjuri ngiyang into Parkes schools was provided as a rare academic account of the efficacy of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation in improving the Wiradjuri socio-political status. Uncle Geoff's students developed social bonds to the extent that no instances of racism towards

Aboriginal students were reported whilst Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous students were learning the Wiradjuri ngiyang together. The town's council supporting a petition from the students to acknowledge Parkes is on Wiradjuri ngurambang is further evidence of the shared practice of cultural revitalisation sending out positive socio-political ripples into the community.

In summary, this chapter has presented evidence that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation incidentally and inadvertently improves the Wiradjuri socio-political status by challenging the detrimental concepts and misrepresentations arrayed against it and creating positive social bonds between Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people.

Chapter 6:

The Socio-Political Significance of Wiradjuri Cultural Revitalisation - The Intentional Dispelling of Detrimental Concepts and Misrepresentations Through Self-Determination

6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the argument that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is significant because it challenges the concepts and misrepresentations that detrimentally impact Wiradjuri socio-political status. However, this chapter differs from Chapter 5 by arguing the practitioners of cultural revitalisation often use it *intentionally* as an act of nation rebuilding; doing so is an act of self-determination that bolsters the Wiradjuri sense of nationhood and may lead to self-government.

Section 6.2 introduces the Stadial Theory of History and provides instances of how it was applied to Aboriginal people in the earlier stages of our colonisation to subordinate our socio-political status and justify the establishment of colonial sovereignty in Australia.

Section 6.3 argues that the Stadial Theory of History has not been abandoned. The debate surrounding Bruce Pascoe's book *Dark Emu* is used to show the Stadial Theory of History is deeply rooted in the Australian settler-colonial narrative and persists as a way of undermining the Aboriginal and Wiradjuri socio-political status.

Section 6.4 shows how the practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is being intentionally used to counter colonial concepts that supress the Wiradjuri socio-political status. This section does so by drawing on Jonathan Jones's profile (see Chapter 4) to demonstrate how Wiradjuri people are intentionally using cultural revitalisation to counter the application of the Stadial Theory of History to the Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people.

Section 6.5. demonstrates how Wiradjuri people improve our socio-political status by intentionally using Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to expose the problematic non-Indigenous practice of misrepresenting Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people to curate the Australian national narrative. Jonathan's creation of an artwork through Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is argued to be an example of Wiradjuri people intentionally using our cultural revitalisation to expose this practice and address it by presenting a self-determined Wiradjuri portrayal of our people, culture, identity and so on. This argued to be a provision of a Wiradjuri counternarrative that has significant implications for our socio-political status.

Section 6.6 will argue using Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to define ourselves incidentally answers the question of who is the 'self' in 'self-determination' and 'self-government.' This addresses the first stage of 'identifying as a nation' in the Nation Building Approach and progresses us towards self-government. However, I also acknowledge that the Wiradjuri people have been intentionally 'identifying as a nation' since at least the 1990s and that our culture is central to that assertion of nationhood. I propose that this makes any act of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation socio-politically significant because it strengthens the foundation of Wiradjuri nationhood.

6.2 The Role of the Stadial Theory of History in the Suppression of the Socio-Political Status of the Wiradjuri and Other Aboriginal People

The Stadial Theory of History is one of many interrelated concepts that have been used to weaken the socio-political status of Aboriginal people, including the Wiradjuri. As such, it is important to commence this chapter by articulating specifically how The Stadial Theory of History and other such concepts were initially constructed and applied to Aboriginal people, including the Wiradjuri.

Many of the earliest justifications of colonisation were based on the racist ideologies professed by pre-eminent European theorists of the time. The Stadial Theory of History

(referred to hereafter as Stadial Theory) came to prominence during the Scottish Enlightenment of 1740–1790 and was applied to buttress the Western concept of the 'savage'. Martens (2003, p.2) defines Stadial Theory as being centralised on the notion

> that humankind was comprised of a diverse variety of peoples at different developmental stages. All societies occupied a place on the scale between savagery and civilization; at the bottom of the scale were the 'rude' savage tribes of America and Australia, at the top the civilized 'polished nations' of Europe.

This definition demonstrates how the Stadial Theory fulfilled a similar function to the concept of the 'savage', as discussed in Chapter 5. Both concepts enabled European colonisers to justify their domination of others by portraying themselves as superior, civilised beings and, conversely, the colonised societies as inferior and uncivilised savages in need of governance and moral development.

The political economist and philosopher Adam Smith is widely believed to be one of greatest minds of the Scottish Enlightenment. Sen (2016) identifies him as the Father of Economics and for Bassiry and Jones (1993) he is the Father of Capitalism. His academic renown mostly stems from the publication of two classic works: *The Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). However, Paganelli (2022) has explained that under his Stadial Theory of History, Smith would articulate to his students that the 'natural progress which men make in society' forms a linear path of advancement through the ages: 'There are four distinct stages which mankind passes thro: 1st, the Age of Hunters, 2dly, the Age of Shepherds; 3dly, the Age of Agriculture; and 4thly, the Age of Commerce' (quoted in Brewer, 2008, p. 2)

An important 'stage' for the purposes of this thesis is Smith's 'Age of Hunters': people living in an Age of Hunters nourish themselves by simply falling upon 'the wild fruits and wild animals which the country afforded' (quoted in Brewer, 2008, p. 3). In other words, Smith viewed such people as collectively supporting themselves by opportunistically acquiring food from the plants and meat that can naturally be found on the land. He reasoned that people in the Age of Hunters would progress to the Age of Shepherds by

domesticating animals, forming them into herds and moving them from one pasture to the next in a nomadic pattern. Such 'advancement' in food supply would result in population growth and thus to the third 'stage', the Age of Agriculture, also referred to as the 'age of farming' (p. 4).

The Age of Agriculture is also particularly important for the purposes of this thesis. Smith proposed that people in an Age of Agriculture would begin planting and harvesting crops and this would provide another level of food security through the storing of grain for consumption at a later point by baking it into bread. As with the transition from the Age of Hunters to the Age of Shepherds, such an increase in food security would allow for a further population to increase. In the Age of Commerce, people would secure food and other goods and necessities through trade.

Within his Stadial Theory, Smith's categorisation of *ages* based on how people would acquire food is problematic because it posits a transition from inferiority to superiority, from savagery to civility. Brewer (2008) notes how the 'savage/civilised' juxtaposition inherit in Stadial Theory can be seen in *The Wealth of Nations*, where Smith 'contrasted between living standards in "savage nations of hunters and fishers" and "civilised and thriving nations"' (p. 3).

Smith's Stadial Theory and its notions of human 'savagery' and 'civility' were elements of an ontological perspective designed to place humanity in a hierarchical system with Europeans superior and everyone else inferior. They were simply tools to bolster Europeans' justification for their brutal colonisation over the non-European world.

Adam Ferguson was a contemporary of Smith who disagreed with his conceptualisation of the Stadial Theory (Launay, 2021). Ferguson believed the stages in the Stadial Theory were distinguished from one another based upon the division of labour and property rights, rather than differences in the production of food. He also believed humanity was divided into three stages, not four. Ferguson's naming of these three stages also differs from Smith's in that their names more overtly demonstrate how deeply the concept was intertwined with the concept of the savage, colonisation and the subordination of non-

Europeans. Ferguson named those three stages in order of ascension as that of the ‘savage’, the ‘barbarous’ and the ‘polished’.

Ferguson further demonstrated the relationship between the Stadial Theory and colonisation by using French Jesuits’ accounts of the Haudenosaunee, an indigenous people they encountered in the southern Great Lakes area of North America in the early 1600s and who had resisted colonisation. According to Launay (2021), Ferguson used the French accounts to portray the Haudenosaunee as his ‘paradigmatic example of savage society’ during his articulation of the Stadial Theory (p. 3). Essentially, Ferguson argued Smith’s construction of the Stadial Theory could not be correct because the Haudenosaunee practised agriculture and were almost universally perceived by Europeans to be savages.

There is strong evidence to suggest the colonisers of Australia also subscribed to Stadial Theory and used it to justify their colonisation of Aboriginal peoples. Their labelling of Aboriginal peoples as ‘non-agricultural’ and ‘hunter-gatherers’ was crucial to their asserting sovereignty and property rights over our lands. Banner (2009) explained:

> The absence of Aboriginal farms was crucial, because the British were heirs to a long tradition of thought associating the development of property rights with a society's passage through specific stages of civilization. The most familiar statement of this view in the late eighteenth century was again from Vattel, who held that non-agricultural peoples’ “unsettled habitation in these immense regions cannot be accounted a true and legal possession”, and that European farmers accordingly might lawfully settle on their land. Vattel was writing with reference to North America ... but his words obviously applied to Australia as well. (pp. 17–18.)

This ‘long tradition of thought’ included the Stadial Theory premise that practising agriculture signified a people’s worth by positioning them on a continuum between the categories of ‘savagery’ and ‘civility.’ Europeans had conveniently developed jurisprudential theories arguing that farming on a piece of land gave the agriculturalist a superior proprietary right over that land relative to any pre-existing non-agricultural

people already occupying it. In line with this, Australia's colonisers went to great lengths to portray Aboriginal people, including the Wiradjuri, as nomadic hunter-gatherers who had failed to develop the practice of agriculture. Depicting them as a 'savage people' could justify forceful dispossession and mistreatment at the hands of the supposedly civilised agriculturalists.

The following declaration from William Hull (1846), a colonial magistrate and an ethnographic author, provides evidence that the Australian colonial authorities were subscribing to the Stadial Theory and Vattel's notions regarding property rights for non-agricultural peoples:

> It is an axiom of civil life, that no nation or tribe can acquire or maintain a right to the soil, unless it profitably occupies or tills it. Admitting such a rule – the nomadick [sic] tribes of Australia cannot be said to be dispossessed of their country. (p. 21)

Hull's assertion demonstrates how Vattel's views of agriculture and colonial property rights were also held within the fledgling British colonies in Australia and how the Stadial Theory was influential in legally and morally justifying the colonisers' invasion and attempted seizure of the continent based on assertions that Aboriginal people did not obtain food by farming. Furthermore, this difference in food-acquisition meant Australia's First Peoples could not have property rights over the lands the Europeans were attempting to claim, despite already occupying them for tens of thousands of years. For McCarthy (2005), the belief Aboriginal people 'were disqualified from possessing property rights due to their non-agriculturalist status … [was] a matter of implicit agreement amongst historians of Australia prior to the 1970s', and this view stood essentially unchallenged for two centuries before being addressed in earnest following the publication of Henry Reynolds's (1985) *The Law of the Land.*

In summation, the First Fleet's British colonisers came to Australia in 1788 with more than just material provisions needed to establish a new colony. They also brought Enlightenment concepts like the Stadial Theory that led them to deem people who were

different from them as ‘savages’ who could be subordinated. This is how the Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people inherited their disadvantaged socio-political status from their colonisers.

6.3 Contemporary Manifestations of the Stadial Theory

This section demonstrates how the Aboriginal, including Wiradjuri, socio-political status continues to be defined and suppressed by the Stadial Theory. Doing so will help articulate the significance of Wiradjuri people's intentional use of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to challenge such socio-political suppression.

This section also examines the public debate that has been raging in Australia around a recent publication proposing Aboriginal people were agriculturalists prior to British colonisation. It argues that even the occurrence of this debate is evidence that some non-Indigenous people still perceive Aboriginal and Wiradjuri people through the lens of the Stadial Theory. The implication of this perception is that the wider public perception and socio-political status of our people is still being manipulated and disadvantaged by 18th century colonial concepts.

In 2014, Indigenous author Bruce Pascoe published *‘Dark Emu Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident’.* Magabala Books (n.d.) provided this synopsis of the book:

> [It is a] reconsideration of the ‘hunter-gatherer’ tag for pre-colonial Aboriginal Australians and attempts to rebut the colonial myths that have worked to justify dispossession. Accomplished author Bruce Pascoe provides compelling evidence from the diaries of early explorers that suggests that systems of food production and land management have been blatantly understated in modern retellings of early Aboriginal history, and that a new look at Australia's past is required.

Pascoe (2018) explained that *Dark Emu:*

> exploded the myth that Aboriginal people were mere hunters and gatherers and did nothing with the land. I wrote the book because I found it hard to convince Australians that Aboriginal people were farming. Using colonial journals, the sources Australians hold to be true, I was able to form a radically different view of Australian history. Aboriginal people were farming. There's no other conclusion to draw.

Keen (2021) noted Pascoe used the journals of Australia's early colonisers as foundational texts for *Dark Emu* and that these accounts

> revealed a much more complicated Aboriginal economy than the primitive hunter-gatherer lifestyle we had been told was the simple lot of Australia's First People. Hunter-gatherer societies forage and hunt for food and do not employ agricultural methods or build permanent dwellings; they are nomadic. (p. 1)

Hughes-d'Aeth's (2018) article in *The Conversation* provided further detail of how Pascoe made the case for pre-colonial Aboriginal people being considered agriculturalists:

> [They] farmed their land, lived in villages, built houses, harvested cereals, built complex aquaculture systems — possibly the earliest stone structures in human history — and led the kind of sedentary agricultural lives that were meant only to have arrived with Europeans in 1788.

Although *Dark Emu* does not explore the Stadial Theory in detail, it clearly addresses its detrimental application to Aboriginal people. In the terms of the Stadial Theory, the thesis of *Dark Emu* is that, at the time of colonisation, Australia's First Peoples should have been deemed to be in Smith's 'Age of Agriculture' instead of the 'Age of Hunters'. With this proposal, Pascoe has challenged a crucial concept used by the colonisers to justify the foundation of their settler-colonial state.

Provoking thought and challenging introspection amongst many non-Indigenous Australians, *Dark Emu* was met with critical acclaim and received many awards, including

the 2016 Indigenous Writer's Prize and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards prize for Book of the Year. It was also adapted into a children's version titled *Young Dark Emu: A Truer History*, which also won several prominent literary awards. And in 2018, Australia's internationally renowned Bangarra Dance Theatre adapted *Dark Emu* into a stage performance.

Because *Dark Emu* challenged notions that are at the heart of the dubious colonial justification for the founding of the Australian settler-colonial state, it also attracted significant hostility and outrage. With much of this criticism coming from Australia's politically conservative right, the book sparked public commentary and debate reminiscent of the 'History Wars' that raged in Australia from 1996 to 2006. The arguments levelled against the book have primarily centred around two main criticisms. The first was a direct attack on Bruce Pascoe, claiming he was not Aboriginal. Morton (2020) outlined one such attack where Peter Dutton MP forwarded a complaint from Aboriginal businesswoman Josephine Cashman to the Australian Federal Police. Cashman accused Pascoe of 'benefiting financially from incorrectly claiming to be Indigenous' (Allam, 2020). Although the allegations were not pursued by the Australian Federal Police, the fact that a deeply conservative Federal Member of Parliament referred the matter of Pascoe's indigeneity to the Australian Federal Police following his publication of *Dark Emu* demonstrates how threatened conservative Australians felt when the application of the Stadial Theory to Aboriginal people was questioned.

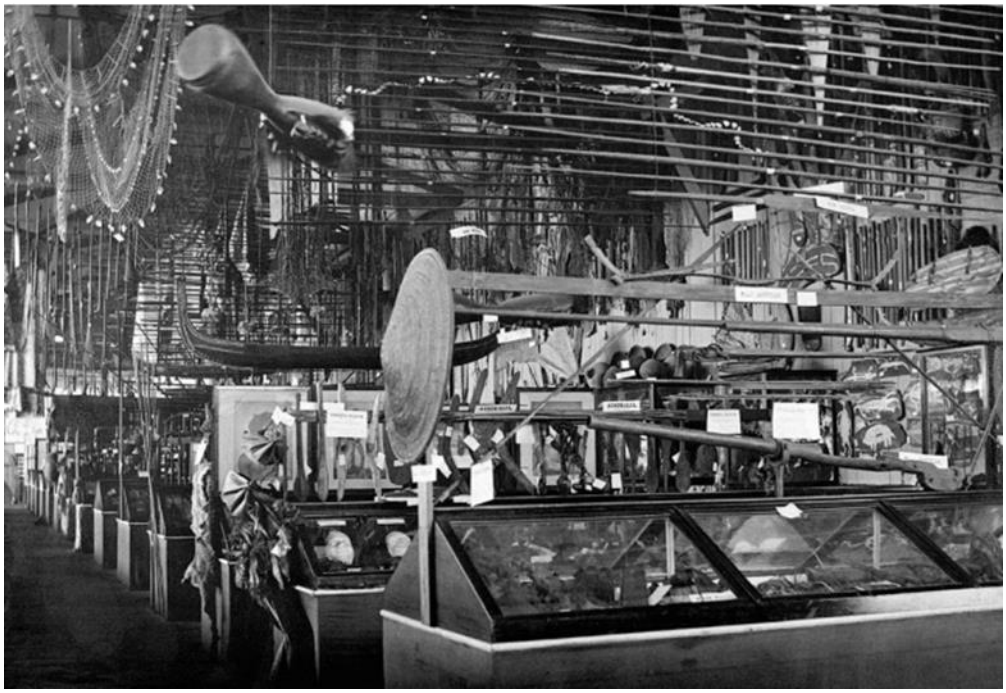
The second criticism was that Pascoe 'exaggerated or embellished historical sources and selectively quoted from them' (Davis, 2020, p. 59). This criticism echoes the conservatives' accusations of substandard scholarship that were levelled at revisionist historians during the 'History Wars' (MacIntyre & Clark, 2004). However, the colonial sources that Pascoe quotes from are both overwhelming and trustworthy. In their own words, colonists described Aboriginal houses, complex land and water management, forms of harvesting, and food processing. Most of all, they acknowledged and were often impressed by these societies' deep understanding of country.

Sutton and Walshe (2021) also criticised Pascoe's *Dark Emu* as lacking scholarship and for selectively using colonial material to support his agriculturalist representation of pre-colonial Aboriginal people. They argued that the Aboriginal harvesting of wild grains and use of fish traps are better identified as evidence of advanced hunter-gatherer practices. Again, such distinctions clearly indicate this debate is positioned in the context of Stadial Theory. However, Sutton and Walshe raise some arguments that are particularly relevant for this thesis. They claim that Pascoe insufficiently drew on the oral histories and voices of Aboriginal people, opting for the colonial-era explorers' accounts, thus reinforcing colonial biases by omitting Aboriginal perspectives and insights. They also convincingly argue that *Dark Emu* accepts the Eurocentric view that agriculture is a sign of a sophisticated society. Instead, they say, the sustainable and complicated techniques pre-colonial Aboriginal people used to acquire food ought to be appreciated on their own terms and not according to such Eurocentric perspectives. This argument is particularly relevant to this thesis as Sutton and Walshe are essentially advocating for the value of pre-colonial Aboriginal societies to be detached and appreciated separately from the Stadial Theory. This is an argument I strongly agree with.

However, the purpose of this section is not to engage with the merits or criticisms of *Dark Emu*. It is to demonstrate that the concepts of the Stadial Theory of History are deeply embedded in the Australian narrative and continue to be used to portray Aboriginal people detrimentally and to undermine our socio-political status. Although the debates surrounding *Dark Emu* may appear to revolve around the very simple question of whether pre-colonial Aboriginal people practised agriculture, I argue that the real debate is about whether Aboriginal peoples and our continuing cultural practices are worthy of consideration in shaping contemporary Australia. The fact this debate is taking place at all indicates that the effects of the Stadial Theory still undermine our socio-political status by misrepresenting us.

6.4 barangal dyara (skin and bones) – Intentionally Countering the Stadial Theory of History Using Wiradjuri Cultural Revitalisation

Jonathan's artwork *barangal dyara* marked the beginning of his use of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to counter the non-Indigenous and socio-politically detrimental misrepresentations of the Wiradjuri and other Southeastern First Nations. *barangal dyara* was a Kaldor Project that traced the outline of the grand Garden Palace, which was built for the Sydney International Exhibition in 1879. The Garden Palace was used for storing many things following the exhibition, including a horde of Aboriginal objects the colonisers had collected as they moved across the continent (pictured below). The Garden Palace burnt down on 22 September 1882 and the objects contained inside were tragically destroyed.



The Ethnological Court at the Garden Palace. Source: Vanni Accarigi, I., 2016.

barangal dyara featured many instances of Aboriginal and Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. According to the Kaldor Public Art Projects (n.d.):

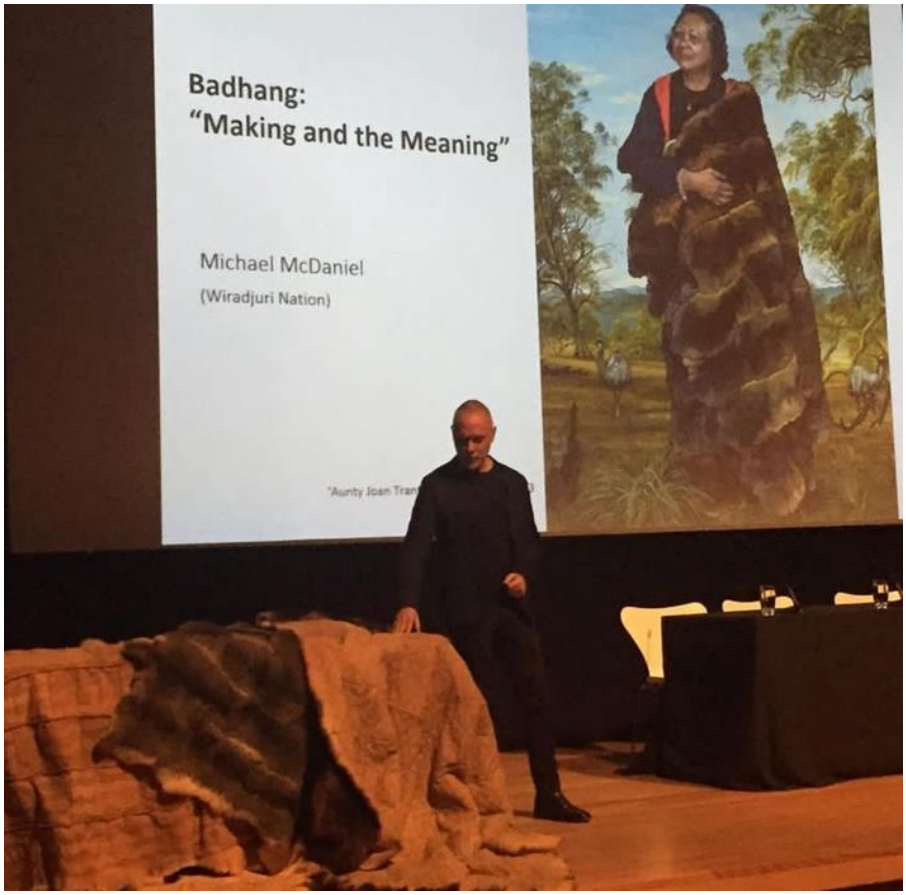
The installation featured 15,000 bleached-white gypsum shields, a material used in Aboriginal mourning ceremonies, to mark the extent of the building's footprint and echo the masses of rubble left after the fire. A native meadow of kangaroo grass formed the heart of the work, on the site of the Palace's original dome. Moving through the installation, visitors encountered eight different Aboriginal languages spoken across south-east Australia, through soundscapes created by Jones in collaboration with communities. *barrangal dyara* (skin and bones) was open to the public for just over two weeks, and each day the site was activated through talks, performances, workshops and special events.

An arial image of *barangal dyara* marking the outline of the former Garden Palace with ceramic shields. Photo by Peter Greig. Source: https://forecastpublicart.org/barrangal-dyara/

barangal dyara's programming featured three symposia in which cultural revitalisation served as a common theme. In the first, 'Landscape and Language', Uncle Stan Grant presented on Wiradjuri language revitalisation. The Kaldor Public Art Project (B, n.d)

described how this symposium connected the revitalisation of the Wiradjuri language to the conceptualisation of *barangal dyara*:

> Announcing Australia to the world, the Palace welcomed international visitors and their goods to the Sydney International Exhibition, 1879–80. Indigenous languages seemed to have been silenced on the ancient ground, while a chatter of other languages, currencies and philosophies from all round the world were ushered in. Landscape and language revealed the cultural landscape and built environment that led to the Garden Palace, asking what configurations of country are still active in this site on the edge of the city.



Dad presenting at *barangal dyara*'s third symposium.

Dad also presented on wilay badhang-galang in the third symposium, 'Loss and Resilience'. The Kaldor Public Art Project (n.d) described how the Wiradjuri revitalisation of wilay badhang-galang contributed to *barangal dyara*:

> When the grand Garden Palace burned down in 1882, vast stores of archival and cultural material were lost, including an ethnological collection assembled by the Australian Museum – a loss that is felt to this day. But out of the void, new modes of display and public cultural engagement developed and Sydney began to recover. The burning palace was generative too, causing the growth of several fledgling organisations that may well have failed to emerge if the great centralised vision of the post–exhibition palace had prevailed. Loss and resilience celebrated the resilience of the many cultures impacted by the Garden Palace fire, showing how communities can heal and find ways to thrive after catastrophe.

Jonathan's desire to draw attention to colonial Australia's propensity to forget its past was central to his conceptualisation of *barangal dyara*. He wanted people to remember the global significance of the Aboriginal cultures that were impacted through both the colonisation of Australia and the Garden Palace fire. This is evident in the following quotation from Sebag-Montefiore (2016) in an article about the opening of *barangal dyara*: 'People don't know that the world's oldest ceremonial burial happened here in New South Wales. People don't know that Australians were the first breadmakers by 15,000 years.'

Jonathan intentionally provided the above statement to a leading Australian newspaper whilst the debate surrounding *Dark Emu* was still raging. The timing suggests he wanted to draw the attention of non-Indigenous Australians to Pascoe's assertions and support them. He also asked Pascoe to speak about *Dark Emu* alongside Uncle Stan and others at the first symposium of *barangal dyara*.

As further support for Pascoe's assertions in *Dark Emu*, *barangal dyara* included a field of kangaroo grass Jonathan had planted in a sandstone plot where the palace's dome once

stood (pictured below). This deliberate statement using an artwork that heavily utilised cultural revitalisation was not lost on Sebag-Montefiore (2016), who wrote:

> Rustling in the breeze, the grass not only looks picturesque; it is a symbolic rebuttal of the myth that Indigenous people were agriculturally unsophisticated before the British arrived. Jones points out that the early settlers recorded in their diaries evidence of Aboriginal populations cultivating the land with yam fields, crops and irrigation systems.

barangal dyara's field of kangaroo grass where the palace's dome once stood. Source: https://archive.kaldorartprojects.org.au/index.php/Detail/objects/11474

Amongst the substantial elements of other southeastern Aboriginal cultural revitalisation that underpinned this monumental installation, Jonathan's *barangal dyara* drew attention to the non-Indigenous peoples' mistreatment and misrepresentation of Australia's Aboriginal peoples and cultures. This countering of the misapplication of Stadial Theory also demonstrates how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation can be intentionally used by

Wiradjuri people to improve our socio-political status by deliberately thwarting the colonial concepts that have persistently undermined it.

6.5 Jonathan Jones, Uncle Stan Grant and walam-wunga.galang – Countering Stadial Theory's Undermining of the Wiradjuri Socio-Political Status and Presenting a Self-Determined Wiradjuri Counter-Narrative

Jonathan Jones's *walam-wunga.galang* appeared in the National Gallery of Australia exhibition under the name *untitled* (*walam-wunga.galang, 2020-21*) from 4 March to 23 July 2023 (NGA, n.d.). It had previously appeared in the 2022 Emu Sky exhibition at the University of Melbourne. A product of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation, it comprises a series of grinding stones and a soundscape featuring Beatrice Murray singing in the Wiradjuri ngiyang. The revitalised grinding stones Jonathan produced for the exhibition are far larger than those used prior to colonisation. Uncle Stan was a key collaborator with Jonathan on *walam-wunga.galang* and provided the Wiradjuri words for Beatrice to sing.

walam-wunga.galang is used in this section to demonstrate how Wiradjuri people can use Wiradjuri-centric conceptualisations of our people, culture, identity, and nation to negate our colonisers' detrimental socio-political concepts and misrepresentations and thus generate better outcomes for our people.

Grinding stones were a common tool of our Wiradjuri ancestors. They generally featured a large flat stone with a concave surface that provided a bowl in which seeds and grains could be placed before being ground into a flour using another smaller grinding stone, similar to a mortar and pestle. This flour was used to make bread. Various colonial factors contributed to the decline in the use of grinding stones, including the seizure of grasslands for grazing sheep and cattle, the subsequent decline in native grasses, the restriction of Wiradjuri people to missions, and the provision of non-Indigenous food sources that disincentivised Wiradjuri food practices.

walam-wunga.galang grinding stones. Source: https://nga.gov.au/art-artists/Jonathan-Jones/

Jonathan creating the grinding stones for *walam-wunga.galang.* Source: https://artguide.com.au/jonathan-jones-centres-some-of-the-worlds-oldest-breadmakers-indigenous-australians/

As with his *barangal dyara,* Jonathan's *walam-wunga.galang* is an artwork that intentionally uses Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to challenge the detrimental Stadial Theory misrepresentations of Aboriginal people and their socio-political status. By drawing attention to the Aboriginal agricultural tradition of producing bread from the grains and seeds of cereal grasses, he supports the claims Pascoe made in *Dark Emu*. This is evident in Jonathan's statement about *walam-wunga.galang*:

> The work is thinking about a statement that Uncle Bruce [Pascoe] has worked a lot within his book, about Captain Sturt who was lost out at Coopers Creek. That he comes across a camp of Blackfellas who end up saving him and his men. And at night as he's been fed with roasted duck and cake, he sits in a house and he listens to the women of the camps grinding seeds, and he says that the sound they make is like a loom factory. And so, in that moment we get a sense of how important these objects were in this region. How people were using these grindstones to feed their families, to feed our nations. And yet those stones have gone quiet. So, in so many ways this project is about waking those stones up to tell these stories again to feed not only our bellies but our imagination. (Emu Sky, 2002)

Further connections between *walam-wunga.galang* and Pascoe's *Dark Emu* were also noted by the National Gallery of Australia (n.d.) when it exhibited the artwork in 2023: The project '[has] drawn on the work of Uncle Bruce Pascoe and Bill Gammage, key thinkers within the conversation about how south-east Australia is understood'. The NGA also mentioned that the First Nations' peoples and cultures were much more complicated than the 'savage hunter-gatherer' misrepresentation that has been applied to them. In his book *The Biggest Estate on Earth*, Gammage (2012) argued the First Peoples of Australia had 'an extraordinarily complex system of land management using fire and the life cycles of native plants to ensure plentiful wildlife and plant foods throughout the year'. The use of such land management systems means Aboriginal people needed far less time and effort to secure food and shelter than European settlers. Gammage challenged the Stadial Theory

proposal that hunter-gatherers spent large amounts of time securing food and that this would have left them little time or motivation to develop sophisticated laws and culture.

The following quotation from Jonathan's *Emu Sky* (2022) exhibition shows he was intentionally using *walam-wunga.galang* to support Pascoe's thesis in *Dark Emu* and thus improve the Wiradjuri socio-political status:

> [*walam-wunga.galang*] is a work that celebrates a southeast cultural practice of collecting seeds, grinding them down and making bread. This is a practice that's been happening for countless generations in this region. In fact, in central New South Wales a grindstone was found at 32,000 years old, making us some of the world's oldest bread makers. But like most Aboriginal stories, that's not part of Australia's history. So, in many ways this project is about bringing those stories to light. Making these oversized grindstones to celebrate these big stories - these stories that are about our history. (*Emu Sky*, 2019)

This quotation echoes the commentary Jonathan provided for *barangal dyara* in support of *Dark Emu*. He noted how Wiradjuri achievements with cereal grains and breadmaking are omitted from the detrimental socio-political portrayals of us as savage 'hunter-gatherers', which has been used to justify Australia's colonisation. He further demonstrates how Wiradjuri people can intentionally wield cultural revitalisation to negate the Stadial Theory narrative.

Jonathan also uses his commentary on *walam-wunga.galang* to expose our colonisers' practices of creating socio-politically detrimental misrepresentations regarding Aboriginal people when constructing the Australian national narrative.

I propose this exposing of colonial concepts and of the misrepresentations that are the causal underpinnings of the disadvantaged Wiradjuri socio-political status must be addressed if it is to be improved through non-Indigenous governmental initiatives like 'Closing the Gap.' The limited success of such programs is well known, and they will continue to fall short until the colonial concepts and misrepresentations underpinning

Indigenous socio-political disadvantage have been exposed for what they are and addressed. Jonathan's *walam-wunga.galang* is so significant because it does this:

> These epic grindstones acknowledge the weight of these stories, which change the way we understand ourselves as a nation. The works are made from sandstone collected from the south-east, slowly ground down over years. The process of shaping stone with stone speaks to our enduring presence and the strength of our knowledges. In the soundscape we hear Uncle Stan Grant Senior speak to us in Wiradjuri, telling us to stay connected to Country, that Country needs us, and that if we look after it, Country will look after us. Ngangaanhi ngurambang wiinydhuradhu (we care for our Country with fire), speaks to the importance of fire to maintain Country and encourage cereal grasses. Beatrice Murray sings Uncle Stan's words to life, reminding us of the cultural significance of the links between our creative processes and caring for Country, for our grasses, our objects, which have sustained our communities for thousands of generations. These stories and how we tell them are what makes a nation. (National Gallery of Australia, n.d.)

Like Pascoe before him, Jonathan referenced the Wiradjuri's sophisticated engagement with cereal grasses and *walam-wunga.galang* to expose their omissions from Australia's colonial narrative. However, I propose Jonathan also used *walam-wunga.galang* alongside Uncle Stan's instructions to remind the Wiradjuri people of our history and how we ought to conduct ourselves culturally. By doing this before a predominantly non-Indigenous audience, he and Uncle Stan demonstrated how Wiradjuri people can intentionally use our cultural revitalisation to represent our people and identity in self-determining ways that are antithetical to the colonial misrepresentations that have been outlined in this thesis.

Jonathan's inclusion of Uncle Stan's words portrays the Wiradjuri as an ancient and enduring people that has used creativity, adaptivity, sophisticated knowledge, fire, physical objects and cereal grasses to live in a symbiotic relationship with Wiradjuri ngurambang for tens of thousands of years. This portrayal stands in direct contrast to our

colonisers' misrepresentations of Aboriginal people as savage, primitive and unsophisticated, eking out a meagre survival by aimlessly wandering the land and opportunistically finding food. Through their exhibition before predominantly non-Indigenous people, Jonathan and Uncle Stan have demonstrated that our cultural revitalisation is an act of self-determination and that we can assume and exercise control over the representation of our people, culture, identity, and ngurambang.

The profound socio-political significance of Wiradjuri people reclaiming and asserting control over our representation becomes clearer when viewed as a counterforce to the 'savage' stereotype mentioned in Chapter 5 and the Stadial Theory in this chapter. However, there are numerous other conceptions and misrepresentations that have been fiercely held for over two centuries to justify the establishment of the Australian settler-colonial state and suppress our socio-political status, an example being the 'doomed race theory', which is beyond the scope of this thesis. The Wiradjuri assuming and exercising self-determination over how we are represented is not merely a cultural or symbolic act; it is a development of monumental socio-political significance that carries transformative potential.

This assertion is based on the understanding that such self-determined representation will serve as a proportional counterforce to the detrimental concepts and misrepresentations that have thus far suppressed our socio-political status.

6.6 The Socio-Political Significance of Wiradjuri Self-Determination Through Cultural Revitalisation – The Nation Building Approach and Wiradjuri Nationhood.

This final section of the chapter explores how Wiradjuri people's intentional use of cultural revitalisation to exercise self-determination over our representation bolsters our sense of nationhood and incidentally progresses us towards our long-held socio-political aspiration of self-governance.

It may seem unlikely that Wiradjuri self-determination through self-governance could arise from making a wilay badhang, speaking the Wiradjuri ngiyang, weaving a basket, or carving walam-wunga.galang. However, the contribution of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practices to increasing self-determination and self-government becomes apparent when it is considered alongside other Native Nations' (re)Building principles and processes for reclaiming indigenous self-governance.

The Nation Building Approach to Indigenous self-governance (or simply 'nation building') is a framework developed by academics in partnership with Native Nations leaders and their communities, who spent decades studying the factors contributing to the success of Native Nations in North America in achieving self-determination and exercising it through self-governance. As Jorgenson (2007) explained, the Nation Building Approach originated from a 1986 research project conducted by economist Joe Kalt and sociologist Steve Cornell, who explored fundamental yet significant questions such as:

> What explained emerging patterns of economic change and community development in Indian Country? What explained the fact that – despite decades of crippling poverty and powerlessness – some American Indian nations recently had been strikingly successful at achieving their own economic, political, social, and cultural goals, while others were having repeated difficulty accomplishing the same things? Were there lessons to be learned from what the breakaway nations were accomplishing, lessons that could be effectively shared and used by other Indigenous peoples? (p. xi)

Their research project grew into several decades of academic collaboration between Harvard University and the University of Arizona's Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy (NNI). These efforts then culminated in the Nation Building Approach, which is 'the processes by which a Native nation enhances its own foundational capacity for effective self-governance and for self-determined community and economic development' (Jorgenson, 2007, p. xii). The Nation Building Approach has allowed indigenous people to counter what Kalt and Cornell labelled the 'standard approach' to

Indigenous development (p. 8). The ‘standard approach’ is the common format Western governments in settler-colonial nations use when engaging with indigenous people, and it is characterised by short-term decision making where non-indigenous people or organisations set the development agenda for indigenous peoples. Settler-colonial governments treat development primarily as an economic problem and view indigenous culture as ‘traditional’ and an obstacle to development and economic progress. In the ’standard approach’, indigenous leadership serves primarily as a distributor of services and resources rather than as a sovereign decision-making body for an indigenous political collective. In contrast, the Nation-Building Approach sees native nations assert decision-making power and reinforce that power with effective governing institutions that match the political culture of the indigenous nation and whose strategic decisions are made by leaders who are nation builders and mobilisers.

In the Nation Building Approach, First Nations develop and exercise the self-determination that can lead to effective self-governance by working through four stages or processes. The first stage is the primary focus of this thesis: the idea that collective self-determination and self-government require the First Nation’s people to ‘identify as a nation.’ The second stage requires them to identify and know their ‘purpose’. The third is to ‘organise as a nation’, and the fourth is to ‘act as a nation.’ Cornell (2015) made it clear that whilst these stages are presented linearly, indigenous people can move through them simultaneously or in any order. He also explains that any stage can be revisited as needed.

Although ‘identifying as a nation’ under the first stage of the Nation Building Approach might sound like a simple process, Cornell (2013) explained it requires an indigenous nation/people to ask and answer some potentially difficult questions. For example, a crucial question is: ‘Who is the ‘self’ in ‘self-determination’ and 'self-government?' Answering this question enables a people to know their national boundaries in matters like citizenship and sovereign jurisdiction. Particularly significant for the purposes of this thesis is this comment from Cornell:

> The ideas of collective self-determination or self-government assume the existence of a recognisable 'self': a community that aspires to control its own future and in which rights to self-determine or self-govern may be vested. But who identifies the community? To be true to the spirit of self-determination, identification of the relevant community should be left to the people whose future is at stake. Self-determination should mean, among other things, the right to determine the self. (p. 42)

The above quotation is significant because this thesis has already demonstrated how Wiradjuri people have been using Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to assume and exercise self-determined control over the representation of ourselves, our culture, our identity and our ngurambang. In other words, Wiradjuri people exercising self-determination over our representation through cultural revitalisation incidentally completes the first step of the Nation Building Approach and establishes our boundaries in terms of Wiradjuri citizenship and sovereign jurisdiction.

Cornell (2015) also recognised that colonisation makes the process of 'identifying the self' difficult for many indigenous people due to actions such as the 'seizure of lands, dispersing or consolidating populations, bypassing and undermining social and political organisation, attacking cultural practices, prohibiting languages' (p. 6). In the cultural revitalisation practitioner profiles found in Chapter 4, this thesis has given examples of how Wiradjuri people experienced such disruptions innumerable times. For example, 'attacking cultural practices' and 'prohibiting languages' are among the reasons Wiradjuri people are not as connected to our cultural practices as we once were, and also the reason we must reconnect with them through cultural revitalisation.

Nevertheless, it appears the Wiradjuri people have also been intentionally identifying as a nation since the 1990s. In Dad's practitioner profile in Chapter 4, he said he noticed the Aboriginal people in Southeastern Australia beginning to identify as nations differently during his appointment to the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT), commencing in 1996. This 'strengthening of Aboriginal people's identities' was accomplished by referring to

ourselves in terms of 'tribes', 'language groups' and 'clans.' He also witnessed the same people referring to our traditional groups as 'nations' because 'our knowledge of the fact indigenous peoples in the United States and Canada referred to themselves as "nations"', and that this was a 'more empowering term'.

Dad's assessment can be corroborated by other evidence, for example, the matters of *Coe v Commonwealth* [1979] and *Coe v Commonwealth* [1993]. *Coe v Commonwealth* [1979] was brought before the High Court of Australia by Wiradjuri man Uncle Paul Coe, who was identifying as a member of the *Wiradjeri Tribe* and suing on behalf of the Aboriginal nation of Australia in 1979.

> [He]attempted to claim not only Aboriginal land rights but continuing Aboriginal sovereignty in Australia. The action failed on procedural grounds. But two judges, Jacobs and Murphy JJ, indicated that some of the issues put forward were arguable. (Netthiem, 2001)

Evidence of Wiradjuri people not using the language of nationhood to describe the Wiradjuri at this point in time, but rather to describe a wider collective of Aboriginal peoples in Australia, can be found in the Gibbs J reference to Uncle Paul Coe's claims:

> 1A. The Plaintiff sues on behalf of the Aboriginal community and nation of Australia and for the benefit of that community which is a community of more than seven persons. 1B. The plaintiff is a member of the *Wiradjeri Tribe* [emphasis added] and as authority from this and from other tribes and the whole aboriginal community and nation to bring this action. 1. The plaintiff is a member of and a descendant of the aboriginal people of Australia and is a member of the aboriginal nation. (*Coe v Commonwealth*, 1979)

However, just 14 years later, the Wiradjuri are identifying as a nation, and not a tribe, in the matter of *Coe v Commonwealth* [1993]. That matter was brought before the court by Aunty Isobel Coe, Uncle Paul's sister. Aunty Isobel claimed that the forcible seizure of Wiradjuri land by the Commonwealth of Australia and the state of New South Wales was

illegal and undertaken through a violent process of genocide. The following statement was submitted in support of Aunty Isobel's assertions. It illustrates a shift in Wiradjuri identification towards the concept of Wiradjuri nationhood:

> Since time immemorial, since 1788, since 1813, since 1901 and since within living memory (hereinafter collectively referred to as 'since time immemorial') the Wiradjuri people, who are known as Wiradjuri Kooris and who are included in that group of people known as Aboriginal people, are a nation of persons who have continuously lived on and occupied that land now known as central New South Wales, in whole or in part, according to Wiradjuri laws, customs, traditions and practices, with their own language. (*Coe v Commonwealth,* 1993)

The correlation between Dad's observations regarding First Peoples asserting nationhood and *Coe v Commonwealth* [1993] is not conclusive evidence of a connection between the First Peoples of North America identifying as nations and Southeastern First Nations of Australia being influenced to follow suit shortly thereafter. However, one could reasonably argue that the alignment in timing could serve as anecdotal evidence that the Wiradjuri and other First Nations of Southeastern Australia began asserting their nationhood in the 1990s due to an awareness of North American First Nations having recently and strategically adopted the concept of 'nationhood'.

How Wiradjuri people are defining our nation is just as important to this thesis as the fact that the Wiradjuri people are identifying as a nation. The 1993 statement above supporting Aunty Isobel Coe's matter identified the characteristics of the Wiradjuri nation when she declared our nationhood. These are grounded in our continuous occupation of Wiradjuri ngurambang since time immemorial in accordance with our laws, customs, traditions and practices. Our possession of a distinct Wiradjuri language is also provided as a particular identifier of our nationhood. In summary, the Wiradjuri nation is characterised by the Wiradjuri people's observance of our laws and *culture*, and this gives acts of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation tremendous transformative potential when it comes to our socio-political status.

With culture forming the bedrock of the Wiradjuri nation, the practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is an incidentally but inherently political act with far-reaching socio-political consequences. It serves as a powerful counterforce to colonial strategies aimed at undermining Wiradjuri self-determination and nationhood by severing Wiradjuri ties to our culture. Every effort to deepen and expand Wiradjuri connections to our culture simultaneously fortifies the foundation of Wiradjuri nationhood.

Where colonisation sought to fragment and erode Wiradjuri culture as a means of weakening the Wiradjuri nation and its people, cultural revitalisation fosters unity and resilience. Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation not only preserves the richness of Wiradjuri culture, it solidifies the foundation of the Wiradjuri nation. Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation, regardless whether or not it is intentionally political, is an act of resurgence that ensures the Wiradjuri people and our culture will thrive once more under the principles of self-determination.

6.7 Conclusion to the Chapter

This chapter began with the claim that both the concept of the savage and the Stadial Theory of History have been used by colonisers to detrimentally misrepresent Wiradjuri and Aboriginal people, undermine our socio-political status, and justify the colonisation of our lands. To support this claim, historical evidence was provided of Aboriginal people being depicted under the Stadial Theory as nomadic hunter-gatherers so that our rights to our lands could be disregarded.

Whilst debating the merits of the arguments for or against Pascoe's *Dark Emu* are beyond the scope of this thesis, the ferocity of the attacks against it are evidence that the Stadial Theory remains deeply embedded in the Australian colonial narrative in ways that continue to suppress Aboriginal peoples' socio-political status.

Jonathan Jones's artworks *barangal dyara* and w*alam-wunga.galang* were then used to demonstrate how Wiradjuri people can intentionally use Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation

as a means of self-empowerment and to counter our socio-politically detrimental misrepresentation and improve how we and other Aboriginal people are perceived by non-Indigenous Australians.

Through these artworks, Jonathan has supported Pascoe's challenging of depictions of Aboriginal people as non-agricultural hunter-gatherers. Along with *Dark Emu*, I argue Jonathan uses Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to expose and address the problematic non-Indigenous misrepresentation of Aboriginal people to curate an Australian national narrative. Jonathan does so by using Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to undertake acts of Wiradjuri self-portrayal that are identified as acts of self-determination.

I argue such acts of self-determined self-representation incidentally have implications for Wiradjuri nationhood and self-governance under the Nation Building Approach. I argue using Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to define ourselves incidentally answers the question of who is the 'self' in 'self-determination' and 'self-government.' This partially addresses the first stage of 'identifying as a nation' in the Nation Building Approach and progresses us towards self-government. However, I also acknowledge that the Wiradjuri people have been intentionally 'identifying as a nation' since at least the 1990s and that our culture is central to that assertion of nationhood. Therefore, I propose that this makes any act of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation increasing our connection to culture a strengthening of the Wiradjuri assertion of nationhood.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Murungiyalinya Today and Into the Future

This thesis has explored Murungiyalinya: Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. It has done so by examining the processes and motivations behind how and why Wiradjuri people are practicing Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation, as well as the phenomenon's socio-political significance to the Wiradjuri people. This exploration was guided by two separate research questions: 'How and why are Wiradjuri people undertaking Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation?' and 'What is the significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to the Wiradjuri peoples' socio-political status?'

The rationale and research value of these questions were developed through a process of positioning and framing throughout the introduction, methodology and literature review chapters of this thesis. My introduction chapter contextualised Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation by positioning it as a localised instance of 'indigenous cultural resurgence', a global phenomenon involving indigenous peoples collectively attempting to ameliorate the impacts of colonisation by re-engaging with our cultural practices. While this thesis focused on the socio-political significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation, it acknowledged the growing body of literature on indigenous cultural revival and renewal generating indigenous wellbeing, signalling the need for more Wiradjuri-specific research on this topic in the future.

In introducing the research, I explained how my positionality as a Wiradjuri researcher and cultural revitalisation practitioner has been a crucial influence and authoritative ground for the ideas expressed throughout this thesis. Importantly, I also acknowledged this research was produced by utilising my prior personal relationships with key research participants. Whereas standard Western approaches to knowledge formation may criticise these elements of connectivity as a source of bias, this dissertation has shown how the explicit recognition of my interested subjectivity as a Wiradjuri researcher having a personal and constitutive relation to the Wiradjuri subject matter brings the strength of

an insider's perspective and gives me the 'positionality blisters' Smith (2014) says an author ought to have when writing about indigenous matters. Furthermore, I disregarded criticisms about my potential bias, since much of the academic literature on indigenous peoples has been produced by non-Indigenous authors writing with a negative cultural bias against indigenous peoples and their cultures. Accordingly, any Wiradjuri subjectivity or cultural bias evident in this thesis simply works to correct that historical imbalance.

My personal and involved interest in this topic, as a Wiradjuri researcher connected intimately to my research participants, informed how I understood, approached and conducted the research presented in this dissertation, as described in Chapter 2. Here, I discussed why a sound methodology is important for indigenous research, particularly because of the historically poor and unethical research practices used by non-indigenous authors. I explained how indigenous research methodologies were developed to counter harmful non-Indigenous academic research and explained how my research was developed through the influence of Rigney's (1999) Indigenist Research Methodology, Martin's (2003) methodological engagement of her Quandamooka culture, Archibald's (2008) use of indigenous storywork as a research methodology, and Kovach's (2010) directive to centre indigenous culture and not colonisation and decolonisation in indigenous research.

My methodology chapter also outlined the difficulties I faced as an Indigenous HDR student having to address the matter of colonisation whilst taking care to avoid 'centring the settler discourse' (Kovach, 2010, p.42), so as not to focus on decolonisation and thereby implicitly remain within a colonialist frame of reference that empowers colonial realities. I found a solution to this problem by engaging Yindyamarra Winhangana as my primary research methodology and adhering to the seven Wiradjuri research principles Uncle Stan and Jonathan provided. This assisted me to resist 'centring the settler discourse' by instead explicitly framing Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation as a contemporary act of self-determination. I was vigilant in expressing the fact Wiradjuri people have always practiced our culture and have always been self-determinate for the vast majority

of the tens of thousands of years we have existed. Any act to return to that state is not an act of reaction to colonisation, and any decolonisation that results is valuable but incidental. Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and any of its outcomes that ameliorate the disruptions of colonisation are simply framed here as Wiradjuri people reverting to the Wiradjuri way of being.

I situated this important shift - from an interpretive framework focussed chiefly on decolonisation to a focus on the significance of cultural revitalisation as self-determination - in relation to the scholarly literature that forms the academic context in which this thesis sits. Chapter 3 further framed my project, its research questions and my methodology by positioning my argument in the context of the literature that has been written on and by the Wiradjuri, and the research practices that have variously informed this history of scholarship. My review of the literature divided these publications into three distinct 'waves.'

The first wave was recognised as comprising non-Indigenous authored literature on the Wiradjuri from the 1880s to 1950s. These were primarily written in the form of ethnographic accounts responding to the 'doomed race theory' and a correlating fear that the opportunity for insight into 'humanities' prehistoric past' would be lost when Aboriginal people had become extinct. This is the same harmful non-Indigenous perspective that was referenced in my introduction and methodology chapter as a starting point for colonialist policies and public views regarding Wiradjuri. First wave literature on the Wiradjuri had the typical flaws that Stocking (1991) identifies as belonging to Victorian era-anthropological and ethnographic literature, being superficial observations of indigenous cultures, tainted by cultural biases and marred by condescending Eurocentric perspectives whilst being too dependent on second hand non-Indigenous accounts and not demonstrating enough engagement with indigenous people. Examples of first wave literature on the Wiradjuri were discussed and their merits were noted and evaluated, but I explained why their unethical and biased nature requires that these flawed examples of

‘research’ should only be read and reproduced with a high degree of criticism and in consultation with Wiradjuri people.

The second wave of literature on Wiradjuri people was identified as having stretched from approximately the 1980’s to the early 2000s and features non-Indigenous authors including Read, Kabaila and Mcdonald. Their literature on the Wiradjuri was produced amid the Australian History Wars and through a generally progressive desire to have the omitted voices of Indigenous people heard in Australian literature. Second wave authors demonstrated a remarkable improvement in Wiradjuri research through their extensive consultation with Wiradjuri people and their willingness to directly include Wiradjuri voices in their research.

The third and final wave of literature on Wiradjuri people was identified as having taken place from the approximately 2010’s to present and comprising entirely of Wiradjuri authors. These authors identify as Wiradjuri people who are writing about Wiradjuri subject matter. A significant portion of these authors are partially or entirely writing about Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation whilst incorporating the practice into their research. Furthermore, it is abundantly clear there is an unusually high number of doctoral dissertations amongst this literature, indicating a promising future lies ahead for Wiradjuri research. I proudly position my dissertation within this significant academic output and am proud to be known as a member of this group of Wiradjuri authors.

Having defined and positioned my dissertation and my research questions, the first research question of ‘How and why are Wiradjuri people undertaking Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation?’ was answered in Chapter 4. This chapter provided detailed Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioner profiles based on the words they provided in interviews with me. These interviews therefore provided my primary data. The driving purpose of my analysis in Chapter 4 was to rebalance the first-wave-authored research by non-Indigenous observers that excluded Wiradjuri voices, as was discussed in the introduction, methodology, and literature review chapters.

I answered the primary question ‘How are Wiradjuri people undertaking Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation?’ by relaying the practitioners’ processes of cultural construction as they were communicated to me. This highlighted significant variations in the revitalisation processes employed by each practitioner, but also revealed important similarities. For example, the process Dad undertook in revitalising Wiradjuri wilay badhang-galang involved getting permission from the Wiradjuri Council of Elders and teaching himself using historical and contemporary references alongside cultural innovation. The process Aunty Lorraine undertook to revitalise Wiradjuri weaving was shown to have started when she did crafts as therapy whilst receiving treatment for polio as a child. However, she did not encounter Wiradjuri weaving until later in life and quickly learned it through engagement with Aboriginal weaving groups on Wiradjuri ngurambang. The process Uncle Stan underwent to revitalise the Wiradjuri ngiyang involved him remembering the words and grammar he had been taught as a child, cross checking them with the words in first wave ethnographic accounts, collaborating with linguist Dr John Rudder, and converting this work into dictionaries, grammar books, courses, smartphone apps, and so on. Jonathan’s process of revitalisation took place within the context of an artistic career and was shown to vary considerably depending on the object and his specific intention for each of the artistic works he produced. Sometimes he was able to be guided by Aboriginal carvers, weavers or artists when making an object. However, sometimes the process of revitalising an object was far more difficult. For example, his revitalisation of the bagay (emu eggshell spoon) for giran ‘had completely fallen out of people’s memory’ and no physical versions of it remained. In that instance, Jonathan simply had to reimagine that object and revitalise it to the best of his abilities.

Whilst the processes varied, all practitioners were identified as having demonstrated a substantial degree of grit and determination in their revitalisation efforts. All the practitioners have been working on their practice for years and had to overcome considerable challenges, including a lack of resources and mentors. Nevertheless, they persevered, and the Wiradjuri people and culture are stronger for it. The first

achievement of this thesis accordingly lies in its demonstration and analysis of how Wiradjuri people are practicing Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation.

Similarly, I answered the question of 'why are Wiradjuri people undertaking Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation?' by relaying the motivations of the practitioners as they were communicated to me. Again, substantial variations were found regarding the practitioners' motivations. Dad was motivated to revitalise the creation and wearing of wilay badhang-galang because he wanted to share in the cultural pride he saw Māori people exhibit when they wore their traditional cloaks at a conference. However, he was subsequently motivated by the sense of cultural familiarity and authority it gave him, and the way it connected him to family, Yindyamarra, and Wiradjuri culture more broadly. Aunty Lorraine Tye was shown to have revitalised Wiradjuri weaving through a desire to reconnect with the Wiradjuri ngurambang and to family she was estranged from as a child. However, she had always had a passion for artistic creativity and weaving culturally resonated with her as a Wiradjuri woman. Furthermore, it was shown to be a way she and other Aunties could fulfill their cultural roles of providing loving care, guidance and support for others. Uncle Stan Grant Snr revitalised the Wiradjuri ngiyang because he had the most knowledge of it amongst the Wiradjuri Council of Elders and because he was instructed by the Elders to do so. However, he also felt he was doing it because his grandfather, Budyaan, had given the language to him so that he could hand it back to our people again. Furthermore, he is motivated to do so because he believes it is the will of Biame, the creator spirit of the Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people. Jonathan was motivated to revitalise various Wiradjuri objects as an artistic practice. However, also found practising Wiradjuri culture through art was a means of tapping into a Wiradjuri philosophy that was both intellectually engaging and culturally enriching. Furthermore, Jonathan was shown to be motivated to engage in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation because it served as a means of challenging colonial constructs and communicating Wiradjuri ones in response.

Whilst the motivations underpinning the reasons why Wiradjuri people are engaging in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation demonstrated considerable variation, there were commonalities too. For example, a common reason 'why' the practitioners engaged in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is that they possess a deep passion for Wiradjuri culture, they believe our people's connection to it is important and they are passionate about ensuring its continuation by passing it on to future generations. This is the clearest rationale my research has found for why Wiradjuri people are practicing Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation: it relates to the community's sense of its nationhood as defined by its cultural continuity form the past, in the present and forward into the future.

Chapter 5 responded to the second research question: 'What is the significance of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to the Wiradjuri peoples' socio-political status?' It demonstrated how the practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation incidentally and inadvertently improves the socio-political status of Wiradjuri by challenging the detrimental concepts and misrepresentations arrayed against our people through colonisation. Furthermore, it was argued the practice of expressing and strengthening culture is significant to our socio-political status because it builds social bonds between Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people.

Chapter 5 began by showing how the suppression of the Wiradjuri socio-political status was undertaken through the historical application of colonial concepts, such as 'the savage', and its associated misrepresentations. The misrepresentation that was the focus of this chapter was that Aboriginal and Wiradjuri people were said to lack 'complex social bonds and familial ties' (Williams, 2012, p. 1). Historical and contemporary examples of Aboriginal and Wiradjuri people being falsely portrayed in such a manner were provided to demonstrate this point.

However, the key achievement of Chapter 5 concerns the attention it gives to the practitioner profiles presented in Chapter 4, illustrating how the practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation incidentally and inadvertently improves the Wiradjuri socio-political status. I explain how Wiradjuri people practicing the revitalised philosophy of

Yindyamarra presents us as being the very antithesis of 'savagery.' This directly challenges the racist misrepresentations that historically resulted in the weakening of Wiradjuri socio-political status throughout colonialism. The contrast made between Yindyamarra mindfulness and colonial imagery of 'savages' demonstrates how Wiradjuri peoples' practice of cultural revitalisation unintentionally and incidentally presents an alternative portrayal of us that contradicts the historically harmful colonialist misrepresentations of Wiradjuri. This contrasting, positive portrayal was argued to challenge the applicability of those harmful concepts and misrepresentations that predominated in the process of colonisation. This process of challenging colonial mindsets through Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation encourages false ideologies to be abandoned, thereby enabling improvement in the Wiradjuri socio-political status.

Chapter 5 further developed this argument by considering how Dad's practice of making wilay badhang-galang was likewise shown to incidentally challenge the Wiradjuri misrepresentation as a people 'without complex familial bonds' by providing non-Indigenous people an insight into the complexity of Wiradjuri familial ties. This was done by demonstrating how making the cloaks connect us to our ancestors, present-day family and to future generations of descendants who have not been born yet. Jonathan Jones's giran and Aunty Lorraine's weaving were furthermore both identified as instances of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation that demonstrate and strengthen Wiradjuri familial ties and social bonds in a manner that is inconsistent with colonialist misrepresentations. Both instances of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation were also shown to facilitate non-Indigenous participation in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. Non-indigenous firsthand engagement with Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation was argued to be a more effective means of dispelling Wiradjuri people's socio-politically detrimental misrepresentations, relative to mere observation of our practice. Accordingly, Aunty Lorraine's weaving with non-Indigenous people was discussed as a means to build social bonds between the Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people. Such bonds incidentally being formed through the shared experiences of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation were argued to counter the non-indigenous ignorance of Wiradjuri people that allowed socio-politically harmful concepts and

misrepresentations of the Wiradjuri to take root. Furthermore, it was argued that the impact of building such social bonds between non-Indigenous people and the Wiradjuri is important because the socio-political improvement that takes place is amplified through communities via a ripple effect.

Although there is a lack of quantitative research measuring the impact of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation on the Wiradjuri socio-political status, the life stories outlined in Chapter 4 demonstrated how the non-Indigenous reception of Wiradjuri people and culture vastly improved during the lifetimes of the practitioners, and this improvement coincided with the practice of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. This was argued to be evidence of the positive correlation between Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation and improvements in the Wiradjuri socio-political status. In this respect, Uncle Geoff Anderson's introduction of the revitalised Wiradjuri ngiyang into Parkes schools was provided as a rare academic account of the efficacy of shared Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous participation in Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation. His article also demonstrated how Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation creates positive ripples for the enhanced socio-political status of Wiradjuri through our positive engagement with the broader community.

The analysis and reframing that was begun in Chapter 5 was continued in Chapter 6, which introduced the Stadial Theory of History as another concept that has undermined our socio-political status by detrimentally misrepresenting Wiradjuri and Aboriginal people. Chapter 6 gave an initial account of Aboriginal people being depicted as nomadic hunter-gatherers under the Stadial Theory so that our rights to our lands could be disregarded. I then turned to the recent debates concerning Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu*, as a way of examining how the ideology of the Stadial Theory continues to have a contemporary echo in Australian society. Debating the merits of the arguments for or against Pascoe's *Dark Emu* was beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the ferocity of the attacks against the book and its author were recognised as evidence that the Stadial Theory remains deeply

embedded in the Australian colonial narrative, continuing to suppress Aboriginal peoples' socio-political status.

Chapter 6 then used Jonathan Jones's artworks barangal dyara and walam-wunga.galang to demonstrate how Wiradjuri people can intentionally use Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to counter our socio-politically detrimental misrepresentation, using the Stadial Theory as an example. Providing education and insights with the power to counter colonial myths that persist into the present can improve how the Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people are perceived by non-Indigenous Australians, thereby improving our socio-political status. I argued Jonathan's use of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation was also significant for improving our socio-political status as he used it deliberately to expose non-Indigenous Australia's propensity to misrepresent its Indigenous peoples to create a national narrative. The use of Wiradjuri culture to identify and address the root causes of our disadvantaged socio-political status in Australia was argued to be necessary if any real change is to occur.

Jonathan and Uncle Stan's articulation of what it means to be Wiradjuri before a non-Indigenous audience in walam-wunga.galang was further argued to be a significant act of self-determination in which Wiradjuri people assume and exercise control over how we are portrayed and perceived in Australia. I argued such use of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation to define ourselves incidentally answers the question of who is the 'self' in 'self-determination' and 'self-government.' This partially addresses the first stage of 'identifying as a nation' in the Nation Building Approach. The significance of this was recognised as a small but important step towards self-government by establishing the Wiradjuri national boundaries in matters of cultural belonging, potentially informing the political redevelopment of the Wiradjuri in terms of defining our citizenship of the Wiradjuri nation and matters of sovereign jurisdiction (Cornell, 2013). I argued Wiradjuri people have been intentionally 'identifying as a nation' since at least the 1990s and our culture has been central to that assertion of nationhood. A fundamental finding of this

research, therefore, is that any act of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation strengthens culture and, by extension, supports the Wiradjuri assertion of nationhood.

The overall significance of the above findings is now evident. The key significance of Chapter 3 is that it reveals how this dissertation is one of a growing number of 'third wave' texts authored by Wiradjuri people on matters of primary concern to Wiradjuri. Literature produced in such a manner importantly balances the problematic first wave literature that has been written on Wiradjuri people. Chapter 4 is also significant because it documents and demonstrates how an indigenous people have successfully revitalised cultural practices following a brutal process of colonisation. In doing so, a blueprint for how further indigenous cultural revitalisation can be undertaken by the Wiradjuri and other indigenous peoples has been provided. It is my hope these profiles will inspire and support further cultural revitalisation by other Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people. But finally, and perhaps most importantly, it provides some well-deserved recognition to the Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation practitioners for the enormous and often overlooked contribution they have made for the Wiradjuri people and our culture.

Beyond these contributions, a major finding of this research is that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation incidentally and inadvertently improves the Wiradjuri socio-political status by challenging the detrimental concepts and misrepresentations arrayed against it and creating social bonds between Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people. The significance of this finding is that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is a powerful means of materially improving the lives of Wiradjuri people and should be supported further. While there are numerous initiatives aimed at improving the socio-political status of Indigenous Australians, such as the Closing the Gap initiative, many of these efforts have proven ineffective and are off track. Chapter 5 demonstrates that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation can be a successful approach to achieving meaningful change. However, the profiles presented in Chapter 4 show that Wiradjuri people often receive little to no support in revitalising our culture. I propose that any local, state, or federal government seeking to improve the socio-political status of Wiradjuri people or promote reconciliation between

Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people must prioritise the support of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation as a pathway to self-determination, based on the findings of this research.

Chapter 6 found Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation is also intentionally used to improve our Wiradjuri socio-political status by directly challenging the detrimental concepts and misrepresentations arrayed against it. This intentional use of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation addresses a root cause of Indigenous socio-political disadvantage: the practice of misrepresenting Indigenous peoples to curate a national narrative for Australia. It was argued Wiradjuri practitioners are using cultural revitalisation to assume and exercise control over our portrayal, and this can be considered as an act of self-determination. Furthermore, this enhanced capacity for identifying culturally, as a nation, is an important first step towards reclaiming self-governance as theorised in the Nation Building Approach. In this respect, it was argued that acts of Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation strengthen the Wiradjuri assertion of nationhood with our culture as its foundation.

The significance of this finding is that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation not only serves as an effective means of challenging the socio-political concepts and misrepresentations that have oppressed us. It also demonstrates that Wiradjuri people have the capacity for self-determination and agency in terms of how we are perceived, treated and able to exist in the Australian settler-colonial state. Self-determination is something Wiradjuri people have possessed and exercised for tens of thousands of years before colonisation, and its disruption has been shown to have had catastrophic impacts on our culture and quality of life. Showing that cultural revitalisation is a pathway for us to return to our long-held state of self-determination, and even self-governance, is a prospect that gives Wiradjuri people hope we can transform our lives, culture, and ngurambang. In other words, the significance of the major finding of this research is that that Wiradjuri cultural revitalisation gives us the means to create a better future.

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