

Exploring Urban Identities and Histories

Exploring Urban Identities and Histories

Edited by

**Christine Hansen
and Kathleen Butler**

Developed from papers presented at the 2009 AIATSIS National
Indigenous Studies Conference 'Perspectives on Urban Life:
Connections and reconnections'

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Contributors

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WH (Bill) Edwards, a minister of the Uniting Church in Australia, was Superintendent of Ernabella Mission (1958–72), Superintendent of Mowanjum Mission (1972–73) and Minister of the Pitjantjatjara Parish based at Fregon (1973) and Amata (1976–80). He lectured in Aboriginal studies at the Torrens College of Advanced Education (1975), the South Australian College of Advanced Education and, from 1991, the University of South Australia (1981–96). In retirement he remains an adjunct senior lecturer at the university. He interprets in Pitjantjatjara in hospitals and courts. He was awarded a PhD in history at Flinders University for his thesis, *Moravian Aboriginal Missions in Australia*. He is the author of *An Introduction to Aboriginal Societies* (Social Science Press, Tuggerah, NSW, 2nd edn, 2004) and editor of *Traditional Aboriginal Society* (Macmillan, South Melbourne, 2nd edn, 1998). He was awarded membership of the Order of Australia in 2009.

Christopher D Gall completed his Master's in the First Nations Studies Program in 2011 at the University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, Canada. During that time, he worked for three years with Tl'azt'en and Yekooche elders to record their oral history and assisted the Tl'azt'en Elders Society with developing an archive to preserve the elders' knowledge. Christopher has gone on to work with Dakelh, Coast Salish, Métis, Inuit, and Anishnabek communities on a variety of community-driven research projects focused on history, culture, and use-and-occupancy mapping. He is currently the Acting Director of Natural Resources for Métis Nation British Columbia and a J.D candidate at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, British Columbia.

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Neville Green AM, BA, BEd, MEd, PhD, University of Western Australia and PhD, Murdoch University is a Western Australian historian specialising in Indigenous history. His 11 authored and edited books, like his university theses, have Aboriginal history themes. He liberated himself from Edith Cowan University in 1993 to engage in native title reports for the state and for Indigenous communities. In 2012 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to Indigenous history. <marnev18@y7mail.com>

Christine Hansen has both academic and professional interests in museums and collections. She was a curator at the National Museum of Australia, a member of the editorial board of the journal *Aboriginal History* and a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Environmental History at the Australian National University. She completed her PhD at the Australian Centre for Indigenous History in 2010. Christine is currently undertaking post-doctoral research on the collection of Australian Aboriginal material held in the Museum of World Cultures in Gothenburg, Sweden.

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Erin Keenan (Te Ātiawa ki Taranaki, Ngāti Te Whiti) is a doctoral student at Victoria University of Wellington. Her thesis in New Zealand history is a Māori history of Wellington with a special focus on experiences of urbanisation. Erin's research interests include twentieth-century *iwi* (tribal) and Māori history, as well as Māori oral histories. <Erin.Keenan@vuw.ac.nz>

Michael Ingrey is from the La Perouse Aboriginal Community of Botany Bay, New South Wales, and identifies as being from the Dharawal (Botany Bay) and Dungutti (mid-north coast of New South Wales, particularly the Bellbrook area) peoples. After gaining his Higher School Certificate in 2000, Michael completed a Structural Engineer (Aeroskills) apprenticeship with Qantas. Rather than continue in this field, Michael had a desire to work with his community to improve facilities and services, particularly for younger people. He currently works as an information referral officer for the La Perouse Aboriginal community and is a member of the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council, La Perouse Deadlys Leadership Group, La Perouse Aboriginal Men's Group and Eastern Zone Gajaga Aboriginal Corporation. Michael has a strong interest in the heritage and history of both Dharawal and Dungutti people, and in keeping both cultures strong. He has worked on Aboriginal heritage projects around Botany Bay, including archaeological excavations, and has developed a particular interest in the Aboriginal culture and history of south-eastern Sydney. Since 2009 he has worked closely with Paul Irish and members of the La Perouse Aboriginal community to better document this history and heritage. <michael.ingrey@live.com>

Paul Irish has been working as an archaeological consultant specialising in Aboriginal heritage for the past 15 years, since completing archaeological studies at the University of Sydney (BA) and Copenhagen University in Denmark (MA). Over the last decade he has developed a keen interest in the Aboriginal history of the Sydney region, which led to the formation of the Sydney Aboriginal Historical Places Project in 2006. Working together with members of the La Perouse Aboriginal community for a number of years, Paul is now undertaking a PhD at the University of New South Wales to investigate Aboriginal people and their settlements in south-eastern Sydney in the mid- to late 19th century. <paulirish@optusnet.com.au>

Professor John Maynard is a Worimi man from the Port Stephens region of New South Wales. He currently holds an ARC Australian Research Fellowship (Indigenous). He has worked for many prominent organisations in major positions such as Director of the Wollotuka Institute of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Newcastle, Deputy Chairperson of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), and Deputy Chair (Humanities) of the Australian Research Council College of Experts. Professor Maynard has also served on numerous committees, including the Executive Committee of the Australian Historical Association, the History Council of New South Wales, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC), the National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) and the New South Wales Fulbright Selection Committee. He was recipient of the Aboriginal History (Australian National University) Stanner Fellowship 1996, New South Wales Premier's Indigenous History Fellowship 2003 and an Australian Research Council

Postdoctoral Fellowship 2004 and was University of Newcastle Researcher of the Year 2008 and 2012, and Australian National University Allan Martin History Lecturer 2010. He gained his PhD in 2003 examining the rise of early Aboriginal political activism. He has worked with and within many Aboriginal communities, urban, rural and remote. Professor Maynard's publications have concentrated on the intersections of Aboriginal political and social history, and the history of Australian race relations. He is the author of several books, including *Aboriginal Stars of the Turf, Fight for Liberty and Freedom* and *The Aboriginal Soccer Tribe*. He has appeared on numerous television and radio programs, including documentaries *The Track, The Colony, Vote Yes for Aborigines, Captain Cook: Obsession and discovery, Outback United, Lachlan Macquarie — The Father of Australia* and *The Years That Made Us*.

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Stephanie Lindsay Thompson is a PhD candidate in the Research School of Sociology at the Australian National University. Her thesis, 'Contemporary Indigenous identity in landscape, culture and narratives of history in the Sydney region', is a study of Indigenous identity and Aboriginality as expressed through the work of contemporary Aboriginal visual and performance artists, researchers, writers, historians, curators, sports people, elders and other members of Indigenous communities. The research topic was prompted by Indigenous respondents in her Master of Philosophy study on 'Museums connecting cultures: The representation of Indigenous histories and cultures in the small museums of western Sydney'. Stephanie's earlier migration research included a study of return migration from Australia to Italy (*Australia Through Italian Eyes: A study of settlers returning from Australia to Italy*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1980). The book won the Oxford Quincentenary Award (1978) and the New South Wales Premier's Special Book Award sponsored by the Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales (1980). <Stephanie.lindsay-thompson@anu.edu.au>

Yuriko Yamanouchi is originally from Japan. From 2002, while at the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, she conducted PhD research on Aboriginal people living in south-western Sydney. The topic of her thesis was the sense of community and identity of the Aboriginal people living in that area of the city. Yuriko is currently teaching at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in Japan and is now researching the relationship between Indigenous Australians and Japanese migrants in northern Australia.

Introduction

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Identity

Aboriginal identity has been defined in myriad and diverse ways since colonisation. Today, through the bureaucratic concept of Aboriginality, Aboriginal people are generally perceived as having greater self-deterministic possibilities for identity construction. The legislative definition for Aboriginality is that an Aboriginal person:

- is of Aboriginal descent
- identifies as Aboriginal within their community
- is accepted by their community as an Aboriginal person (Gardiner-Garden 2000).

Despite a codified means through which Aboriginal identity can be ‘proven’, mainstream discourses based on common sense understandings operate to objectify Aboriginal identities, which are scrutinised to maximise difference from the white Australian self. Skin colour, location, language, spirituality and the performance of these on demand to a white audience, be they tourist, judiciary or teacher, all act as markers of authenticity (Brady and Carey 2000). Those who fail to manifest an authentic appearance or performance according to these criteria are treated in mainstream education with varying levels of suspicion, scorn and dismissal. In particular, there are vehement discourses that construct the urban Indigenous population as experiencing less authentic forms of Aboriginality, disassociated from country, having ‘lost’ culture.

Linked to a philosophy of economic rationalism, these discourses become a means of demonising urban Indigenous people as illegitimate claimants of ‘Aboriginal special treatment’, diverting funds from ‘real Aborigines’ who are constructed as the deserving poor. By virtue of their physical location, which supposedly necessitates a cessation

of all facets of Indigenous cultural experience, urban Indigenous disadvantage is positioned firmly as arising from individual pathology. This has the potential for moral and philosophical disadvantage at the micro-level in claims to the processes of self-determination in the formation of identity. More broadly, it has the potential to disempower and marginalise urban Aboriginal people from contemporary political debates such as native title; accurate context-based representations in education; and from equitable participation in Aboriginal consultative bodies. The inclusions in this volume that problematise the supposed disenfranchisement of urban Aboriginal people from 'culture' make an important contribution to the debate on Aboriginal identity.

Yuriko Yamanouchi's work centres on Aboriginal people in south-western Sydney and makes clear that a one-size-fits-all model is inappropriate for exploring the diverse experiences of identity within the region. With a majority of the Aboriginal population having migrated from other areas, identity ranges from a continued kin-based sociality to 'organisation-based socialities' and those seen as 'newly identified'. Yamanouchi introduces the conversations that take place within the community as people attempt to make sense of the complex dynamics of identity that exist within its boundaries. These conversations may render the formal 'proof of Aboriginality' invalid within the social world, where the politics of the everyday can exclude individuals from group membership.

While much of Yamanouchi's fieldwork included in the chapter focuses on the actions and conversations of women, Stephanie Thompson's work in Sydney provides a voice for Aboriginal men and the innovative Tribal Warrior project, which marries the concerns of urban elders, needs for youth programs and the continuity of Aboriginal maritime histories. While acknowledging the drug issues in The Block in Redfern, this chapter alerts the reader to the attempts to redevelop both the land and local lives according to a vision that is still anchored within an Aboriginal cultural life-world.

Also in the identity section is the chapter by Waymamba Gaykamaŋu and Kerin Coulehan, which deals with movement from country to an urban environment. This chapter details the attempts by Yolŋu women to mediate some of the difficulties they face in Darwin and surrounding areas, particularly Palmerston. As in the other chapters, kinship is a factor in urban life, although its centrality to the local experience is more central to wider notions of governance. Thus these chapters share some core factors, while simultaneously highlighting the diversity of the Aboriginal experience.

As African-American scholar Robin Kelley (1994:4) has argued:

We have to step into the complicated maze of experience that renders 'ordinary' folks so extraordinarily multifaceted, diverse, and complicated. Most importantly we need to break away from traditional notions of politics. We must not only redefine what is 'political' but question a lot of common ideas about what are 'authentic' movements and strategies of resistance. By 'authentic' I mean the assumption that only certain organizations and ideologies can truly represent

particular group interests...Such an approach not only disregards diversity and conflict within groups, but it presumes that the only struggles that count take place through institutions.

The identity chapters in this volume speak directly to the challenge of presenting the life-world of 'ordinary' Aboriginal people. In doing so, they challenge the academy and the broader mainstream community to think about Aboriginal identity in new ways, undermining the discourses that presume to determine what constitutes 'real' Aboriginality. These chapters show current forms of the Aboriginal experience in a variety of contexts. Further works like these will only strengthen this field of study, while simultaneously enhancing the lives of many Aboriginal people in their quest for identity and recognition.

History

Critical to understanding urban Aboriginal identities is a consideration of Indigenous history and, particularly, its under-representation, exclusion and misrepresentation in historical texts. Although there is now an increasing focus on Indigenous history, this volume contributes a unique set of chapters that concentrate on the history of urban areas. By doing so, these contributions — from Australia, New Zealand and Canada — provide a rich historical contextualisation that not only illustrate the richness, complexity and variety of urban historical experience, but also informs the chapters focused on urban identity.

It is more than four decades since the anthropologist WEH Stanner reprimanded the nation for its lack of attention to Aboriginal history. In his ground-breaking series of Boyer Lectures in 1968, Stanner famously admonished historians for their collusion in maintaining what he termed the 'great Australian silence' in which Aboriginal people were ignored, forgotten and excluded from mainstream historical narratives. In the 43 years since, significant advances have been made. Today the field of Aboriginal history is burgeoning; from academic journals through to popular television series, many of Australia's most talented creators are turning their attention to telling Aboriginal stories of the past.

With so much interest, you could be mistaken for thinking that the silence was well and truly broken and that the truth of Aboriginal history was at last being acknowledged. Undeniably, the past four decades of scholarship have led to a transformation of the narrative from a largely white settler story to one that at least attempts to deal with the history of interaction between Aboriginal and settler peoples. Yet this transformation struggles to find purchase within the wider culture. The myth that Aboriginal people 'aren't around anymore' or, worse, that 'they're not real Aborigines' continues to play out in public and private settings every day,

nowhere more so than in our towns and cities. For urban people whose history sits in the margins of mainstream interests, the great Australian silence is still deafening.

This important volume of essays goes some way to redressing this situation and in doing so brings into focus several of the critical issues facing the development of Aboriginal history as a discipline into the future. As many of these chapters demonstrate, there is a huge methodological challenge in this field, as there is for the writing of histories of any oppressed peoples. The authors who take on this challenge have each come up against the limitations of the tools traditionally used by historians. Paul Irish and Michael Ingrey, for example, confront the paucity of the archival record in their collaborative work on historical places in the Sydney landscape. This is countered by the fine-grained reading of sources by Neville Green in his study of south-west Western Australia. Similarly, Erin Keenan takes on the language of previous narrators and a lack of nuance in describing the Māori experience of urban migration, while John Maynard and Greg Blyton demand the attention of economic and labour historians in their narratives of politics and the workplace.

What it means to be urban, whether as a colonised traditional owner or a migrant from another place, is an issue that cannot be reduced to a single understanding. The diversity across the work of Peter Read as he re-peoples the historic Aboriginal landscape of Sydney, Bill Edwards as he follows the migration of Anangu to Adelaide and Chris Ross as he travels with the elders deep into the Canadian countryside speaks to the multitude of experiences and the range of approaches that characterise the field of Aboriginal history more widely.

As Peter Read travels with Gordon Briscoe through the disappeared landscape of Briscoe's childhood, from northern Australia to the children's homes of western Sydney, they travel deep into the heart of the issues around 'place' in urban Aboriginal histories. As Briscoe reveals to us the loss of the physical landscape in which his childhood played out, Read moves out into the greater Sydney region, stepping from lost place to lost place, revealing a history that remains un-memorialised. Read is a veteran of revealing previously unseen histories, and Briscoe is a veteran of making them. Together they open up an important discussion about the disassociating of memory from its material remains and the consequences of that dislocation for people whose history is forced into the margins. But Read is not content to leave this observation as a lament. Instead, he reveals the opportunity that new technology offers and the way in which it can jump over mainstream narratives to include voices that would otherwise remain silent. The project that Read unveils offers both new information and an exciting new methodology, using the internet to create what he calls a 'three-dimensional' history that allows for the integration of maps and memories, as well as the web of relationships that these historic places sat within. Tracing remnants of almost forgotten places and histories across the suburbs of Sydney, Read not only offers a fascinatingly re-enlivened landscape but a forum that promises to open up new historical worlds into the future.

Archaeologist Paul Irish and Dharawal man and La Perouse community member Michael Ingrey traverse a similar theme and landscape to that of Read in their painstaking documentation of historical Aboriginal people and places in south-eastern Sydney. This innovative cross-disciplinary research places methodology at its core. Calling on archival, archaeological and oral sources, these scholars carefully piece together the locations of places that hold enormous historical significance for the contemporary community.

Writing from the northern hemisphere, Christopher Gall and Ross Hoffman open a window onto the issues around Aboriginal history that are currently being debated in Canada. In doing so, they offer us a perspective on our own practices and underscore the commonality between experiences within our two nations. Gall documents his journey in the field with the elders of the Tl'azt'en Nation. Seeking to detail the history of their important sites for use by future generations of the community, he travels with the elders back to the places for which they hold custodian responsibilities. As he listens to their recollections, he reflects on the role of oral histories within the wider world of history writing and his own role as receiver of this information. A scholar and an outsider, his determination to offer what he terms 'a cultural inventory' of himself shows his willingness to consider what 'doing history' might mean and the complex ways in which it can be used. Through this reflexive voice he comments on the wider issue of 'who owns history', an issue which resonates across the volume.

Often missing from historical research are members of the migrant Aboriginal population who have relocated to cities from other places. Bill Edwards redresses this omission as he follows the story of Anangu living in Adelaide and their journey from northern South Australia across the past half century. His observations contextualise a widely discussed contemporary issue within a long history, trailing back through the introduction of the assimilation policy, the increase in private car ownership, the causes of family breakdown, the location of medical services, the increase in welfare dependency and local employment opportunities in remote locations. The issues faced by this group once they reach the city are those faced by many migrants; cultural misunderstandings, difficulty in accessing services and fractured social structures. As Edwards points out, there is intense focus on remote communities, particularly in light of the 'Intervention', yet little consideration is given to providing for this group of migrant city dwellers once they leave their remote homes, a worrying oversight given that it is a growing population. Edwards' contribution sets the scene for a deeper consideration of the needs of urban Anangu and of urban migrant groups more broadly.

The theme of connections between rural and urban spaces plays out in the highly politicised milieu of Australian Aboriginal and African-American revolt in John Maynard's contribution to the volume. Here the focus is on the effectiveness of political movements founded in urban centres with a support base in rural

communities. This transnational study looks at the links between Marcus Garvey, the most effective black activist of his generation in the United States, and Fred Maynard, the founder of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association. These two great leaders founded their organisations in the metropolitan centres of political power in the 1920s, yet travelled widely in rural locations to generate grassroots support. It was this combination of rural and metropolitan activism that was central to their success, drawing on the established links between people living in cities and their networks 'back home'. By moving between these two case studies, Maynard provides us with a much needed historical insight into the sophistication of both political activism and international co-operation in Aboriginal organisations in the early twentieth century. In doing so, he reaches into an overlooked strand of labour and political history, particularly the role of the workplace in the transference of knowledge.

The theme of labour and economic migration is picked up by Greg Blyton in his work on families in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie districts. Blyton follows the twin strands of railway workers and families who settled in shanty towns.

As historians have found in mission history in Australia, Erin Keenan finds in New Zealand/Aotearoa: that new urban spaces were places where change occurred but they were also spaces where continuities were emphasised. By using oral histories to review aspects of recent history, she revisits discussions on urban social lives as sites of Māori adaptation and change, as well as cultural affirmation and continuity. She challenges the language of historians in their discussions about urban migration as she proposes that, despite the changes that have defined histories, continuities remained the defining factors in Māori urban lives. Māori understandings of the meanings of urbanisation suggest that a more holistic approach to urban migration research is necessary for oral history research.

Neville Green's chapter reviews the available historical sources that provide information about the Indigenous population of the Perth metropolitan district from 1829 to 2001. He examines the major shifts in population through a range of published data and archival sources and considers contributing factors such as violence, disease and migration. Green utilises a range of data, including name census reports in conjunction with research on biographical dictionaries. His chapter shows what can be gleaned from fine-grained analysis of historical sources, but also the limits of the information they provide.

The history chapters in this volume are proof that Indigenous history is not lost, but the painstaking work of writing it back into the record takes a huge commitment to historical truth. The identity chapters show how urban life continues today and into the future. Combined, the chapters in this volume allow a deeper understanding and

awareness of an urban Indigenous history and experience that has been significantly under-represented in scholarly publication to date.

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Part 1

Identity

Chapter 1

Living with ambiguity: Aboriginal community experience in south-western Sydney

Yuriko Yamanouchi

Abstract: *This chapter focuses on how Aboriginal people experience community in south-western Sydney.¹ Aboriginal socialities tend to be understood (a) in terms of kinship and (b) in terms of their ties to their places of origin or ancestry, bonds that are considered the basis of their identity. While the importance of kinship ties for Aboriginal people is undeniable, the degree of emphasis placed upon them has tended to divert scholarly attention from the other forms of socialities that Aboriginal people have developed, a phenomenon epitomised in the use of the term ‘community’ in Aboriginal studies. This chapter examines the various uses of the term ‘community’ and how Aboriginal people experience Aboriginal community that is not exclusively based on kinship ties. In doing this it also explores Aboriginal people’s engagement with identity negotiation.*

Introduction

To date, most research has supported the premise that ‘Aboriginal community’ is a collective term that refers to a specific people based in a single geographic location and connected through kinship ties. Although there have been some critiques (e.g. Peterson 1969) and works of note (e.g. Beckett 1988[1965]; Holcomb 2004; Macdonald 1986),² most have unquestioningly adopted the notion of community. Successive Australian governments’ use of the term ‘community’ has further complicated the issue. In 1972 the federal government introduced the term to identify a body or group among whom massive amounts of funding have been distributed, an action based upon the assumption that a ‘community’ consists of people in a single geographic location, who are organised accordingly (cf. Smith, B 1989). In practice, this has meant that Aboriginal people have had to establish legally constituted organisations in order to receive, manage and account for expenditure and services provided. Some research

highlights the difference between government use of the term ‘community’ and the ways in which Aboriginal people’s social organisations operate. Aboriginal people living in a single geographic location may not constitute a self-governing social unit (Smith, B 1989): their social organisations tend to be more labile and oriented towards kinship ties. According to Christopher Anderson (1989), governments’ use of the term ‘community’ can be subverted by Aboriginal peoples’ kin-based loyalties. In such situations, the term becomes a ‘convenient label used by those in administration of Aboriginal affairs’ (Palmer 1990:169). Rowse (1992) argues that anthropologists in general, who have undertaken research in remote areas, tend to be critical — even dismissive — of the term ‘community’. In settled Australia, the situation is not so different. Macdonald (1986) notes that in Cowra the term ‘community’, which used to refer to those who share the same historical experience, started to refer to those living in a single geographic location. Peters-Little (2000) suggests that organisations ostensibly representing the ‘community’ can be taken over by dominant families. This situation confused Aboriginal peoples’ understanding of the appropriate use of the term.

Some scholars who have addressed the problem of government use of the term have waived the opportunity to contemplate the word ‘community’ and Aboriginal peoples’ diverse social relationships, a problem evident in studies of urban settings. In these studies the term ‘Aboriginal community’ usually means a people connected through kinship ties associated with their places of origin (Barwick 1964, 1988[1971]; Gale 1972, 1981; Gale and Wundersitz 1982; Inglis 1961, 1964; Schwab 1988; Smith, H and Biddle 1975). In more recent times, Aboriginal people have developed various kinds of relationships that cut across kinship ties (Cowlshaw 2009; Matsuyama 2006; Suzuki 1995); whereas their kinship ties make them frequently move between the city and their places of origin (Anderson, K 1999; Staveley 1993), the conventional usage of the term ‘community’ often proves inadequate to grasp these relationships. Exceptions include Pierson’s (1977a, 1977b, 1982) work, which suggests the importance of the role of organisations to connecting non-related Aboriginal people (see also Plater 1993). Pierson’s (1977a, 1977b, 1982) approach is considered here, although it has not been developed subsequent to his work.

This chapter employs Delanty’s (2003) theory of community, which argues that community is based on the communicative experiences of belonging. I explore how Aboriginal people develop and experience a sense of community in south-western Sydney, where their main socialities are neither reliant upon kinship ties nor on shared localities. Questions vis-à-vis the relationship between community and identity are raised. In particular, consideration is given to questioning: if kinship ties are ‘what makes you Aboriginal’ (Peters-Little cited in Plater 1993:265), what happens to Aboriginal identity in communities not based on kinship ties?

In this chapter I first review the theoretical literature on community to provide a methodological tool. Delanty’s (2003) notion of community is used as an analytical

tool to facilitate an understanding of people's sense of community in urban settings. Second, I provide background knowledge on Aboriginal people living in south-western Sydney. Third, using Delanty's notion of community, I explore the Aboriginal community in south-western Sydney based on the field data, which derived from my one-year field research in south-western Sydney in 2004. Aboriginal peoples' sense of community is illustrated by investigating Aboriginal social relations. The issue of identity is examined in the fourth section, as is argumentation surrounding Aboriginal identity and its implications for socialities. Finally, I present my conclusions based on the implications of ambiguous community and identity experiences.

Community based on communication

The concept of community was initially used as an analytical tool to grasp the relationship between social structure and emotional sentiment (Hazan 1984). In classical social science, the term 'community' referred to a reified, bounded group of people living in the same geographical area. Residents were assumed to have an emotional attachment to the community by virtue of living in close proximity with others. This model, however, could not cope with social fluidity which calls any idea of a fixed boundary into question (Barth 1969). In the 1980s the concept was reinterpreted as symbolic (mental) (Anderson, B 1983; Cohen 1985; Marcus 1994). But the link between this ideational aspect of community and actual social experience was not deeply debated. As a result, debate could not come up with a concept of community which could analyse why and how people use the term even when living in complex and fluid social situations.

Amit (2002) argues that the cognitive aspects of the concept of community should be re-embedded into actual social relations. Here I draw on Delanty's (2003) notion of communicative experience as the basis of community, which unites social and emotional aspects of community. He argues that community has always been based on *communication*, including within classically imagined small-scale communities. Nowadays, these communicative ties have been freed from former social structures such as family, locality, class or nation, having become more pluralised and fragmented. People belong to a number of communities, all of which have a weak sense of boundary and tend, if anything, to be abstract and imagined (cf. Marcus 1994). This model captures the fluid and overlapping characteristics of socialities formed in contemporary urban worlds in which people simultaneously belong to a nation, an online community, an academic community, a family, a neighbourhood and/or a workplace community.

If community is based on communication, people's communicative ties need to be explored in order to understand people's experience of community. Since kinship ties have been the primary basis of Aboriginal peoples' communicative ties, Aboriginal community has often been considered as based on kinship ties. In contrast, I argue that in situations in which Aboriginal social relations are not exclusively based on kinship

ties, communicative ties are constituted differently. In the following section, after providing a background picture of the Aboriginal people in south-western Sydney, I analyse the Aboriginal community based on this notion.

Aboriginal people in south-western Sydney

South-western Sydney, an area located approximately 27–51 kilometres south-west of Sydney, comprises the Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool and Campbelltown Local Government Areas (LGAs). Within 30 years of the British arrival on the Australian coast in 1788, this area had become the ‘first white frontier’, with agriculture as its main activity. After the Second World War (post-1945) suburban development saw large public housing estates interspersed among private housing estates in the suburbs. Cheap land and housing attracted people with relatively low incomes (e.g. ex-servicemen and migrants) (Keating 1995). By 2006 the total population in this area was 658 061 (ABS 2006). Since the start of its suburban development, this part of Sydney has been considered a low socio-economic area (cf. Keating 1995): the cost of living is cheaper compared to the eastern or inner-city suburbs of Sydney and the population is generally less well educated, experiences relatively high unemployment rates and tends to have low income levels (ABS 2006). Crime and safety are issues of some concern (Bankstown City Council 2004; Campbelltown City Council 2004a, 2004b; Fairfield City Council 1999, 2003; Liverpool City Council 2003, 2005; New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2008). There is a high rate of one-parent families, which are more likely to be found living in low-rental houses provided by the government. Widespread stereotyping has resulted in this area being dubbed ‘Dodge City’, home to perceived ‘unsophisticated’ residents (cf. Delbridge et al. 2001).

Subsequent to European occupation, the original Aboriginal population was decimated by disease and violence. Today, only a few descendants of the Tharawal³ people, the original inhabitants of the Campbelltown area (cf. Campbelltown City Council 2004a), can be found in the area. No records have been kept or studies undertaken indicating the presence of descendants of the original inhabitants living in south-western Sydney (cf. Everett 2006). According to the most recent census, in 2006 there were 7658 Aboriginal people living in south-western Sydney, most of whom had originally come from different areas of south-eastern and south-western Australia (cf. Beasley 1970). The Aboriginal population of south-western Sydney is younger, less well educated and experiences higher unemployment rates and lower income levels than the non-Aboriginal population (ABS 2006).

On first arriving in Sydney, Aboriginal people tended to take up residence in inner-city suburbs such as Redfern. Migration to this area started as early as the 1880s (Taksa 1999). In time, their overcrowded housing situation gave rise to public concern. In an attempt to deal with the problem, at the end of the 1960s the

government set up major public housing projects, including a special program later known as the Housing for Aborigines program in outer suburbia (Morgan, G 2006). Between 1971 and 2006 the Aboriginal population of this area rose from 491 to 7658 (ABS 1971, 2006). George Morgan (2000, 2006) notes the friction between the obligations of Aboriginal kinship and the assimilationist Housing Commission policy. In addition, what was called the 'salt and pepper' (e.g. Morgan, G 2006) housing allocation policy was designed to ensure that Aboriginal people lived dispersed among non-Aboriginal people.

Although family is important for most Aboriginal people, there is no single kinship connection which covers all or sufficient numbers of Aboriginal people in south-western Sydney to be dominant. The patterns of the distribution of family members and their interactions with each other are various. There also seems to be no predominant pattern of migration. While some Aborigines migrated to south-western Sydney to join their kin, others, who had no contacts in south-western Sydney, simply applied for public housing in the area and accepted the offer. As a result, the structures of the Aboriginal families living in south-western Sydney are diverse. Some have local kin networks large enough to warrant 60 people attending a birthday party: others' kin live mainly in the rural areas; some live in a home town or are dispersed among the towns, cities or states they have migrated to; many have kin elsewhere in Sydney, in the inner-city or outer suburbs. Interaction between the family members and the functions of the kin relationships are also diverse. Some Aboriginal people regularly visit their relatives in and outside south-western Sydney, providing social and material assistance to each other in the form of food, accommodation, money and the raising of small children. Some visit their relatives in rural areas only once a year or less. Others may not have visited their relatives in their original place of residence since their migration to the city, which could be decades ago. There could be various reasons for this. Some may have found it difficult to continue to meet the demands of kinship; others may have quarrelled with their kin and departed for the city.

In addition, considerable numbers of people do not have kin in any of the ways described above; for example, members or descendants of the Stolen Generations, those Aboriginal people who were removed from their Aboriginal families as infants or small children and raised in foster homes and institutions (cf. Read 1982). While some have established contact with their Aboriginal family members, others have either found it difficult to establish close ties with them or have not been able to find them. Another group comprises those referred to as 'newly identified'. There are various reasons for their histories. Some say that they knew about their Aboriginal descent but kept it hidden for a long time; others say their parents only recently told them of their Aboriginality. Some, through genealogical research, discovered that they are of Aboriginal descent. As a result of recent changes in social attitudes towards Aboriginal people in the wider society (and the new advantages which Aboriginality may attract), they have decided to re-identify as 'Aboriginal'. And while some go in search of their

Aboriginal families (Morgan, S 1987), others opt not to explore their immediate or extended family connections.

Aboriginal organisations were established in Sydney's outer suburbia, concomitant with Aboriginal peoples' migration. In inner Sydney, organisations dealing with Aboriginal peoples' social issues — including health and education — were established in the late 1960s and have mushroomed since 1972. In south-western Sydney Aboriginal peoples' involvement with organisation-oriented socialities commenced in the 1980s. In 1983 the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council were established under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (NSW). Other Aboriginal, as well as mainstream, projects addressing Aboriginal issues proliferated. Currently, there are two Aboriginal organisations in Liverpool LGA and 11 in Campbelltown LGA⁴: these organisations run projects, monthly meetings and annual events for Aboriginal people. The Liverpool and Campbelltown City Councils employ Aboriginal project officers and hold monthly meetings. The South Western Sydney Area Health Service⁵ has employed many Aboriginal health care workers and organises Aboriginal elders' groups, Aboriginal men's and women's clinics in Liverpool LGA and Campbelltown LGA, and an Aboriginal women's group in Bankstown LGA. It also funds projects for a non-government organisation that runs an Aboriginal playgroup in Fairfield. Some local schools employ Aboriginal Educational Assistants or Aboriginal Liaison Officers and have programs for Aboriginal students and parents. These projects are run by Aboriginal workers, who are connected through loose networks. Local Land Councils, some Aboriginal organisations, city councils and various community organisations either jointly or separately hold annual Aboriginal events such as NAIDOC (National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee) Week celebrations and Sorry Day services. Aboriginal health care workers jointly hold an annual festival for Aboriginal women throughout south-western Sydney. Some of these groups meet two or three times a week and some meet monthly; most attract between ten and 30 people. Organisations that hold activities frequently do so for only one to three hours at a time. And because there are no central organisations or places to accommodate large and inclusive social gatherings, the building of strong social relations is limited.

There is therefore no comprehensive form of social relations that connects all of the Aboriginal people in south-western Sydney. They are not exclusively connected through kinship ties and they do not live in clusters; rather, they inhabit their diverse histories and backgrounds. In their everyday social interactions, they frequently mix with non-Aboriginal neighbours, friends, workmates and family members. However, in this situation it is not rare to hear an Aboriginal person refer to him/herself as a member of the 'community' or 'Aboriginal community'. Why do they do this?

Aboriginal community in south-western Sydney

In south-western Sydney one finds the term ‘community’ used and applied in different ways; for example, it is used as a suffix to a suburb, as in the ‘Minto community’ or the ‘Bonnyrigg community’. Some people refer to their places of origin as their ‘community’; one hears Aboriginal organisations referred to as ‘the community’. The most frequent usage is ambiguous and general, such as ‘You are well known in the community’.

An examination of communicative ties helps to unravel this situation by finding out where and how Aboriginal people communicate.⁶ As regards the appending of the term to a suburb, it only occurs in relatively geographically isolated suburbs like Minto, where residents have to travel by train, car or bus to visit other suburbs and have access to one shopping centre only for their everyday needs. In confined situations such as these, because the residents come into contact with each other frequently, communicative ties are concentrated in one geographical area. For this reason, the residents refer to the ‘Minto community’, which includes both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal residents.⁷

Aboriginal kinship ties, while not comprehensive in south-western Sydney, are nonetheless important to many Aboriginal people. For those who frequently visit their relatives in their places of origin, communicative ties are maintained; in such cases they refer to their places of origin as their ‘communities’. Aboriginal people, and organisations thought to be representative of Indigenous communities by government, use the term to attract funds. When Aboriginal people use the term ‘community’ in reference to local organisations, they may be reflecting this situation, although such inference requires cautious use due to the significance of the activities of the organisations dealing with Aboriginal issues, which involve a fourth way of using the term. Because the meetings, groups and events run by organisations dealing with Aboriginal issues do not occur on a regular basis, the people tend not to develop the strong social relations depicted in studies of rural area communities. But, notwithstanding, given that in south-western Sydney many Aboriginal people have limited recourse to their kin, organisations provide an opportunity to get to know — and form alliances with — other Aboriginal people and keep in contact with them. Some Aboriginal people have come to know others through their children’s schools, some through contact with the Land Council. Others attend Aboriginal health care services. When Aboriginal workers start work on new projects, they visit the above organisations in order to introduce themselves along with their projects. Organisations also offer opportunities to members of the Stolen Generations — and to those with ‘newly identified’ backgrounds — to become involved with Aboriginal people other than their own Aboriginal families.

In south-western Sydney the communicative ties among Aboriginal people are enhanced by the activities of organisations dealing with Aboriginal issues. It is through

their experiences with these organisations that Aboriginal people come to refer to themselves as ‘members of the community’. As a local Aboriginal elder stated:

For me, there are two communities. One is in my family, there. Here, for my children, is their community. So mine too. For me, it’s also this organisation on Aboriginal education that I have been involved with for a long time; for others, it may be through the health care network, for some it might be through football.

Referring to the organisations as ‘community’ could, in some cases, reflect the importance of the organisations. Most people are not involved solely with one particular organisation. They tend to participate in several different groups, meetings and events. For them, communicative ties in south-western Sydney are dispersed and varied, making their experiences of community diverse, slippery and unbounded. Aboriginal people may or may not attend the same groups, meetings and events: frequency of attendance varies and their experiences of community, rather than coinciding with each other, tend to overlap, all of which makes people’s use of the term ‘community’ at best vague and ambiguous. The elder made another important point, that Aboriginal people may experience more than one form of community. The fact that they communicate with their relatives, neighbours and with others who participate in the aforesaid organisations’ activities suggests that community in south-western Sydney is built around diverse experiences of participation.

Boundaries of being

A significant feature of the Aboriginal community in south-western Sydney is that it is not exclusively based on kin-based socialities. For this reason, I question the premise that Aboriginal identity is based on kinship ties alone. Among Aboriginal groups and meetings in south-western Sydney, questioning what ‘Aboriginal’ means can on occasion trigger a huge argument. Identity is debated because it is no longer taken for granted (cf. Bauman 1999). In south-western Sydney Aboriginal people encounter not only people from different regions but also members of the Stolen Generations and people claiming newly identified backgrounds. This puts ‘being Aboriginal’ under question, as evident in the case below:

At one Aboriginal meeting, an Aboriginal woman, Daisy, asked a woman named Penny: ‘Penny, do you know who is Aboriginal?’ Penny replied: ‘Well, he or she has to identify as Aboriginal, has to be Aboriginal descent, and has to be recognised as Aboriginal by the Land Council, or TAFE [Technical and Further Education]...’ Daisy did not wait for her to finish the list. She said: ‘No, Aboriginality has to be from where it comes from. You cannot become Aboriginal by taking a TAFE course’. Penny, refuting this argument, asked: ‘What about the Stolen Generation?’

Daisy replied: 'Well, Link-Up...' But before she finished her sentence, a woman named Lila, who was new at this meeting, turned around and asked Daisy: 'What if my mum died?' Daisy asked: 'Where are you from?' 'Bourke', Lila replied. Daisy smiled, then said: 'Well, I am from Bourke. So we all know you.' A young girl named Tracy interrupted: 'Well, where is this thing from? Not everyone knows that.' Daisy seemed annoyed and said: 'Everyone knows that.' Tracy said: 'I did not know that'.

When the argument turns to the question 'What is Aboriginal?', people talk about their families and say things like, 'Being Aboriginal has to be from where you come from' or 'We know if we go back where we come from.' In south-western Sydney the argument about Aboriginality revolves around whether family ties should be the sole criterion. This indicates, on the one hand, the continuing significance of kinship ties for some Aboriginal people. However, the nature of the kinship ties argued here is not the same as that in the rural areas from where the majority of the Aboriginal people living in south-western Sydney originally came.

In the rural areas Aboriginal kin relationships are not solely reliant upon blood connections (Macdonald 1986, 1998, 2000). Macdonald (1986) also emphasises 'doing the right thing' by kin. What is important is the actual doing and engaging. For example, in cases where a woman gives birth to a child but fails to take care of the infant, the woman will not be treated as the child's mother. Kin relationships need to be 'activated' to be meaningful and need to be reinforced by regular visiting and by providing material and social assistance (e.g. Birdsall 1988). In south-western Sydney a social requirement is being able to tell where people come from, from which family and how — or to whom — they are connected. This can be achieved via identity negotiation that includes diverse Aboriginal populations, for not all Aboriginal people have kept their ties with their Aboriginal families in their places of origin. Some have not visited them since they left to live in Sydney and for this reason it may be that they will no longer be accepted by their rural kin. However, they can still show where they are from and to whom they are related. This can include members of the Stolen Generations, who have met their Aboriginal families only once.

But Penny's refutation showed that this requirement does not satisfy everyone. Daisy may have been going to say that members of the Stolen Generations can trace their Aboriginal families through Link-Up, an organisation which was specifically established to locate the Aboriginal families of the Stolen Generations. But to date some members have yet to find their Aboriginal families and some 'newly identified' people have not been connected with their Aboriginal families. Tracy's refutation of Daisy's comment reveals that even the reduced requirement for kinship connection is no longer taken for granted. In such cases, a person can be accused of being a 'wannabe', someone who is white (usually Anglo-Australian) but pretends to be

Aboriginal (cf. Cowlshaw 2009). At Aboriginal meetings, groups or other social gatherings in south-western Sydney, it is not unusual to hear people talking about someone 'who is supposed to be Aboriginal, but is actually not'. The rejection of someone's claim to Aboriginality can be seen as one way of dealing with the ambiguity surrounding Aboriginality. By doing so, Aboriginal people from Aboriginal family backgrounds redraw the boundary between 'Aboriginal' and 'non-Aboriginal', which has become blurred. A similar situation was observed by Schwab (1988) in Adelaide, where Aboriginal boys rejected one boy's claim to be Aboriginal not only because he was not related but also because he could not understand the subtle essence of Aboriginal cultural mores. This 'wannabe accusation', however, is never consistent. An Aboriginal woman, A, might accuse B of being a wannabe, but seems happy to work with C. Another Aboriginal woman, D, might accuse C of being a wannabe but will accept B. If a person is not happy in one group or at a meeting, there is always another that one can join or attend.

There is a further attitude towards those who cannot demonstrate their Aboriginality through kinship ties. This became evident in a conversation I held with an Aboriginal woman named Natalie:

Natalie: But also there is acceptance of people who cannot do it [demonstrate their Aboriginality by kinship ties]. For example, there are some Stolen Generation people who do not know their families but still are accepted. It is important to be involved in the community.

Yuriko: Does it mean being involved in NAIDOC Week and other activities?

Natalie: It is not only that but also like being part of the committee, part of the school Aboriginal programs, like ASSPA [Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness], and so on, being more actively involved in these things.

Natalie suggested that people who cannot demonstrate their Aboriginality through kinship ties can be accepted if they become involved in the activities of the various organisations. This attitude stems in large part from longstanding cultural values, which emphasise that rights and recognition are extended to people on the basis of committed practice. This has also underpinned Aboriginal kin relationships. What Natalie suggests, while predicated on similar cultural values, is based on the specific way in which Aboriginal social relations have developed in south-western Sydney, where organisations play crucial roles. Being involved in the activities run by the above organisations is what 'Aboriginal people do'. These organisations provide another way for those who cannot or do not meet the requirement via kin relationships to be accepted as 'Aboriginal', albeit through 'community commitment.' However, what constitutes community commitment is slightly subjective: not all Aboriginal people recognise others' inclusion, as frequent 'wannabe' accusations suggest. There is almost

always someone ready to accept or reject the aspirant. And it is the slippery, loose and unbounded nature of social relations in south-western Sydney that makes this situation possible; in other words, makes unified criteria for Aboriginality impossible. Here, the ambiguous nature of community resonates with the ambiguous Aboriginal identity.

Conclusion: living with ambiguity

In south-western Sydney, Aboriginal people have developed their own sense of community in a particular social environment. They live among — and develop relationships with — people from diverse backgrounds. Applying the conceptual model of community, which understands community as based upon the experience of communication, one can see how Aboriginal people develop their sense of community through neighbourhood, kin and the activities of organisations dealing with Aboriginal issues. Aboriginal peoples' experiences of community in south-western Sydney may overlap but never coincide: not everyone frequents the same shopping centre or attends the same organisation's activities, and experiences of community are thus loose, unbounded and slippery. This ambiguity resonates with the ambiguity of Aboriginal identity in south-western Sydney, where Aboriginal residents are constantly engaged in negotiation and discussion surrounding Aboriginality. Will the day come when they reach unified criteria of Aboriginality? In this chapter I argue that community does not necessarily come with fixed Aboriginality: these arguments are part of the communicative experience that constitutes the community. As Simmel (1955) suggested, conflict is a form of sociation. It is through engaging in the Aboriginality 'argument' that Aboriginal residents in south-western Sydney experience their community.

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Notes

1. South-western Sydney has changed since the paper on which this chapter is based was written. Further academic works about the area this chapter deals with are covered below.
2. The unquestioned usage of the term 'Aboriginal community' was also problematised in works such as Beckett 2012; Cowlshaw 2009; de Rijke 2012; Lumby 2010; Morgan and Warren 2011; see also Cowlshaw and Gibson 2012.
3. Alternative spellings of this word encountered in the literature are Dharawal, Tarawal, Darawa:l, Carawal, Turawal, Thurawal, Thurrawal, Thurrawall, Turuwal, Turuwul, Turrubul, Ta-gary.
4. This is based on field research conducted in 2004 and updated in 2009. Nomenclature of organisations, projects and events listed here could have changed.
5. The South Western Sydney Area Health Service was amalgamated into the Sydney South West Area Health Service in 2005. However, its function at the local grassroots level has remained the same.
6. This chapter focuses on face-to-face communication. The emerging importance of online communication among Aboriginal people was recently pointed out (Lumby 2010). In south-western Sydney, more and more people are now using online communication as well, which I observed during my visits.
7. The Department of Housing relocated some tenants in Minto to the suburbs further south-west after 2008. The sense of 'Minto community' has seemingly declined with this relocation.

Chapter 2

The Tribal Warrior Association: Reconstructing identity

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Abstract: *Small groups of Aboriginal people living on Darug, Tharawal and Gundungurra country around Sydney, many with connections to other areas of Australia, have been participating in a study of Indigenous identity and Aboriginality, as expressed through the work of contemporary Aboriginal visual and performance artists, researchers, writers, historians, curators, sports people, elders and other members of Indigenous communities. Participants in the study have been discussing how they give expression to their Indigenous identity through their work and in their daily lives, and how what they do affects them as Indigenous people. The participants, whose stories contribute to a narrative of present-day Indigenous identity making, include members of the Tribal Warrior Association, a non-profit maritime training company based in Redfern, Sydney, and operated by Aboriginal elders. The training program aims to help young Aboriginal men and women gain accredited qualifications and work experience, which will enable them to make choices in their own lives, rising above the negativity they had previously experienced to ‘a new vision’ of themselves. A tourism arm of the association links the training to Aboriginal cultural cruises on Sydney Harbour, which are designed to showcase Aboriginal seamanship and to counter public misconceptions about Aboriginality by gaining public recognition of the continuing Aboriginal presence in Sydney. A landmark event on 9 June 2003 was the re-entry into Sydney Harbour of the Tribal Warrior after a 21-month voyage around Australia, visiting and conveying ‘letters of goodwill’ to 120 Aboriginal coastal communities. The circumnavigation symbolised Aboriginal self-affirmation at many levels: as a form of initiation for the trainees, a reconnection with traditional ways of interacting through the renewal of links with Aboriginal communities around the Australian coastline, and as a flagship for nation building and reconciliation Australia-wide.*

Introduction

In 1998 a significant reaffirmation of Aboriginality took place on The Block in Redfern,¹ where a group of elders² met with Daniel Ariel, a local resident, who offered to give his boat, the *Tribal Warrior*, to the Aboriginal people of Sydney: 'That's what led us to where we are today', Board member Michael Mundine said when I interviewed him at the Tribal Warrior Association in Redfern on 28 July 2008.³ On the strength of that offer, the elders set up an Indigenous maritime training company, which they named the Tribal Warrior Association after the boat.

The Tribal Warrior Association was incorporated in 1999 and was registered as a non-profit organisation directed by Aboriginal elders and operated by Aboriginal people to provide 'certified commercial maritime training, employment opportunities and mentoring to underprivileged Australians, with an emphasis on Aboriginal youth' (Tribal Warrior Association 2008). In an interview in Sydney on 11 August 2008, Shane Phillips, Chairman and Chief Executive of the company, said that the training program was developed without government funding: 'It was a community initiative which aimed to empower Aboriginal people by helping them gain practical skills and theoretical knowledge to qualify for work in the maritime industry.' Establishment of the Tribal Warrior Association represented a step towards achieving greater autonomy and self-determination (Phillips, interview, 11 August 2008):

For us, it's just two simple things: economic empowerment and development. We can call things on our own terms, if we are making our own money and we are doing it the right way, then we can choose to take pathways that we think may help other people. By not being dependent on someone else's money, it allows us to be independent to make our own decisions.⁴

Organisational autonomy and independence in decision making were prerequisites in safeguarding the Aboriginal identity of the Tribal Warrior Association and ensuring a culturally appropriate and secure work environment for crew members, trainers and trainees. From its Redfern origins, the Association had credibility within the Aboriginal community, and in its negotiations sought to ensure that the standpoints of local Aboriginal people informed and directed its policies and decisions. This approach involved working in conjunction with the community to reinforce its authority, in contrast to the consultation processes used in the past by external bodies, which had undermined Aboriginal authority by raising expectations then failing to deliver positive outcomes (Brennan et al. 2000, cited in AHC 2007:15).

In this chapter⁵ I look at how the gift of a boat launched an Aboriginal maritime training and cultural tourism company, which, while operating independently of government for more than ten years, has had marked success in reviving Aboriginal maritime traditions, which had been disrupted by colonisation, and building a bridge

between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities at Sydney's cultural interface (Tribal Warrior Association 2008).⁶ The Tribal Warrior Association initiative holds particular interest as a definitive reaffirmation of Aboriginality on The Block in Redfern's Aboriginal heartland, and is led by elders and others with diverse Aboriginal heritage who are working in collaboration. Through its training programs, the Tribal Warrior Association has enabled young Aboriginal people to obtain TAFE-accredited qualifications, which have led to 'real jobs' in the maritime industry and related trades and launched them on new career paths.

This chapter draws on interviews with Tribal Warrior Association Board members, staff, crew, trainers and trainees, who discuss how they give expression to their Aboriginality through their work with the association and in their daily lives. Daniel Ariel, the donor of the boat, declined to be interviewed, saying that he would prefer 'no limelight' as he did not want any coverage of his story to detract from the achievements of the Tribal Warrior Association (Ariel, pers. comm., 2009).⁷

In order to appreciate the significance of the Tribal Warrior Association, it is necessary to look back to the origins of the project in the Redfern community. In 1998, when the Tribal Warrior Association was being established, morale on The Block was at a low ebb. Families and groups were increasingly divided as residents struggled to find solutions to problems that had become deeply embedded as a result of longstanding government neglect. Housing was dilapidated, culturally inappropriate and far below the standard of housing in other inner-Sydney suburbs. Relationships within The Block community had been severely undermined by drug and alcohol abuse, and ill health, aggravated by cramped living conditions, 'crime, vandalism, drug dealers and criminal manipulation' (AHC 2007:8). In a classic example of blaming the victim, much of the crime and substance abuse for which the Aboriginal community was blamed originated outside Redfern, and non-Aboriginal drug peddlers and petty criminals preyed on residents of The Block.

The community felt stigmatised by the positioning of a 'Needle Bus' for more than ten years next to the Redfern Community Centre and a children's playground, and four doors away from a pre-school.⁸ Michael Mundine, Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Housing Company, described how, 'In the beginning, we didn't object to the bus because we were going through a bad time, but now the drug problem on the Block has been largely resolved' (Mundine, interview, 28 July 2008):

Today [28 July 2008] all the drug users from everywhere are using the bus, and the Health Department hasn't got the respect for us to move it on...The Redfern [Police] Command want it moved, Aboriginal organisations and local residents, white and black, want it out of there, but the Health Department and the City of Sydney refuse to listen.⁹

The stigmatisation was doubly unfair. People interviewed recognised that white society had been responsible for the introduction of drugs in their country, and that the drugs had represented a form of acculturation to white social values. Phillips (interview, 11 August 2008), reflecting on the injustice of the situation, said:

I was an angry man. I was angry when I thought — I think — the white man has put us in this position, and now they want us to get up and run with them, alongside. And I thought, what if we can't do that straight away? Are they still going to resent us and make us even angrier?

At a time when choices for young people had been limited to drugs, alcohol and self-harm, the Tribal Warrior Association offered an alternative, although the introduction of tertiary-level training courses in a community that had become demoralised required much preparatory groundwork. The involvement of elders in guiding the project helped the trainees re-establish links to traditional culture and values, and the trainers ensured that the training programs were attuned to the trainees' needs for a community to belong to, endorsement of their Aboriginality, encouragement in their career paths, and support as they underwent rehabilitation. Skipper Dallas Clayton, in an interview on board another Tribal Warrior Association vessel, the *MV Deerubbun*, at the Sydney Fish Markets on 31 July 2008, said the Tribal Warrior Association has helped 'hundreds of troubled kids':

We've dealt with a lot of troubled kids from around the metropolitan area and the country. They've come down from the Kimberley, Central Australia, the Desert, West Torres... The importance of the training is it gives the kids a bit of incentive, encouraging them to 'have a go'. It's helped them develop self-esteem.

Between 1998 and 2007, 562 students participated in the Tribal Warrior Association's maritime training courses, including 209 who trained as general purpose hands, 12 as coxswains, 19 as master class 5, four as Australian Yachting Federation coastal skippers and two as boatswains. Twenty-two undertook Marine Engine Driver 3 Engineer training, while others trained at Marine Engine Driver 2 Engineer and Master 3 level (Tribal Warrior Association 2008). The Tribal Warrior Association is recognised as 'the only Indigenous maritime training company in the country' (Clayton, interview, 31 July 2008).

There is always a waiting list for enrolment in the courses. In the absence of government funding, 'it's a struggle financially to keep things going, to have the maintenance done on the boats, to have an office and people working in the office. So we're not actually running a day-to-day training program at the moment', Keefo 'Kippa' Zechariah said when interviewed at the Tribal Warrior Association, Redfern, on 8 August 2008. The two trainers, Kippa and David 'Seaweed' Vincent, both from

TAFE NSW Open Training and Education Network Maritime Studies, Strathfield, have always worked voluntarily for the association.

Graduates of the training programs have high-level technical skills and are in demand across the industry. The training succeeds through being tailored to each trainee's experience and level of education, and is 'far more rigorous and more practical than other courses' (Zechariah, interview, 8 August 2008): 'We've always had youngies and oldies among the trainees, mixing together. We have two women trainees at the moment, and we've had women trainees before.'

The courses are adapted to Aboriginal learning styles and preferences, building on the Aboriginal trainees' excellent oral and memory skills, as Skipper David Bird said when interviewed on board the *MV Deerubbun* at the Sydney Fish Markets, 5 September 2008:

Most of our exams are oral, and they enable us to examine people with low literacy. What I'm saying is that Aboriginal people have very good memories through having relied on the oral tradition and, working orally, we are able to translate materials for a lot of the fellas without the need for an education in literacy. You see, it's in us to understand that because we don't know the written words.

The training relies less on text books than other TAFE courses and more on data summaries, although standards in theoretical work are equivalent, and in practical work are higher than in TAFE, according to the trainers. Zechariah (interview, 8 August 2008) outlined how training practices endeavoured to meet the needs of Indigenous trainees:

When we first ran this course, we didn't give them set books, just sheets of paper stapled together each time, because they would have been put off by the amount of books. So ever since then, all the training that we do, we've always tried to help the guys with their assignments to get through it. We do that as quick as we can, and we concentrate on the practical training as much as possible. We help them with their assignments, so they can get that out of the way and get on with the practical training so that they become proficient at it, not just head-locked.

Under the direction of elders and community members, the TAFE trainers have adapted training methods to blend with Aboriginal culture and patterns of learning. The training adopts Aboriginal customary learning practices, as Clayton (interview, 31 July 2008) explained:

With our training, it isn't like classrooms or school. It's a different curriculum altogether. We make sure you look and learn and, it's not cheating, we help one another out. It's not like where the teacher stands out the front, uses a board and

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says, ‘Copy this’ or ‘Do this’, and you’re allowed 10 or 20 minutes, otherwise you’ll fail. Practically no one fails with us; we make sure they understand, because that’s the traditional way of learning of our people anyway — you practised doing whatever collection task you were given until you got it right, and it’s the same with our training with the *Tribal Warrior*: unfortunately, a lot of non-Indigenous people haven’t had the opportunity to train our way.

The training program’s potential for rehabilitation was tested in 1999 when Phillips approached mates working on the *Tribal Warrior* (Skipper David Bird and Trainers Kippa and Seaweed) to enlist their help with a group of a dozen young men from Redfern who were undergoing drug detoxification. Phillips, who had been working with the group as a volunteer counsellor, recalled that ‘After the kids had been working through the detoxification program for a few weeks, everyone was asking, “What are we going to do after?”’; it was an important question if they were to break the drug cycle, so Phillips approached Ariel, his neighbour, who suggested, ‘We’ll do days out on the *Tribal Warrior* with your kids, once they’re clean, so they can have some time away with their families’ (Phillips, interview, 11 August 2008).



Figure 1: Shane Phillips

Being able to take the young people on board the *Tribal Warrior* offered the prospect of a breakthrough in the drug-dependence cycle. Phillips (interview, 11 August 2008) described the exhilaration the young people experienced out on the harbour, reunited with their families, after weeks of separation while they were undergoing rehabilitation: 'For the first time for a long time, their new day included their families. The kids and their families had lunch out on the boat, going for a cruise, being able just to enjoy the sunshine and the breeze. That's how the Tribal Warrior came about.'

That experience indicated that maritime training, which distances trainees from the site of their problems and offers a taste of a new life offshore as part of a supportive crew, had the potential to help break down drug and alcohol dependencies. Employment, which is critical in breaking the drug-dependency cycle, was generally unattainable until people had been weaned off their substance abuse and had their self-confidence rebuilt. Hence, rehabilitation programs, combined with mentoring, were seen as essential components of the maritime training courses.¹⁰

Phillips is proud of the association's achievements in rehabilitation, which he has incorporated into the training program informally by drawing on existing support networks. The rehabilitation depends on 'community', and there is also an expectation that 'once you get help, you help someone else: I love the fact that people here who at one stage of their lives were on substance abuse, heavy drugs, petty crime, broken families, low, low self-esteem, and with no vision for themselves, just didn't think they were worth anything, now seeing them helping people' (Phillips, interview, 11 August 2008).

Zechariah (interview, 8 August 2008) described the interweaving of support into the training program:

Because some trainees were having drug and alcohol problems, we gave them a bit of extra support. It wasn't just maritime training...it was a bit of everything; it was full-on, ministering to them, trying to empower them, basically, to give them some self-esteem, a new taste of life, a new vision with better horizons.

For those who had been long-term drug users, rehabilitation was often uneven, with occasional relapses, in some cases after 'going straight' for six to eight years; other relapses occurred much sooner. The Tribal Warrior Association offers ongoing support to people fighting drug addiction. Phillips (interview, 11 August 2008) said, 'There's also this cultural thing, people helping themselves, and as a group of people they all support each other together. They all have different beliefs, but they all just try to do something to help themselves':

They don't get many chances, but we've got options for them, we've got people in rehab, we've got people who are counsellors, we talk to the courts, and we link them with sponsors who've come through the organisation. Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Christian groups also offer support.

Tim Gray, who is studying for his Master 5 Certificate while working in the office of the Tribal Warrior Association, had been homeless before commencing training: 'I was so depressed, it was an actual choice to live on the streets: I'd lost all hope. But now, I've gained all that back again, since returning to the Tribal Warrior Association after a period of rehabilitation', he said when interviewed at the Tribal Warrior Association, Redfern, on 11 August 2008.

The Tribal Warrior Association's management practices are not democratic, Phillips (interview, 11 August 2008) was careful to point out:

We have to be hard...we deal compassionately with them, but when they are with us, we have to make sure that they understand the full ramifications of their role — to be a representative of our people. The standard has to be high, as every one of our kids represents us, and we have to represent them, so we don't want to give them any crap, but we have to make sure they understand the big picture, so that they can use their training as a tool for their own future.

During interviews, crew members and trainees alike strongly endorsed the Tribal Warrior Association training programs, which they said had given them work skills and confidence to overcome problems, enabling them to reconnect with their Aboriginality. An important factor contributing to their recovery had been the traditionally supportive Aboriginal community they found in the Tribal Warrior Association. 'This organisation is the best thing that ever happened,' said Skipper Chris Duckett (interview on board the *MV Deerubbun* at the Sydney Fish Markets, 1 August 2008); 'Some of these fellas here would give you the shirt off their back, and they have had hard lives.' Duckett was elated to have recently gained his Captain's Certificate, recalling how before joining the Tribal Warriors his situation had been dire: 'I was going bad. Five and a half years of my life I was inside — in all the prisons, Long Bay, Lithgow, Goulburn, Grafton, Maitland, Cessnock. Coming back out the other end was an achievement, and being a father made the difference...'

Continuities on The Block

The Block at Redfern seems an unlikely birthplace for an Aboriginal maritime training company: a landlocked inner cityscape of some 8000 square metres, bounded by narrow streets — including Eveleigh Street, which has a reputation for drug dealing and violence. Yet that small space, on Gadigal lands that form part of the Darug nation, has been a hub of Aboriginality for more than 200 years, and its significance to its present-day Aboriginal owners is disproportionate to its size. It continues to be a meeting place and point of disembarkation for travellers from country areas, accustomed to staying with or close to relatives.

Of some 50 to 60 Gadigal traditional owners of Redfern who were alive in 1788, only three survived the smallpox epidemic and remained alive in 1791 (Kohen 1993:15; AHC 2006). In the 1920s Aboriginal people from rural communities began migrating to Redfern, seeking work at the Eveleigh rail yards and on the waterfront, their numbers becoming ‘an influx in the 1950s, after modern farm machinery eliminated seasonal jobs in the bush’ (Stephens 2004). The intermixing of Aboriginal people from diverse communities, brought into close proximity on the site, encouraged the development of political activism. John Maynard (2005:2) records that at the Sydney docks, Aboriginal wharf labourers encountered international black seamen, and ‘realised that they were not alone’ as they learned that ‘others around the globe were...speaking out against oppression, racism, and prejudice directed against black people.’

Six terrace houses on The Block were bought by the Whitlam government in 1973 and handed over to Aboriginal ownership.¹¹ Other houses remained in private hands until, in 1997, the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) bought the last privately owned terrace house on The Block to become the owner of more than one hundred individual parcels of land. Only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their partners and families live on The Block, and the AHC, under its memorandum of association, is unable to rent any property to non-Indigenous people (NSW Parliament 2004).

Aboriginal ownership of The Block did not result in autonomy in land management, however, and the area remained a contested space where Aboriginal residents continued to experience a form of cultural apartheid (Mundine, interview, 28 July 2008):

Our land beside Redfern Station is the second biggest Aboriginal nation in New South Wales, and [it has] got to go forward. From a government point of view, we’re a stumbling block for their vision. That’s where we’re isolated. Their attitude is: ‘You’re a black man — you stay over there!’ That barrier is part of the vicious cycle of racism that’s got to go.¹²

Against opposition from New South Wales Government planning authorities, the AHC persisted and in 2001 submitted a Community Social Plan for the redevelopment of AHC properties in Redfern. A second edition of the plan, developed with support from the non-Indigenous community, was published in 2007, as Mundine (interview, 28 July 2008) described:

With our new concept plan, since non-Indigenous people came to help us, we were able to put the plan in to the Planning Authority, simply because the whole mob came together as a people. That’s what can happen if you show respect. The non-Indigenous people involved know that it is an Aboriginal company, and that we’ve got the last say on what happens, and I have the last say from the CEO point

of view. But we sit at the table, and talk to one another. We've got the vision as Aboriginal people, but to bring the concept to reality, you've got to have architects, planners, landscapers and surveyors.¹³

The AHC's Pemulwuy Project Concept Plan for The Block moved a step closer to being implemented after gaining the approval of the New South Wales Minister for Planning and Minister for Redfern, Kristina Keneally, on 2 July 2009 (Keneally 2009).¹⁴ The election of a new state government on 26 March 2011 resulted in further delays for the project until, on 22 December 2012, Premier Barry O'Farrell announced that his government had granted planning approval for the Pemulwuy redevelopment of The Block.¹⁵

The approval was a landmark after 'a very long, long journey of trials and tribulation', Mundine said in a telephone interview on 2 April 2013. Mundine observed, in the AHC's fortieth year, that he had witnessed 'greater respect for Redfern after we made a stand and said "No more!" to the vicious cycle of racism in which people in our own community had been caught up as much as anybody else'. He added:

You cannot blame Aboriginal people for blaming others and dwelling on the past because of what they went through, ones who had suffered all these many, many years. But I believe that now it's time to [not] dwell on the past, live in the present and look forward to the future.

This community we are building is for the next generation of children, and Redfern in general. We want to change the image of Redfern, to change the face of Redfern... With the Pemulwuy project, I want people to come and say, 'Oh, we'll go to Redfern! That's my meeting place.'¹⁶

The Block community is made up of permanent residents and a transient population of temporary residents staying with relatives, including people from rural areas seeking employment and better educational opportunities for their children, and other people travelling between communities. Clayton spoke of having 'moved in and out of Redfern on and off over the years, staying with aunties and uncles'; at other times he stayed with his mother at Bonnyrigg, or travelled to Bowraville, where his Wiradjuri family members have a land claim (Clayton, interview, 31 July 2008).

Redfern residents, both short- and long-term, draw strength from their community, as Duckett (interview, 1 August 2008) observed:

There is a bit of community here, although there's a struggle with the alcohol and drug dealers down at The Block. Redfern has always been a meeting place for the Stolen Generation people, and people travelling through, they'd put them up for the night while they travelled between towns.

Skipper David Bird's involvement with the Tribal Warrior Association over ten years had, he said, 'nailed me to Sydney, because of the great vision it offers — I like being part of it'. Bird feels he belongs to the Redfern community, despite having been born in Dubbo (and being Wiradjuri on his mother's side, and from Cherbourg on his father's side of the family). From his observation, 'everyone that has come to the vessel, during their time with the Tribal Warrior Association gets involved with the movement in Redfern and La Perouse and with those communities more than the communities they came from' (Bird, interview, 8 August 2008).¹⁷

The self-containment of the Redfern community has undoubtedly contributed to its residents' sense of belonging, kinship and political solidarity, with ostracism by white society encouraging cohesiveness in self-defence. Several participants in this study conceptualised the Redfern community as the core of their understanding of their Aboriginal identity. The *Tribal Warrior* and the MV *Deerubbun* act as a bridge to maintain lines of communication between residents of The Block and Aboriginal communities around Australia. Even crew members who originated from other areas of Australia felt a sense of belonging to The Block and concern for the wellbeing of the Redfern community.

During interviews, residents of Redfern and adjacent areas identified multiple factors making up their identities as members of the Redfern community, including connections to ancestors, as Phillips (interview, 11 August 2008) described:

I'm from the Redfern community...my Mum's mob is from down here. It was actually across the road in Lawson Street in the late 1800s that her grandmother and grandfather used to work in that street on some big old cart. There's a connection — that's why I love Redfern so much...I know within my own spirit that it's from this area, that there's this connection.

Both Phillips and Bird spoke of their deepening sense of identification with Redfern — Phillips referred to Redfern as his country and spiritual home, while Bird described his sense of growing connection to the people and history of the place. For Mundine (interview, 28 July 2008), the Tribal Warrior Association seems 'rather like the water-side of the Aboriginal Housing Company, down at the sea':

The totem for this area is sea creatures, and I believe the sea creatures, the dolphins and whales make the spiritual flow of the water. So the *Tribal Warrior* is trying to get the good spirit from the sea level and bring it back on the land, and clean out the vicious cycle, the bad karma. That's my belief, anyway.

On the harbour

The Tribal Warrior Association was an idea that had wings — a courageous venture to attempt to float an Aboriginal maritime training and cruise business on two small vessels. The *Tribal Warrior*, a 15.4 metre gaff-rigged ketch, was built in the Torres Strait Islands in 1899 and worked as a pearling lugger off Broome (Tribal Warrior Association 2008).¹⁸ On Sydney Harbour it acquired a new layer of identity, becoming the flagship of the Tribal Warrior Association after the elders had performed a traditional smoking ceremony to purify, cleanse and heal past memories. The vessel today bears testimony to Aboriginal history in its mast, carved with the Whale Dreaming story, a story of reconciliation. For public occasions and celebrations, the *Tribal Warrior* flies the Koori flag, a special events jib sail bearing the words ‘It’s a Koori harbour’ and a ‘Black Duck (Guindaring) painted in Aboriginal design...the totem of the Yuin — south coast of New South Wales’ (Tribal Warrior Association 2008).¹⁹ MV *Deerubbun*,²⁰ acquired in 2001, is a wooden-hulled ex-Navy torpedo recovery vessel.²¹ Aboriginal carvings now decorate the woodwork of the vessel, which is used for Aboriginal Cultural Cruises and corporate charters on Sydney Harbour.

Aboriginal Cultural Cruises on Sydney Harbour, linked to the training program, are designed to showcase Aboriginal seamanship, to teach Aboriginal culture and gain public recognition of the continuity of an Aboriginal presence in Sydney. The cruises,



Figure 2: *Tribal Warrior*, Sydney (photograph: Wayne Quilliam)

which depart from the Opera House steps and attract many tourists, demonstrate that Sydney's harbour and waterways belong in Aboriginal culture, as Bird (interview, 8 August 2008) described:

Aboriginal people were familiar with everything associated with the water, tidal zones, up and down the streams, when were the best times to fish. Down here in Blackwattle Bay there's evidence of Aboriginal rock carvings of the larger Orca whales keeping the fish within the sandbanks, and when the tide was right out, there were these nice pools of fish here for the people, who were signalled and able to go down and grab these fish, working in with the creatures themselves.²²

Trainer David Vincent, in an interview in Sydney on 1 August 2008, said the cultural tours aimed to dispel public misconceptions about Aboriginality by educating the general public to recognise that, in Sydney, 'There are coastal Aboriginal people. There always have been coastal Aboriginal people.' The cultural cruises are run in a way that encourages 'everyone that comes along to offer an aspect from their culture as part of our cultural cruises' (Bird, interview, 8 August 2008).



Figure 3: Skipper Dallas Clayton at the helm of MV *Deerubbin*, Circular Quay, Sydney, 31 August 2008 (photograph: Stephanie Lindsay Thompson)

One crew member, who is of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, is a traditional dancer and on the tours presents ‘the live history of the songs, dance, artwork, and also a bit of knowledge of the Aboriginal people today’ (pers. comm., 9 August 2008²³). He described his sense of belonging to the ship’s company: ‘It’s a real community with these guys here — we’re a community within ourselves. In addition, there’s the performing arts side’:

With dance, one of my elders taught me to dance, and she said to me, ‘I’ll teach you to dance, but it’s not for you to have. It’s for you to pass it on.’ And the reason I have to pass it on is to keep our culture alive. If you keep it, it’s not going to be there for the next generation. It’s just like the land, we don’t own the land, the land owns us. It’s the same with our songs and dances.

Working with the Tribal Warrior Association melds very well with Aboriginal lifestyles as people move in and out of Redfern taking up different roles in their lives. Troy Russell, who travels frequently between Sydney and Dubbo, taught music at Dubbo TAFE for five years. After moving to Sydney he joined the Tribal Warrior Association, ‘starting out as deckhand, and later doing the commentary on the boat. I did some training, passed my tests and exams, and got my certificates. When I get the chance, I work on maintenance too’ (Russell, interviewed at the Tribal Warrior Association, Redfern, 11 August 2008):

I love being around the boats, and I love being out on the harbour. It’s also about who’s working here as well: there’s the mateship of these people, the crew and office staff...Once out on the harbour, we are doing our thing, and it’s strictly Aboriginal...People ask me what I do for a living, and I go, ‘Well, I work for an organisation called the Tribal Warrior Association’...Once you start talking about it, you become proud of what you do out there in maritime work as an Aboriginal person...*Deerubbun* is a whole new experience, and I’ve learnt through the maintenance on one boat.

Russell is well known as a musician and film maker. He currently works in commercial television, and has made two documentary films, one being the award-winning documentary, *The Foundation 1963–1977*.²⁴

The circumnavigation

On 30 August 2001, three years after the Tribal Warrior Association was established, crowds of well-wishers gathered at Cockle Bay for the departure of the *Tribal Warrior* and its crew on a circumnavigation of the Australian continent. After Uncle Max Eulo performed a smoking ceremony, Aboriginal dancers farewelled the crew members,

who were presented with ‘letters of goodwill’ to all the coastal communities the *Tribal Warrior* would visit (Tribal Warrior Association 2008).

The circumnavigation of 25 760 kilometres of Australian coastline aimed to encourage coastal and river communities to join the Tribal Warrior Association in developing a chain of Indigenous maritime training and tourism industries right around the coastline (Tribal Warrior Association 2001). The Tribal Warrior Association (2008) issued a press release inviting the coastal communities to come on board the *Tribal Warrior*:

We are inviting each community we visit to burn or carve an identifying piece of art on the timber of the vessel to signify their assent and involvement. When the Tribal Warrior returns to its place in Sydney Harbour, it will bear the ‘signature’ of all the coastal nations.

The communities were generally enthusiastic, and each sent an artist to put some art work on the boat (Vincent, interview, 1 August 2008).

Twenty-one months later, on 9 June 2003, the *Tribal Warrior* sailed back into Sydney Harbour on the completion of its circumnavigation, which had included visits to 120 major Aboriginal coastal communities. On board was ‘the first Aboriginal crew to circumnavigate Australia in a voyage of reconciliation’, which rekindled memories of early Aboriginal mariners, notably Bungaree, who 200 years earlier accompanied Matthew Flinders in the *Investigator* on a circumnavigation of the continent (Smith 2011:2; Jopson 2003; McCarthy 2013[1966]).²⁵ On the waterfront and at sea, Aboriginal mariners frequently joined forces with colonial voyagers, who drew on their mediation skills and readiness to share in the work of the crew.²⁶

For Phillips (preliminary interview, 2 June 2006, Circular Quay), who had completed his training as a deckhand before joining the circumnavigation, it was ‘a voyage of self-discovery’:

We handed the vessel over to the elders in all the coastal communities on the way through, and they would share it with the whole town. So it was like a vessel of goodwill, which enabled people who normally wouldn’t spend time together out on the water and in the town, to share the vessel and spend time together...

The circumnavigation was symbolic at several levels: in reconnecting with Eora saltwater traditions and early mariners, and establishing links with communities around Australia as part of an Aboriginal nation-building process; as a voyage of reconciliation in which the *Tribal Warrior* was taking a leadership role; and as a form of initiation into Aboriginality for the trainees. For crew and trainees, it was an introduction to the national and international dimensions of Aboriginality, and some people moved

into new careers in the international shipping industry, leading them far from the community on The Block.

Among the trainees on board, Craig Timbery, aged 28, who had gained his Marine Engine Driver's Certificate, as well as a commercial maritime qualification, was about to join the 34 000-tonne alumina carrier *Alltrans*. Five years earlier he had been 'cutting grass and painting houses on work-for-the-dole', as he told Debra Jopson (2003) of the *Sydney Morning Herald*: 'There's no looking back now. I'll be on ships for the rest of my life.' For crew members from troubled backgrounds, the circumnavigation represented an emphatic self-affirmation of their personal achievements. It was cause for celebration of Aboriginality, not only for the participants, but for all associated with the Tribal Warrior Association and the Redfern and La Perouse Aboriginal communities. The voyage demonstrated the power of Aboriginality, Mundine (interview, 28 July 2008) said: 'It was like Captain Cook landing in Australia, and the *Tribal Warrior* going to show him: "We've been here first. Hey, look at us! Respect us!"'

New horizons

Through its cruise business, the Tribal Warrior Association has opened up lines of communication with other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities across Sydney's cultural divide, and around Australia. The training programs on board the Tribal Warrior Association's two small vessels showcase Aboriginality in a phase of rapid growth: they are modern and outward-looking, but continue to draw strength from tradition and are guided by elders. As a result of positive affirmations of their Aboriginal identity, while working with the Tribal Warrior Association, trainees have become strong enough to offer support to other disadvantaged people across the wider community (Tribal Warrior Association 2008).²⁷ The experiences which members of the Tribal Warrior Association describe in this chapter illustrate evolving processes of identity formation within urban Aboriginal communities (Lewins 1991:172).²⁸

The Tribal Warrior Association's operations are significant nationally for the ways in which they encompass a cultural interface, described by Torres Strait Islander academic Martin Nakata (2007:215–16) as 'a space of many shifting and complex intersections between different people with different histories, experiences, languages, agendas, aspirations and responses'.²⁹ Bird (interview, 5 September 2008) outlined how, from his observations, he believed that the Tribal Warrior Association's interventions at the public interface had brought about change:

What do other Aboriginal people say? They sing our praises. They tell everybody, the Tribal Warrior name is well and truly out there, and we haven't had nothing at all untoward in what we do. Non-Aboriginal people say lots of good, positive

things as well. Where we sit at this moment in this pen outside the Sydney Fish Market, the non-Aboriginal owner of the Fish Market, Mr Peter Manetti, was so impressed with our maritime training and the way we are community-based, he has given this \$200-a-week pen to the Tribal Warrior Association that we've been using ever since we've been here. How can we be biased against non-Aboriginal people when we have so many good people who are willing to support the Tribal Warrior Association?

In summary, 'Daniel [Ariel]'s gift was a blessing', Mundine (interview, 28 July 2008) said, 'because it's given our people back a bit of pride, a bit of respect... This has shown everyone out in Australia, non-Indigenous and our own people too, "Hey, look, we can do things ourselves as Aboriginal people!"'

Postscript

Since the interviews in 2008–09, 'the Association has seen some nice growth', Shane Phillips said in a telephone interview on 19 March 2013. In 2009, Phillips, in collaboration with Redfern police commander Superintendent Luke Freudenstein and Indigenous leaders Michael Mundine and Mark Spinks, initiated Clean Slate Without Prejudice, a boxing training program at the gym in the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence at Redfern. Participation is voluntary and an Aboriginal mentor brings participants to training, where the trainers are police. Phillips (interview, 19 March 2013) observes:

Clean Slates has changed the way we interact with each other, the way policing happens, the way that police deal with Indigenous young offenders here, and with community-based policing. The idea is that they just do exercises in the morning at the 6.00am exercise program. Everyone drops their guard, and at the end of the session, everyone's equal, and they learn about each other. After that, the kids go on to school or work, the police go to work, and when they see each other in the street, there's something simple that they do together, and they become friends. So it helps in the way the youth form, and if you're in a police car and you see one of the young guys who may in the past have had some difficulty with you, or vice versa, and you say, 'How y'a goin?' And they may be able to influence the other people that are with them. It sounds really simple, but it's huge. It's the human level of life.

Between 2009 and 2010 the number of robberies committed by local youth declined by 80 percent (Feneley 2012).

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Notes

1. A block of houses, bounded by Eveleigh, Vine, Louis and Caroline streets in Redfern, was one of the first pieces of land in urban Australia owned by Indigenous people when it was purchased for Indigenous housing in 1973. Subsequently, what had been ‘a dream for Aboriginal self-determination, turned into a ghetto’, as conditions on The Block deteriorated as a result of government and organisational neglect, and ‘poverty, crime and drugs...overwhelmed a community still struggling to believe in itself’ (*Four Corners* 1997).

2. Uncle Lionel Mongta from the Walbunja community, Uncle Bruce Stewart from the La Perouse community, and, from the Redfern community, Uncle Max Eulo, Uncle Allen Madden and Uncle Solomon Bellear.
3. Mundine described Ariel as 'a guy with a good heart who always had time for Aboriginal people and people who were down-and-out' (Mundine, interview at the Tribal Warrior Association, Redfern, 28 July 2008).
4. Phillips, interview at the Tribal Warrior Association, Redfern, 11 August 2008. Phillips added that in the past four months they had received government funding to train a business development manager, but the funding does not cover any of the running costs of the association.
5. This profile of the Tribal Warrior Association draws on a thesis chapter of my current PhD study on 'Contemporary Indigenous identity in landscape, culture and narratives of history in the Sydney region'.
6. The Tribal Warrior Association has received numerous awards for its work, including awards in 2003 from the New South Wales Premier for 'Outstanding Services to the Community and New South Wales' and for 'Social Justice, Tribal Warrior Aboriginal Training Program' and a 'Certificate of Appreciation, Local Cultural Awareness Training, NSW Police, Redfern Local Area Command'.

In 2013 Shane Phillips was named 'Australia's Local Hero 2013' in the Australian of the Year Awards in recognition of his work as full-time Chief Executive Officer of the Tribal Warrior Association, which offers maritime training for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, emergency relief for struggling families, and a linked mentoring program designed to help young people achieve their full potential.

7. Daniel Ariel has an Aboriginal background and holds the position of Public Officer with the Tribal Warrior Association.
8. In 1993 the New South Wales Health Department introduced a mobile needle exchange service, which operated from The Block, handing out up to 700 needles per day. In response to representations from the Aboriginal Housing Company, in 2003 the department reduced the hours that the Needle Bus was stationed at The Block, from 10am to 3pm Monday to Friday. On 17 June 2008 the Health Department announced, in response to community requests, that the 'outreach service is stationed near the corner of Hugo Street and Caroline Street between 10am and 2.30pm (Monday – Friday) and relocated, after school hours, to Hudson Street from 3pm until 4.30pm' (NSW Parliament 2008:2207).
9. On 3 April 2013 Mundine (interview) reported that the Needle Bus had been removed: 'Would you believe, that's finally gone after 15 years? Now, it's so sad, I think the Needle Bus was put in for a reason, to crucify this community, and this was by a government of faceless men!'
10. Phillips (19 March 2013) reported:

One of the things that we were recognised for as a community is our mentoring program. It's part of the Clean Slate Without Prejudice program, which commenced

in Redfern in June 2009, and has been very successful in its outcomes for young ones in our area. The outcomes are based on getting into a routine and getting a job, or back to school, and it's very simple, but its effectiveness has been proven ten-fold.

11. In 1973 Prime Minister Gough Whitlam provided an initial grant to the Aboriginal Housing Company for 'the first housing purchases on this parcel of land in Redfern and the Block became the birthplace of urban land rights in this country. At that time, there were 102 houses in and immediately around the Block. Now only 19 inhabited houses remain' (Dabscheck 2006:43).
12. Mundine had worked with the AHC for 33 years.
13. Mundine said: 'We've got Sydney University, Redfern Police Command, we've even got the City of Sydney, architects and barristers [helping us]. And our Chairperson of the Committee for our new project is Tom Uren, so people out there have got a heart: they're not looking at our colour of skin; they're looking at justice.' (The Honourable Tom Uren AC, former Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party, helped establish the heritage and environment movement in Australia and, in particular, worked to preserve the heritage of inner Sydney.)
14. On 2 July 2009 Keneally (2009) announced the New South Wales Government's approval of the AHC Pemulwuy Project Concept Plan for The Block, a project that was expected to deliver 300 jobs, 62 homes and more than 9000 square metres of commercial uses, shops, and community and cultural space.
15. A media release issued by O'Farrell and Planning Minister Brad Hazzard on 22 December 2012 announced planning approval for the Pemulwuy redevelopment project, as 'the result of the Aboriginal Housing Corporation working closely with the department [of Planning and Infrastructure] and Government agencies including the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority, Railcorp, the Redfern Local Area Command of the NSW Police Force as well as the City of Sydney Council'. The project would allow for construction of:
 - 62 affordable housing dwellings and a 42-unit student housing facility to be managed by the Aboriginal Housing Corporation;
 - A gymnasium, child care centre and community gallery;
 - An open space area in Eveleigh Street, between Lawson and Caroline Streets, to be known as 'Pemulwuy, the meeting place' [which would] contain public art which reflects the important history of the site;
 - Shops and other commercial uses in the ground floor of most buildings to create a vibrant mix of uses that will activate the area;
 - High-quality public open spaces and landscaped streets; and
 - A 115-space underground car park. (O'Farrell 2012)
16. Mundine (interview, 2 April 2013) is confident that Pemulwuy will succeed:

I really feel it's going to happen. We got approval in 2009 when no one thought it was going to happen, and a DA [Development Application] approval last year. We relocated all our tenants when no one thought we would be able to do that.

But we did that in a good manner; no tenants were kicked out in the street. We showed respect both ways, including to the drug runners. Some were the big drug runners who just wanted their community to be a safe haven for drugs. We just said: 'No more!'.

17. For residents of Redfern who had experienced 'the vicious cycle of racism' that Mundine described, 'community' had high significance in defining their identity grounded in 'country', a sense of belonging and connection with family and ancestors, where people felt safe and protected from racist hostility. Community was particularly important where people felt vulnerable, as Redfern residents had since the death of TJ Hickey on 14 February 2004, after a coronial inquest exonerated the police involved. 'As protesters gathered in Redfern on February 14, 2013, to mark the ninth anniversary of the 17-year-old Aboriginal youth', Ray Jackson, President of the Indigenous Social Justice Association, said 'the rally was magnificent and shows what solidarity between black and white Australians can do' (Payne-Baggs 2013).
18. Originally named *Mina*, early mariners engraved their stories in the timbers of the *Tribal Warrior*. In the 1980s, the Ganabaar Morning Star Clan, traditional people of the Arnhem Land and Gove Peninsula, adopted the boat, which they renamed *Wutuku*, meaning 'drifting wood' (Tribal Warrior Association n.d.a).
19. Kohen (1993:9–10) cites word lists compiled by RH Matthews, which show that 'the word, "*kuri*" (*koori*) was used by Darug-speaking people from the Hawkesbury River in the north to Appin in the south, and west into the Blue Mountains "to describe themselves", and is still used by most Aborigines from around Sydney. Victorian Aborigines also use the term to describe themselves.'
20. Darug for 'running water' and the name of the Hawkesbury River.
21. The *Deerubbun* was built by Halvorsen Shipyards, sold to the Snowy Mountains Authority in the 1960s, and later used as a charter boat on the Hawkesbury River before the Tribal Warrior Association acquired it (Tribal Warrior Association n.d.b).
22. Smith (2008:ix) notes that:

Saltwater, as much as the land, was the natural habitat of the inhabitants of the Sydney coastal area, who identified themselves as Eora ('people'). Theirs was a canoe culture and they had depended for countless generations on fresh fish and seafood. The harbours, rivers, creeks and lagoons, sandy beaches and muddy estuaries were their natural highways and principal sources of food. Men and women skimmed across the water in their fragile bark canoes (*nawi*).
23. The crew member did not wish to be identified.
24. Russell (2002) was the director of *The Foundation 1963–1977*, 'a documentary that intercuts interviews with historical footage to tell the history of The Foundation of Aboriginal Affairs, an organization significant in the push for the 1967 referendum in which Aboriginal people were given the vote'.
25. 'Bungaree (c1775–1830) from Broken Bay, north of Sydney, adopted the role of a mediator between the English colonists and the Aboriginal people' (Smith 2011).

- Smith (2011:5) observes that 'Flinders relied on Bungaree's knowledge of Aboriginal protocol and skill as a go-between with coastal Aborigines', and in 1799 'took Bungaree with him on a coastal survey voyage to Bribie Island and Hervey Bay'.
26. Smith (2008:ix) observes that 'from their experiences, Aboriginal mariners sought and found a place in the colonial society that had dispossessed them. Going to sea gave them status and confidence in dealing with English officers and officials.' On board ship, 'all members of the crew ate, talked, slept, smoked and drank together and learnt something of each other's language and customs.'
 27. The Tribal Warrior Association (2008) charter states that it will provide a 'respected social, cultural and business role model for the local Aboriginal and wider community'.
 28. Lewins (1991:172) observes that a 'new discourse on Aboriginality...is of interest to social scientists because it means that Aboriginal identity is no longer taken for granted in academic circles. Instead, it is viewed as an aspect of social process rather than a static given.'
 29. Nakata (2007:215-16) considers that 'at the Cultural Interface' each Indigenous person experiences 'a push-pull between Indigenous and not Indigenous positions' and a 'familiar confusion with constantly being asked at any one moment to both agree and disagree with any proposition on the basis of a constrained choice between a whitefella or blackfella perspective'.

Chapter 3

Family matters: Yolŋu women and children and rural–urban mobility

Kerin Coulehan and Waymamba Gaykamaŋu

Abstract: *This chapter documents more than three decades of Yolŋu rural–urban mobility, focusing on women and children who move from remote communities in north-east Arnhem Land to live in urban hostels and suburban housing in Darwin. With diverse histories of education, employment and welfare entitlement, Yolŋu women’s lives illustrate social change in marriage, residential family, kinship affiliation and socio-linguistic etiquette. Life crises of birth, sickness and death — which invoke gurrutu (kinship) responsibilities in women and children, the sick and their support families — and ‘bringing the bāpurru’ (clan gathering and organisation) into action for funeral ceremonies, impact on suburban households and interrupt women’s urban careers. At such times, vulnerable women and children are targeted for care and control by both welfare government and Yolŋu family governance. While acknowledging Noel Pearson’s (2000:136–54, 2009a) call for reform of welfare government and Aboriginal governance, the authors argue that the movement of Yolŋu women and children from remote communities to the city is more complex, contentious and open-ended than Pearson’s (2009b:1) vision of Aboriginal people being enabled to ‘orbit between two worlds and have the best of both’.*

Introduction

Since the late 1980s, the authors have been participant observers, although from different perspectives, of Yolŋu women and family groups moving from communities in Arnhem Land to live in Darwin and its satellite town of Palmerston. The data presented are based on earlier research (Coulehan 1995a, 1995b; Coulehan et al. 2005), current collaboration, and Gaykamaŋu’s lived experience of Yolŋu mobility and migration to the city.

This chapter documents more than three decades of Yolŋu rural–urban mobility and focuses on women, with children in their care, who follow the family and exercise personal choice when they move from their remote communities to the city. Living in urban hostels and suburban housing, the women’s lives illustrate different histories of education, employment and welfare entitlement, and changes in marriage, residential family, kinship affiliation and socio-linguistic etiquette. Life crises of birth, sickness and death — which invoke *gurrutu* (kinship) responsibilities in women and children, the sick and their support families — and ‘bringing the *bäpurru*’ into action for funeral ceremonies impact on suburban households and interrupt women’s urban careers. At such times, Yolŋu in Darwin experience an intensification of ‘control as care’ (Keen 1989:27), exercised by both welfare government and family governance.

From his perspective in Cape York Peninsula communities, Noel Pearson (2000, 2009a) argues for reform in government welfare and Aboriginal governance. Pearson (2009b:1) emphasises that young and able Aboriginal people need to be able to ‘orbit between two worlds and have the best of both’. Pearson does not address the out-migration of Aboriginal women and children, which is typically contentious in local communities and more open-ended than his proposed mobility for school terms, university semesters and work–vacation cycles. Our study of Yolŋu women and children, who live long term in Darwin, provides insights into individuals’ aspirations and strategies for more autonomy and opportunities in life within the benefits and constraints of two poorly understood and articulated systems of care and control.

In the 1970s self-determination policy and welfare entitlement began to enable Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to move from remote communities that were formerly mission and government settlements to places of residence on homelands or in urban centres (Taylor 2007). Government strategies of service delivery were, and continue to be, based on the concentration of comprehensive services in urban areas, which necessitates the sponsored rural–urban mobility of Aboriginal people. Despite the state’s structural involvement, Aboriginal peoples’ movement to urban centres continues to be described in media and policy discourse as ‘urban drift’ (Taylor 2007:174, 2009:6), thereby denying Aboriginal decision making and ‘mobility for survival’ (Young and Doohan 1989).

Aboriginal women and children continue to be sponsored by family and government to transit through and migrate to the city to access hospital and specialist health services, schools and tertiary education, court protection and public housing. Individual welfare entitlements and combinations of pensions, child endowments and student allowances have also made it possible for Aboriginal women with dependants to choose to settle in urban centres. By the late 1980s Collman (1988:105–25) noted that Aboriginal women with children moving into Alice Springs were ‘privileged’ compared to their menfolk in their access to welfare monies and housing in town camps, and that Aboriginal men were becoming ‘marginalised’ from women’s

matrifocal households. Similarly, Yolŋu women and family groups were moving to Darwin but living predominantly in Aboriginal hostels and public rental housing in the suburbs.

Access to hospital and specialist health services is a major driver of the rural–urban mobility of Aboriginal patients and supporting family members. In childbirth and as primary carers of ill and invalid kin, Aboriginal women are introduced to the nexus of urban hospitals, hostels and public housing. By the mid-1990s Northern Territory health research indicated that the rate of admission of Aboriginal people to hospitals would ‘continue to increase for as long as there is so much unmet need’ (Plant et al. 1995:x; see also Rubin and Walker 1995:402).

When Yolŋu patients are transferred to Darwin for hospital and other health services, family members ‘keeping company’ with them frequently stay at, and overcrowd, Yolŋu suburban households (Coulehan 1995a). Chronic and life-threatening diseases, which require ongoing specialist therapy, result in Yolŋu patients and support families living indefinitely in town, which in turn accentuates the need for Yolŋu interpreters in hospital, renal and other health services (Coulehan et al. 2005). The Aboriginal Interpreter Service and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education provide opportunities for Yolŋu interpreters and interpreters-in-training to live, train and work in Darwin.

The decades from the 1970s to the present have seen rapid social change in marriage, residential family units and social order in Aboriginal communities in northern and Central Australia. In this period, new forms of violence have emerged in Aboriginal communities, including violence associated with substance abuse and ‘domestic violence’ (Bolger 1991; Burbank 1994). Aboriginal women and children have long been sponsored by health and welfare services, and under court protection orders, to move to urban centres for emergency and longer-term housing. Yolŋu women with children also independently move away from chronic housing shortage and family duress in remote communities to obtain housing in Darwin, and they hold on to hostel rooms and suburban housing for the longer term.

For the past 30 years the benefits and alternatives in life offered by welfare monies and comprehensive services have largely shaped the movement of Aboriginal women and families to urban centres, but more direct ‘policing of families’ (cf. Donzelot 1979) is emerging as a factor. Concerns about the safety of children in dysfunctional families and communities led to the ‘Little Children are Sacred’ report (Wild and Anderson 2007). The federal government’s response to the report was to initiate the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER, the Intervention) in 2007. Following the NTER, continuing interventions of health and police authorities in Aboriginal communities are likely to generate further sponsored and independent movement of Aboriginal people to Darwin and other Northern Territory urban centres (Taylor 2007:174).

The Intervention sparked heated debate among Aboriginal and non-Indigenous commentators about the levels of surveillance, coercive measures, problematising of culture and politicisation of Aboriginal distress (see Altman and Hinkson 2012; various authors in Altman and Hinkson 2007, 2010; Sutton 2009). The quarantining of a proportion of Aboriginal people's welfare incomes to meet 'basic needs', an intervention that required the suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) in the Northern Territory, was one of the more contentious measures.

In the main, welfare monies have provided Yolŋu women with the means to transit through or migrate to Darwin, and urban hostels and public housing have provided the keys to city living. The majority of Yolŋu women seek better life opportunities for themselves and their dependents and a relatively diminished kinship demand on their incomes. Some also take advantage of more personal autonomy in sexual-marital relations, including with *balanda* (Europeans, whites) and other Aboriginal men. A few drop out of Yolŋu family life and become 'lost to grog' in alcohol-drinking circles and 'long-grass camps' in and around the city. But the majority of Yolŋu women lead sober and productive lives in Aboriginal hostels and public housing in the suburbs of Darwin and Palmerston.

Whatever their urban circumstances, the authors argue that three factors shape Yolŋu women's rural-urban mobility and residence in the city: the agency of the welfare state, a Yolŋu system of family governance exercised in social organisation and ceremonial life, and individual Yolŋu making personal choices and setting out on their own life journeys.

Aboriginal governance and welfare government

Keen (1989:27, 1994:298) notes that the term 'Aboriginal governance' has been employed in Australia to distinguish Indigenous mechanisms of care and control as distinct from institutions of 'government', including welfare measures. Keen (2004:243) identifies a number of features of governance including 'the framing' of norms and rules of behaviour, 'the socialization' of younger generations accordingly, more 'direct control' (including adjudication and sanction), and 'relations and structures involved in governance and the exercise of power'. In Aboriginal contexts, kinship, age and gender mark out relations of power, and 'individual autonomy and relatedness' are highly valued (Keen 2004:243).

Following the NTER, research has drawn attention to the 'contested governance' (Hunt et al. 2008) over Aboriginal populations, particularly over women, children and youth. Peterson (2010:249) argues that 'through the Intervention the government has tried to enter...ungovernable space' with policies that go 'beyond the normal role of the state in citizens' lives'. Diane Smith (2008:76) argues that 'the often unilateral imposition of the state's sovereign powers is deemed to be necessary to "protect" Indigenous people from the governance disabilities of their own culture.'

Smith (2008:80) further argues that policy makers and public servants have no concept of Aboriginal governance, other than the introduced, Western-derived apparatus of ‘incorporated community organizations’. In western Arnhem Land, Smith (2008:93) explains that:

Bininj governances lies in its institutions; that is, in its own ‘rules of the game’, the way things should be done. These give legitimacy to practice, and include laws, kinship and marriage systems, behavioural and gender norms, family values, religious beliefs and moral system, principles of land ownership, ceremony and ritual...

Such Indigenous systems of social organisation are ‘highly decentralised’ and function in ‘governance networks’ where individual leadership and agency exist together with group decision making and collective action (Smith 2008:95–6). Sullivan (2011) criticises the centralised policy making of successive governments for failing to recognise and support Indigenous authority and life ways, while pursuing political, bureaucratic and managerial priorities and agendas.

In north-east Arnhem Land, Keen (2004:262–6) identifies the authority of patrigroup elders in Yolŋu governance of life, according to *rom* (law, culture) derived from *wangaar* (ancestors, ancestral time). The Yolŋu have a continuing history of arguing for the recognition of ‘two laws’, Yolŋu *rom* and Australian law, in the context of land and resource rights, in family matters and dispute resolution (Williams 1986, 1987).

Historically, disputes about sexual–marital relations were commonly described by Yolŋu as ‘little trouble’, as Yolŋu business rather than a matter for the police and the courts (Williams 1987:126–9). In Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land, social sanctions including ostracism, gossip, argument and ritualised violence that did not attract police intervention continued to be applied in disputes over sexual–marital relations (Williams 1987:147–8; Burbank 1994). Increasingly, the legitimacy of ‘traditional violence’ as a sanction of Aboriginal customary law has been challenged by white authorities and from within Aboriginal society, with differences of interests and opinions being evident between men and women and older and younger generations (Bolger 1991:49–53; Burbank 1994:146–51). In the Northern Territory ‘bullshit traditional violence’ is a phrase coined to describe how some Aboriginal men have attempted to justify violence against women as ‘traditional’, when violence is shaped by substance abuse rather than by cultural precedent (Bolger 1991:50). Since the 1990s the incidence of neglect and sexual abuse of children has emerged as a failure of both Aboriginal family governance and state and federal governments. The ‘Little Children are Sacred’ report purportedly triggered the Howard government’s NTER in 2007 (see, for example, Hinkson 2007; Merlan 2010).

Simultaneously, the evident deterioration in Aboriginal social order and living conditions in northern and Central Australia was being attributed, by neoliberal critics, to government policies and practices centred on Aboriginal 'rights', self-determination and welfare entitlement. Noel Pearson (2009a) identifies welfare monies as the root cause of widespread social dysfunction and violence in Aboriginal families and communities in Cape York Peninsula. Pearson argues that, by accepting their right to welfare support, Aboriginal people have lost sight of their social and cultural responsibilities and have become trapped in welfare dependency, potentially for generations to come. While acknowledging colonial histories and the continuing failures of governments in duty of care, Pearson (2009a:143) argues that for Aboriginal people the 'right to self-determination is ultimately the right to take responsibility' for their own present living conditions and future opportunities.

Pearson (2000:44) argues that the formal (state) system of government has undermined the informal (family, clan, cultural group) system of governance but has not fully replaced 'our traditional values and structures' and he calls for attitudinal and structural change on both sides. Pearson's reform agenda to overcome Aboriginal welfare dependency requires new local governance structures that sever individuals' direct relationship to the welfare state and reinstate moral authority and mutual obligation in Aboriginal families and communities. A limitation of Pearson's reform analysis is his failure to clarify what constitutes family and community in contemporary Aboriginal society (Martin 2001:13–16).

Martin (2001:15) notes that 'core constitutive elements' of Aboriginal societies are 'families' that 'may live across a number of households within a community or even dispersed across communities'. These are to be understood not simply as extended families but, as Sutton (1998:55ff.) points out, as 'families of polity' organised on lines of kinship and descent and operating in social, economic, political and ceremonial life. More recently, Sutton (2009:64) has argued that cultural traits are in part explanatory of dysfunction in Aboriginal families and communities today, but his analysis fails to adequately address the role of the state (Altman 2009).

Although Sutton (2009:85, 64) and Martin (2001:vii) deny a 'blame the victim' analysis, they argue that cultural traits in Aboriginal society may work against the changes that Pearson advocates for reform of Aboriginal governance at family and community levels. Martin (2001:15) further notes that:

Kinship may provide the idiom in which relations of amity and mutual support are expressed, but it also provides points of fracture and differentiation...

Within families and households, the autonomy of individuals is typically jealously preserved, and attempts by others to control behaviour strenuously resisted.

Debate about how the welfare state seeks to govern families and bring about social change by acting upon inherent differences within families is not new and not limited to Aboriginal Australia. Donzelot (1979:48–96) argued that state ‘government through the family’ sought to break up the ‘government of families’ in working-class society in France. He further argued that age and gender mark out relations of power and ‘differences of potential’ within the family. The state acts upon these differences by offering individuals welfare benefits and alternatives in life to bring about social change, including more individual autonomy, emancipation of women and youth from patriarchal authority, erosion of the ‘clannish’ family in favour of smaller family forms, and dependence on the state (Donzelot 1979:48–96).

In the West there has been a historical division of responsibilities between the church, the state and the family in the governance of ‘life’ and exercise of ‘pastoral power’ (Foucault 1986:208–26). Foucault (1986:213–15) describes the evolution of pastoral power into a power dichotomy in which spiritual functions were largely left to the church, while political–legal and socio-economic matters became increasingly the province of the state. The welfare state has historically taken responsibility for the more secular dimensions of governance.

This division of interests and of powers between the secular and the sacred, the material and the spiritual is not so readily separated in Yolŋu society, where responsibilities in social and in ceremonial life are more interdependent. Yolŋu *rom* is ‘nothing less than the Yolŋu way of being, conceived as having been set down in the time of *wangarr* (creation)’ (Morphy 2008:122). Yolŋu *rom* applies in the domain of *madayin* (the sacred, ceremonial) dimensions of life (Keen 1994:294), including in the ‘bringing the *bäpurru*’ together for funeral ceremonies and in the everyday arena of *gurrutu* practice.

Since the end of missionary and government supervision of Aboriginal people on reserves, Aboriginal ceremonial life has experienced comparative freedom from direct intervention from the secular state. This may be about to change as populist criticism is being made of Aboriginal ceremonial life, including ‘protracted funerals’, as hindering Aboriginal participation in ‘a real economy’ (Rothwell 2007:153). There continues to be little or no public and policy recognition of Aboriginal ceremonial practice as one manifestation of Aboriginal pastoral power or governance.

The *bäpurru* and the state — responding to a death

Agents of the state are not interested in Yolŋu funeral rituals but are concerned with every detail of the management of sickness and death, and the altered circumstances which these entail for immediate kin. Yolŋu exercise relative autonomy over ‘funeral business’, which addresses the spiritual and social reintegration of the kin group after the death of kin, while the state is concerned with death certification, pensions, tenancies and other bureaucratic responses. ‘Bringing the *bäpurru*’ together for funeral

ceremonies is a public expression of how Yolŋu social organisation, religious law and ceremonial practice constitute a continuing system of Indigenous governance in awkward articulation with state mechanisms of government.

In ethnographies of north-east Arnhem Land, *bäpurru* is variously translated as ‘clans’, ‘patrilineal descent groups’ and ‘patri-groups’ (Morphy 2008:113–51):

A person belongs to the *bäpurru* of their father. In one meaning of the term, *bäpurru* are the groups in which the ownership of land and sea estates is vested, and the meaning encompasses not just the living representatives of the group but also its spiritual essence located in the clan estate, the product of *wangarr* activity. (Morphy 2008:122; see also Keen 1994; Williams 1986)

Keen (1994:64) notes that ‘soul’ and ‘shared identity through father’ are also meanings attached to *bäpurru*. The death of kin necessitates ‘bringing the *bäpurru*’ to ritually announce the death (Williams 1986:65–70) and organise participation in the funeral ceremonies, which are held in Yolŋu remote communities. When Yolŋu die in Darwin, the *bäpurru* is also evident in rituals to announce the death in kinship circles, to ‘farewell the coffin plane’, to ‘smoke’ houses, offices and vehicles to release them from death taboo, and in the organisation for bereaved kin to return to the remote community for the funeral ceremonies (Coulehan 1995b). Close female kin of the deceased may be obliged to remain in the remote community after the funeral to observe customs of mourning.

The funeral ceremonies and mourning period consequent upon a recent death in the family is a time for individual kin to reassess their own lives, and for the family and wider social group to reassert responsibilities for and claims on individuals. The status and circumstances of Yolŋu women and children are especially liable to be readjusted after the death of spouses and parents, both in relation to family responsibilities and state welfare.

***Gurruṯu* and welfare interventions**

Births and serious illnesses are also times when family governance and welfare interventions are brought to bear on vulnerable individuals and families. Contemporary Yolŋu governance operates in everyday life in *gurruṯu* responsibilities in ‘looking after’ women and children and ‘keeping company’ with the sick and distressed. Morphy (2008:113–51) states that ‘the foundation of the Yolŋu social system and system of governance is *gurruṯu* — the complex networks of kinship that link individuals and groups to each other.’

Yolŋu kinship is complex and structured, and includes the moiety, subsection and classificatory kinship systems, as well as exogamous marriage. Features of

differentiation and integration, including by sex, birth order, generation, and close and wider kin, add complexity. We confine our focus here to the changing configuration of kinship relationships that have been shaping the Yolŋu residential family, as evident among Yolŋu families living in public housing and Aboriginal hostels in Darwin. First, we examine tradition and change in Yolŋu marriage and the *dhuway–galay* (husband–wife) relationship and potential for *mari*’ (trouble) in sexual–marital relations and between intermarrying groups. Second, we consider the *wäwa–yapa* (brother–sister) relationship, traditionally marked by avoidance behaviours, and the relevance of *mirriri* (ritualised violence) as a mechanism of family governance. Third, we note the declining influence of the *bäpa–gathu* (father–child) relationship, in contrast to the increasing predominance of the *ŋändi–waku* (mother–child) and the *märi–gutharra* (mother’s mother — daughter’s child; mother’s mother’s brother — sister’s daughter’s child) relationships in the lives of Yolŋu children living in matrifocal urban households.

Morphy (2008) describes *gurrutu* as the social environment in which Yolŋu governance operates. The welfare state directly challenges Yolŋu governance in the care and control over vulnerable individuals and families by providing a ‘safety net’ of welfare monies, coupled with access to services that are most comprehensively provided in urban locations. To understand the potential implications of the contested governance over Yolŋu women and children who move to Darwin and live long term in the city, it is necessary to examine tradition and change in Yolŋu marriage and family formation.

‘Going own way’: Yolŋu women, marital change and urban migration

The Yolŋu understand the universe as consisting of Dhuwa and Yiiritja moieties. For marriage to be ‘straight way’, both spouses must marry outside their own patrimoiety and patriclan. Cultural preference is for a man to marry one or more of his matrilateral cross-cousins, a female *galay* (wife), and for a woman to marry a male *dhuway* (husband), one of her patrilateral cross-cousins. Yolŋu marriage traditions include the complex ‘promise’ system of bestowal and arranged marriage between clans that ‘link groups of both moieties’ (Morphy 2008:118–23; see also Keen 1994:85–8, 2004:202–4; Shapiro 1981:47–56 ff.; Warner 1969:49–52, 63–85).

In the 1970s and 1980s Yolŋu marriage persisted, although widows’ pensions enabled women not to remarry and girls deferred marriage to their ‘promise’ husbands while they pursued opportunities in education, training and employment. Yolŋu women and girls were increasingly able to evade marriage as men’s willingness and ability to enforce marriage bestowals and widow remarriage declined. A decade later, polygyny in general was in decline and many men opted for monogamous marriage to fit their modern image and careers (Keen 1994:299).

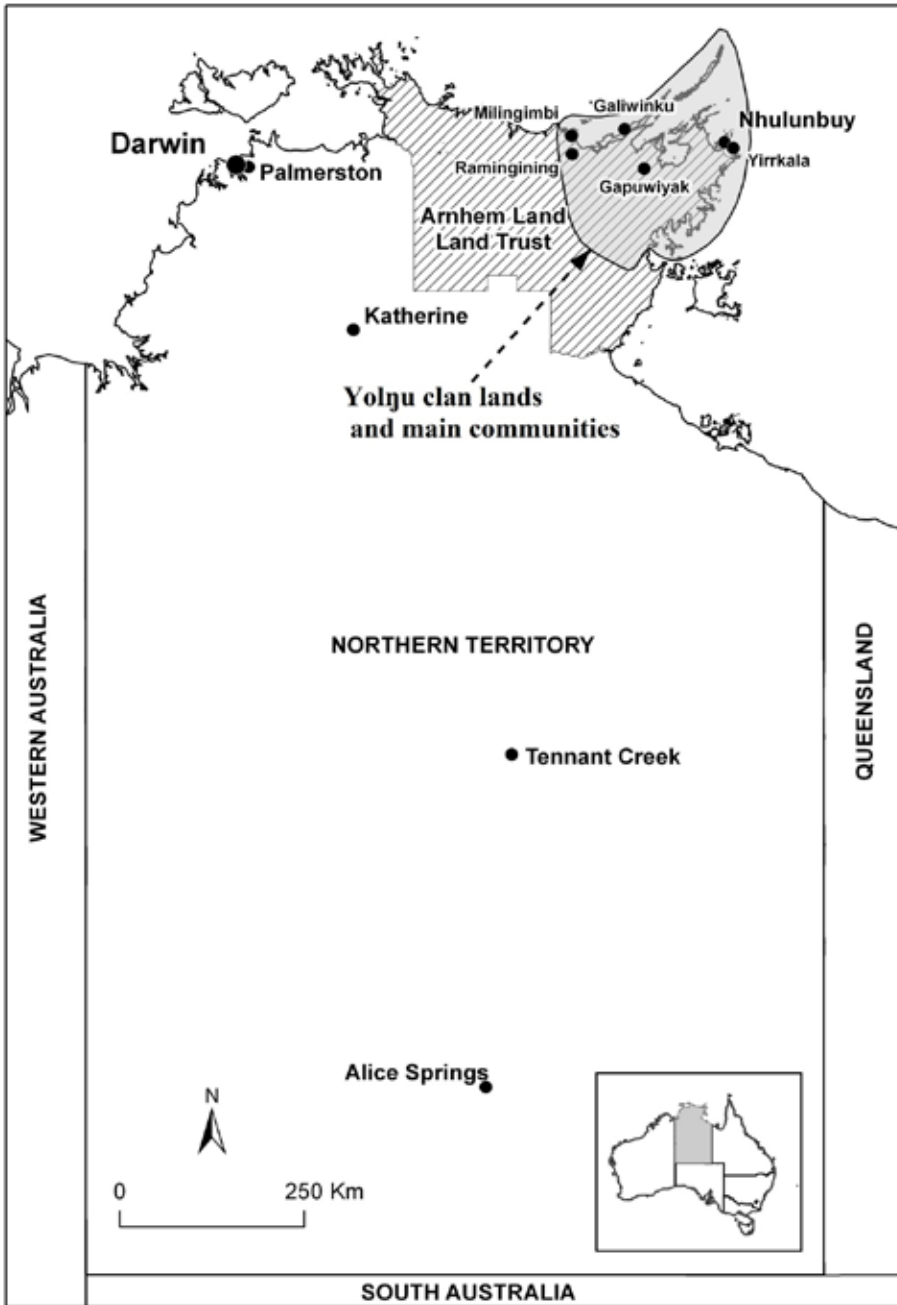


Figure 1: Yolŋu clan lands and major towns in the Northern Territory (original map commissioned by K Coulehan, inspired by Map 2 in Keen (1994:77) and amended with advice from the Northern Land Council)

In the 1980s and 1990s Burbank (1989, 1994) found strong evidence of marital change and of single womanhood among Aboriginal women in south-east Arnhem Land. Cultural definitions of ‘correct’ marriage continued to be salient, but as the ideal was stronger than the practice, both customary sanctions and new forms of social conflict were common. Conflicts between men and women, women and women, the older and younger generations, and between close and wider kin were significantly traced to sexual–marital issues, with alcohol consumption frequently a contributing factor (Burbank 1994).

Among Yolŋu, conflict in the *dhuway–galay* (husband–wife) relationship has the potential to escalate into conflict between intermarrying groups. Yolŋu women remain affiliated with the group identity of their fathers and brothers (Warner 1969:99–100), while the children of the marriage are recruited into the patrimoiety and patriline of their socially recognised fathers. The group solidarity of men and women in the *wäwa–yapa* (brother–sister) relationship is in tension with the inter-clan relationships of *dhuway–galay* (husband–wife) and brothers-in-law, particularly if *mari*’ (trouble) within marriage spills over into trouble between brothers-in-law and intermarrying clans.

The *wäwa–yapa* (brother–sister) relationship entails behavioural rules of avoidance expressed ordinarily in socio-linguistic etiquette and extraordinarily in *mirriri* (ritualised violence) (Warner 1969:55, 98–102; see also Burbank 1985, 1994:151–5). Yolŋu brothers are obliged not to hear anything personal about their sisters, including their names from *ringitj* (sacred place on clan country). By custom, a Yolŋu woman is referred to and addressed as *wakinju* (without kin) and *bambay* (lit. invisible) by, and in the hearing of, her brothers. Alternatively, the name of the woman’s child plus the suffix *walaŋa* (belonging to) is used as a form of reference and address for a Yolŋu woman in the presence or hearing of her brothers.

The latter option appears to predominate in contemporary circumstances where Yolŋu households contain young adult and adolescent siblings of both sexes and one or more of the sisters are single mothers. There are other indications of change in the socio-linguistic etiquette of brother–sister avoidance. Households containing young adult and adolescent siblings of both sexes are now commonplace in remote communities, owing to chronic housing shortage and increased options for individuals to remain single. In Darwin during a crisis in health and in housing, adolescent brothers were observed to call their young adult sisters by their personal names. Yolŋu explained that the sisters, who were single mothers with pension incomes, had long been caring for their *yukuyuku* (younger siblings) since their mother was ‘lost to grog’ in the ‘long-grass camps’ of Darwin. They were more like ‘little mothers’ than sisters to their brothers so avoidance etiquette was not observed in the siblings’ household. Another Yolŋu woman continues to be called *bambay* in kinship circles, even though no brothers are present. More than a decade ago she lived as a single girl in her older, married brother’s suburban household, where resident and visiting kin were obliged

to avoid her personal name and *bambay* became an enduring substitute, perhaps a nickname.

As late as the mid-1990s, the threat of *mirriri* was sufficient to suppress gossip in kinship circles about Yolŋu women's sexual-marital affairs in Darwin (Coulehan 1995b). In Arnhem Land *mirriri* customs evidently constrained expressions of male anger and aggression in a ritualised way, served to prevent an escalation of violence, especially between intermarrying groups, and rarely caused actual bodily harm (Burbank 1985, 1994). Brothers 'colluded to protect' women by ignoring what was going on in their sisters' lives and by reacting in ritualised violence when circumstances could not be ignored (Burbank 1994:154). In consideration of these features and effects, it would appear that *mirriri* acted among Yolŋu and other Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land as a mechanism of Aboriginal family law to prevent or limit *mari*' (trouble, fighting).

It has been argued that Aboriginal girls in Arnhem Land are socialised into subordination to males (Cowlshaw 1982; Hamilton 1981), and women are 'very careful of brothers', suggesting that brother-sister avoidance behaviour is an example of sexual asymmetry (Burbank 1994:152). Social change, including decline in Yolŋu marriage alliances between clans, the incidence of adult siblings sharing housing and the rise of substance abuse in kinship circles, has led to a decline in the use and efficacy of *mirriri* as a mechanism of customary law and family governance.

Sutton (2009:110) argues that Aboriginal women in northern and Central Australia have no reason to 'have a nostalgia for the old patriarchy' and, while 'violent aspects of this apparatus have become illegal', the traditional social order has always relied significantly on 'dispersal as a means of keeping levels of conflict at manageable levels'. Keen (1994:299) writes that Yolŋu women take advantage of 'alternatives' in life offered in education, employment and marital choice, and that some choose to avoid local 'power structures' in remote communities by moving to urban centres.

Today, whether they live in remote communities or in urban centres, many women and girls live outside Yolŋu marriage as widows, estranged wives, unmarried mothers, single girls and career women. While some women migrate with their husbands from remote communities to Darwin, and a few exceptional women enter urban employment, in the main it is Yolŋu women's pension incomes, together with child benefits and youth study allowances, that have provided the means for Yolŋu women and children to live in the city. Yolŋu women find that access to urban hostels and housing in their own right affords them more personal autonomy and the opportunity to live longer term in Darwin.

We argue that while Yolŋu women take up their options in 'going own way' outside of Yolŋu marriage and by migration to Darwin, they have not placed themselves and their children outside of a Yolŋu system of governance, as the relations, norms and mechanisms of family governance are changing to fit new circumstances. Even when they live long term in the city, Yolŋu women and their children are following 'both

ways’ — that is, Yolŋu and *balanda* ways of living — and they are subject to family care and welfare conditions.

‘Both ways’ and ‘best of both worlds’?

In Aboriginal society authority and respect, and socialisation and knowledge transmission, are shaped in long-term, intergenerational relationships. Keen (1989: 34–8, 2004: 243–5, 262–4) identifies processes of socialisation as indirect and long-term mechanisms of Aboriginal governance. In the sense of Habermas (1987:299), for the Yolŋu to be empowered, to be self-determining as a socially and culturally distinct Aboriginal people, the Yolŋu ‘life-world’ must reproduce itself by means of ‘the propagation of cultural traditions, the integration of groups by norms and values, and the socialisation of succeeding generations’.

Despite the intrusions of the *balanda* and the interventions of mission, and then government, in family and community life, the Yolŋu continue to reproduce and modify a Yolŋu way or life-world in their own communities in north-east Arnhem Land. Under the former policy of self-determination, Yolŋu social and ceremonial life and introduced contexts of local self-government and community services, and in particular schooling, were significantly conducted in Yolŋu languages and by Yolŋu kin. Yolŋu espouse ‘two-ways, both-ways’ as a philosophy of engagement with wider Australian society and as a model for the education of their children in bilingual, bicultural programs in Yolŋu community schools.¹

In the mission era a select few Yolŋu were sponsored to travel to southern cities for Bible studies and community leadership courses. Following the transition from mission to government, and then to nominally self-governing communities, a number of Yolŋu travelled to Deakin University in Victoria and Batchelor College near Darwin. They studied for qualifications in teacher education, which in turn led to their employment as Aboriginal school principals, teachers and teachers-in-training in their remote communities. This cohort of Yolŋu principals and teachers worked with *balanda* educators to develop, implement and evaluate bilingual, bicultural programs in remote community schools.²

A number of bilingually educated Yolŋu went on to other careers in and beyond their remote communities, including in Darwin at the Aboriginal curriculum development unit of the Northern Territory Education Department, at the headquarters of Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation and Traditional Credit Union, and within the United Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, Northern Regional Council Congress of the Uniting Church. Yolŋu have been regularly employed as interpreters in urban and remote contexts of courts, hospitals, police and Centrelink services since the introduction in 2000 of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service in the Northern Territory. One author of this chapter, Gaykamaŋu, provides an example of

the success of bilingual education, training and employment in her personal history, including remote schooling, teacher training at Batchelor College, teaching experience in a remote community, and moving to Darwin to work in the Northern Territory Education Department on curriculum development for remote Indigenous schools, then as a lecturer in Yolŋu language and culture at Charles Darwin University, a position she held with distinction from 1994 until she retired in 2008. Since then Gaykamaŋu has continued her bilingual consultancy work with Charles Darwin University and with Aboriginal Resource and Development Services for Yolŋu radio.

Education for and employment in the remote bilingual teaching context evidently provided a number of Yolŋu with the foundations for long, distinguished and diverse careers in remote communities, in Darwin and in the wider world, where their bilingual, bicultural knowledge and skills were valued.³ Paradoxically, Yolŋu with Aboriginal teaching qualifications have no career path into schools in Darwin, even though Yolŋu children are increasingly enrolling as boarders in private schools and as day students in state schools.

In their analysis of the history and future of schooling in one Yolŋu remote community, Tamisari and Milmilany (2003:2) state that a Yolŋu ‘vision of education’ has always been ‘developed within the broader political struggle for the maintenance of local authority structures and the assertion of control and decision-making in the school’. With a background of research in south-east Arnhem Land, Burbank (2006) notes a contemporary Aboriginal resistance to the hegemony of institutions of Western government, including schools. The causes of truancy and poor educational outcomes among Yolŋu children are complex and arguably include a failure of family governance, and a failure of state and federal governments to nourish the early promise of bilingual, bicultural education in remote community schools.

Sutton (2009:66) argues that ‘getting rid of profound disadvantage’ in Aboriginal communities requires taking into account ‘the critical and central role of the socialization of children’. The question is whether it is socialisation or education that outsiders can ethically seek to influence. The policy of assimilation included the radical sundering of child–parent–family bonds for the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal children. Perhaps anticipating such criticism, Sutton (2009:67) counter argues that ‘lost generations’ are not just those damaged by malnutrition, substance abuse, domestic violence and sexual abuse but potentially all the young people who are ‘functionally illiterate and unemployable in real jobs, but who have also received only a diminished education in their elders’ cultural traditions’.

In his reform agenda for Aboriginal communities in Cape York Peninsula, Pearson (2009a:292–300) argues that the ‘young and able’ need the capacity to ‘orbit’ between their remote communities and centres of education and employment, whether rural towns or cities. He acknowledges that family and community elders may be opposed, fearing that mobility may be a ‘one-way ticket’ taking the young away from their cultural and social origins. Pearson emphasises that social order must be restored and

employment capacity developed in Aboriginal communities if the young and able are to return.

Pearson (2009a:298–300) is critical of the state secondary school system and advocates boarding schools and proficiency in English as keys to social, economic and geographic mobility for Aboriginal children and youth. He further argues that Aboriginal people need to dichotomise their lives, with time and place to pursue socio-economic advancement of self and immediate family, and alternative time and place for cultural recharge via re-emersion in their Aboriginal heritage based in land, language, kinship and ceremony (Pearson 2009c).

Aboriginal people routinely use ‘cognitive compartmentalization’ (Smith 2008:103; cf. McConvell 1991) in day to day interaction with white people and their agendas when they are obliged to speak in English and modify their socio-linguistic etiquette to fit in with the speech conventions of the dominant culture. When Yolŋu come to Darwin to seek the life chances offered by more comprehensive services in the city, especially those of health, housing and education, they must communicate their needs in English and to strangers. They must also compartmentalise their responsibilities in *gurrutu* (kinship) and to the *bäpurru* (clan organisation for funeral ceremonies) to fit in with their responsibilities as tenants of suburban housing, parents of children enrolled in school terms, as employees with limited compassionate leave, and as welfare recipients geared to Centrelink pay cycles and conditions.

When Yolŋu move to Darwin, they may choose to leave their children behind in the care of close family or take children with them. If their purposes and stay are long term, Yolŋu parents or guardians will enrol children in suburban primary and secondary schools as day students. In order to fulfil their kinship obligations to attend funeral ceremonies in remote communities, Yolŋu typically have to interrupt children’s schooling, as well as incur the additional expense of taking children with them. Return airfares from Darwin to remote communities are expensive and require kin to pool monies over a number of Centrelink pay cycles, so visits to remote communities tend to be prolonged, which further impacts on children’s schooling.

Yolŋu women’s pension incomes and child subsidies have enabled their rural–urban mobility, but following the NTER and linking of parents’ welfare money to their children’s school attendance, there is more constraint on mobility for cultural purposes. Behrendt (2009:5–8) argues that the new welfare measures are ‘punitive rather than constructive’ and perpetuate ‘negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people as irresponsible parents’ (see also Sarra 2009).

Some Yolŋu women and adolescents in Darwin contemplate the advantages of private boarding schools, including the ability for children to have uninterrupted schooling while their parents and guardians have the flexibility to attend funeral ceremonies in remote communities. To date, Yolŋu women who are resident in Darwin have found it ‘too hard’ for their children to access urban boarding schools, which are geared to enrolment of Aboriginal students who are resident in remote communities.

Most Yolŋu parents and guardians in Darwin are therefore obliged to reverse ‘orbit’ children between the city and home communities, not just during school vacation but when important ceremonies are taking place in home communities. In this way, Yolŋu attempt an informal ‘both ways’ education for their children, but this strategy is unlikely to deliver ‘the best of both worlds’ (Pearson 2009b:1) as their children’s formal education is typically compromised.

Yolŋu women who have benefited from school, further education and employment are keen for the children in their care to regularly attend suburban schools. They participate in homework sessions and parent–teacher interviews, and express pride in their children’s progress, especially in English language and literacy skills. On the other hand, Yolŋu women who are ‘shy’, lacking in confidence in urban contexts or transient in town, have been noticeably more reluctant to engage with urban schools. As Gaykamanju has shown, Yolŋu parents and guardians who have secure and functional housing and urban employment are well placed to use their housing as a staging post for children and youth in their care to access suburban high schools and post-school programs for employment readiness. Post-school qualifications improve Indigenous Australians’ access to public service and non-government employment where ‘cultural obligations are recognized in workplace agreements’ (Taylor et al. 2012:25).

Conclusions

The aspects of social change we have examined in this chapter include the increasing incidence of unmarried status among Yolŋu women and relative socio-economic independence of women as widows, single mothers, unwed child-carers and career women. Marital change has been accompanied by change in residential family units, particularly from male-headed, marriage-based, patrifocal households to female-headed, matrifocal households and sibling-based households.

Some preliminary observations have been made about changing socio-linguistic etiquette between, and in respect of, Yolŋu brothers and sisters who, in contemporary housing circumstances, find themselves living into adulthood under the one roof in parental homes and increasingly in female-headed, sibling households. It would also appear that social change in marriage and residential family may be leading to the declining relevance of relations of avoidance and *mirriri* (ritualised violence) as mechanisms of family governance, at least as observed among Yolŋu living in Darwin.

Far from being confined to remote communities by welfare monies, Yolŋu women with a mind to be independent, including as widows, single mothers, students and would-be career women, have been aided by welfare monies and centralised services to seek more personal autonomy and better life chances for themselves and their children by migrating to Darwin. The problem is that the welfare trap may be set for them in the city if they and their children do not access long-term secure housing,

a necessary platform to make the health, education and employment transition. A personal background in mission and bilingual schooling in remote communities, and in further education and training in bilingual teaching, has evidently provided a solid foundation for some Yolŋu women, and men, to find urban employment where language and culture are valued.

As women, children and youth embody the future of social reproduction and cultural transmission, as well as the potential for social change, they are targeted for attention both by mechanisms of family governance and state interventions. In the foreseeable future, Aboriginal remote communities are not going to be able to provide sufficient education and employment opportunities to match population growth. Aboriginal peoples' rural–urban mobility already has a long history, and 'orbiting' will continue to be necessary for future generations.

Among Yolŋu, obligations in *gurrutu* at times of life crises, especially birth, sickness and death, will continue to impact on urban lives, prompting individuals and families to reassess their priorities and trajectories in life. In particular, funerals will continue to shape the periodic return of urban-dwelling Yolŋu to remote communities. It remains to be determined if the *bāpurru* will continue to shape the organisation and gathering for funeral ceremonies in remote communities for Yolŋu who grow up in matrifocal families and households in the city.

When at least three generations of Yolŋu women have been living long term in Darwin, and adolescent girls in the fourth generation are living with them in urban housing while going to high school, it may be time to say that Darwin is a home base and Yolŋu are reverse 'orbiting' to remote communities for cultural purposes.

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Notes

1. For discussion of ‘two-ways, both-ways’ as a philosophy of cross-cultural interaction and a methodology of bilingual schooling in north-east Arnhem Land, see Christie et al. 1987:148–53; Harris 1990; McConvell 1991. See Mandawuy Yunupingu’s (1994:1–11) article in *Voices from the Land: The 1993 Boyer Lectures*.
2. See contributions by Yolŋu educators in *Aboriginal Pedagogy: Aboriginal teachers speak out* (Deakin University 1991). See also ‘Yolngu metaphors for learning’ (Marika-Mununggiritj and Christie 1995).
3. The federal government introduced support for Indigenous bilingual education in the Northern Territory in the 1970s. In 1998 the Northern Territory Government prioritised the teaching of English as a second language, then revitalised its commitment to bilingual education in 2005. In 2008 the Northern Territory Government again prioritised the teaching of English in the first four hours of class time in Aboriginal community schools (Harris 1990; Devlin 2009). Following the National Indigenous Languages Survey report in 2005, Ministers Macklin and Garret introduced the National Indigenous Languages Policy in March 2013 (Office for the Arts 2013).

Part 2

History

Chapter 4

Marking their footsteps: Aboriginal people and places in nineteenth-century Sydney

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La Perouse Aboriginal Community

Abstract: *Many Aboriginal people who lived in south-eastern Sydney during the nineteenth century appear to be remembered only as words on a page, as are the places they lived in. Knowing about these people and places is important to local Aboriginal communities and broader society, and is also essential to ensure that such places are protected and managed appropriately. This chapter describes the development of research to document historical Aboriginal people and places in south-eastern Sydney. Using a collaborative approach that utilises archaeological, historical and community knowledge, the authors are working towards a more rounded understanding of why and how Aboriginal people lived where they did at the times they did. It is also becoming apparent that these people's connections and movements are partly continuations of pre-contact social and cultural life and obligations, and that they were able to exert a degree of autonomy even during times of increasing government control and regulation.*

Introduction

The knoll of high ground that looks over Double Bay and the Heads...was the last camping place of the natives. There old Wingle and his wife Kitty, and Bondi Charley took up contributions, from a copper to the occasional crown of the early globe-trotter, and in return demonstrated boomerang throwing.

Nearby is Seven Shillings Beach, and Miss Nesta Griffiths tells its story in her book. The aboriginal owner of the fishing rights to the beach was Gurrah, whose

lubra, Nancy, was a sister of Sophie, who lived near the spring at Vaucluse. (Jervis and Kelly 1960–65:44)¹

European settler reminiscences such as these about the mid- to late nineteenth century are found across the Sydney region. They and others like them are routinely repeated in local histories and a range of specialist heritage or history reports to this day. They imply, given that they are quoted without any additional research being undertaken, that it is neither important to know more about these people nor considered likely that any further information exists.

Yet these particular quotes show that there was an Aboriginal ‘community’ of sorts in the 1870s in what is now the densely populated eastern suburbs area of Sydney (Figure 1). Their presence in the formative years of these suburbs is all but unknown to most residents, where ‘history’ is very much associated with the built environment largely created since that time. But has the tide of history really left only these scant traces of past Aboriginal lives on the shores of Sydney Harbour? Who were they,

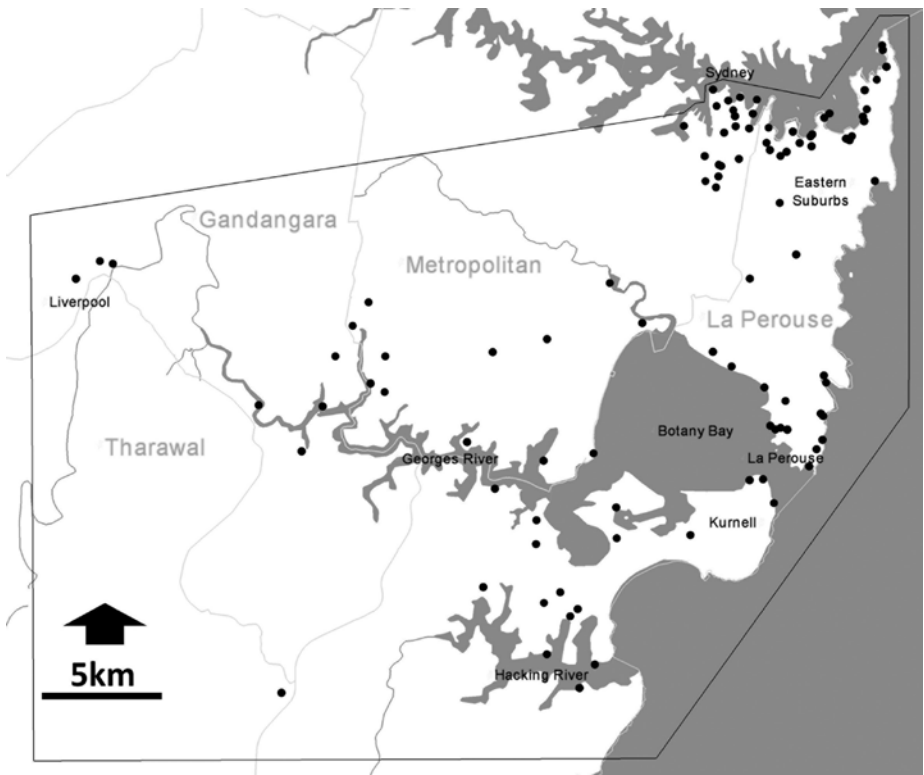


Figure 1: The project study area (black outline) showing approximate location of Aboriginal places (dots); land council names and boundaries are shown in grey and relevant places/areas are named in black (adapted by Paul Irish from Google Earth image)

how and where did they live, and what became of them? Are they remembered by Aboriginal people today? What can their lives tell us?

This chapter describes research being undertaken to answer some of these questions in relation to the south-eastern portion of the Sydney region. It also describes this work from the different perspectives of the two researchers; Paul Irish, an archaeologist and (from 2011) history PhD candidate, and Michael Ingrey, a Dharawal man from the La Perouse Aboriginal community of south-eastern Sydney. Although such collaborative work is not new, it is less commonly applied in a largely archival research context (as opposed to community or oral history) and it is instructive to document how it has worked in practice and the mutual benefits it has brought. The result is a better understanding of the context of the people and places being investigated, and this can potentially inform a range of other questions about the pre- and post-European contact Aboriginal experience in Sydney.

How and why did the research start?

Paul's longstanding interest in Sydney's post-contact Aboriginal history led to the creation of the Sydney Aboriginal Historical Places Project (SAHP Project) in 2006 (Irish 2011). The SAHP Project aims to historically and archaeologically document the places used by Aboriginal people in the Sydney region after European contact in 1788 and up until the early to mid-twentieth century, by which time most Aboriginal people in the Sydney region had ceased to live in separate or semi-autonomous camps. The focus is on places repeatedly used in that time, which may have created an 'archaeological signature' whether or not anything has survived (Irish and Goward 2012). The project also seeks to examine the people who used these places, their relationships with others, and the ways in which they lived within, and moved around, a growing city. Places used after this period are often, and more appropriately, documented through community histories (e.g. AIAS 1988; Museum of Sydney 1996), whereas those investigated for the SAHP Project are generally very poorly documented and have little, if any, *specific* accompanying oral information.

The scoping study for the project involved compiling a database of these places from previous research (largely published or easily accessible historical information and Aboriginal site databases). This database contains around 300 places drawn from a wide range of historical and archaeological sources (Irish 2009, 2011). The next stage of the project, with which this chapter is concerned, involves intensive historical research leading to archaeological recording of those places at which physical traces may have survived. A major feature of the project is to involve local Aboriginal communities in research, not only to foster experience and skills development, but in recognition of the important knowledge and perspectives held in communities of the places and people being investigated. Crucially, it puts the decisions on how best to manage these places in Aboriginal hands.

The first area of intensive historical research in 2009 was the Botany Bay area in south-eastern Sydney. Before establishing a more precise boundary for the research, Paul sought the involvement of an Aboriginal researcher from the La Perouse Aboriginal community. Michael had been interested from an early age in family history of places and people, especially within the Botany Bay area where he had grown up. During previous work together on Aboriginal archaeological projects, Paul had discussed his interest in post-contact Aboriginal places. Michael was also interested in these places, both generally and through family connections to specific areas. He offered a way of researching these people and places that would meet both the aims of the SAHP Project and Michael's own aims for benefiting the La Perouse Aboriginal community.

Making connections, setting boundaries

Initially, research in 2009 focused on the Kurnell Peninsula in Gwea-gal country on the southern side of Botany Bay (Figure 1). The Gwea-gal and other Aboriginal people have maintained connections to Kurnell since the permanent movement of Europeans into the area. Some of these connections were already familiar to Michael through community knowledge (e.g. AIAS 1988:12–13); others were documented historically in a fragmented manner (e.g. Ashton et al. 2006:30–1; Curby 1998; Larkin 1998; Salt 2000) and even archaeologically (Dickson 1971; McIntyre 1984; Megaw 1969, 1972; Rolfe 1931). Despite this and recent detailed historical work (e.g. Goodall and Cadzow 2009; Nugent 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Smith 2004), there was a clear sense that research had only gone to a certain point (generally to large, daunting collections of personal papers). The Kurnell Peninsula therefore seemed a good place to test whether further information was available, and to try to document more closely where and how Aboriginal people had lived.

Research focused on the records of early surveyors, records of interviews with early European residents (e.g. Houston 1905; Labington 1906), and the extensive papers of the Holt family and others who, between them, virtually controlled the peninsula throughout the nineteenth century. Previous examinations of some of these documents (e.g. Larkin 1998) had generally been undertaken without a detailed knowledge of the Aboriginal people and historical context of the local area. This lack of historical context had also limited previous considerations of the post-contact archaeology of the area (Harrison 2003).

Based on this initial research, it was possible to compile a considerably long list of Aboriginal people historically associated with the Kurnell Peninsula. Although many were previously described, they had not been considered as a group or 'community', nor had the locations of the places in which they had lived been detailed (although see Goodall and Cadzow 2009). From this close reading of archival material, combined with community genealogical, historical and cultural knowledge, some past errors could be corrected, such as the conflation of the identities of Bidy Giles and

Biddy Coolman, two significant Aboriginal women (e.g. Illert 2003; Smith 2004:41, 2008a:15–16).

It was clear that Aboriginal connections to Kurnell had remained strong, with local people providing place names to early surveyors (Figure 2), retaining oral history of Cook's landing (MacDonald 1928:286; Nugent 2009), and continuing to live and work on country with local landowners and others (e.g. Connell n.d.; Delessert 1848:169–76; Holt Family Papers 1861–1933). It was also evident that Aboriginal people associated with Kurnell had lived at and used other parts of Botany Bay and beyond, and had family ties north, south and west of Kurnell. For this reason, a focus on just Kurnell or Botany Bay was too narrow to capture a sense of peoples' lives at this time.

In very broad terms, links between nineteenth-century Aboriginal people and places in the Botany Bay area extended north to the southern side of Sydney Harbour at least as far west as Cockle Bay, south to Port Hacking and beyond, and west up the Georges River to Bankstown and possibly Liverpool. This area comprises what may be called south-eastern Sydney and became the revised study area (Figure 1). The SAHP Project database contained records for around 90 places in this area, to which Michael immediately suggested several more from his own knowledge and research (Figure 1). As this area covered the boundaries of several local Aboriginal land councils, consultation was undertaken with these organisations in 2010 to make them aware of the research and to seek their endorsement.

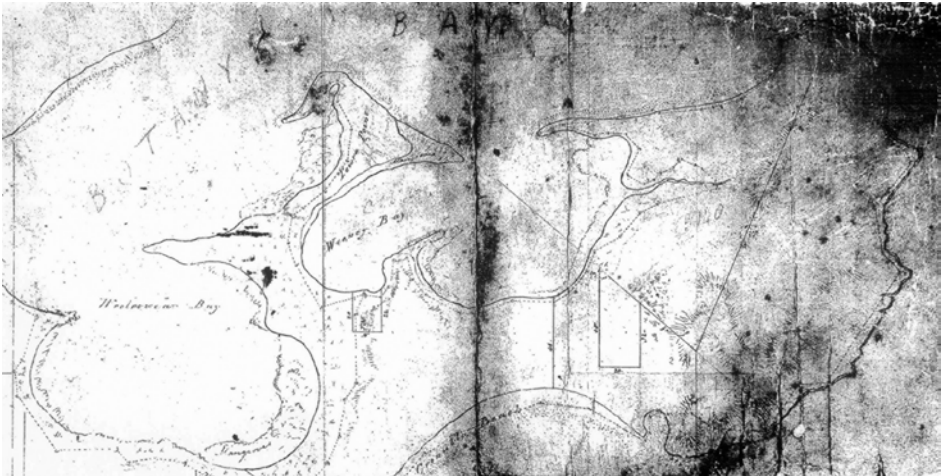


Figure 2: Extract of the first map of the entire Kurnell Peninsula by Surveyor Dixon from around 1827 showing Aboriginal place names; all of these names are still in use today (source: R Dixon n.d. *Part of a map of Port Hacking*, NSW State Records Item NRS 13859, 4734/SG Map P256)

Although maintaining an overall focus on the entire south-east Sydney area, research was broken into a series of smaller areas (as with the initial Kurnell research) to allow intensive research to be undertaken. SAHP Project records indicated that a number of named Aboriginal people were resident in the eastern suburbs area of Sydney (Figure 3) in the mid- to late nineteenth century, some of whom appeared to link back to Botany Bay. It was intriguing to Michael that none of these names appeared to be well known in the La Perouse Aboriginal community by his generation and it was decided to focus next on this area. While Paul synthesised the existing SAHP Project documentation, Michael made enquiries among elders in the community (whose knowledge extends easily back to at least the late nineteenth century) and discovered some interesting information and potential leads for further investigation. This set the scene for the research and results, which are now described.

Hitting the library and hitting the phone

Archival research involves targeted investigation of promising historical leads, as well as the systematic exhaustion of sources such as family papers. This methodology recognises that past investigations have often been undertaken without the same knowledge of, or focus on, the Aboriginal people and their connections available to the present authors and have generally been more time constrained than this current research. Both Paul and Michael are actively involved in reviewing archival texts, images and maps and methodically recording and cataloguing all these materials. This has also included compiling contextual databases of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people relevant to the south-eastern Sydney area in general. In this way, the information examined, and any possible connections between people and places, are discussed as they appear from both viewpoints.

Michael has found this archival aspect of research interesting, especially examining 150-year-old books and other documents in the Mitchell Library and being able to link the 'old people' to descendants today and locate some of their camping places. This 'linking' process highlights how crucial Michael's involvement has been to the success of the research. His perspective on personal identities, connections and the locations draws on a different way of thinking to Paul's, leading to some conclusions that probably would not have been made individually. Michael has also been able to telephone community elders from the library with queries about these matters, often clarifying issues instantly (or through follow-up questions later if more appropriate). This has helped make connections between people and places and has maximised the effectiveness of time spent in libraries and other archives.

Another important collaboration in this research is with local historians and researchers through local libraries and historical societies. Not only do these people have an excellent historical knowledge of local areas and environments (crucial context for research of this kind) but they have often also collated information on local

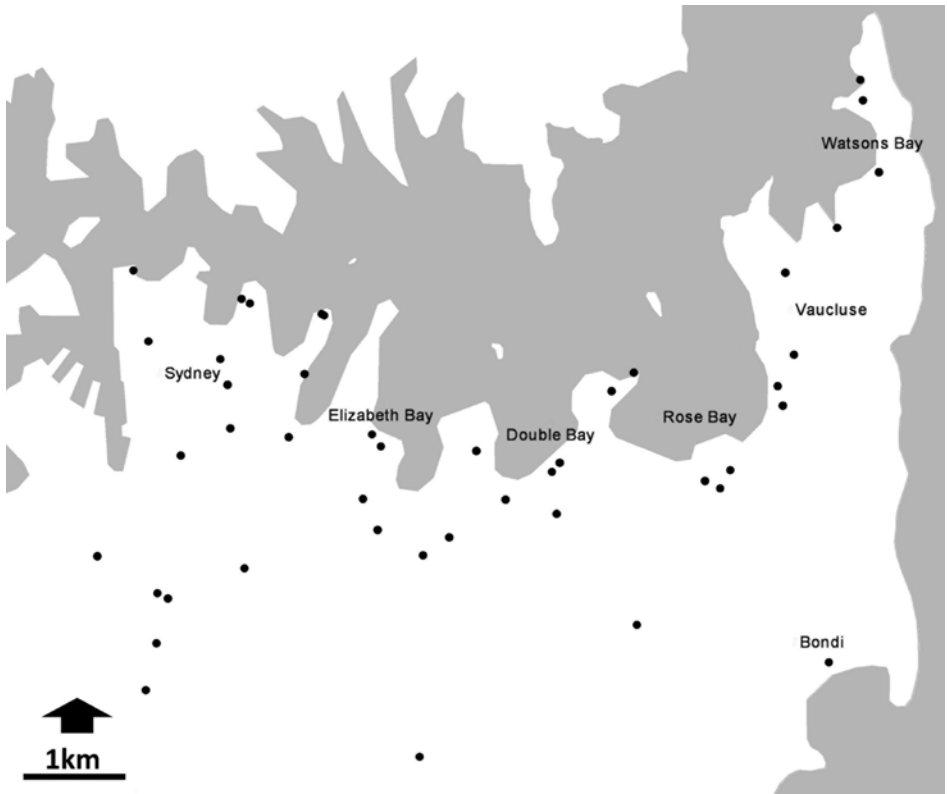


Figure 3: Historical Aboriginal places in the eastern suburbs of Sydney (adapted by Paul Irish from Google Earth image)

Aboriginal people. An aim of the project is to connect these people and organisations with the local Aboriginal community because much mutually beneficial and interesting research (beyond the current project) could be achieved in this manner.

The products of this research are stored in several linked databases, and all relevant documentation (where possible) has been scanned and attached to the relevant records of places. Although stored presently in the format of the SAHP Project, this data will be made available to the local Aboriginal community (see below).

Initial findings

Some interesting initial results from the research particularly concern the eastern suburbs area. Given the preponderance of large and ‘historic’ properties across this (now) generally affluent area, it is easy to forget that until the late 1800s this area was effectively a ‘remote’ rural part of Sydney, despite its relative proximity to the city. As with Botany Bay to the south, there appears to have been opportunities for Aboriginal

people to continue to live with a degree of autonomy in this area. This is reflected in the acknowledgment of Europeans living in the region in the mid- to late 1800s of the connections of Aboriginal people to specific areas. For example, the link of Aboriginal woman Kitty to the Double Bay area, described in the introductory quote from the 1870s, appears to have been recognised as far back as 1841, with a parish plan naming the bay ‘Kitty’s Cove or Double Bay’ (Figure 4). The Seven Shillings Beach story in the same quote also recognised the rights of a specific person (Gurrah) to an area and its resources. Similarly, a natural spring at Vacluse is named ‘Emma’s well’, supposedly after an Aboriginal woman named Emma Collins who lived nearby with her husband, Peter, and drew water from the spring (Figure 5). Locals placed a stone trough at the site in 1874 and the council later erected a tablet nearby giving that name, though there is some debate as to whether the couple were Aboriginal (Jervis and Kelly 1960–65:148–9; Rowland 1951:225).

Given that these people were all living in close proximity at the same time, they would obviously have known one another. Some were clearly related, as the introductory quote shows, though many connections are still unknown. It is also relevant to consider the traditional affiliations of these people. This is documented for people such as William Warrell² (also known as ‘Rickety Dick’), who lived at Rose Bay in the mid-nineteenth century. His mother was from Botany Bay and his father was

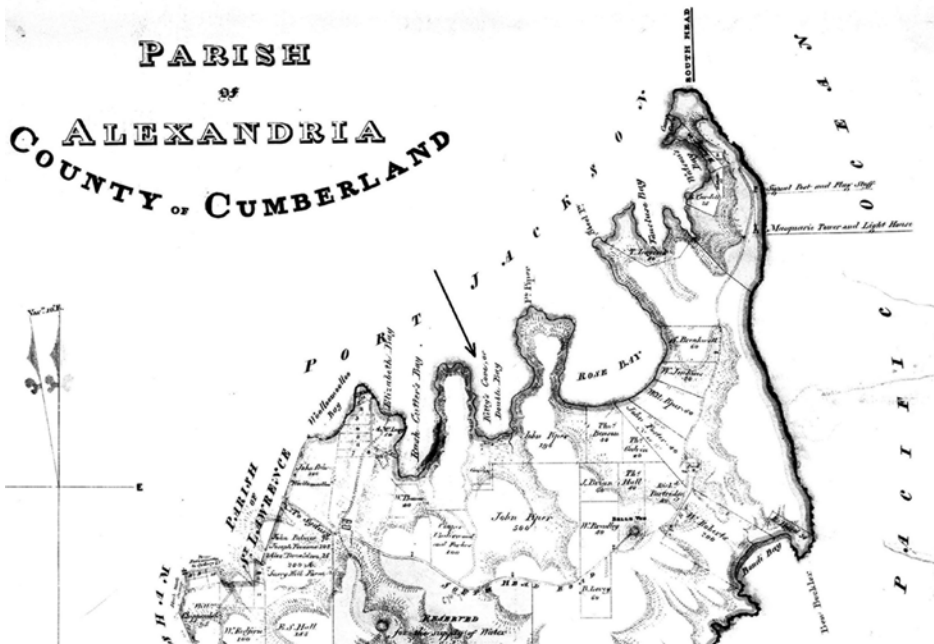


Figure 4: Extract of Alexandria Parish Map of 1841 showing ‘Kitty’s Cove’ (indicated with arrow) (source: PL Bemi 1841 *Plan of the Parish of Alexandria*, County of Cumberland, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW #M2 811.181/1841/1)

from the Illawarra (Anon 1863). He was also a cousin to Cora Gooseberry, one of the wives of well-known early Sydney identity Bungaree (Flynn n.d.:Frame 14). A similar pattern of Sydney/Botany Bay/Illawarra parental origins is noted for a number of other people in the south-eastern Sydney area at this time, and there is no reason to assume that it does not represent a pre-contact trend or custom. These people may therefore have had obligations to country in several areas across a wide tract of land.

Interestingly, Bungaree, despite being 'from' north of Broken Bay (i.e. north of Sydney), was buried at Rose Bay with one of his wives (Smith 1992:144). Though his father may have been from the Broken Bay area, his mother's origins are not known,



Figure 5: Emma's well at Rose Bay (photograph: Paul Irish and Michael Ingrey)

and this raises the possibility that Bungaree had some traditional affiliation with Rose Bay or the Sydney Harbour area more generally. Rose Bay is historically documented as a ritual combat ground known as Pannerong (Collins 1975[1798]:489–90) and evidence of the burial of at least one other Aboriginal person from the post-contact period was unearthed there during recent construction works (Donlon 2008:102–04). If Wingle and Kitty were also from north of Sydney, as suggested by Smith (2008b:229), one or both of them may also have had familial connections to the eastern suburbs area, given that they lived most of their lives there.

Perhaps, as Michael suggests, Bungaree's famous statement to visitors entering Sydney Harbour — that the north side of the harbour was 'his shore' (Barratt 1981:34) — hints at more complex relationships to country than most researchers currently acknowledge. Aboriginal historical research in Sydney has an undeniable tendency to reduce the complex and numerous inherited and marriage obligations to country of Sydney's Aboriginal people to the 'clan' to which they belonged, as though that fully explains their identities (e.g. Smith 2004). It is fair to say that since the initial recording of clan affiliations by the early colonists, inadequate attention has been paid to these potentially complex relationships, despite what is known from other parts of Australia (Powell and Hesline 2010).

Beyond the broad affiliations discussed above, the research also maps the movement of individuals around smaller areas such as Botany Bay. For example, in the mid-nineteenth century Johnny Malone lived on western Botany Bay (Scherzer 1863:58), at Kurnell on the south side of the bay (Anon 1899; see also Goodall and Cadzow 2009) and north of La Perouse on the north-eastern bay (Anon 1862; Jervis and Flack 1938:304). At another time he is said to have lived in the Heathcote area to the south of Botany Bay in a rock shelter while working to clear timber (Midgely 1973:58). The general location of these camps is known and it does not appear that Malone was forced to move between them. The reasons are likely to be a combination of historical factors and cultural obligations. As per the trend noted above, Johnny married 'Lizzie', an Illawarra woman.

Similarly, Botany Bay man William Rowley was born and lived for many years at Kurnell, spent time in the Illawarra (Carter 1935:2) and was a founding member of the La Perouse Aboriginal community. He also later helped to establish the Salt Pan Creek Aboriginal camp further west on the Georges River, with the daughter of another Kurnell woman, Bidy Giles (who was also married to a man from the Illawarra). Bidy also lived at a range of places around the south and west of Botany Bay throughout the mid- to late nineteenth century (see Goodall and Cadzow 2009).

A degree of choice and freedom of movement is clearly evident here but is not generally recognised in the descriptions of nineteenth-century Aboriginal people in Sydney. Even today, these camps are often thought of as fringe camps, as if Aboriginal people had no choice over location and were left trapped and dependent on the outer edge of European settlements. The continued occupation of rich resource areas

and the likely maintenance of cultural obligations to country show that this was not the case.

This is well illustrated by Mahroot, a Botany Bay man known for his moving testimony at a government enquiry into Aboriginal people in 1845 (NSW Select Committee on the Aborigines 1845:1–5). He was born at Cooks River (north-western bay) and later lived on the eastern bay at the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel at Botany and on land leased to him at Bunnerong by Governor Bourke in 1832, where he earned a living from fishing. Mahroot told others that the latter location was ‘all my country... water all pretty — sun make it light’ (Miles 1854:5). It was clear to Michael and others in the community that it would have been a good fishing spot on the bay next to a creek. It may also have had cultural significance or affiliation.

In all these examples, it is essential to understand exactly where these places were in order to appreciate the choices people made, and the context of their lives. It is curious that while Mahroot’s testimony is a key and often-quoted source for the period, only a few have thought it relevant to know where the land grant was and how he came to choose it (e.g. Curby 2009:41–3; Karskens 2009:517; Smith 2004:128–30) and no one has related its recorded location precisely to the landscape today. Michael notes that it is precisely this that is important to the Aboriginal community, as many from the La Perouse Aboriginal community drive past Mahroot’s land and other historical Aboriginal places every day without knowing it (Figure 6). Michael believes it is important, especially for younger people, to be aware that all these places have an Aboriginal connection, as well as knowing more about each place and person. For example, Mahroot can be considered one of the first Aboriginal businessmen, leasing out his land to non-Aboriginal farmers (NSW Select Committee on the Aborigines 1845:3–4; Townsend 1849:120).

Knowing locations is also important in terms of heritage management. Despite huge alterations to the landscape in the area of Mahroot’s land with the creation of the Port Botany container terminal, part of his land grant is still undeveloped. Could anything physically remain of Mahroot’s life there, and should this remaining portion be physically spared any future impacts? Similarly, the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel is registered as an item of State Heritage Significance but only for its European heritage values, with no recognition (and hence consideration or protection) or interpretation of its Aboriginal historical connections.

These places are certainly as significant to the Aboriginal community as pre-contact middens, engravings and other places, but largely remain historical concepts rather than managed places. Only around a third of places in the south-eastern Sydney area have been listed on formal heritage registers, and the vast majority of these are ‘archaeological’ sites with some evidence of post-contact Aboriginal use. Only a handful of sites are registered for their historical Aboriginal associations, including rock engravings historically associated with the La Perouse Aboriginal community. This is partly explained by the separation of ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘historic/European’



Figure 6: An unassuming bend of Botany Road, familiar to many but few know they are driving over Mahroot's land (photograph: Paul Irish and Michael Ingrey)

heritage by statute and management in New South Wales, leading to uncertainty as to how and by whom Aboriginal historical places should be managed. A further factor is the time needed to research these places to a degree where their physical location can be pinpointed, which is beyond the scope of most development-driven heritage investigations or even academic studies. These are explanations, not excuses, and a key reason for the research outlined here is to seek to address this situation in a culturally appropriate way, backed by rigorous historical and archaeological research. It is also a key aspect of this work that the Aboriginal community decides how to manage the Aboriginal values of these places, as registration does not necessarily imply real protection. For example, the best management may be to leave the place as it is but to raise awareness of it in the Aboriginal community, or there may be a need for active conservation or management of the place, or interpretive signage.

Future directions

The mixture of historical, archaeological and Aboriginal community information in this research is already generating new perspectives and uncovering previously

undocumented connections. The research is ongoing and interest and support in these historical connections have been shown through a project commissioned from the authors by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales (Irish and Ingrey 2011). Paul has also commenced doctoral research focusing on the people and places of south-eastern Sydney from 1840 to 1900, while Michael has developed a brochure about historical Aboriginal connections to south-eastern Sydney (with funding from the New South Wales Heritage Branch) which is to be distributed to local schools and Aboriginal communities in the region (Garrara Cooperative 2012). Better documentation of the people and places being studied will lead to a much deeper understanding of who they were and why and how they lived where they did. The authors are also undertaking site visits to document remains of places and their environmental settings and have delivered several talks to raise professional and broader community awareness of the historical and heritage implications of their research.

From Michael's perspective, the main aim of the research is to make the Aboriginal community aware of these places generally, so people may be able to make personal connections with particular places. The information that is found belongs to the Aboriginal people of the communities as a whole and is being borrowed for this research. Decisions on management, and possibly promotion of some places through tours or publications, should flow organically from this awareness and should not be forced.

It is hoped that this research will lead to a better understanding by the Aboriginal and broader community of these people and places. If subsequent generations of Sydneysiders can grow up with an understanding of pre- and post-European contact and ongoing Aboriginal connections with their local areas, it will do much for the cause of mutual understanding and respect for Aboriginal people, past and present, in Sydney and beyond.

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Notes

1. The outdated and offensive terms used to describe Aboriginal people in these quotes are retained to convey the nature of the historical record and do not represent the views of the authors.
2. There are historically documented variants on this spelling.

Chapter 5

‘The evidence of our own past has been torn asunder’: Putting place back into urban Aboriginal history

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Abstract: *It is easy to demonstrate the lack of signage about the history of Aboriginal Sydney, but it is not all due to racism and apathy. Ignorance and forgetfulness are relevant too. Here I argue not for more signage, but, while continuing further research, to bring the information that we already have online into two- or three-dimensional forms.*

Introduction

Dr Gordon Briscoe is an Indigenous historian, born in Central Australia. In 1942 he was removed, with his mother, from Central Australia, taken first to Balaklava near Adelaide and, at four years of age, placed in a church home in Mulgoa, western Sydney. In 2009, more than 60 years later, he revisited the site where 40 similar Northern Territory Aboriginal children had been institutionalised. Of the structures relating to the children who lived within the grounds, nothing remains in place: not a building, foundation or plaque. St Matthew’s Church remains and functions, but the rectory where the staff had their quarters has been demolished, the dormitory has been relocated and the grass where it once stood has been re-sown. Walking the grounds was a sad experience, but of all the painful memories, perhaps Gordon Briscoe’s sharpest reflection was the absence of any marker to the children’s existence. He reflected (Briscoe 2013):

When we talk about what Aboriginal people are sorry for, it’s the way they treated us and our past. One of the great things about history is that it’s used as an intellectual prop for Europeans. And here we see Aborigines grappling for a

past that's...been thrown asunder by white people, and they [have to] recapture some of that stuff by oral sources only, with nothing there to match it like the evidence of buildings. As you drive past this on the road from Blacktown to Mulgoa, Aboriginal history has been obliterated. And when we [are asked], what are we are sorry for, we're sorry because white people simply discarded our past. And when we try and reconstruct it we are accused of being reconstructors of fallacy. The church had its property — and the thirty or forty children that were there, and their carers, and the structures that were there in place when they left — can simply be accused of implementing a scorched earth policy. So when we come back here and say, 'Hey! What's this? Our past is gone' — we can't claim this area as being part of our home. And can't convince our own people of our history here, living in New South Wales, under the Welfare Board...The Japanese [for causing us to be removed from northern Australia] and the Australians are culpable in the destruction of Aboriginal society. The place has gone? Not so much the place but the material evidence that we can talk about as part of our own healing has been torn asunder. The church might be sorry, but it never really asks us, 'What are you sorry about?' This evidence of our sorrow has been torn asunder.

Next day Gordon and I travelled to the inner city to investigate the sites of Aboriginal activity so familiar to him in the 1960s and 1970s, some of which he had helped to create. Towards the western end of George Street, the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in the 1960s was a major initiative by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to offer at first a refuge for Aborigines arriving from the bush, then a social club, employment agency and ideas-exchange network. Yet no plaque tells passers-by of this critical moment in Sydney Aboriginal history. Nor does any signage mark the site of the 'Big E', the Empress Hotel close to Redfern Station, popular as a meeting place even for non-drinkers, nor the site nearby in Botany Road where the Aboriginal Legal Service held its first planning meetings to answer police persecution of patrons of the 'Big E' in the 1970s, nor the first site of the Aboriginal Dance Theatre, nor the Aboriginal Medical Service, nor Murawina, the famous pre-school that provided free breakfasts for children, nor the Aboriginal Children's Service. These inner-city artistic and community services, some of which Gordon Briscoe helped to create, were the most important Indigenous initiatives in 40 years of urban radical reform. Not a single plaque records any of the events, or any of the sites. The one plaque in Redfern to mark an Aboriginal presence records not an organisation but a person, Mum Shirl (Shirley Smith). It reads, 'In celebration of the life of Shirley Smith, the black saint of Redfern. Who gave aid and comfort to all who asked.'

Nor does signage record post-invasion Indigenous living areas. In the inner city, until at least 1830, Aborigines congregated at Kirribilli, Lavender Bay, Woolloomooloo, Berry's Bay and Circular Quay. Further from the Central Business District (CBD), Aboriginal people by 1900 were living in hundreds of sites at Middle Harbour,

Annandale, Blackwattle Bay and Balmain, and along the Parramatta, Nepean, Hawkesbury, Lane Cove and Georges rivers. An attempt to mark the significance of these sites might perhaps begin at Saltpan Creek, a tributary of the Georges, some ten kilometres up river from Botany Bay. Here many people from southern Sydney escaped the restrictions of the heavy-handed managers of La Perouse and planned political activity. Equally significant was a farm on the other side of the river managed by the Dharawal woman Biddy Lewis, the daughter of Bungaree's wife Matora. North of the harbour one might mark the grave on Bar Island of Biddy Lewis. At the Field of Mars Reserve on the Lane Cove River, some 20 people were still living in seclusion until at least 1900, while on the Wakehurst Parkway between Oxford Falls and Narrabeen another 20 or 30 people struggled on until their camp was destroyed in the late 1950s. Major sites of Aboriginal occupation, some of which were official reserves, deserve recognition. These include the Blacktown Institution, founded by Macquarie and moved from Parramatta to this site in 1823, the land grant to Colebee in Liverpool (Tait 2003), the Sackville Reserve on the Hawkesbury River, and a farm at Rooty Hill where many western Sydney Koories gathered on weekends (Gordon Morton, interview with author, 2010). A rarity can be seen near the Hawkesbury Regional Gallery at Windsor, which commemorates the spot where Yarramundi — one of the best known early Indigenous leaders (who has many descendants today) — met Arthur Phillip. Modern places involving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together that deserve recognition include the University of Sydney, from where the Freedom Ride bus departed in 1965, and the starting place of the walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge as the Reconciliation Council presented its Blueprint for the Future in May 2000.

Why are so few of these sites, so important in the history of Aboriginal Sydney, not recognised? A major reason is that even within the CBD, Sydney is not well endowed with historical signage of any kind, especially after the period of the 'pioneers'. In 1988 the Royal Australian Historical Society erected 101 plaques to celebrate historical places, people and events — only one was dedicated to an Aboriginal (Bennelong). Of the three dozen commemorative discs embedded in the Opera House walkway, only one refers to an Aboriginal person — Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker), who was a Brisbane Murri. In 2004 some 40, mostly twentieth century, sites were marked on each side of Darlinghurst Road, Kings Cross, but none referred to an Aboriginal presence. A plaque to the memory of Aboriginal people who found their way to Kings Cross (who were often members of the Stolen Generations) would be an appropriate addition to the existing plaque that marks the site of the Arabian cafe, Darlinghurst Road, where many of them used to gather. Joy Janaka Williams, a Wiradjuri woman who unsuccessfully sued the New South Wales Government, was one of them. Although the Australian Hall, in which the 1938 Day of Mourning took place, is preserved and marked, no signage exists at the former homes or workplaces of Sydney identities of the CBD — Charles Perkins, Bennelong, Colebee, Barangaroo,

Matora, Patyegeerang, Queen Gooseberry, Ken Brindle, Roy Carroll, Chicka Dickson, Muriel Merritt or Louisa Ingram. We can conclude this short and dismal survey by noting the lack of acknowledgment that Aboriginal people were everywhere present throughout the CBD since 1788, not only in their own society but participating in much of the life of the community — in the Wayside Chapel, in the 1970s Green Bans, as watermen, longshoremen, factory workers, sex workers, entertainers and domestic servants. It is true that in 1988 some local councils tried to make amends. The North Sydney Council lists five plaques associated with Aboriginal people, but all relate to pre-invasion times and mostly make the same point about the generalised existence rather than actual locations of the Cammeraygal (Gai-Mariagal) living areas. Other councils have perhaps felt ambiguous about commemorating town camps destroyed by their own officials, such as the Gully in Katoomba, destroyed in the mid-1950s, which was declared an Aboriginal Place in November 2002 (Johnson 2007). Recently installed plaques often carry the implication that the Indigenous presence ceased in 1788. Yet no obvious reason explains why the site of Bungaree's farm in Mosman, presented to him by Macquarie, and whose general location has never been lost, remained unmarked for 150 years. Apparently nobody thought it worth the trouble to mark.

Most local historians will be able to name half-a-dozen sites of post-invasion Indigenous interest, but their presence vanishes after the first chapter of many older local histories, sometimes even after the introduction. Inertia, ignorance and contempt for the Aboriginal past are factors in the vanishing Indigenous urban past.

It is certainly true that a great deal of information is still being unearthed week by week. The authors of *Aboriginal Sydney: A guide to important places of the past and present* (Hinkson and Harris 2000) did not have access to new information on many of the sites listed here, or of others such as Bungaree's 1801 town camp in Kirribilli. Both Aboriginal descendants and scholars have learned much in the past decade on northside sites at Beauty Point, Anderson Park, Manly or Brookvale. We will never have a complete list of significant community sites, such as annual gatherings of extended families to the 1970s on the Cattai Creek or Patonga, or smaller semi-permanent sites where half-a-dozen people were living until moved on, at White Bay, Phillip Bay or Cockle Creek, Asquith. The Australian Hall in Elizabeth Street needs formal recognition (Hinkson and Harris 2000:22), as does Rehoboth, the first home of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (Maynard 2008:46), and St David's Church Hall, Surry Hills, site of the first Australian Aboriginal Civil Rights Convention (Maynard 2008:53). Gandangara community members using an echo sounder have located the original Burragorang waterhole connected to the Giant Kangaroo Dreaming, and hence several of the now-submerged government reserves that once occupied some of the Burragorang Valley floor (*Blue Mountains Gazette*, 27 May 2009).

Online recognition of historic sites

Considering the past disinterest of many councils and the lengthy research, bureaucratic processes and the expense of installing site markers, the World Wide Web would seem a logical alternative location for site-specific information. Yet a search of Sydney clan and community sites reveals some surprising lacunae. The ‘Darug Country’ web page of the Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation (2006a) lists equivalent modern and Aboriginal names. Another page states that ‘The Darug Language’ (rather than site identification) ‘is the defining reference for the Darug people’, and hence identification of the Darug Country ‘is defined by the language usage of the people who lived in the Sydney Basin, likewise other tribal groups are identified by their language usage’ (Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation 2006b). A third page of the Darug website invites attention to 11 aspects of Darug life, most of which concern pre-invasion culture, but none is place specific. The ‘Welcome to Barani’ website deals with the history of the Eora people and investigates issues concerning First Contact, government policy, organisations, events, people, church, employment and Western science — but makes no close identification with many of the known post-invasion sites, even of the harbour, such as Rose Bay or Woolloomooloo (www.sydneybarani.com.au). The Cadigal Wangal website lists half-a-dozen places of significance, but only some are pre-invasion sites (<http://cadigalwangal.org.au/clientsite>). Such a lack of information is perplexing. There seems little reason to suppose that communities want to keep secret formerly well-known and well-publicised locations such as the Sackville Reserve on the Hawkesbury River (Brook 1994).

The absence of specific information about what happened and exactly where it happened — whether recognised by a physical place marker or by an online site sponsored by local council or a land council — involves more than inattention or deliberate exclusion. It involves more than the difficulty and cost of creating and maintaining websites. Somehow much information has been lost. Much information was lost carelessly: until at least 1927 local residents were pretty certain where Bennelong was buried in James Squires’ farm in modern Putney (Duff 2011). And the reasons are clear enough. The disruption of families by the Protection and Welfare Boards, town camp destruction and child removals, the denial or obscuring of Aboriginal descent within families, and the determined destruction of sites by shire and parish councils have consigned very much place-specific information to oblivion. Yet as we have discovered in the University of Sydney project ‘A History of Aboriginal Sydney’, an enormous amount of information remains to be rediscovered in parish maps, Aboriginal oral histories, family photographs, local historical societies, private letters and the reminiscences of older residents. The historical research of Jim Smith (2008), Jack Brook (1994), Jim Kohen (2006), Keith Vincent Smith (1999) and Heather Goodall (Goodall and Cadzow 2009) indicates just how much site-specific information is recoverable.

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Here are some examples of historical information relating to particular sites, from the History of Aboriginal Sydney website:

- Using records held in local libraries (History of Aboriginal Sydney 2013a)
Cremorne point...
At Christmas time Aboriginal people come in large numbers to camp at Cremorne Reserve in Cameragal country. They receive the annual gift of a blanket each, given by the government. Traces of Christmas feasts have been found in the shell middens around the caves (Bennett 1960, Manuscript, Local History section, North Sydney Library).
- Using non-Aboriginal oral history (History of Aboriginal Sydney 2013b)
[A resident at Pymble recalled that Robert Pymble the elder] related that members of a Koori clan periodically travelled from Lane Cove River at a point near Burns Bay on the way to Cowan, 'by way of what is now known [as] Cowan Road. They always break the journey and camp on Wright's Hill, near the present reservoir at Pymble...' He continued that the hill beyond the present situation is called by those campers 'Turramurra' or 'Turraburra' the word meant 'big hill'. ('Reminiscences of JG Edwards 1843-1927', Evening News, July 1921)
- Using parish maps
Cuthill Farm Maps of Holsworthy parish of 1913 and pre-1899 in Sydney pinpoint the land grant on Mill Creek referred to above (Goodall and Kadzow 2009).
- Using Aboriginal oral history (History of Aboriginal Sydney 2013c)
Rooty Hill Farm, Oral testimony by Gordon Morton, a resident in the 1940s-50s, has revealed the precise location of the estate and buildings mentioned above, much frequented by Darug people until the early 1960s.

Granted that these historic places exist, can be located and are desired to be recognised by Indigenous communities or families, as well as by many non-Indigenous people, how can this information be deployed most usefully to repatriate Aboriginal knowledge to the families and to educate the general community?

The History of Aboriginal Sydney website

This project, which in 2010 focused on the northern coastal region, will ultimately present a history of all of Indigenous Sydney. The website locates key and minor events on an interactive timeline and links them to themes such as 'routes and

pathways', 'community leaders', and 'families and children'. The most useful theme in terms of linking an event to a person is through location. This is achieved via an interactive map of Sydney, with global positioning system (GPS) locations of significant sites, a process which seemed the most logical and accessible method of sharing Aboriginal history where site-specificity is the first requirement. Thus at location 13, Biddy Lewis' farm on Marramarra Creek, Hawkesbury River is the entry (History of Aboriginal Sydney 2013d):

A land grant of about one hectare on Marramarra Creek was the first permanent home of Biddy Lewis (also known as Sarah Wallace). Title to the land was granted to her in 1835, though Biddy and her husband John Lewis (also known as John Ferdinand) may have lived on the site for some years previously.

Biddy was the daughter of Matora, wife of the Sydney Aboriginal identity Bungaree. In the absence of clear genealogy, it is also held by some of her descendants that Biddy Lewis was Matora's grand-daughter.

Biddy Lewis was born in about 1803. Her death certificate names her father as 'Richard Wallace, Aboriginal', but some of her descendants believe that he may have been British. It is said that the couple met while Lewis, a convict, was working at the farm granted to Bungaree by Macquarie in 1815 at Georges Head, and while Biddy was living there.

Biddy Lewis died in 1880 and was buried on Bar Island, at the mouth of Marramarra Creek. Her grave has not been located.

From the rich river flats on Marramarra Creek the family produced shingles for roofing, cabbage-tree grass for thatching, lime for mortar, fish and oysters. Biddy bore seven surviving children, mostly born on this site, some of whom took up land further down Marramarra creek. Elizabeth, for example, lived with her husband Israel Rose at Doughboy Beach further down the creek. Another child, Catherine, married Joseph Benns and lived on Scotland Island.

The site today can be visited by water during very high tides, or by the Marramarra Ridge walking track. The cleared spaces of the farm, and those of other land grants nearby, are easily discernable [sic] today. An adjoining grant, was probably abandoned in the 1950s, still has an orange orchard.

There is an identical entry in the online Dictionary of Sydney (Read 2011a).

Such information needed intensive research, community and family consultation, a site visit, and terrestrial and aerial photography, as well as the technical work to design and upload the information.

Yet this kind of precise location finding, interesting though it is, has limitations. So a progression from the two-dimensional actuality of the website GPS reference to a three-dimensional historical reconstruction was planned. For instance, the current

reference to the town camp at which Aboriginal people were living on Narrabeen Lagoon is as follows (History of Aboriginal Sydney 2013e):

Sydney Academy of Sport

The site was the last community Aboriginal town camp to survive in the northern Sydney suburbs. Probably, before the British invasion, Narrabeen Lagoon was one of the many coastal occupation sites offering seasonal shelter, fish and wetland resources. Until perhaps 1850, the western end of the Lake was a community and secular living area standing in relation to the higher country of the Collaroy plateau above. This higher and less accessible country was used for ceremonial and educational purposes by the Gai-Mariagal. Dennis Foley, a Gai-mariagal (Camaragal) descendant, describes the area as ‘the heart of our world’.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries most of the other northern town camp sites were resumed for housing or recreation by state and shire governments. Similar sites at Quakers Hat Bay, Mosman and Brookvale were probably gone by 1930. The Narrabeen site survived longer because of its inaccessibility, and was not seriously threatened until the opening of the Wakehurst Parkway in 1946.

By the end of the Second World War the Narrabeen Lagoon town camp had become a more or less permanent refuge for Koori people having kin connections throughout the north-coastal areas, as well [as] along the Hawkesbury River. Dennis Foley, a Gai-mariagal, remembers visiting the site with his uncles or mother in the 1950s, by which time perhaps fewer than twenty people were in permanent residence. Often his mother brought a bag of flour or a cake.

During the 1950s a thirty hectare site was developed at the National Fitness Centre, including several ovals and accommodation for more than fifty people. The town camp was seen as having no value, and in keeping with the assimilationist thrust of the day, the humpies were destroyed and the people forcibly trucked to the western suburbs.

No signage today records the presence of the camp within what is now the Sydney Academy of Sport.

A Google Earth reference pinpoints the site in relation to the lagoon. (See also, on the website, two videos of Professor Dennis Foley explaining his personal connection with the Narrabeen town camp (Foley 2012a, 2012b), and the entry in the online Dictionary of Sydney (Read 2011b)). How, though, did the site *function*? The aerial photograph that can be found on the grid-reference in Google Earth does not, and cannot, depict *relationships* to the Narrabeen/Collaroy suburban people who purchased the community’s marine produce and supplied its physical wants. Nor is an economic relationship easily demonstrated on a map. Neither photograph nor map can reflect meaningfully the ongoing relationship between members of the community and ceremonial, spiritual and educational country that lay in the plateau country to the

east. Nor can it show the relationships between the community members or towards nearby Aboriginal non-residents, nor to the white community generally. Nor can it demonstrate when and why a seasonal resource site had become a permanent town camp, nor where the people had come from, nor where, after the camp was destroyed in 1959, where they were taken. We hope, then, in further development of Sydney Aboriginal history, to create a three-dimensional modelling of the Narrabeen camp to demonstrate these relationships — through eye-level views towards and away from the camp, taking into account the 1950s dredging of the lake, sand-mining, the post-war upgrading of the Wakehurst Parkway, the changing local economy, the changing environment on the lagoon and the increasing non-Aboriginal population (see also Read 2010).

Gordon Briscoe may never be able to persuade the parishioners of St Matthew's, nor the Penrith councillors, to erect a plaque in memory of the Mulgoa children. But an online interactive map pinpointing the site and its buildings, built on oral histories, official and newspaper discussions, period photographs, and videoed interviews with Briscoe and other former inmates, would surely help to replace the lost history he feels so sharply. A three-dimensional reconstruction of the Mulgoa institution as it was in 1945 would help to explain why the site has been destroyed so completely.

And when we try and reconstruct it we are accused of being reconstructors of fallacy. The church...can simply be accused of implementing a scorched earth policy. So when we come back here and say, Hey! What's this? Our past is gone — we can't claim this area as being part of our home. And can't convince our own people of our history here, living in [New South Wales], under the Welfare Board...The material evidence that we can talk about as part of our own healing has been torn asunder...This evidence of our sorrow has been torn asunder. (Briscoe 2013)

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Chapter 6

Adelaideala nyinanytja — Living in Adelaide

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Abstract: *In recent years a significant number of Anangu people from the north-west of South Australia have resided in Adelaide. This chapter outlines the earlier history of culture contact in the Anangu lands, identifies reasons for this movement, examines problems encountered as Anangu people seek to adjust to urban life and comments on organisations that seek to assist them in this adjustment. The chapter is based on a demographic survey and interviews conducted with Anangu people and service providers. Fay Gale's studies of an earlier Aboriginal movement to Adelaide provided a useful model and enabled comparisons and contrasts between the two movements. This preliminary study points to the need for further research into the issues confronting Anangu in Adelaide and the implementation of effective programs to assist them.*

Introduction

When I first saw the 2009 AIATSIS conference theme, 'Perspectives on Urban Life', my immediate reaction was that because my primary experience has been in remote communities, I would not present a paper. However, soon afterwards, on 8 May 2009, having completed some banking business at Satisfac Credit Union in South Terrace, Adelaide, I looked across the road and saw a group of Aboriginal people sitting on the lawns of the south parklands. Wandering over in their direction I received calls and hand signals inviting me to join them. I discovered that the people in the group were sons and daughters of Pitjantjatjara people whom I had known well when I lived in the Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara lands from 1958 to 1980. Two were a son and daughter of a man who had worked closely with me in the office and store at Ernabella Mission and who had been my principal language teacher and a leading singer in the Ernabella Choir, which I conducted. One was a son of a man who had been head stockman of the cattle work at Fregon, established in 1961 as an outstation of Ernabella. Another

was a daughter of a couple who moved from Ernabella to Fregon and played leading roles in the development of Fregon. The parents of the others had been involved in the sheep, craft and other industries at Ernabella. I had known most of those sitting in the park when they were children at Ernabella and Fregon.

Before this chance meeting I felt that there was need for research to provide more detailed information on the movement of Anangu to Adelaide.¹ I had been aware of the presence of an increasingly significant Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara population in Adelaide through my role as a Pitjantjatjara interpreter in the health and legal sectors, as people occasionally rang or called at our house seeking assistance and as we met Anangu in the streets, in art centres or at other events. On 2 March 2009 I attended a meeting sponsored by Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide at which representatives from several departments and organisations met to discuss ways of assisting remote area Aborigines living in Adelaide. Although many such meetings had been held and several reports written, there was an obvious need for demographic data and clarification of the issues facing these people. The AIATSIS conference theme motivated me to embark on such research. My aim in this chapter is to provide statistics, outline reasons the people give for living in Adelaide and the problems and issues they face in adjusting to urban living, and to identify and comment on some of the programs that seek to assist them in this adjustment. This chapter is a preliminary report on a work in progress.

Anangu people and their recent history

The people who are often referred to now as Anangu belong to the Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and associated dialect groups that traditionally occupied the ranges and desert regions of the far north-west of South Australia and adjacent areas of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. They were among the last Aboriginal groups to have their social and cultural life disrupted by the encroaching colonial settlement, being safeguarded for several decades by ‘the security of distance’.² Their territories lay approximately 1500 kilometres from Adelaide. The first European intrusions into their lands were the exploratory expeditions of Ernest Giles and William Gosse in 1873. They were followed in subsequent decades by sundry surveyors, adventurers and prospectors. The government of South Australia proclaimed an area of 56 721 square kilometres as the North-west Aboriginal Reserve in 1921 in an effort to provide some protection and limit entry into the region. However, external contact increased as pastoral expansion extended along the eastern boundaries of the reserve and the payment by the government of a bounty for dingo scalps encouraged people, known as ‘doggers’, to enter the reserve to trade supplies of food for scalps. Some Anangu sought access to the newly introduced foods such as flour, sugar and tea by working on pastoral stations. This move was exacerbated by drought conditions on the reserve in the 1920s and 1930s.

Government and church bodies in Adelaide received reports of the exploitation of Aboriginal workers, abuse of women, inadequate exchange given by doggers and the spread of introduced diseases. An Adelaide surgeon, Dr Charles Duguid, decided to investigate the situation. After visiting the region he advocated the establishment of a mission as a buffer settlement, where the Indigenous culture and language would be respected, to provide protection from exploitation. As a result of his vision, a pastoral lease on the eastern boundary of the reserve was purchased and Ernabella Mission was established by the Presbyterian Church in 1937. Anangu were trained as shepherds, shearers and well-sinkers, and in fencing construction in the sheep industry. Others were employed in gardens, building and maintenance. A policy of bilingual education was followed at the school, which opened in 1940, and a clinic was established in 1942. A craft industry to provide employment for women commenced in 1948. The sixtieth anniversary of this enterprise in 2008 provided an opportunity to celebrate it as the oldest continuing Aboriginal art centre in Australia. By the 1950s Ernabella had a population of approximately 400 people, and other Anangu working on nearby cattle stations used it as a base during holiday periods and for ceremonies.

I commenced working at Ernabella in 1958 in the period of the assimilation policy. This was the policy advocated by governments and supported by leading anthropologists and a few Indigenous spokespersons of the day. It was widely recognised that remoteness and limited resources in many of the regions where Aboriginal people lived severely hindered the possibility of social and economic development. It was assumed that those who desired to share in the economic and cultural life of Australian society might eventually have to move nearer to urban areas where employment was available. The particular policy approach at Ernabella, reflected in the bilingual education program and respect for cultural practices, tended to modify this policy. Despite very limited financial resources, efforts were made to provide training and employment through expansion of the sheep industry, building programs and gardens. In 1961 Fregon, an outstation 60 kilometres south-west of Ernabella, was established as the centre for a cattle project. In the same year the South Australian Aborigines Protection Board established Musgrave Park, later named Amata, as a government settlement on the reserve west of Ernabella. Six families moved from Ernabella to form the original population of Amata. In 1968 the government opened its second settlement in the Anangu area, Indulkana, by excising an area of 12 square miles (approximately 31 square kilometres) from Granite Downs cattle station.

During that period, development was hindered by the limited financial resources available. It preceded the 1967 referendum, which authorised the provision of Commonwealth money for Aboriginal programs in the Australian states. Another factor that frustrated our attempts to provide more training and employment was remoteness from markets. Travel and cartage costs made it difficult to compete with producers sited nearer the markets. At the same time, changes in the pastoral industry decreased the demand for Aboriginal labour on nearby cattle stations. Changes in

the following decade, the 1970s, gave promise of a new era of development. In the economic sphere, increased financial grants following the 1967 referendum enabled the construction of new buildings, including housing, with local Anangu employed and increases in wages paid to these workers. Two cattle stations in the region, Everard Park and Kenmore Park, were purchased by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission and placed under local community control. In the political sphere, communities were incorporated with their own elected councils and administration was transferred from mission or government bodies to these community councils. For example, the Presbyterian Board of Missions handed over control at Ernabella and Fregon from 1 January 1974.

At the same time, increasing income through pensions and other social security benefits and the growing number of privately owned motor vehicles enabled people to return to their homeland centres to the west of the main communities. Government support for this process led to the establishment of several outstations that became homeland communities. Although some of these outstations, including Kunytjanu, Iltur, Kunamata, Aparatjara, Walytjitjata and Putaputa, have not been maintained, others, including Pipalyatjara, Watarru, Kanypi, Nyapari and Angatja, continue to exist. Small satellite settlements have been established near the older communities such as Ernabella, Amata and Fregon. While enabling their residents to have some independence from the tensions of these larger communities, they draw on them for store, schooling and health services.

In 1978 a Homelands Health Service was established to provide medical services for the western homeland region. The nearest clinic staffed by nursing sisters was at Amata, approximately 150 to 200 kilometres to the east. As it was to serve several communities, rather than placing it at one of them which might then be seen as having a prior right to its services, it was sited at Kalka, a few kilometres from Pipalyatjara. Although it was planned originally as a base for medical staff and services only, it has become another community.

While the 1970s was a period of political and economic development for Anangu, it was also a time of widespread social change, reflecting to some extent the worldwide social changes of the decade. Some of the problems that became evident then have intensified and become important factors in contributing to the movement of a significant number of Anangu from their home communities to Adelaide. Although in the earlier years of Ernabella and Fregon, development was restricted by very limited funding, there were few social problems and they were safe communities. In fact, I have sometimes remarked that we did not have to warn our own children about people until we moved to Adelaide. There were no problems related to alcohol abuse, petrol sniffing, child abuse or drugs. Although there were severe problems related to infant health, with frequent epidemics of gastroenteritis, the general health of adults was good.

With increases in the availability of money through social service benefits and wages and the ownership of motor vehicles, the 1970s witnessed the beginnings of alcohol being introduced to the lands and the practice of petrol sniffing among youths and children. Marijuana was also imported into the area, at first by community staff members, and introduced to Anangu. Peter Sutton, based on his experiences at Aurukun in north Queensland, identifies this period as one of ‘descent into dysfunction’ (Sutton 2009:3). The growth of the cash economy also resulted in an increase in the demand for a wider range of goods in community stores and the sale of products that contributed to a dramatic rise in the incidences of diabetes, obesity, cancers and other health problems. All of these factors escalated over the following decades. The increasing use of motor vehicles and consequent lessening of the physical activity of walking and carrying loads also contributed to some of these health problems, as well as to deaths and serious injuries resulting from motor vehicle accidents. Several Anangu are now living in Adelaide to receive treatment for these medical conditions.

In recent decades there have been changes also in family and wider social relationships in Anangu communities. In the 1950s and 1960s these relationships were more stable. Most couples remained in long-lasting relationships, with their offspring having a sense of security within the family. The same applied in the very few cases in which a man had two or more partners. These relationships were established almost without exception within the language and cultural bloc stretching from Warburton Mission in the west, Areyonga settlement to the north and Granite Downs to the south-east, and including the Yankunytjatjara, Pitjantjatjara, Ngaatjatjara and Ngaanyatjara dialects. Motor and air transport facilitated the extension of ritual and marriage exchange to other dialect areas and to distant communities including Papunya, Wiluna and Yalata. Contacts made between distant Aboriginal churches led to a few marriage exchanges between Anangu and people from Arnhem Land. There has also been an increase in the number of marriages or partnerships between Anangu and non-Indigenous people. Cultural and geographical distance has placed severe stress on many of these relationships and the resultant breakdowns and problems have contributed to the drift of people to Adelaide. Even among those who have followed more traditional patterns of marriage exchange, the influence of the changing mores of the wider Australian society and the previously identified dysfunctional factors in remote communities has led to increasing instability in family relationships. The former stability has given way to more people entering into a series of relationships. Anangu women who have felt rejected or who have been physically abused during the process of these relationship breakdowns are among those who have sought refuge in Adelaide. Sutton refers to this period as ‘a time of major decline in household stability...Domestic family life in many places was severely challenged and frequently transformed’ (Sutton 2009:55). His comment, based on observations in north Queensland, applies to the Anangu region.

Adelaide

Adelaide was established as a colonial settlement in 1836 on the Adelaide Plains, a narrow stretch of flat country between the waters of Gulf St Vincent and the Mount Lofty Ranges. This was the traditional territory of people now identified as the Kurna. Although the Letters Patent that authorised the colonial settlement included a clause that stated that the Aboriginal people should retain rights to the land they occupied, and initially there was some interaction between the settlers and Aborigines, introduced diseases soon reduced the Aboriginal population. A few surviving young men were moved to Poonindie Mission on Eyre Peninsula. Others were absorbed into neighbouring groups, the Ngarrindjeri and Narungga (Amery 2000:6). From the mid-twentieth century there has been an increasing movement of people from these groups from rural areas to Adelaide. In recent decades some of those who can trace Kurna descent have reclaimed their Kurna identity and heritage. This has been expressed in a movement to revive knowledge and use of Kurna language, based on research into written materials recorded by German missionaries during the early contact period (Amery 2000).

Aboriginal migration to, and settlement in, Adelaide is of particular interest because the pioneering research into urban Aboriginal life undertaken by the late Professor Fay Gale focused on this city. Having based her doctorate on research into Aboriginal communities in Adelaide in 1957, she continued this interest as Professor of Geography at the University of Adelaide and later as Vice-Chancellor. Earlier studies of Aboriginal life tended to focus on remote areas. Her surveys and analyses enable comparisons and contrasts to be made between two waves of Aboriginal migration to Adelaide. The first wave from the end of the First World War through the 1960s took place during the policy era of assimilation when Aboriginal people were expected to adapt and use existing facilities. Although there was government pressure to scatter Aboriginal families among the wider population to promote assimilation, Gale's research indicated a tendency to cluster because of kinship and cultural ties. The policy changes of the 1970s resulted in an increase in special services in areas such as health, education, welfare and housing (Gale and Wundersitz 1982:1). In 1972 Gale recorded six reasons given by Aborigines for their migration to Adelaide: kinship ties attracting others once some individuals had moved; availability of welfare services; health issues; employment opportunities; legal issues; and better educational opportunities (Gale 1972:4–5). Writers on other urban environments had confirmed the 'dual role of the city in both inducing change, and at the same time encouraging the continuance of some cultural features' (Gale 1972:255). Although Aborigines were making some adaptations as they found new opportunities in Adelaide, 'the new environment encourages the persistence of certain patterns of kinship behaviour' (Gale 1972:255).

In a later study Gale and her co-researcher Joy Wundersitz identified the following demographic features relating to this influx of Aborigines to Adelaide: the very youthful character of this population; the relatively low numbers of males; a ‘floating’ population of ‘homeless’ men who were loosely attached to Aboriginal homes; the northern section of South Australia contributed very little to this population (most came from Point Pearce and Point McLeay); Aboriginal houses were more crowded than others; a series of complex forces were operating to encourage spatial proximity on the one hand and dispersal on the other; the main concentrations of Aboriginal housing were in the Port Adelaide and Elizabeth/Salisbury areas (Gale and Wundersitz 1982:19, 26, 27, 43, 64, 75).

Gale and Wundersitz noted that in the early years of this migration there were employment opportunities in Adelaide, even for unskilled workers, but this declined in the 1970s. This decline affected males more severely and led to an increase in welfare dependency (Gale and Wundersitz 1982:106, 111). It is salutary, in the light of recent focus on problems arising in contemporary Aboriginal communities due to ‘social welfarism’, to read the final sentence of their 1982 publication: ‘The ultimate social cost of ever-increasing dependency upon welfare should not be underestimated’ (Gale and Wundersitz 1982:182).

Anangu in Adelaide

As Gale and Wundersitz noted, in the earlier period Anangu contacts with Adelaide were very limited. A few children of mixed European/Anangu parentage were brought to the Colebrook Home in Quorn in the 1930s, and later to Adelaide. They were separated from their Anangu heritage. Some have moved back to the Anangu lands in recent decades. During the 1950s and 1960s a few individuals spent short periods of time in Adelaide for medical treatment for polio, tuberculosis and serious injuries. They were accommodated in private homes or medical hostels. In 1980 the Department of Education commenced a program under which rotating groups of eight children from Anangu schools spent four weeks in Adelaide, attending Ingle Farm High School. They were accommodated at Wiltja Hostel.³ Over the following years this has developed into the Wiltja Program in which students spend the whole year in a larger hostel and attend a Wiltja enclave at Woodville High School for several years of secondary education.⁴

From the late 1970s a small number of Anangu came to Adelaide or nearby areas after forming relationships with non-Anangu partners. In the early 1980s a woman from Ernabella, concerned about the increasing social problems in the Anangu lands, moved to Adelaide with her son and two daughters in the hope that they would access better educational opportunities. Although she was one of the first to be diagnosed with diabetes in the lands, her primary motivation was this concern. A man from Amata brought his family to Adelaide because of fears of recriminations following a

motor accident fatality. During this period there was a trickle of such movement, with most of these people later returning to their communities. Having lived in the Anangu lands for more than two decades, my family moved to Adelaide at the end of 1980. My wife, who as a nursing sister at Ernabella from 1958 to 1963 had worked closely with the woman who had brought her family to Adelaide, was in 1981–82 the matron of Wiltja Hostel where we resided. We thus had continuing contact with Anangu. As more people came to Adelaide for medical or legal matters, I was asked to interpret in the health and legal sectors. As a result of the social conditions referred to earlier, this demand increased to 220 interpreting assignments in 2007.

While these earlier movements were of a temporary nature, during the 1990s and early years of this century they have increased in numbers and have tended to lead to more permanent residence in Adelaide. The Anangu whom I come across in Adelaide can be classified under four categories. First, there are those living in households in which at least one of the residents is living in Adelaide on a long-term basis. Second, an increasing number of people live in supported or supervised accommodation, either because of health problems or because they are under some form of legal restraint. Third, there is a small floating population of itinerants who move between their home communities, regional towns, such as Port Augusta, and Adelaide. Fourth, there are a few individuals who tend to have little contact with other Anangu, having formed relationships and taken up residence with non-Aboriginal people or non-Anangu Aborigines in Adelaide. My main focus in this chapter is on the major group of householders, although reference is made to others as their presence impacts on the first group. For example, members of this group, when interviewed, frequently identified the itinerants as a major cause of problems they encounter as they seek to adapt to life in an urban environment.

In the course of this research I have identified 26 Anangu households in Adelaide. The total population recorded for these households is 139, comprising 89 adults and 50 children. This number fluctuates widely as family members and other visitors move between home communities and Adelaide. The gender of households was recorded as follows: female, 16; male, three; joint male/female, seven. The primary reason given by households for being in Adelaide was identified as follows: a resident required dialysis, seven; other health problems, seven; social issues, ten; family relationship problems, two. In addition to those living in these households, another nine people, including eight adults and one child, were recorded as living in hostels and institutions for health and legal reasons.

Although the total of 148 people is a relatively small number in an urban situation, two factors must be recognised. First, there are indications that the number will increase considerably in the next few years. At a meeting held in July 2009, it was reported that an additional 15 people could move to Adelaide in the near future for renal dialysis. In the past Alice Springs has been the nearest medical base for Anangu living in the north-west of South Australia, and several people have commenced

dialysis treatment there. In September 2009 the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families advised that 16 people from South Australia's remote Aboriginal communities were on dialysis in Alice Springs (Department of Health and Families 2009). However, because of the demands on dialysis services in Central Australia, the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families has introduced a new policy that 'no new clients from outside the Northern Territory are able to access the Territory's renal dialysis treatment centres' (Huntington 2009). This will force more Anangu families to move to Adelaide for this treatment.

Second, while my research is confined to Anangu people from the far north-west of South Australia, there are migrations of other remote Aboriginal groups to Adelaide. There are a significant number of Warlpiri people from the Northern Territory who have been attracted to Adelaide for similar reasons as the Anangu. Others are from the far west coast region of South Australia. They include some southern Anangu who had moved south from their traditional lands in the 1930s to live at Ooldea Mission and then were moved further south to Yalata Mission in 1952 because of the British atomic testing at Maralinga. Thus the Anangu presence in Adelaide should be seen as part of a wider migration of Aboriginal people from remote areas.

Issues and problems related to this migration

In recent years several meetings have been held and reports written as government and other agencies have become aware of problems confronting Anangu in Adelaide. For example, on 20 March 2007 representatives of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide, Aboriginal Housing Services and SA Health met with several Anangu at the Parks Community Centre, with Mrs Mona Tur interpreting. Those present identified 29 issues that required attention. At another meeting, sponsored by Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide, on 2 March 2009 several Anangu met with representatives from several government, Aboriginal and church agencies. Background information provided by Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide for this meeting listed the following 15 issues, which were similar to those identified at the previous meeting:

1. Overcrowding.
2. Extended families creating disturbance and substance abuse.
3. Family violence.
4. Very limited living skills.
5. This often leads to ongoing property damage, increasing their Housing SA debt and neighbourhood complaints.
6. Parenting.

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7. Non school attendance. Anangu young people are being enrolled under the federal government's National Action Plan for Indigenous education to enable transport and regular school attendance.
8. Behaviour of children leading to poor outcomes.
9. Going back to the lands for funerals and business and leaving homes vacant for long periods of time.
10. Centrelink issues.
11. Issues with gambling.
12. There is the belief or misunderstanding from Anangu families that they can obtain housing easily.
13. There is currently no tracking system in place. We do not know who is coming down and where from and no consultation process between service providers and Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Inc.
14. Chronic health, hospital admissions, missing hospital and clinic appointments, follow-up at home, medication.
15. Poor dietary intake.

On 24 July 2009 representatives of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, Housing SA, Families SA and the state government's Social Inclusion Unit met in the office of the Minister for Housing. The same issues were discussed.

A report funded by the Department of Family and Community Services SA on housing for traditional Aboriginal people living in Adelaide was published in November 2003 (Walker and Ireland 2003). The report listed several recommendations. There appears to have been little action undertaken to implement these recommendations. A research report on housing needs for Indigenous South Australians, funded by the same department, was published in July 2006 and noted that Anangu 'are being increasingly attracted to Adelaide' (Roberts et al. 2006:124). Interviews with Anangu revealed that they saw Adelaide as a safer place than their home communities and as providing better access to a range of services they required (Roberts et al. 2006:124-5). The issues raised in these meetings and reports are similar to those identified by Gale in her studies of the earlier period of Aboriginal movement to Adelaide. In relation to some of these issues there is a marked correspondence between both movements. In others there are significant differences.

Problems related to medical treatment as identified by Gale in the earlier movement are again a major factor in the relocation of Anangu to Adelaide. While access to renal dialysis is the main health reason, others who have been interviewed have identified heart and respiratory problems and the need for care resulting from motor vehicle accidents. A recent arrival has indicated her child's failure to thrive as the reason for her moving to Adelaide. Once an individual settles in Adelaide, kinship ties attract other family members to join him or her, another factor noted by Gale. These include spouses, parents, sons and daughters, nieces and nephews,

and grandchildren. This often leads to another of the factors referred to by Gale, that of overcrowding in the available houses. In recent surveys, two of the houses each had 11 residents. These numbers are at times swelled by visitors from home communities.

The surveys also indicate that new arrivals for health treatment are accommodated with families already in Adelaide while awaiting allocation of their own housing. Recent plotting of Anangu residences in Adelaide indicates that most of them are in north-western and northern suburbs where cheaper housing is available. The same applied when Gale reported that the main concentrations of Aboriginal housing were in the Port Adelaide and Elizabeth/Salisbury areas. Gale noted the presence in Adelaide of several 'homeless' Aborigines who from time to time attached themselves to Aboriginal households. One of the central problems raised by Anangu is the disturbances caused by itinerants who seek refuge in their homes. As they are often affected by alcohol or drugs, their presence leads to abuse, fighting and noise and subsequent protests by neighbours. I have at times interpreted at meetings where these issues have been discussed with residents. In one instance in the Port Adelaide area, I translated some housing rules drawn up in consultation with Anangu. There were reports that these were effective. Whereas the troublemakers reacted negatively to their kin laying down rules for them, they took some notice when residents pointed to the rules attached to the wall of the house.

Two other factors identified by Gale in the earlier movement were its youthful character and the low number of males. The relevant figures for the current Anangu situation are as follows: adults, 89; children, 50; adult males, 35; adult females, 54.

Gale noted that in the post-war movement from settlements nearer to Adelaide, employment opportunities were a motivating factor. This has not been so in relation to Anangu. The majority either have medical conditions that prevent them from engaging in regular employment or lack the skills required for work opportunities in Adelaide. The exceptions to this are a very small number of women who have obtained employment in education services where they have been able to use their language in translation and the production of literature. However, a significant development has been the increasing involvement of several Anangu in the production of art. Further reference to this is made later in this chapter.

Gale identified the seeking of better educational opportunities as a factor in motivating some of the Aboriginal people involved in the earlier movement. Although it was an expressed motivation by one Pitjantjatjara woman in the 1980s, it does not appear to be a reason why children are brought to Adelaide now, apart from those attending the Wiltja school program. In fact, the irregular attendance of Anangu children at school in Adelaide is one of the troubling factors in the current situation. It partly reflects the decline in school attendance rates in home communities in recent decades and a perceived lack of relevance of schooling to what the children see as their future prospects. This is an issue that requires urgent attention.

Other problems raised in the meetings and reports referred to above are the apparent limited home management and budgeting skills of those moving to Adelaide, diet (with the availability of junk foods), gambling (with the close proximity of poker machines), dealing with Centrelink and work agencies, and difficulties in returning to home communities for funerals and other cultural responsibilities. In recent weeks I have interpreted for Anangu in the legal system. Some have been charged with driving offences; for example, driving without a licence or driving an unregistered vehicle. Others are charged with assault or breach of bail. In some cases fines mount up and become a considerable drain on social security income. Anangu women are at times vulnerable in the legal system when, for example, they enter into abusive relationships with non-Anangu men. When the woman reacts in a traditional manner, she may be charged with assault or property damage.

The problems therefore that confront Anangu living in Adelaide are many and varied. Their problems reflect the serious health, education and social crises of their home communities. They are probably less prepared to adapt to the urban environment than an earlier generation before 'social welfarism' undermined motivation to work, and when there was better health, little or no involvement with alcohol and drugs, and a tradition of regular school attendance. In contrast to many of the Aboriginal people who moved to Adelaide a half-century ago to seek a better lifestyle with employment and educational opportunities, the Anangu now coming to Adelaide are in general a people suffering from a range of chronic health and social disabilities. In my interaction with them I am amazed at the resilience some of them show under these conditions.

What assistance is provided for Anangu in Adelaide?

Government and other agencies are seeking to provide help to Anangu in Adelaide. They include units related to government health, housing and education departments, Aboriginal organisations such as the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, and church bodies such as Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide. Most of these units are struggling to cope with demands and to find answers to the problems. At this early stage of my research I will focus on two agencies that seem to be making effective contributions.

The first of these is the Uniting Church's Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. The congress's church facilities at North Salisbury offer one focal point where Anangu gather for worship and lunch on Sundays and fellowship and lunch on Wednesdays. The Reverend Dean Whittaker has a small team of staff and volunteers who provide a range of transport, counselling and other services. The gatherings at the church provide a place where problems can be discussed and from which issues can be taken up with appropriate government or other agencies. Dean Whittaker, who has had experience in Arnhem Land, in his pastoral role visits Anangu in their homes and hospitals when they are facing crises and supports them during court appearances.

The second of these agencies is a privately run business, Better World Arts, situated in Commercial Road, Port Adelaide. Opened in 1992 to provide a commercial outlet for traditional craft from overseas, Better World Arts entered into an agreement with Kaltjiti Arts Centre at Fregon in the Anangu lands under which designs created by Kaltjiti artists were crafted into rugs by Kashmirian craftspeople. This later expanded to Kaltjiti designs being incorporated into silverware and wooden artefacts by Incas in Peru. Some of the Anangu artists who now live in Adelaide brought paintings to Better World Arts. Previously they had at times sold them cheaply in their neighbourhoods. The relationship between Better World Arts and these artists has developed over the years and there is now a space where the artists can work, and where canvasses, paints and other materials are provided. Recently, an arrangement was made with Meals on Wheels, whereby lunches are delivered to the site, thus overcoming to some degree the dietary problems. To assist with other social problems and to ensure the active participation of Anangu in running their own affairs, the Ngura Wiru Winki community centre based at Better World Arts has been incorporated.

Conclusion

The above is a preliminary discussion of some of the issues related to the movement of Anangu people to Adelaide. I have attempted to situate this discussion into a wider perspective of the history of Aboriginal people in the Anangu lands. At present there is intense focus on the situation in remote Aboriginal communities in the writings of Noel Pearson, Peter Sutton, Helen Hughes and others. The Northern Territory intervention measures have stirred fierce debate. As John Taylor noted in a recent paper in *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, all of this ‘has stimulated interest in the issue of rural-urban migration’ (Taylor 2009:4). While, as Taylor has confirmed, such migration is not reducing population levels in remote communities, there are signs that the migration will continue and the now small pockets of Anangu and other populations in Adelaide and other urban centres will grow. There is thus need for urgent research, planning and action to alleviate the problems outlined above.

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Notes

1. Throughout this chapter I refer to the people under discussion as Anangu. This term, meaning person, is used increasingly as an identifier for Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people and speakers of other neighbouring dialects belonging to the Western Desert language and cultural bloc.
2. This phrase, which I have used in other writings, plays on the phrase popularised by the historian Geoffrey Blainey, 'The tyranny of distance'.
3. Wiltja is the Pitjantjatjara term for shade, shadow, bush shelter.
4. Noel Pearson's reflections and comments on the situation in his own region of Cape York in his recent work *Up from the Mission* have resonated with my experience of the contemporary scene in Anangu communities (Pearson 2009:139–42, 155, 200, 234).

Chapter 7

A research journey documenting Tl'azt'en Nation's ancestral history of Yeko

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Abstract: *Collaborative research is an effective research method for meeting community needs. This chapter examines the experiences and challenges around developing a community-based documented history that recorded Tl'azt'en Nation's settlement at Cunningham Lake (Yeko) in British Columbia, Canada. This research was completed under the guidance of the elders as part of their language and culture program to preserve their knowledge and pass it on to the younger generations. The documented information about the land and settlement will be used further for educational purposes in the local school. It will also hopefully assist with the restoration and protection of this important traditional site.*

We Indians, we live by unwritten law, we don't carry around a whole bunch of books — we carry it in our heads for survival. (Yekooche elder Alfred Joseph, pers. comm., 5 June 2008)

Prologue (by Ross Hoffman)

Conducting research within an indigenous nation is an endeavour that comes with its own unique set of cultural, ethical, historical and political contexts. This is certainly true today within the Canadian province of British Columbia, where the vast majority of land was never ceded to the Crown and the question of ownership continues to be debated within judicial processes and treaty negotiations. It can become even more complex when a researcher is asked to document the history of a traditional village site. When the researcher is from outside the community and especially if he or she is not an aboriginal person, it is vital that a respectful, trusting, learning relationship is established between the researcher and the members of the community. As a graduate

student in my research methodology course, Chris Gall studied the literature and listened to the words of the other students in his cohort, all of whom are Aboriginal. As we approached the end of the course, which coincided with Chris' completion of the program's course requirements, he was worried by the fact that he did not have a research topic for his thesis. Then this research opportunity presented itself. Initially, Chris was not sure if he should explore this potential offer that was being presented to him. When asked, my advice to him was that it would be a mistake for him to take it simply because it was being offered, he didn't have a research topic and it came with full financial support. I told him that if it 'felt right' for him, then go and meet with the elders who wanted this work done; that way he would know for sure, one way or another, if this was the work he truly wanted to do.

As you will read in the following pages, it is clear that this research relationship was meant to be. As Chris' thesis supervisor, I have had the pleasure of witnessing the unfolding of his lived experience of conducting indigenous research, in all its intricacies. More importantly, I have witnessed something that I have had the gift of knowing myself, the beauty of the transformation that can take place when we, as researchers, as learners, open ourselves to the teachings of elders.

Introduction

The 4x4 bumped and banged as we slowly made our way down the deactivated forest road. This was my second time travelling to this place; the first trip, a week earlier, was much muddier, although now the mosquitoes were far worse. I sprayed myself down with repellent and then offered some to my companions. My thoughts quickly drifted to those living here long ago...how could they have survived without bug spray? The first trip had brought me only to the edge of this new landscape; new only in terms of my experience, as I would soon learn this place was truly ancient. That first trip we explored the periphery, walking briefly through a meadow and along the adjacent lake shore. Thinking back on the idea of periphery as I write this, I feel as though this whole project has brought me to the edge of a way of knowing and being strangely at odds with my own, while at the same time not. This second trip was deeper, both in terms of our travel within the territory, as well as for me personally. I could barely hold back my excitement as we neared the end of the road. Growing up mostly in the city, this road had provided my first 'offroading' experience, and I liked it. The condition of the road added to the sense I felt of exploring; not in any true sense, as people from the community still fish and hunt here regularly, but I felt as though I was travelling into the great unknown. With each bump, and bang, I was learning more of their territory.

We boarded Ralph's aluminium boat and were soon cruising down the lake. As I scanned the wilderness around me, my senses heightened as I took in my surroundings: new sights, smells and even tastes as we hit a wave, sending a splash of cool water into my partially open mouth. I was experiencing the place I had heard and read so much

about...Yeko. I closed my eyes for a moment and was overwhelmed by a sense of wonder tied to this place and its importance, not just now but throughout history.

The research project

We have to talk about what we know...the way we know it. (Alfred Joseph, pers. comm., 5 June 2008)

These words echo the desire of Tl'azt'en Nation to record the knowledge of its elders. Because of this desire, I was given the incredible opportunity to participate in a community-based oral history project under the Tl'azt'en Nation/University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) Community–University Research Alliance. This study was community driven and has involved the collection of knowledge that pertains to Yekooche Nation's and Tl'azt'en Nation's ancestral home of Yeko (Cunningham Lake) in present-day central British Columbia, Canada. The information collected includes oral history related to life and settlement around Yeko and specifically the village site of Yekoozdli.

Oral history, one of the most ancient and venerated staples of human culture, has all but disappeared in Western societies, supplanted by ink and paper and an ideal that the written word is authoritative. Julie Cruikshank (1992:33–4) described the capacity of the oral tradition¹ when she wrote:

Aboriginal oral tradition differs from western science and history, but both are organized systems of knowledge that take many years to learn. Oral tradition seems to present one way to challenge hegemonic history. It survives not by being frozen on the printed page but by repeated retellings. Each narrative contains more than one message. The listener is part of the storytelling event too, and a good listener is expected to bring different life experiences to the story each time he or she hears it and to learn different things from it at each hearing. Rather than trying to spell out everything one needs to know, it compels the listener to think about ordinary experience in new ways.

I have tried to listen well and have learned a great deal as a result. I have learned about life, respect, and the history and traditions of the Dakelh people, for which I am truly grateful.

While oral history is facing challenges in being maintained in indigenous communities, there has been a renewed push for preservation alongside the legitimisation of this knowledge form within the Canadian legal system. In the 1997 *Delgamuukw* decision it was stated that the oral histories of Aboriginal peoples must be given equal consideration and weight to other forms of evidence (*Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* [1998] 1 C.N.L.R. 14). Chief Justice Lamer maintained that it was

necessary to ‘adapt the laws of evidence so that the Aboriginal perspective on their practices, customs and traditions and on their relationship with the land, are given due weight by the courts’ (*Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* [1997] in Calliou 2004:75).

Locating myself

I do not consider myself an expert on anything. As someone coming into the community doing research for my Master’s degree, I saw myself as a tool for the community to use. The elders have been very gracious with a *nado* (Dakelh term for white man) who knows very little. In this sense I consider myself very much a student, both of the university and the community in which I conducted this research. It is important for me to provide a cultural inventory of myself, in the spirit of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (Said 1978:25): I am a non-indigenous outsider. My belief system is strongly influenced by the Christian tradition in which I was raised. My father is of Germanic descent, and his family comes from the rural inter-lake district of Manitoba. They were immigrant farmers. My mother is Danish and English. I was raised in the urban centre of Vancouver and come from a middle-class background. I am also an academic in that I have earned a degree in history, and conducted this research, which became my Master’s thesis in First Nations studies.

In *No Man Is an Island*, Thomas Merton (2005:198) wrote, ‘We make ourselves real by telling the truth’; he goes on to say, ‘Man can hardly forget that he needs to know the truth, for the instinct to know is too strong in us to be destroyed’. The search for truth is what led me to First Nations studies as a discipline. Where history focuses on the writings and records of the coloniser, First Nations studies seeks to present research from an aboriginal perspective. In this research I tried to ‘tell the truth’ by presenting Tl’azt’en’s perspective as much as possible and by listening to the elders whose voices I recorded.

Tl’azt’en Nation community profile

Tl’azt’en Nation is located in North Central British Columbia, approximately 65 kilometres north of Fort St James. Translated, the word *Tl’azt’en* means ‘people by the edge of the bay’ (Tl’azt’en Nation 2006). The Tl’azt’enne self-identify as Dakelhenne, but are also known as ‘Carrier’. The Dakelh language is the traditional language of Tl’azt’en Nation and is a part of the Athapaskan language family (Tl’azt’en Nation 2006). The term *Carrier* is taken from the French word *porteur*, which in turn is a translation from the neighbouring Sekanais term *Aghelh Ne*, which means ‘ones who pack’. Since time immemorial, the Tl’azt’enne have been located in central British Columbia. Tl’azt’en Nation is situated just north of present-day Fort St James in the forested uplands at the confluence of the Nechako Plateau and the Omenica Mountains. Their traditional territory is centred on Stuart (Nakal bun) and Trembleur Lakes. Tl’azt’en’s roughly 652 000 hectares of traditional territory has sustained and provided for countless generations; their means of food, clothing and

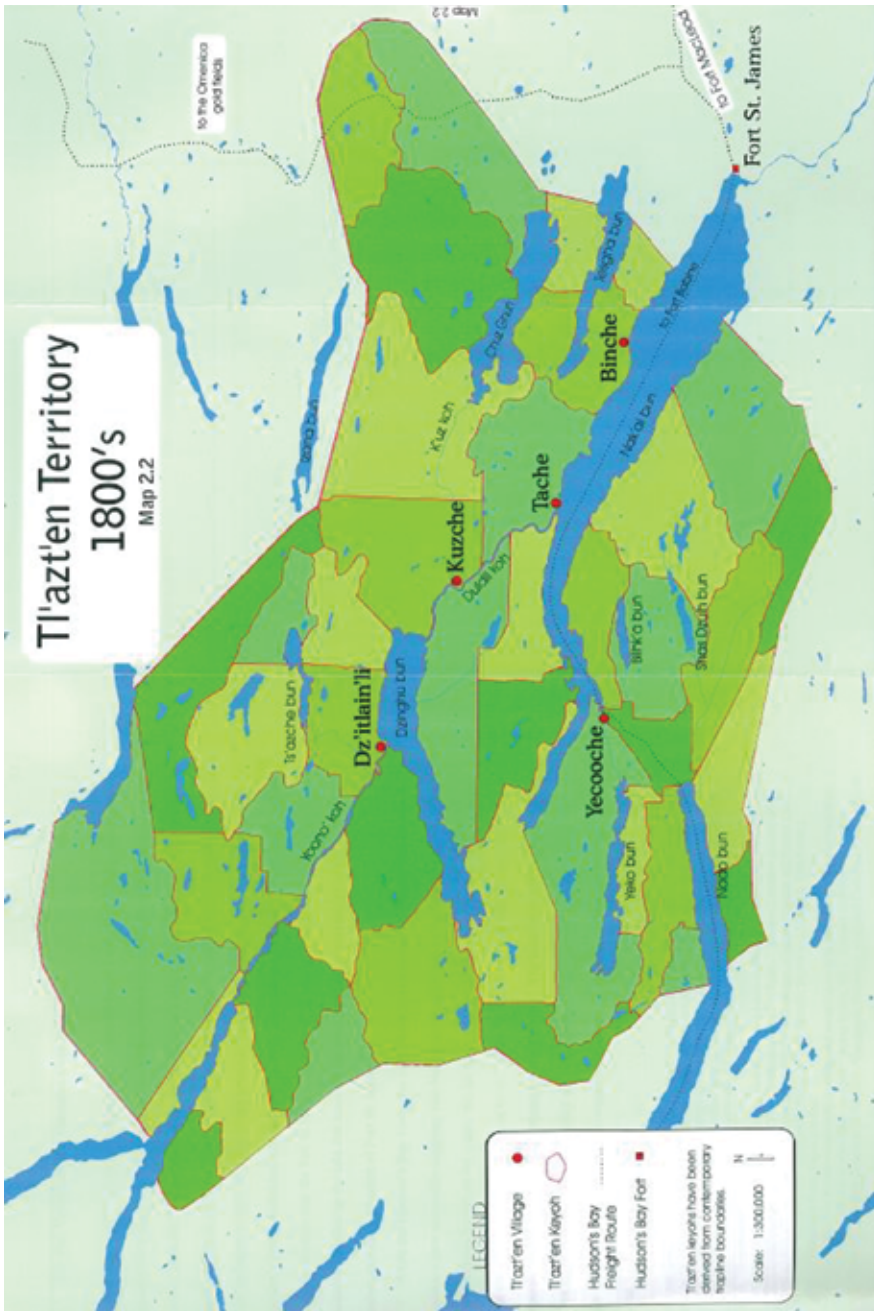


Figure 1: Tl'azt'en Nation traditional territory, North Central British Columbia. Note: Yecooche is no longer a Tl'azt'en village (Morris 1999)

shelter were found all around them. Historical events, such as the establishment of Fort St James as a trading post in 1806, had a fundamental influence on Tl'azt'en Nation and the traditional way of life (Moran 1994). Fort St James brought many profound changes to Tl'azt'en Nation, from the introduction of tea and sugar into the Tl'azt'en diet to the monthly publication known as 'The Paper that Relates', or *Test'les nauhwelnek*, by Father Morice in 1891 (Johnnie and O'Hara 1992; Moran 1994). The fur trade, over time, dramatically changed the practice of hunting from a primary source of subsistence to a means of acquiring trade goods in exchange for furs (Hall 1992:70).

Over the past 50 years, Tl'azt'en Nation has seen many significant changes. Some of these developments include the installation of electricity and the water and sewage system. In the 1960s the government provided funding for a road from Fort St James to Tache (Moran 1994). The direct access that this road offered was the first of its kind on Tl'azt'en territory; as Justa Monk explains, 'when the road was built everything changed' (Moran 1994:20). Although accessibility was seen as a great benefit to Tl'azt'en Nation, it came at a cost. Justa Monk recounts the wonderful sense of community before the existence of the road and how during the winter people would travel between Tache and Fort St James in large groups of ten or more teams of horses. In the summer travel was by boat and people stopped to have tea and visit the various communities on their way into Fort St James (Moran 1994:18–20).

Today Tl'azt'en Nation has a total population of approximately 1300 people, with 500 members living off-reserve (Tl'azt'en Nation 2006). Tl'azt'en Nation now comprises four villages identified as Tache (Tachie), Binche (Pinchi), Dzit'ainli (Middle River) and K'uzche (Grand Rapids) (Moran 1994). The largest village, Tache, is located on the shores of Stuart Lake and is where Tl'azt'en Nation's elementary school, health centre and administrative offices are located. The Tl'azt'en Natural Resource/Treaty Office is the administrative department that oversees issues related to resource management. Traditionally, natural resources were managed solely through local governance systems such as *bahlats* (potlatch), *keyohs* (family territories) and the clan system (Brown 2002; Hudson 1983; Morris and Fondahl 2002).

Tl'azt'en Nation traditional governance uses a hereditary clan system. Clan membership was matrilineal and marriage within a clan was forbidden (Hall 1992). Through the clan system the land was divided into *keyohs*, in which families had access to a variety of resources and were set up as stewards of their territory. The family head controlled the hunting, fishing and gathering on the *keyoh* (Carrier Sekani Tribal Council 1998). Justa Monk's statement, 'every family had its territory — its reef or sand bar for fishing, its area for hunting and trapping, its meadow for hay' (Moran 1994:33), reaffirms how effective the traditional management systems were in sustaining the Tl'azt'enne.

The territory and people of Tl'azt'en Nation have been significantly affected by many industrial developments, including the establishment of a mercury mine on

Pinchi Lake in the 1940s, the construction of a railroad line by the Pacific Great Eastern Railway Company in the 1970s, and the development of the forestry industry (Morris and Fondahl 2002). Despite the broad-scale changes that these developments have brought, Tl'azt'en Nation is striving to maintain its cultural identity. The Tl'azt'en Elders Society is a registered non-profit society that brings elders and community members together to foster the transmission of language and culture. Their mission is to 'provide leadership by demonstrating traditional ways of doing things. Tl'azt'en Elders Society is committed to working towards unity, respect and love for our people, land and animals through stories, gatherings and traditional teachings. We are the knowledge holders and mentors to set footprints for many generations' (unpublished community document n.d.). Tl'azt'en elders are working hard to revitalise the Dakelh language and culture among the youth in order to promote healing and to foster a larger sense of community. At a Yekooche information session on 5 June 2008, which I conducted as part of my research, Tl'azt'en elder Helen Johnnie explained, 'All this we're trying to get the language back and the culture for the students, whose growing up after us we're gone, nobody is going to talk to them and nobody is going to teach them what to do. What we been doing long ago.'

Yekooche community profile

The Yekoochet'en (people of Yekooche) have lived in the Stuart Lake area for thousands of years in a rich area encompassing the Skeena and Fraser watersheds. The Yekoochet'en, also known as the Portage Band, shared their resources and knowledge, allowing the Hudson's Bay Company to establish a lucrative fishery on Yeko (Cunningham Lake) and to freight goods between Stuart and Babine Lakes. The Yekoozdli village site at the mouth of the creek was the original settlement of the Portage Band. It was the site of a fish weir and a productive whitefish fishery. The Yekoochet'en gradually settled at their current location at the head of Stuart Lake in the 1880s. Many continued to maintain cabins and smokehouses at Yeko.

After contact the Yekoochet'en saw their rights and way of life consistently eroded as trappers, prospectors and resource companies were given access to their traditional lands. During this time many children were removed from the village at Portage and sent to residential schools, where they were prevented from using their own language or practising their cultural beliefs. In 1959, for the purposes of settling reserve land disputes, the federal government amalgamated the communities of Tache, Pinche, Yekooche and Dzitlanli into one large band called the Stuart-Trembleur Lakes Band. In 1987 the Stuart-Trembleur Lakes Band changed its name to the Tl'azt'en Nation. In 1994 the Yekooche Band separated from Tl'azt'en Nation to form a distinct band known as the Yekooche First Nation (Yekooche First Nation n.d.a). After the communities split, many elders remained in Tache although originally from Yekooche. Tache was never a permanent settlement historically; it was used as a rest stop more or less during travel and was a seasonal fish camp. This changed slowly as social and

cultural impacts encouraged the Dakelh people to settle in permanent locales. Tache grew rapidly as people were encouraged to settle closer for the purpose of sending their children to residential school, first in Fort St James and then to Lejac, located outside of Fort Fraser. Today Yekooche has a population of 227 members, with 120 people living in the community (Yekooche First Nation n.d.b).

Research purpose and objectives

This research has developed a community-based documented history that records Tl'azt'en Nation's settlement at Yeko (Cunningham Lake). This information was obtained by taking elders out on the land to describe the significance of the place and through one-on-one interviews. Information was obtained only with permission of elders. In order to preserve this area and the knowledge pertaining to these sites, it was important to document the stories and experiences of the elders. The documented information about the land and settlement will be used further for educational purposes and hopefully for the restoration and protection of these important areas.

Through my writing I hope to be able to take the reader on a journey through the territory and present the power that comes from stories and lessons when the elders go out on the land. The Tl'azt'enne are also interested in using this research to build excitement among the youth, and perhaps to begin to take them out to the sites with elders, where they can be taught the stories. My goal was to produce an excellent piece of indigenous research, centred around a First Nations perspective and worldview. As a non-indigenous outsider, I try my best to be as open as possible to understanding new perspectives and ways of knowing. In this way I aspired to carry out my research in ways that were respectful to the community, and to each individual I came into contact with. I was focused on building relationships and recognised that how I brought myself to the community would dictate how they in turn would respond to me.

The central objective of this research was to develop a community-based documented history of Yeko. This was accomplished by partnering with members of both Tl'azt'en Nation and Yekooche Nation to record the oral stories that they were willing to share. I employed qualitative methods, such as an elder retreat, focus groups and open-ended conversational interviews, as well as archival and published sources, to document their history. In contrast to previous written historical accounts of indigenous people, I have strived in my research to focus on the Tl'azt'en perspective and to draw knowledge from the community using archival research and published sources to complement the oral testimony. As Yekooche elder Alfred Joseph explained at the Yekooche information session on 5 June 2008, 'I'm 69 years old, many of us elders we won't last very much longer and we're all worried of how to convey this... put it in book so that it can be taught in school, even in university'. In an interview I conducted with Tl'azt'en elder Willie Mattess on 26 January 2009, he stated:

We got to make at least one book the way people gonna understand it. We make one book, we're on the way...I want to see these young people control everything. That's what I want to see, it's not my future, it's those people like you — your future. Right now there is nowhere to turn to, nothing.

The results of this research will be made available to community members, as well as the community school, in order to educate Tl'azt'en youth about their past. Additionally, almost all facets of this research have focused on capacity building with members of Tl'azt'en Nation.

Locating the research

I have been greatly assisted by the Tl'azt'en Nation/UNBC Community–University Research Alliance (CURA) project protocols, which were invaluable in helping me carry out this research in a respectful way. The Tl'azt'en Nation guidelines for research within their territory, developed before the CURA project (1997), were also valuable, and I had several community members working alongside me during the research. I have framed my project as an oral history, and, as indigenous research, a First Nations perspective is presented through the oral stories. These are complemented using archival research and an academic perspective. This is participatory research in that the community was the driving force behind the project, and approached me about doing the research. Community members have been involved from the beginning to the end. They were directing the research and the results are theirs.

This project involved producing a written history for Tl'azt'en Nation to be used as an educational tool to teach the community about its past. Early settlement sites in the area have been given very little critical attention to date. In fact, this project is one of the first to document the location of such sites and to record the stories elders share around these places. The project focuses on the area around Yeko, which is where most of the Tl'azt'enne were settled before the arrival of the fur trade.

CURA funding originates from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The Tl'azt'en Nation/UNBC CURA project has been a six-year partnership between Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC. The goals of the partnership are as follows:

The purpose of the Tl'azt'en Nation-UNBC CURA project is to enhance the capacity of Tl'azt'en Nation to effectively engage in culturally and ecologically sustainable natural resource management, and to enhance the capacity of UNBC researchers and their students to effectively contribute to First Nation community needs through collaborative research. (Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC CURA n.d.a)

Exploring urban identities and histories

The equal partnership benefits both Tl'azt'en and UNBC. The objectives of the partnership provide an excellent means of fostering mutually beneficial relationships and demonstrate what can be done in relation to some of the issues university programs face in terms of incorporating indigenous knowledge into the academy. The objectives are:

- To strengthen the cultural development of the Tl'azt'en community by capturing resources and expertise to promote the transfer of TEK [Traditional Ecological Knowledge] from older to younger generations
- To enhance the social and economic potential of the Tl'azt'en community by providing the expertise to facilitate the development of alternative, culturally appropriate environmental/science curricula for Tl'azt'en youth; and by providing a map to ecotourism development, informed by robust research and Tl'azt'en values
- To provide graduate training experience with First Nations partners that will foster knowledge of cross-cultural research requirements and experience in community-relevant research
- To provide training and enhance research capacity among Tl'azt'enne in areas important to integrated natural resource management
- To improve First Nations content across the curricula of UNBC's academic programs
- To ensure research results are available to regional, national and international audiences; and
- To enhance the potential of UNBC and Tl'azt'en Nation to develop and strengthen their partnerships. (Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC CURA n.d.a)

The research objectives of the CURA project further indigenous research by helping researchers carry out their work in a respectful manner.

The CURA project has several different knowledge streams. This research fits within the Tl'azt'en Ecological Knowledge Stream, which has been researching methods of recording traditional knowledge. The individuals working in this stream have been 'reviewing information, and providing recommendations for developing these methods further' (Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC CURA n.d.a). The hope is that this will allow Tl'azt'en Nation to record and perpetuate their TEK and train community members to continue this work on their own. This project will serve to further Tl'azt'en's goals in 'developing curriculum material to enhance educational objectives' (Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC CURA n.d.a). This has also been an important part of my research, as I am expected to give something back to the community for their use. The community product will be a written record that can be used in the schools. This document of their history will combine Tl'azt'en and Yekooche oral history with the written historical record. The specific goals of the TEK stream are 'to gather information on medicinal

uses of plants, traditional Tl'azt'en place names, and aboriginal perspectives on forest health. This information will enhance the knowledge of UNBC researchers, and provide valuable resources for Tl'azt'en Nation' (Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC CURA n.d.b). Researchers under this stream are expected to 'learn interview methods, and develop and practice interview protocols with TEK experts' (Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC CURA n.d.b).

Methodological approaches and perspectives

Community-based research

This is community-based research — I was approached by the community to carry out this project and community members have been involved throughout. As Graham Hingangoroa Smith (2000:210) suggests, 'Indigenous peoples must set the agenda for change themselves'. As a non-indigenous outsider I am very honoured to have been given this privilege and opportunity, and I come to it with a deep sense of responsibility. Shiu-Thorton (in Fondahl et al. 2009:2–3) describes community-based participatory research as:

A research approach that involves community members/partners in all phases of research. It seeks a collaborative approach that is equitable for all participants engaged in the research process, from the inception of the proposed research to the dissemination and publication of research findings. It is grounded in the conscious recognition that historically, and particularly within ethnic minority communities, research has been done on (in contrast to with) communities of color by predominantly white researchers.

The community requested an oral history project backed up by archival research, and eventually they hope to conduct an archaeological study of the area. The inspiration for this project came from several elders in the community who spoke extensively with Simon John, a community leader and the former Tl'azt'en Nation Language and Culture Coordinator. They wanted to locate and record their early dwelling sites and the oral stories associated with those places before the knowledge was completely lost. The main area of interest was Yeko, but only a handful of people are left who remember these places and the stories, and they are aging. The elders were feeling stretched by the CURA project and did not want more research and interviews conducted, but they were very excited by this project and pushed for it to take place.

The research plan initially involved a trip with the elders onto the land for about a week to record the places and the knowledge surrounding them. The community pushed for this to take place very quickly, and wanted the trip scheduled for mid-June

2008. They wanted to visit the sites before all the leaves were out, making things less visible. The week-long camp did not take place due to several deaths in the community.

As discussed earlier, context is very important. Harold Adams Innis, considered Canada's pre-eminent fur trade historian, believed that the context needed to be experienced as much as possible. Robin W Winks, in the foreword of *The Fur Trade in Canada*, wrote that Innis did not 'make the mistake, common in 1930 and increasingly common since, of thinking that history could be written exclusively from archives and libraries, from one's study, comfortable and essentially untravelled...he realized that he must see the country of which he wrote' (Innis 2001:xxix). Innis famously travelled in an 18-foot canvas-covered Hudson Bay canoe to the Mackenzie River basin (Innis 2001:xxix) to experience the fur trade.

During my research I made three trips to Yeko. The first trip was to assess the condition of roads and to discuss where to hold our camp. Our second trip, on 19 June, was preliminary reconnaissance during which we found plenty of physical evidence of past settlement, including cache pits, house pits and even grave markers. The third trip was a day camp with several elders and community members. There is something very deep and powerful about hearing the elders' stories out on the territory. I spent the day listening closely while sitting around a roaring fire enjoying moose stew and bannock, a traditional fried bread.

The research methods included four main phases: the initiation phase, the data collection phase, the data analysis phase, and the presentation or knowledge translation phase. The initiation phase occurred in the summer of 2008. I spent as much time as possible in the community in order to learn about their culture and to build relationships. I researched Tl'azt'en Nation archives, attended language and culture meetings and elders meetings, and assisted a CURA researcher at two community events. This allowed me to become more aware of the surroundings and, more importantly, allowed the community to become comfortable with me. On 26 June 2008, at a community meeting to which all interested community members were invited and encouraged to attend, the objectives, methods, relevance and outcomes of the study, as well as benefits to the community, were discussed. There was time for the community members to give feedback and ask questions. This meeting was also used to determine if there were any other issues related to the study that the community felt needed to be addressed.

A support group of knowledgeable and respected community members was established to guide the research. These members aided in the identification of important stories and pieces of history. This information determined the timing of the rest of the project, as several elders were not well enough to be interviewed and needed to be interviewed in the community at a later date. During this initiation phase, community members were selected to act as experts and guides in the next phase of the project. Methods of compensation for their time and expertise were determined before the fieldwork began.²

The data collection phase began during the summer of 2008. The elders were taken out onto the land to describe the significance of various sites. Semi-structured interview techniques were used. Simon John and Beverly John (Tl'azt'en Nation Research Coordinator) helped develop the interview questions with the community and Simon was present during interviews to aid in the translation process. The information gathered in the field was documented using written, audio and video techniques, according to the wishes of the elders/experts. This material is stored in the Tl'azt'en Nation Treaty Office Archives. Archival research of written sources has also been used to supplement the oral history. This involves Department of Indian Affairs documents, Hudson's Bay Company archival material and the journals of early visitors to the region.

The research participants included elders of Yekooche Nation and Tl'azt'en Nation and were selected through peer nomination. Community leaders Beverly John and Simon John aided in this process. Each research participant:

- was a member of Yekooche Nation or Tl'azt'en Nation
- was knowledgeable: identified by peers as an 'expert' by having a deep knowledge of the research site
- had recognised authority: identified as an 'expert' by a minimum of two Tl'azt'en community members.

All participants involved in the project received an honorarium, as recommended by the community researcher or community research coordinator. It is practice to give honorariums and a small gift for being a part of CURA research. Throughout the research process, interview transcripts were returned to participants for verification and feedback. At the end of the project participants will verify the research and a community presentation for interested community members will take place. The community members will also be invited to the thesis defence. Materials will be made available on the CURA website (<http://cura.unbc.ca>) as per the individual consent forms.

During the data analysis phase, the information collected from the elders and from the written record was analysed in order to develop a rich historical narrative of the area around Yeko.

The nature of this research meant it involved a community and elders who needed to be shown the utmost regard for their ways of knowing and the stories they shared with me as an outsider. I began studying the Carrier language to show respect and deepen my own understanding. In addition to this respect, I will be giving back directly to the community in the form of a usable product. One way of achieving community validation was to have a community member, Simon John, on my thesis committee and I will complete a presentation of my thesis in the community. This will further serve to enable the community and elders to validate the work.

It was very exciting to see how this project developed and unfolded. Looking back, I feel as though I have been able to integrate both academic research and indigenous knowledge, and to develop a document that is useful to the community. Paul Thompson describes the essential qualities an interviewer must possess: ‘an interest and respect for people as individuals, and flexibility in response to them; an ability to show understanding and sympathy for their point of view; and, above all, a willingness to sit quietly and listen’ (Thompson 1978:165).

During the course of this work 11 elders were formally interviewed one-on-one. These interviews ranged from roughly one to two hours in length. Additionally, the Elders Camp was a group setting that included the participation of other knowledge holders from both communities.

Research challenges

Historical

Overall, this was a very positive experience. However, at the beginning I experienced first hand the lack of trust and cynicism that can greet an outsider when coming into a community. This is due to a long history fraught with exploitative research (Smith, LT 1999). My presence has been met with anger on more than one occasion. Harsh tones, angry stares and the word *nado* were clearly indicative of the fact that I was the topic being discussed in Dakelh. While glad that members are fervent in their desire to protect both their knowledge and community, what has impressed me the most is the speed in which attitudes change. After speaking from the heart about this research and my place as a non-aboriginal student in First Nations studies, people were much more friendly and welcoming. This increased tremendously as I got to know community members and spent time with them.

Political

It is important to recognise the political context in which this research is taking place. As is common in British Columbia, Tl’azt’en Nation and Yekooche Nation are involved in the British Columbia Treaty Process. My research project originally proposed including Yekooche and Tl’azt’en Nations. The goal was to foster understanding and have the two Nations work together. We held an information session in Yekooche on 5 June 2008. After some initial concerns our meeting seemed to end well. However, an email was soon sent out from the Yekooche Treaty Team saying that my research should cease. In 1994 Yekooche had broken away from Tl’azt’en Nation in order to enter into separate treaty negotiations. Although this project is not about land claims, it is about a traditional site, and therefore was initially perceived as a contentious issue within the treaty process. Though the Yekooche Nation chose not to officially participate in this research project, members were granted permission to participate

on an individual level if they chose. Two of the elders who supported this project live in the village of Yekooche.

This issue surrounding land has come up with each elder I have interviewed so far. The elders spoke of how Yekooche and Tl'azt'en are related. People from the village of Yekooche have lived in the Tl'azt'en village of Tache and vice versa. My preliminary genealogical research supports this. The issue, according to the elders, stems from the European names given to people at baptism. Some had their first and last names reversed or were given new names. The result is that many people in both Nations are unaware of who they are related to and where they come from. The people of Yekooche and Tl'azt'en are deeply related. Yet today many members of each Nation see themselves as separate because they do not understand the historical relationships as broadly as the elders.

Institutional

The main institutional challenge thus far has been the academic timeline. My research project has not progressed in the typical linear fashion. I was already engaged and conducting research before my thesis proposal was completed. The community was pushing for me to begin my work right away, so I completed my Ethics Board application in a matter of days. I then had to go back and fill in pieces of information; for example, my thesis proposal defence was in November 2008 rather than prior to the start of my research. Temporally, conducting research in an indigenous community can take longer, as in this case. The proposed time for a Master's degree is usually two years, but community research requires building relationships and trust, as Willie Mattess frankly put it: 'No, I don't think you want to know everything just right now, just because you're here' (Willie Mattess, pers. comm., 26 January 2009). Likewise, Alfred Joseph questioned me at the Yekooche information session on 5 June 2008; 'Why should I tell you something that is part of me if you do not believe what I am or who I am?' This supports Burgess' (1991:43) argument that access is 'negotiated and renegotiated throughout the research process'; it is 'based on sets of relationships between the researcher and the researched, established throughout a project'. It is also necessary to conduct a community verification of results. I have taken the long way around in completing this research because it is important to do things well. Many of the elders cautioned me on taking shortcuts and, while they were talking literally about my life, I think it applies to this as well: 'Don't try to go shortcut, walk around, right around, it don't matter if you think you got chance...if you go shortcut, that's your life it's gonna be that short' (Willie Mattess, pers. comm., 26 January 2009). Thankfully, I have come to this community at the tail end of the CURA project. This has given me the benefit of established protocols and familiarity with the research process, as well as developed relationships with elders and community members.

Geographical

Distance posed another challenge to research. Communication is hindered, and travel can be time consuming and tedious. Email, telephone and post were incredibly helpful at bridging that gap and staying in touch as much as possible. Having a research assistant working in Fort St James doing translation required the mailing of interview recordings and transcripts back and forth, which added a delay to the process.

Cultural

Cultural understanding and learning has been an important part of this project. One asks a lot of the community in collaborative work. There are huge labour, social and cultural costs for the community. I have come to appreciate that the needs of the community come before any schedule with the researcher. Once I had ethics approval, my research was delayed due to the ice on the lake breaking late. There were then several deaths in the community, during which time all work shut down and people came together in support of each other. Because of the late spring in the first year, berry picking season was later, which also delayed the start of my interviews. There were other times when meetings needed to be postponed. Elders also had the opportunity to respond to my interviews in Dakelh, which meant extra time was required for the transcription and translation to English.

Closing

I have worked hard to do what I was asked when the moment arose, whether it was giving a community member or elder a ride to or from a meeting or town, attending a last minute meeting, or delivering items between organisations and communities. It has been a privilege to work alongside a group of patient and helpful elders and community members.

There came a moment in the course of this research when I realised everything was going to be okay, and I could finally enjoy myself. That moment came around the time I went out on the land with the elders. Simon John and several others had spent the majority of the summer camped out at the lake. It is a magnificent spot with a gorgeous view of the territory. We had planned on taking the elders around the area by boat as a way to help them reconnect to this place, and hopefully serve to remind them of the past. Unfortunately, the boat had mechanical issues, which forced us to spend the day at the camp. It was a blessing in disguise.

A moose had been shot that morning; I first saw its lifeless body on a tarp close to the lake. I am not a squeamish person, so while the partially butchered animal did not bother me, it did incite a sense of excitement as I thought of enjoying fresh game on the land. I was put to work chopping vegetables as Simon began making a moose-meat stew. The elders spoke of eating out there as children: vegetables were grown in small

gardens that were tended by the family and stored in root cellars under cabins. Our vegetables came from the grocery store in town.

The elders sat around the fire excitedly reminiscing about a place they all remembered but few had visited recently. I heard a flurry of Dakelh and saw hand gestures point here and there, with plenty of laughter exchanged. Simon prepared the stew over the fire and, as we all sat and ate, the elders began to speak of this place. I was enjoying myself, and the elders, their words and our meal came together harmoniously and that's when I realised that this was, at least for me, the perfect campfire — though it wasn't until sometime later that I came to understand what that meant.

While the food hadn't come entirely from the land, it was prepared and enjoyed on the territory by thankful hearts. This meal had taken many hands to bring it to the table (so to speak), much like my research. The fact that most of the community members I worked with were sitting around that fire was a rare and important thing, as was the fact that the elders were opening up their lives for me to record.

As I listened to the stories, and the elders correcting each other and corroborating to accurately preserve their oral tradition, I realised for the first time that this was truth. While some might label these stories as tales or merely legend, I couldn't help but feel deep within me that they were real. Sitting around a campfire on the territory in which this oral history was born gave it a life that is otherwise lost. I could reach down and dip my hands in the lake that sustained countless generations before us at that very location. I could see the mountains and the stream that were key elements to the stories of the past. I felt a power that flowed through the words that was ancient and deep. It was important. Sitting quietly and listening to the stories unfold around me I was struck by the true cost of that knowledge; the precise sacrifice of time, energy and life that preserving it entailed. One of the elders spoke of his ancestors carrying fire with them as they travelled. This is much like the elders themselves who are keepers of a vast library of living memory amassed over a lifetime. In this way a campfire is a place to impart knowledge of the past to direct the future.

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Notes

1. Oral history refers to the transmission of historical information whereas the oral tradition is broader in scope and multifaceted. It includes many cultural aspects.
2. This followed the guidelines already established by the CURA project.

Chapter 8

‘Survival against all odds’: The Indigenous population of metropolitan Perth, 1829–2001

Neville Green

Abstract: *An 1836 name census of the known tribes identified fewer than 200 men, women and children in what may be regarded as the modern Perth metropolitan area. A survey in 1947, excluding those in institutions, counted 157 men, women and children, and at the 2001 national census the Perth metropolitan Indigenous population was beyond 23 000. This chapter examines the major shifts in population through a range of published data and archival sources and considers factors such as violence, disease, migration, legislation and policies. A unique feature of this chapter is the use of name census reports of the nineteenth century and Indigenous biographical dictionaries to trace names over several decades.*

Introduction

Noongar territory in the south-west of Australia approximates the area of mainland Victoria and was mapped by Tindale in 1940 into 12 distinct tribal groups, now collectively known as the Noongar, with one, the Whadjuck, less than 10 percent of the domain, having within its boundaries the greater Perth metropolitan area, including the Swan and Canning rivers and their tributaries (Tindale 1940). Within the set limits for this chapter, I revisit the shifts in the Indigenous population of this small region after the arrival of British settlers in 1829. The American author Mark Twain popularised the phrase ‘There are lies, damned lies, and statistics’, and all three enemies of the truth are seen in reports and publications when population data is used for personal or political gain or to support an illogical thesis.

Indigenous populations

Lancaster Jones (1970:2) writes that ‘The number and distribution of Australia’s Aboriginal population at the time of first European settlement will probably never

be accurately known' and this certainly applies to Western Australia. Nathaniel Ogle (1977[1839]:62) wrote, after a visit to Perth in 1837, 'the numbers of Aborigines cannot be ascertained; they can only be guessed at.' Captain Irwin (1835:22), commandant of the 63rd Regiment at the Swan River in 1829, guessed there were fewer than 1000 in contact with the settled districts of Perth, Fremantle, Guildford, York, Mandurah, Augusta and Albany. George Fletcher Moore, a noted Swan River settler, estimated no fewer than 3000 frequented the settled districts (*Perth Gazette*, 20 February 1841, pp.2–3). In 1832 the first governor, James Stirling, put the settler population at 1497 and estimated the Aborigines to be in the order of one person per square mile (Stirling to Goderich, 2 April 1832) and in 1837 he reported the settlers at 2032 and the Aborigines reduced to one person per two square miles (*Perth Gazette*, 9 June 1838, pp.91–2). Stirling's method of gauging the population of a country by a simple ratio of people per square mile incorrectly assumed that the productivity of the land was constant and the population evenly distributed. In 1848 the Noongar population in the settled parts of the colony was put at 2000, with an estimated 500 employed by settlers and in the Perth District (*Perth Gazette*, 23 December 1848, p.2). The 1848 census acknowledged the flaws in such estimates and offered a solution:

If, however, the names of individuals belonging to the several tribes are ascertained with a degree of certainty, useful estimates of their numbers may unquestionably be formed. And this mode having been carefully carried out in some districts, the data formed thereupon may be relied on as an approximation to truth. We may then assume about 2,000 for the located parts of the colony.

It is fortunate that, during the first 30 years of settlement, the names of several thousand Noongar were recorded in their home localities. In 1832, three years after British settlement, Yagan, the son of tribal elder Midgegooroo, described the metropolitan family tribes to Robert Lyon (*Perth Gazette*, March/April 1833, see Figure 1). The following year, Captain TE Ellis established the Mount Eliza Native Institution on the riverside within sight of Perth, and maintained a daily journal of local families and visitors from the Murray River district 100 kilometres to the south and from York, a similar distance to the east. The arrival of young men from the Murray in December 1833 was an occasion for a ceremony observed by Ellis (Ellis journal reports 1833). The next morning he rationed 91 adults, and then Monang, from the Murray district, escorted a Perth delegation to his home territory. Ellis was mortally wounded at the Battle of Pinjarra on 28 October 1834. His successor at the Native Institution was Francis Armstrong, a young man who spoke several Noongar dialects and was later the official court interpreter. Armstrong recorded the names of visitors to the institution and compiled a name census of 295 people, separated into eight tribal groups extending from the Moore River north of Perth to Bunbury, nearly 200 kilometres to the south, with those for the metropolitan area of Lyon's mapping (Armstrong 1837, see Figures 2 and 3). The Armstrong census represents the first recording of significant numbers

of Noongar within family groups, which he termed 'tribes'. In 1838 Stirling informed the Colonial Office that 'tribes' usually consisted of about 120 related persons (*Perth Gazette*, 9 June 1838, p.91), almost double Armstrong's highest count; he may have been exaggerating the situation to gain support for a civilian militia.



Figure 1: Place names and territories recorded by Robert Lyon in 1832 (Green 1979:174; map by Neville Green)

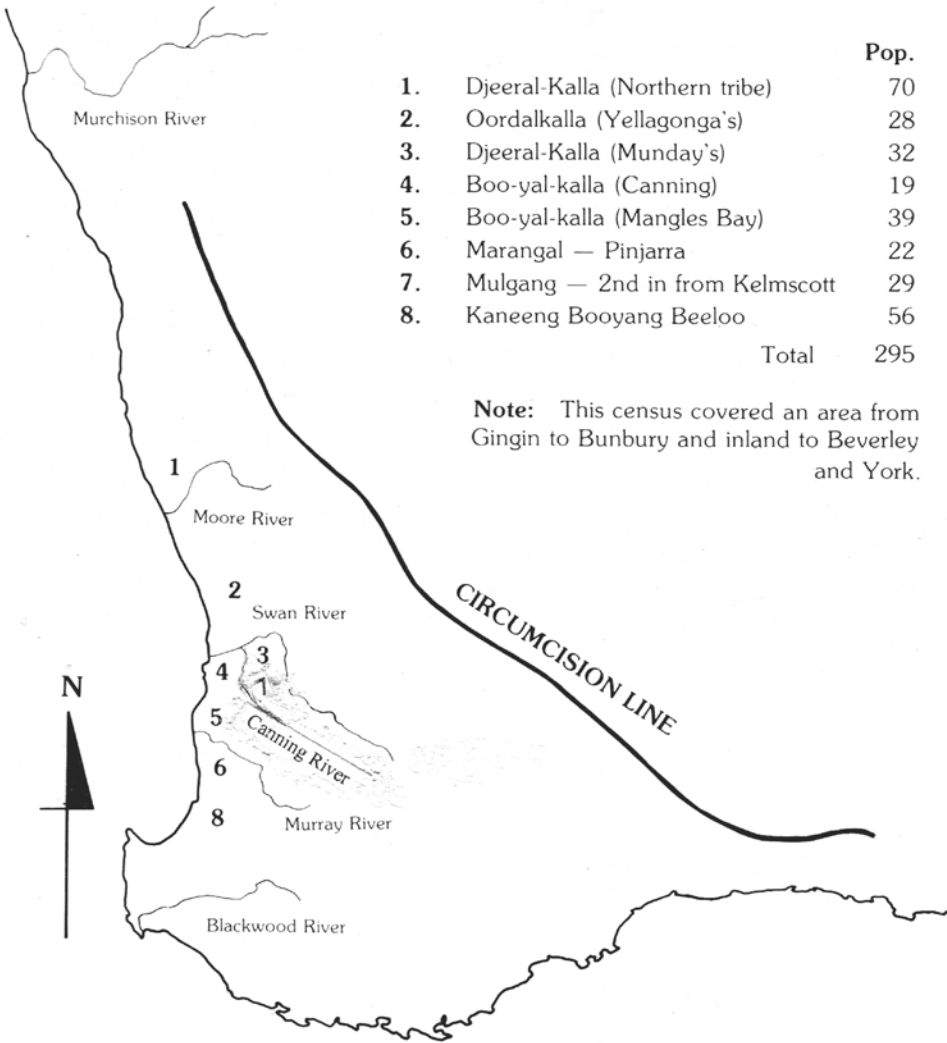


Figure 2: Name census recorded by Francis Armstrong in 1837 (Green 1979:192; map by Neville Green)

George Grey, an explorer and resident magistrate at King George Sound in 1838, recorded more than 400 Noongar names (Grey 1838), sketched genealogies and was one of the first Europeans to recognise, but not fully comprehend, the Noongar section system (Grey 1841). Charles Symmons, the Protector of Aborigines, followed up the Armstrong census in 1840 and identified nine tribes, including six across the metropolitan area, under the heading 'Names and census of natives original owners of the land on the right and left banks of the Swan from Fremantle to the head of the river' for a total of 99 persons (Symmons 1840). The Symmons register displays significant shifts in 'tribal' boundaries and a dip in numbers (Symmons 1840). Also in 1840, the first of four metropolitan Native schools was established and the names of many of the pupils are included in the Hallam–Tilbrook dictionary (Hallam and Tilbrook 1990). Two years later, Assistant Protector of Aborigines Henry Bland listed the names of Aborigines in the Avon (York) and King George Sound (Albany) district (Bland 1842). These names were included in the Aboriginal dictionaries discussed later.

The most detailed and reliable name census of the nineteenth century was conducted in 1858 under the supervision of Bishop Rosendo Salvado of the Benedictine New Norcia Mission in Noongar territory 135 kilometres north of Perth, who surveyed an area Hallam estimates to be 15 300 square kilometres, to record the names of 740 husbands, wives, children and others, with a population density of five to six persons per 100 square kilometres. This census was methodically transcribed and analysed by Hallam, who describes it as among 'the most valuable sources available for studying nineteenth century Aboriginal populations in Australia'. It is included in the New Norcia dictionary (Hallam 1989 in Green and Tilbrook 1989:179–216). A valued source of family names is the register of births, deaths and marriages, a legal requirement in Western Australia since 1842. Although the Act does not exclude Aborigines, relatively few Indigenous births and deaths were recorded during the nineteenth century.

An Aboriginal biographical dictionary committee consisting of Ken Colbung, Sylvia Hallam, Lois Tilbrook, Bob Reece, Neville Green and, later, Anna Haebich was established in 1978 and, with funding from AIATSIS, took on the task of collecting and collating all the Noongar names recorded in newspapers and government documents in the nineteenth century. The search was later extended to include other regions of Western Australia and these published and unpublished volumes are well used for Indigenous family histories.

Hallam and Tilbrook (1990) list the names and details of about 1217 persons, mostly from the greater metropolitan district between 1829 and 1840, and include the Ellis, Armstrong, Grey, Symmons and Bland (Avon) data and the children at the Perth Native schools. When these names are screened through the 4524 names in the 1841–90 unpublished south-west volume (Green and Moon 1993), fewer than 40 reappear, including only 17 of Armstrong's 295 names.

Natives
of
Oor-dal-kalla
commonly called
Yalagonga's Tribe

Yalagonga.
(or Drooree)
Windan.
Yangan.
Nander.
Elal.
Dued.
Elup.
Noreup.
Bindup.
Quebup.
Beenup.
Warup.
Kadjup.
Barbang.

Mellum,
(or Dalbur)
Gooban.
Nignana.
Daleer.
Gayup.
Woobyte.
Domera.
Yangup.
Goongar.
Dattkup.
Ngoojar.
Edar.
Dutomerre.
Doonmooit.

Total 28 persons

Francis Trauer Armstrong

Figure 3: Natives of Oor-dal-kalla commonly called Yalagonga's Tribe by Francis Armstrong in 1836 (Acc 36 CSR 1837 v58:f163 SROWA)

The Aborigines of the Albany Region 1821–1898 (Green 1989) offers some evidence of names 'disappearing' over a period of ten years and it is impossible to determine if they are dead, absent or just avoiding the census taker. Of the Aboriginal names recorded by King (1818–21), Nind (1826–29), Collie (1831–32) and Barker (1830–31) at King George Sound (Albany), very few were found in the name census conducted in that region by Henry Bland in 1842. Of the 181 names recorded by Bland, fewer than five percent appear in later colonial records. We must recognise that most Indigenous names recorded after 1842 are in police and court records and the majority of the Noongar are only occasionally identified. Furthermore, the early attempts at counting the Indigenous population did not take into consideration family mobility and some may be counted twice and others not at all. In 1837 Governor Stirling claimed, 'seven hundred and fifty were known to have visited Perth from the district surrounding it, about forty miles each way' (Ogle 1977[1839]:62–3), and as Ellis noted in 1833, there were reciprocal visits.

The official census reports for the Perth metropolitan area

The 1848 colonial census was divided into shires and the estimated Indigenous population of Perthshire was 553, with the only reliable count being the 162 adults in employment. Charles Symmons added to this figure 50 men, 32 women and 26 children residing at lakeside camps at Wanneroo, Perth and South Perth (Symmons 1848). No Aboriginal figures are given in the 1854 and 1861 official censuses and I rely upon an 1857 count of Swan, 123; Perth, 70; Fremantle, 65; and Canning, 40, for 298 persons, with Symmons' warranty, 'I believe the above to be a tolerably accurate calculation' (Symmons 1857). These figures compare favourably with the 1830s but are well below the 1848 figure. In the wake of the 1848 whooping cough epidemic, the 1859 census noted a decline in the Noongar population: 'In 1842 the number of Aborigines frequenting the Settled Districts of Perth, Fremantle, Swan, Avon, Wellington, Sussex and Albany was estimated at about 1200, whereas at the present time they are not supposed to exceed 800...' (*Western Australian Census 1859*:13).

A search of the Colonial Secretary's Records produced only one document of interest for the 1860s, a Perth police report (Police report 1864) of blankets issued on 20 May 1864 to ten men, including two from York and one from Williams, and 19 females, including two from York. Thirteen have a single given name such as Joe, Jack, Tom, Fred, Jane, Fanny and Annie and the remainder are traditional names and six may be names recorded by Hallam and Tilbrook. The replacement of traditional names with common English given names may be an obstacle to family history research.

In preparation for the 1870 census, Governor Sir Frederick Weld instructed district magistrates and police officers to report the number of Aborigines in their districts and to state whether the number was increasing or decreasing and to state why. The return

for the Swan (presumed to be the metropolitan area) was 100 adults but no children and no explanation. Eleven adults were employed in the Fremantle district and 15 in the Perth district. The districts of Plantagenet (Albany), Sussex (Busselton) and Wellington (Bunbury) failed to submit returns and the colonial statistician admitted that:

The result of this measure is not at all satisfactory, as affording anything like correct data of the number or social condition of the Natives. The nomadic habits of this people, and their inability to give numerical information, renders it a matter of difficulty to procure any very reliable returns. (*Western Australian Census 1870*:26)

The 1881 census recorded only Aborigines who were employed and yielded a figure of 71 adults for the metropolitan districts (*Western Australian Census 1881*:32). The 1891 census was the most comprehensive of the nineteenth century, with those classified as 'half-caste' counted, and here bracketed, confirming the ethnic changes occurring: Fremantle, 25 (2); Perth, 11 (17); and Swan District, 23 (33) for a total of 59 (52) and 111 (*Western Australian Census 1891*:87, 181–4).

Analysing the decline

Three common causes of a decline in the indigenous populations of colonised regions are settler violence, tribal violence and introduced disease. Curr (1886:190) generalised to the Australian continent a casual opinion that 15 to 20 percent of the Aboriginal population fell to rifles. Host (2009:93) represents the early Western pioneers as strugglers and '[O]ne would have thought that at the end of the day, they had neither the time nor the energy to set about destroying the Aboriginal people and their culture'. A 1984 tally of south-west conflict between 1829 and 1852 has 30 settlers killed and 34 wounded, with 121 Noongar killed or executed and 52 wounded. The metropolitan component was four executions, 18 dead and none killed in the decade after 1839 (Green 1984:Appendix 1, 201–25). Charles Fremantle, during his brief return to Perth in 1832, was told that soldiers came upon a group of Aborigines and bayoneted most (Cottesloe 1985[1929]:92); this may refer to an 1830 incident at the Upper Swan (Moore 1978[1884]:21) or at the Murray in 1831 (Moore 1978[1884]:123) or en route to Guildford in 1832 (Moore 1978[1884]:127). All are hearsay diary entries by George Moore. The only recorded multiple killings are the Battle of Pinjarra, one settler and uncounted but recorded as fourteen Noongar; Busselton, 1834, one settler and estimated five Noongar; York district, 1835–39, three settlers and an estimated 25 Noongar (Green 1984:Appendix 1). In recent years there have been trans-generational oral accounts of massacres in the south-west, including one in Kings Park within sight of the city, but most are unsubstantiated (Green 2010:203–14).

Tribal violence

There are dozens of recorded incidents of internecine killings observed by settlers and it would be naive to suggest that traditional pay-back killings, or, for that matter, settler murders of Aborigines, did not occur elsewhere, merely because they were not seen and documented by Europeans. Isaac Scott Nind, the doctor at King George Sound, 1826–29, observed an alarming level of tribal murders, noting, 'When a man is killed, his tribe instantly sets about revenging his death; but they are not particular whether they kill the principal offender or any other of his tribe...They are, however, so constantly at war that their numbers must be considerably diminished by it' (Nind 1831 in Green 1979:47–9). Collet Barker, the military commandant at King George Sound in 1830, recorded three murders and five spearings following the death of a boy from snakebite (Mulvaney and Green 1992:270ff). Again it would be naive to suggest this was a 'one off' occurrence. A brief summary of internecine conflict in the south-west between 1830 and 1841 identified 25 deaths and 77 wounded, of which 18 deaths and 65 wounded were recorded within the metropolitan area between 1833 and 1840 (Green 1984:Appendix 2, 201–33). Following the Weewar case in 1842 (Green 1984:161–6), which placed British law above tribal law, Noongar arrested for tribal murders were tried and sentenced according to British law. Later in the century, many of the south-west and metropolitan cases brought to the attention of the courts appear to be domestic violence rather than pay-backs (Green and Moon 1997).

Introduced disease

Tilbrook, addressing the data she and Hallam collated for a biographical dictionary, plotted the metropolitan Indigenous population between 1829 and 1840 and contends that by 1837 introduced disease had significantly reduced the Swan River population and it continued to decline (Tilbrook 1987:72, 94). Furthermore, she claims that the failure to consider the decline has affected later population estimates. She compared Armstrong's figures with that by the Protector of Aborigines, Charles Symmons, in 1840 (Symmons 1840) and found an overall decrease of 18 percent. Not one group showed a gain. The loss for the Murray group was 38 percent and the 'First Group North' of Perth suffered a 32 percent loss (Tilbrook 1987:71–3) and in this case she identified conflict with Europeans as a factor. However, the major Murray River loss to conflict was in 1834 and well before the Armstrong census.

In the closely settled areas of the south-west, it is possible to record the passage of whooping cough, influenza and measles (Green 1984:Appendix 3) but only occasionally were Aboriginal deaths recorded. Reports of venereal disease and diphtheria were noted in the archival records and 300 Swan River Noongars were vaccinated against smallpox in 1853, but no smallpox deaths are recorded for the metropolitan area (Symmons 1854). In institutions such as missions, schools and prisons the dead are

counted with some accuracy; however, the conditions in institutions may also have spread the disease.

An influenza epidemic in 1841 killed more than half the pupils at the Church of England Guildford Native School. At least 14 Aboriginal prisoners on Rottneest Island, off the coast of Fremantle, died of influenza between 1882 and 1883 and another 27 in 1897 (Green and Moon 1997:59).

Whooping cough, which the Perth Noongar called *kulbul kulbulkan*, imitating the sound of the military bugle, was epidemic in 1832–33 and returned in 1848 with 15 settler children dead (*Inquirer*, 1 January 1848). The 1871 census referred to an 1860 whooping cough epidemic that accounted for 15 percent of all settler deaths that year; Aboriginal deaths are not acknowledged but we cannot assume that there were no deaths.

Measles entered the colony at King George Sound in 1861 and resulted in many recorded settler deaths, especially among nursing mothers and children. The government statistician noted:

The disease soon spread, and fixed its strongest hold on the Native Population... the disease caused a wide spread desolation, extending from tribe to tribe with most fatal consequences. The Local Government did everything which could be devised to alleviate the sufferings of these poor people, by the establishment of temporary hospitals, and supplying food, medicines, and comforts, but in every District of the Colony the Deaths were very numerous, as the habits of the natives are so unfavourable in the progress of a disease of this nature, and their mode of treatment so utterly at variance with all rules of medical science. (*Western Australian Census 1870:26–9*)

Fr Venancio Garido (1871) claimed that this measles epidemic severely reduced the New Norcia Mission population and, being able to base his opinion on mission inmate records and the 740 persons recorded three years before the epidemic, his assessment should be considered reliable. The Chief Protector of Aborigines, Henry Prinsep, informed Bishop Gibney that half of the south-west Aboriginal population died during this measles epidemic (Prinsep to Gibney 1907). In October 1883 measles reappeared at Albany (Colonial Secretary's Records, 8 October 1883) and its progress can be plotted through Mount Stirling, where Noongar were gathering for ceremonies (Colonial Secretary's Records, 17 April 1884), to Rottneest Island, where more than 62 prisoners died from measles and influenza (Green and Moon 1997:58–64), and continued north to the Gascoyne (Gascoyne measles report 1884).

Jesse Hammond (1933:70–2), a youth during the epidemic, recalled: 'the whole [Noongar] system was upset by the great measles epidemic of the eighties which killed off the blacks by scores'. No report was found to describe the impact of this epidemic on the metropolitan Aboriginal population.

Dr John Host entered the population debate as a historiographer with a native title commission and a determination to prove there was a robust and continuous Noongar society since 1829. The report was completed in one year and Host favours secondary sources rather than direct access to archived documents; for example, he cites Green more than 300 times and Haebich more than 100 times. Neither Green nor Haebich took an active part in this native title case. Professor Bob Reece, in a review of Host's book, is critical of his research, methodology and bias, and he comments on Host's failed attempts to prevent its publication (Reece 2011:223–7). However, it was published and it is in the public domain and cannot be ignored.

Host agrees with other historians that an exact Indigenous population figure at 1829 is impossible and then he juggles numbers. He takes Green's settler figure for 1829 (Green 1984:89, citing the WA Statistical Register for 1900), he deletes his own estimate of the number of children and then scatters the remaining 1324 adults across 237 000 square kilometres of the south-west to arrive at 'one European adult to every 179 square kilometres' (Host 2009:90). He does the same with an 1840 figure of 2434 settlers to place a single adult settler on a property 25 times the area of King's Park (Host 2009:90). Host applies Stirling's 1832 ratio of one Aborigine per square mile across the same area to arrive at 11 000 Noongar in 1832 and, assuming the population is unaffected by deaths, doubles it for 1837 to 'some 22 000 Noongar' (Host 2009:94). He may have overlooked Stirling's 1837 statement that 'The nearest estimate of the population appears to be that which assigns one native to each portion of ground of two square miles.' Thus Host's 11 000 Noongar should be 5500 and not 22 000 (Stirling 1837:92). To cap this exercise he writes, 'Even were we to set aside the estimates, however, we could probably assume that the Aborigines [at 1829] were at least equal to the settlers in number (approximately 2000)' (Host 2009:94).

Having set a probable 1829 base figure of 2000 across the Noongar domain, we advance to 1901 where Haebich (1988:1) introduces her study of Noongar survival with the 1200 Noongar counted at the 1901 census, including the metropolitan distribution of Fremantle, 62; Perth, 48; and Swan, 106 for a total of 216 (Haebich 1988:9, Table 1). She explains the complex inter-ethnic relationships occurring during the first century of British settlement (Haebich 1988:47–51) and cites the *Western Australian Census 1901* (Haebich 1988:204), which shows that half the south-west Indigenous population was of mixed race and accepted within Noongar communities. Haebich follows this population to 1940 when it is estimated at 3000.

Host (2009:30) accepts Haebich's (1988:1) 1901 population figure of 1200 (800 fewer than he considered possible in 1829) and her figure of 3000 Noongar in 1940; a 200 percent gain, which he regards as a measure of a continuous and robust society. Still referring to the Noongar, he wrote, 'Those receiving rations rose from 996 in 1907 to 3,330 in 1914 and rationing was subsequently used as a means of driving them out of town camps and onto reserves. When families refused to relocate, their

rations were stopped' (Host 2009:Ch 2, 33, citing Haebich 1988:41–6 and Haebich 2000:226–9). Host does not explain how 1200 Noongar in 1901 could have increased 200 percent by 1914, then diminished by about 12 persons per year to 3000 in 1940 and still be considered a robust society. The answer lies in his sources. Haebich (1988:46, citing Biskup 1973:276) is clear that the figures 996 and 3330 refer to a total state rationing table and not exclusively to the Noongar. She does not indicate, on the pages cited, that rationing 'was used as a means of driving them out of town camps and onto reserves'. For the second sentence, Host cites a different book and 15 years into the future, and the pages cited (Haebich 2000:268–9) do not agree with the sentence.

The Aborigines Department was created in 1897 and four years later the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Henry Prinsep, established a camping reserve south-east of Perth city known as Maamba, with small garden plots and a few huts to encourage permanent residency. The early occupants included people from Busselton and New Norcia. The reserve was abandoned in 1908 when a new manager was appointed (Gale to Connolly 1908). Two years later, a West Guildford 20-hectare camping reserve was created but, being alongside a cemetery and lacking adequate drinking water, it too was boycotted and the families returned to their familiar camping areas where their numbers were monitored by the local police and, in 1919, counted as 55 men, 50 women and 35 children (a total of 140) (ARCPA 1919:18–19).

We advance to 1927 with a relatively stable metropolitan Noongar population living in bush camps near fresh water, some close to the river and most within walking distance of public transport. The camps were still regularly policed to record the family names and ensure that no white men were cohabiting with the women, contrary to the *Aborigines Act 1905*. Many of these camps continued into the years after the Second World War and Makin (1970:84) identifies some in suburban Bassendean, Bayswater, East Perth, Midland Junction, Caversham, Claremont, Swanbourne and Shenton Park.

There was, however, a drift from rural districts that bothered Chief Protector Neville, and in 1927 he applied Section 39 of the *Aborigines Act 1905* to proclaim the greater metropolitan area a prohibited zone, 'in which it shall be unlawful for Aborigines or half-castes, not in lawful employment to be or to remain'. Neville's prohibition extended to a radius of about 20–30 kilometres from the city centre and included the metropolitan bush areas where new arrivals might become established. The police had the authority to arrest those in breach of the proclamation and order them to return to their own districts.

The Great Depression was severe on Aboriginal workers. With the choice of an overcrowded country town reserve or seeking out extended families in Perth, many chose the latter. The number of persons counted in 1935 was 200 (ARCPA 1935: 19–20) and Perth was now under a strict prohibition. Two years later, Neville added a new measure of control which he justified in his annual report for June 1937: 'Owing to the inroad of increasing numbers of unemployed natives in the city, it was found

necessary to institute a pass system, and to the time of writing this appears to be working satisfactory' (ARCPA 1937:6).

Neville signed every pass carried by metropolitan Aborigines aged 14 years and over. A pass identified the bearer as a 'legal' resident and described the areas wherein he or she should remain, and where he or she could venture and when. For example, pass no. 6, issued to Tommy X of Central Avenue, Swanbourne, was valid from 30 June to 30 September 1937 and allowed him to visit Perth only on Mondays and not to stay beyond 6pm (three lists in Neville 1937). In a letter to Police Commissioner Connell, Neville explained his decision to act against 'outside' Aborigines: 'In future therefore, it is desired that natives shall not be permitted to camp within the metropolitan area (as described under the Traffic Act) except by permission of this Department and henceforth this approval will be given by the issue of passes to approved people' (Neville to Connell 1937).

A list of pass holders was distributed to every police station within the prohibited zone and police could order unregistered persons to leave the metropolitan area. The population in 1938 was 276 (ARCNA 1938:24–5) and, by January, 200 passes issued included temporary passes for hospital patients and passes for women at the Native Girls' Home East Perth.

In 1941 the Commissioner of Native Affairs, Francis Bray, ordered all eastern suburban camping Aborigines to move onto the original West Guildford reserve under the supervision of Constable Herman Wilhelm (ARCNW 1959:27) but in 1943 the Commonwealth Government, using its war-time powers, resumed the reserve for an army camp (ARCNA 1944:10) and the Noongar returned to their traditional metropolitan camps. After the war the army camp served as emergency housing for white families and then, from about 1955 to 1967, it was an Aboriginal housing estate known as Allawah Grove. By this time, the policy of protection and segregation had given way to assimilation and checks on rural Noongar moving into the metropolitan area ceased.

Before leaving this period, it is useful to review the 1940s. The metropolitan population was counted at 337 in 1944, as 284 in 1945 and as 217 in 1946, possibly reflecting men drawn to the city for employment and families with men in uniform who rented houses in the older suburbs and at the war's end returned to the country. The spike in 1947 to 341 has its origins in the *Aborigines Act Amendment Act 1936*, better known as the Native Administration Act (an Amendment Act to the 1905 Act). The amendments meant that children described in fractional terms as 'quarter-caste' could be removed from their families and assigned to Sister Kate's Home for Children, established in 1933. In the three years 1935–37, Sister Kate's averaged 30 children a year but as increasing numbers were identified as 'quadroons' the number rose to 115 during the 1947 Bateman survey. If those counted in metropolitan institutions are excluded from Bateman's total of 341 (Table 1), the metropolitan 'free' population is only 157 men, women and children; fewer than Armstrong counted in 1836 and

27 percent below the metropolitan count of 216 in 1901. It is not the profile of a robust community. On the contrary, it matches the situation described by Anna Haebich (1988:356) when she retells the epic struggle of Noongar to survive under difficult circumstances: ‘Most were trapped in a cycle of poverty characterised by long periods of unemployment, deplorable living conditions, malnutrition, disease, and premature death. Their children were growing up without schooling or vocational training and they had few prospects of breaking out of this cycle.’ It is the profile Hasluck (1938:7) describes and Green (2005:107–40) outlines as he traces the links between poverty, disadvantage, discrimination and the substandard education of Noongar children and other Indigenous children in Western Australia. However, as Green has noted (1984:189), the Noongar survived and by 1984 there were an estimated 12 000 descendants of the original Noongar.

Table 1: Perth metropolitan Aboriginal population in 1947 (Bateman 1948; from Native Population Distribution [WA] as at 30 June 1947)

Perth metropolitan area, 30 June 1947	Male	Female	Children	Total
Beaconsfield *	4	4	5	13
Causeway *	6	5	7	18
Claremont *	1	–	5	6
Fremantle (prison)	24	1	–	25
Guildford *	19	28	33	80
Maylands *	5	4	12	21
Midland Junction *	2	–	–	2
West Perth *	2	4	11	17
Claremont Mental Hospital	14	10	–	24
Cottesloe Deaf School	–	–	1	1
Native Girls' Home East Perth	–	7	2	9
Other Perth institutions	2	2	6	10
Sister Kate's children's home	–	–	115	115
Institution population	40	20	124	184
Non-institution population	39	45	73	157
Total	79	65	197	341

* Established camps

In 1948 Bray redefined the prohibition perimeter closer to the Perth business district (*Western Australian Government Gazette* 1948) and this continued until 1954, when Stanley Middleton, Bray's successor, repealed all town and city prohibitions

throughout the state (*Western Australian Government Gazette* 1954). In the same year Middleton abolished the mandatory employment permit system in force since 1905 and, with the freedom to travel at will and seek the employment of their choice, many Noongar families sought a better life in the city.

Dr John Wilson (1964:158) commented on the causes of post-Second World War Aboriginal migration to Perth:

Anxiety has been evident in a few parts of the city with the in-flux of part-Aboriginal migrants from rural towns and fringes of the metropolitan area. This move of population is partly the result of displacement of labour through the mechanisation of farming industries. The city sectors most affected by the move have been areas of transition, parts of the older city that are falling into disrepair, yet adjoining those of the new expanding city block on one side and good working-class homes on the other.

Conclusion

This period ends with the removal of town prohibitions, increased family and individual mobility, access to state government housing, and a more equitable access to Commonwealth Government pensions for the elderly and for the unemployed. A national referendum in May 1967 removed Section 126 from the Australian Constitution and allowed all Aborigines to be counted at a national census. LR Smith (1980), who analysed census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, found that more than 40 percent of the Perth Aborigines completing the 1971 census had migrated to Perth in the four years since 1966. This compared to 30 percent over the same period for Brisbane and Adelaide, 20 percent for Sydney and Hobart, and 15 percent for Melbourne. The metropolitan Indigenous population at the 1991 census was 11 744 and above 23 000 at the 2001 census, representing almost a 50 percent gain in ten years. The acceleration coincides with a general population growth in the Perth metropolitan region, which has seen many of the urban swamps drained and new suburbs created, with an occasional small boutique lake in a public park serving as a reminder of the Indigenous past.

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Chapter 9

Fred Maynard and Marcus Garvey: Storming the urban space

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Abstract: *This chapter seeks to examine the impact of Australian Aboriginal and African-American political revolt in the early decades of the twentieth century in relation to the city and urban space. In the United States the aftermath of the civil war witnessed a mass movement of black people from the rural environment to the city in search of better opportunities. These dreams of a better life were largely unfulfilled. Although not on a similar scale, the movement of Aboriginal people to the city in the early decades of the twentieth century allowed them to escape from the clutches of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board. It also, importantly, provided opportunities for contact with international black visitors and with the political manifestos and ideology they carried with them. Fred Maynard in Australia and Marcus Garvey in the United States both utilised the press and city space to challenge and inform the wider public of the intolerable disadvantage, racism, prejudice and oppression that confronted their peoples.*

Introduction

The move to urban spaces both in the United States and Australia provided the platform that witnessed the rise of black leaders like Garvey and Maynard. Both were articulate, eloquent and powerful speakers. Garvey is credited with establishing the biggest black movement ever assembled in the United States, with millions of followers worldwide at its height. Garvey's ability to tap into grassroots issues and the mindset of many oppressed groups was undoubtedly his greatest triumph. His message of racial pride, cultural pride, pride in history and connection to country and place of birth resonated powerfully with many groups, including Aboriginal people in Australia. Garvey recognised the moment and sent forth a message of encouragement:

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Everywhere the Blackman is beginning to do his own thinking, to demand more participation in his own government, more economic justice, and better living conditions. The Universal Negro Improvement Association during the past five years has blazed the trail for him, and he is following the trail. We do not think he will turn back. He has nothing to lose and everything to gain by pushing forward, whatever the obstacles he may encounter. (*Negro World*, 20 September 1924)

The Garvey movement established its central base in Harlem, New York. Author Clare Corbould (2009:6–7), in her recent book *Becoming African Americans*, stated that:

Black public life transformed partly because of a steady movement of black Americans to towns and even bigger cities. This great migration, as it has come to be known, brought to life black metropolises that gave new feelings of militancy a permanent address. Where just under twenty percent of black Americans lived in urban areas in 1890, by 1920 the figure was thirty four percent. Migrants contributed to new political organisations that gave voice to black Americans' growing discontent.

Harlem at this time was already becoming the centre of the black universe, the virtual black capital of the world. It was, in those first decades of the twentieth century, a vibrant, cosmopolitan place, bubbling over with political, cultural and religious activity. It was like a magnet for black radicals of all types and a large number of outstanding black creative artists (Martin 1983:41). Harlem was unquestionably the most highly politicised black community on the planet.

Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association was able to tap into this bubbling pot of rebellion like no other before or since. In 1920 Garvey held the First International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World at Madison Square Garden in New York and more than 25 000 people from around the globe filled the arena and spilled out into the streets. The opening of the convention was preceded by a parade: 'All along 7th Avenue, crowds jostled for the best view of the spectacular procession weaving through Harlem' (Grant 2008:242). At the opening of the convention Garvey's powerful words echoed through the great hall: 'We are assembled here tonight as the descendants of a suffering people and we are determined to suffer no longer' (Grant 2008:246).

There were differences of interpretation of the black and white space within the city. As an example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which featured WEB Du Bois, had its offices in the white part of the city, with a primarily white board and many white office workers. It could not connect with the heart and soul of the black experience on the street in the way that Garvey could and did. On visiting Du Bois in the offices of the NAACP, Garvey

was 'dumbfounded' to find that it was impossible to tell whether one was in a white office or that of a black protest organisation: 'There was no representation of the race that anyone could recognize' (Levine 1993:118). Garvey and Du Bois developed a deep mistrust and dislike of one another. Garvey humorously tagged the NAACP as the National Advancement Association of 'Certain' People (Martin 1976:273–4). As Mary G Rolinson (2007) illustrates in her recent study, *Grassroots Garveyism*, it was Garvey's ability to reach out to the rural black experience that galvanised his massive support. He was prepared to travel with his message from the urban city space to the deep-south and other rural areas across the United States where blacks were experiencing savage disadvantages. Virginia Collins, a Louisiana Garveyite, expressed the emotion that Garvey was able to generate:

He spoke from his soul...and ah, Garvey spoke the words that you thought you was speaking yourself...They were in your thoughts, in your mind, in your brains, but still you did not speak them the way Garvey spoke them. And it...ah, it was in one accord. It was just like everyone had one mind. (Rolinson 2007:24)

In looking at the broad appeal that connected the Garveyism of the city centre with the rural oppressed, Rolinson (2007:2) observes, 'What has remained obscured, though it is in many ways more significant, is that this organization's program enjoyed broad popularity in the South because it also embodied the practical and spiritual aspirations of rural farmers. Garvey recognized this fact...'

In Sydney the newly formed Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA) also tapped into growing grassroots rural discontentment. It held its first conference at St David's Church and Hall in Surry Hills in April 1925. More than 200 Aboriginal people attended this inaugural Aboriginal civil rights convention, many having travelled great distance from across the state. President Fred Maynard delivered an inspiring inaugural address:

Brothers and sisters, we have much business to transact so we will get right down to it. We aim at the spiritual, political, industrial and social. We want to work out our own destiny. Our people have not had the courage to stand together in the past, but now we are united, and are determined to work for the preservation for all of those interests which are near and dear to us. (*Daily Guardian*, 7 May 1925, p.1; see also Maynard 2007:53–4)

Like Garvey, Fred Maynard also travelled widely, listening to the voice of Aboriginal protest and offering inspiration and hope. In early 1925 the Sydney press reported that Maynard had returned to the city after visiting some remote Aboriginal centres, where he was '[amazed] to see the interest the people are taking in this movement' (*Voice of the North*, 10 August 1925, p.13). The AAPA was far more sophisticated and organised

than many have later credited. It opened its own offices in Crown Street, Sydney, in 1925, assisted in establishing a home for Aboriginal girls who had run away from white employers, became an officially registered company with the Registrar General (despite severe opposition from the Protection Board) and established 13 branches across the state with an active membership of more than 600 Aboriginal members. The AAPA also held four annual conferences in Sydney, Kempsey, Grafton and Lismore, where papers were written and delivered by Aboriginal people on issues including housing, education, health, employment, land and children — issues that remain on the agenda some 85 years later. The AAPA had a ready base of followers eager to align themselves with this new movement. Salt Pan Creek on the Georges River in southern Sydney, for example, was a place of growing Aboriginal political discontent. Cadzow and Goodall (2009:143) note that:

Important though Maynard and his fellow north coast countrymen were, there is a need also to understand better the city Aboriginal support which buoyed the movement from its earliest days. These urban networks drew on the rural links already well established in the Sydney communities to circulate news of the new movement and to alert the AAPA spokespeople to the conflicts occurring in rural areas outside their own north coast networks.

The AAPA leadership was readily given the opportunity to speak politics in places like Salt Pan Creek and La Perouse, to large gatherings of supportive and encouraging Aboriginal people who were sick and tired of government negligence and inability to listen to Aboriginal grievances. Interviews with Jacko Campbell and Ted Thomas revealed: ‘You’d see them old fellas sittin’ around in a ring, when there was anything to be done...They were well educated! They could talk on politics!’ (Cadzow and Goodall 2009:149).

Marcus Garvey, in a 1922 paper delivered in New York, forcefully declared the intentions of the new Blackman on the city street:

We represent a new line of thought among Negroes. Whether you call it advanced thought or reactionary thought, I do not care. If it is reactionary for people to seek independence in government, then we are reactionary. If it is advanced thought for people to seek liberty and freedom, then we represent the advanced school of thought among the Negroes of this country. We of the U.N.I.A. [Universal Negro Improvement Association] believe that what is good for the other fellow is good for us. If government is something that is worthwhile; if government is something that is applicable and helpful and protective to others, then we also want to experiment in government. We do not mean a government that will make us citizens without rights or subjects without consideration.

We mean the kind of government that will place our race in control. (Garvey 1970:164)

The city offered Aboriginal people an opportunity to be in a space with a degree of freedom, away from the confines and control of the Protection Board. In the urban space they were able to meet, mobilise and talk up an agenda of political, social, historical and economic change and it was unquestionably the movement of Aboriginal people to the city that generated this first organised, united Aboriginal movement in the 1920s. In a similar fashion to Garvey in the United States, it was also the experience and knowledge of what was happening in the rural and remote areas of the country that triggered their fighting response. They were fighting for land. They were fighting to stop the practice of Aboriginal kids being removed from their families and they were fighting in defence of a distinct Aboriginal cultural identity. All of these issues were connected to the rural areas and the AAPA had established an effective grassroots community network that fed information to its central offices which were used to expose and embarrass the Protection Board in the city press.

Aboriginal people in much larger numbers than have previously been imagined were living in Sydney prior to the 1930s in areas like Redfern, Woolloomooloo, Surry Hills and Chullora. They were working on the docks and railways, areas of opportunity that had arisen in the wake of the First World War. Their influence and contacts with trade union members and the connections they made on the wharves, particularly with visiting African-Americans, West Indians and Africans, were the foundation for their political strategy. Through discussions with these international associates many Aboriginal people were exposed to an ideology that was already in progress overseas. They realised they were not alone and that the racism and prejudice and oppression they were fighting in Australia was in fact a global battle and they needed a global strategy to tackle it.

Despite the urban space offering a degree of freedom, they were not completely away from the clutches of the Board; the AAPA and its leadership were under constant police surveillance and harassment. They were even under the scrutiny of a Crown solicitor acting, unsuccessfully, for the Board to find a legal way to shut down the organisation's activities.

Incredibly, with both Garvey in the United States and Maynard in Australia, by the mid-1930s both leaders and their movements were but fading memories. Garvey was a target for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and he was convicted and jailed on trumped-up mail fraud charges. Eventually, as a West Indian, he was deported in 1927 and was never allowed to return to the United States. Maynard and the AAPA in Australia were hounded out of existence by the police acting for the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board.

The demise of the AAPA in Australia also meant the organisation's erasure from Australian history and memory. Coupled with the systematic policy of exiling

Aboriginal people from the wider population, this erasure affected a wider white Australia's memory of an Aboriginal urban presence both before and after the Second World War. As a result Aboriginal people were less visible and vocal in the urban space, an effect exacerbated by the rising importance of anthropologists like AP Elkin in the 1920s. These new authorities directed not only the academic gaze but also government focus to the far north — where the 'real' blacks were. Such ideas were undoubtedly responsible for comments made by noted historians, such as a comment by FW Wood in the 1950s that 'nearly all the Aborigines live in the tropical north, for those of the south have died out since the white man's invasion...many people have lived for years in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide without seeing a native' (Wood 1957:263). Ernest Scott (1964:191) similarly stated with conviction that in the southern states of New South Wales and Victoria 'the black population is fading out of existence very rapidly, and within the present generation will probably cease to exist'. It would not be until the 1960s that a large-scale Aboriginal vocal political movement would again mobilise and voice discontent in the urban space.

In conclusion, some historians continue to minimise the impact of early urban black leaders like Fred Maynard and Marcus Garvey in the sphere of political protest rather than to recognise that these movements were the forerunner to all that came after, both in Australia and the United States. If we understand that the AAPA was a strong influence on Aboriginal activists for decades afterwards, we will recognise that the organisation was not just an aberration or short blip on the radar but an enduring movement which left a lasting legacy. One important consideration is that Maynard and the AAPA largely existed outside the view, recognition and influence of the wider white populace. Their momentum remained closely tied and connected to the grassroots Aboriginal community. This was pivotal in their success but also accounted for their eventual historical oblivion. The urban setting had provided a space to voice opposition to the policies of disadvantage that were savagely impacting on the majority of Aboriginal people in the rural sector. Today the memory of both the AAPA and the Universal Negro Improvement Association remains to inspire future generations and Garvey prophesised that the memory and impact of his message would remain long after his demise: 'Look for me in the whirlwind or the storm, look for me all around you, for with God's grace, I shall come' (Levine 1993:124).

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Chapter 10

Stories of continuity, times of change? Māori oral histories of twentieth-century urbanisation in New Zealand

Erin Keenan

Abstract: *Urban migrations were a widespread and rapid phenomenon for Māori populations in New Zealand in the decades after the Second World War. Māori oral histories of this time of rapid change direct researchers to the ways that Māori urbanisation experiences were a combination of new encounters and the maintenance of Māori social and cultural forms in urban spaces. A result of this emphasis on continuity during times of change that is accessed through Māori oral histories is that variations in understandings of the meanings of urbanisation are revealed. Although urbanisation was a significant demographic phenomenon for Māori populations, reflected in several key scholarly resources which helped define Māori urbanisation literature in New Zealand history, Māori deny urbanisation as an important theme in personal histories that instead prioritise whānau (family) and iwi (tribal) themes. Māori oral histories of urban migration direct us away from narratives of urbanisation and towards narratives that prioritise connections and relationships instead.*

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi; engari taku toa he toa takitini.

My strength is not my strength alone; it is the strength of many. (Māori proverb)

The urban migrations of generations of Māori after the Second World War were an important phenomenon in post-war New Zealand. They remain an important consideration in historical conversations on Māori in the post-war period. In Wellington after 1945 Māori interacted with one another and with non-Māori in ways that adapted lifestyles for urban living, as well as maintaining identities through connections with home places.¹ By using oral histories to review aspects such as these in our recent histories, it is possible to revisit discussions on urban social lives as sites of Māori

adaptation and change, as well as cultural affirmation and continuity. In this chapter I argue that new urban spaces were places where change occurred, but they were also spaces where continuities were emphasised.

This chapter is based on preliminary research observations made for my doctoral thesis in history at Victoria University of Wellington. It describes how researching Māori experiences with reference to the urban migrations of the twentieth century requires present-day researchers to reconsider understandings of urban identities. Particularly interesting is a comparison of past academic usages of urbanisation terminologies with ‘ground level’ Māori understandings of urbanisation, especially from the very people who experienced those urban migrations. For Māori men and women who urban-migrated to Wellington after the Second World War, I have found that urbanisation is most often ascribed a peripheral narrative in oral histories. The *whakatauki* (Māori proverb) at the beginning of this chapter illustrates one important explanation for this: an individual’s successful experiences are not the result of his or her own doing, but the result of the support of many other people. In oral history research, I have observed that urban migration was not described as an individual experience, nor was it simply a geographical process. Instead, the term ‘urbanisation’ encompasses many layers of experience and meaning.

In a strictly demographic sense, Māori urbanisation during the twentieth century was a process of dramatic population change that was possibly unparalleled in the world due to its rapidity. In 1973, for example, demographer Campbell Gibson (1973:82) described the pattern of urbanising change in New Zealand as a remarkable case, writing that ‘to this writer’s knowledge, the urbanization of the Māori population since 1936 has been more rapid than the urbanization of any national population or of any other sizable ethnic subpopulation at any time in history’. Indeed, between 1926 and 1971 the vast majority of the Māori population switched from living in rurally defined areas to urban living. In 1971 almost 71 percent of Māori were urban dwellers (Figure 1), and we have remained a relatively high urban-dwelling population to this day.²

Urbanisation of Māori, therefore, has been a significant phenomenon in the New Zealand past, with factors comparable to the diverse urbanisation experiences of Aboriginal populations in Australia. Yet there are many interesting conversations yet to be held between New Zealand and Australian Indigenous populations regarding urban experiences. One meeting point in the trans-Tasman histories raised during the AIATSIS National Indigenous Studies Conference in 2009 involved a mutual concern about ambiguous usages of the language of urban migration, and the effects of the applications of these usages on Indigenous peoples. A result of this concern was some consensus that ‘urban’ and ‘urbanised’ are words that, as tools for our work, possess distinct ranges in applications and variety in effects and consequently require academic caution.³

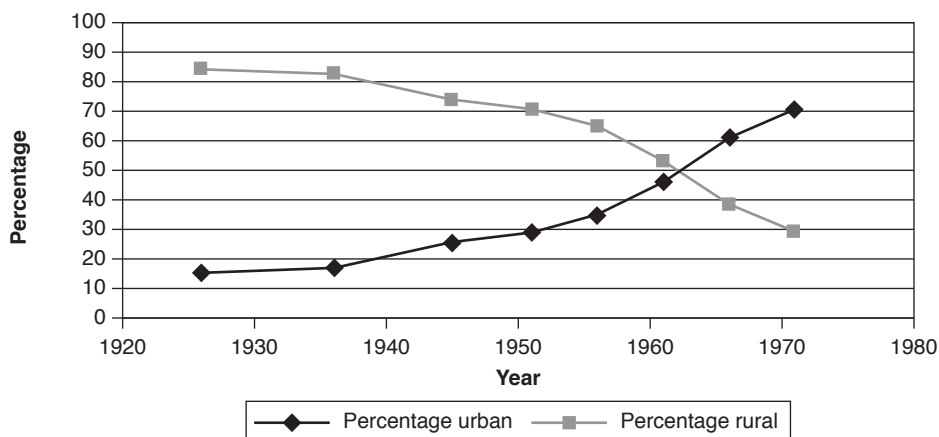


Figure 1: Rural and urban distributions of the Māori population in New Zealand, 1926–1971 (New Zealand Department of Statistics 1977:3)

For historians, writing is a primary tool of our trade and to accommodate a broad accessibility for our work, we often write in English. The prominent Māori parliamentarian during the early-mid twentieth century, Tā Āpirana Ngata, once advised young Māori to stay strong in their cultural heritage but to also ‘keep their hands to the tools of the Pākehā’ (New Zealanders of European descent) (Aotearoa 1958:56).⁴ Although his message was intended to encourage Māori achievement in education and employment, among other things, as a Māori historian I have found that an examination of the tools of language provides a window into Māori perspectives of the post-war period. Scholarly considerations of Māori urban migrations in the first half of the twentieth century, for example, often relegated Māori experiences to broad terminologies that included ‘urban drift’ and ‘urban acculturation’.⁵ Although such terms are used sparingly in scholarly writing today in both New Zealand and Australia, academics have nonetheless become aware that there are certain challenges in writing about combining ideas about urban spaces and identities with more traditional expressions or understandings of Indigenous life.

History writings of Māori twentieth-century experiences have, then, often rightly identified urban migrations as a significant factor impacting upon changing race relations in New Zealand during the twentieth century. Consideration of the language used provides an interesting insight into Māori perspectives of urbanisation. General histories of New Zealand, for example, commonly begin their discussions on Māori during the second half of the twentieth century by referencing urban migrations and the ‘push-pull’ factors that spurred this overhaul of population distribution. Much of this knowledge is influenced by a number of important resources that have been frequently cited by historians.⁶ The two most prominent of these authors were perhaps demographer Ian Pool and anthropologist Joan Metge. Ian Pool’s expertise on Māori

demographics during the twentieth century is unparalleled in New Zealand writing, and Pool is most often cited as providing the ‘how’ of urban migrations. His long contribution to population and demographic work on Māori began to be published as early as 1961 and he is one of the most frequently cited authorities in this area.⁷ In the early 1960s another important scholar on urban migrations was Joan Metge, who also conducted early work on the processes of urbanisation. In particular, she conducted the first on-the-ground study of Māori urbanisation experiences during the 1950s, comparing a rural Northland community with urban Māori communities in Auckland. Importantly, Metge made suggestions as to the ‘why’ of Māori urban migrations. According to Metge (1964:128), moving into the cities was based on at least three motivations that she called the ‘big-three’: movements that were inspired by the pursuits of work, money and pleasure. To this day her explanation of urban migrations remains a broadly accurate and largely unchallenged hypothesis on the rationale behind many Māori urban migrations.

James Belich is an example of a New Zealand historian who has written a general history of New Zealand and referred to Pool and Metge’s work on Māori urban migration. In his history of New Zealand from the 1880s to the year 2000, Belich stressed that twentieth-century Māori urban migrations were a significant phenomenon for Māori history. He argued that urban migrations were a foundation of what he called the fifth-biggest revolution in Māori history, which led to a renewed ‘renaissance’ of political and cultural endeavours for and by Māori (Belich 2001:467).⁸ As a historian, he balanced a comprehensive range of sources discussing this renaissance that he called ‘resurgent Māori’, and he offered a commentary on not just the demographic changes in which Pool specialised or the particular experiences of two localised communities as explored by Metge but also general Māori social, cultural, economic and political developments during the twentieth century. Belich’s work in this area constituted a thorough and thoughtful treatment of the diverse field of scholarship.

However, although there is no doubt that urban migrations meant dramatic material and geographical changes for Māori after the Second World War, focusing on changes risks obscuring Māori narratives that locate their histories with reference to ongoing identities and connections. A Māori understanding of scholarship such as that presented by Belich, especially including perspectives on language used and its meanings, provides an interesting case demonstrating how Māori urban identities are layered and complex in oral history research on urbanisations. In the first few pages of his chapter, Belich used urban-based words frequently and mostly in the demographic sense as a tool for explaining urban-based residency. This included the statement that ‘[a]round 1960, the Māori became a predominately urban people’ (Belich 2001:472). In this simple and to-the-point sentence, Belich described a time when Māori became a majority urban-living population. In its context, the statement made no judgement on Māori social or cultural experiences in being an ‘urban people’, and it was probably never intended to be used as a commentary on individual or group Māori identities.

But in considering this statement from a Māori worldview perspective, the question was raised — what did it mean to become an ‘urban people’?

In my research I have chosen to take questions like this one back to Māori communities to ask about their experiences and understandings of urban migration to the Wellington area. In the Māori language, the word ‘people’ is often synonymous with the word for ‘tribe’, that is, *iwi*. An implied (but not intentional) meaning of Belich’s statement, therefore, is that Māori became a predominantly urban people or *iwi* in 1960, and this idea does sit easily with many Māori who have resisted being defined in a relationship to ‘urban’. In my research I have talked with Māori men and women who are active members of the present-day Māori community in Wellington and who were also active members of the Māori community in Wellington in the years after the Second World War. In all interviews, those Māori men and women recounted their experiences of urban migration as personal and *whānau* (family) stories. In doing this, they refocused discussions of urbanisation as stories of connections to family and descent, rather than stories of individual journeys. This was especially clear when discussing ‘urbanisation’ as a concept for history.

A particularly interesting question in this theme was ‘who or what is urban Māori?’ Although one consistent reply was that ‘urban’ is a concept that applies to material experiences, lifestyles and relationships within the city, another resounding reply was that to be referred to as ‘urban Māori’ did not adequately communicate the breadth of the layers of identities that were active in urban-located Māori lives. I will describe one of those instances here.

The limit to using words like ‘urban’ was demonstrated to me in an interview with a participant who moved to Wellington with *whānau* in the early 1950s. She said that the idea of ‘urban Māori’ meant little if anything to her, especially for her identity, explaining that ‘[i]t’s only a title; it’s only a name. I still prefer to be called Māori rather than urban Māori. That title doesn’t really concern me. To me, it has no meaning. It has nothing’ (WP, interview with author, Lower Hutt, Wellington, 15 July 2009).

Two of this woman’s adult daughters were present at this interview. Despite their mother’s reluctance to accept urban word terms, her daughters believed that the terms ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ were indicative of the connections of their mother’s generation to *hapū* and *iwi* (tribal areas and people). On this point the woman agreed, but she directed the conversation back to the connection of individuals to meaningful systems of *whakapapa*. She explained that she was brought up with strong connections to land and *kaumātua* (elders), and her parents made sure that she would know *tikanga* Māori (Māori cultural practices).

By directing me back to the role of *iwi* and *hapū* in Māori relationships within the city, this woman emphasised that the location of living was less important to urban Māori than the relationships between people and back to home places and home identities. By referencing *tikanga* and *iwi* (or by talking back to their *whakapapa*),

the narratives of this woman and other people I have interviewed about moving into and living in urban areas, as a part of what was a mass migration of people, had only a peripheral role in their personal pasts. Ideas of being an 'urban person' or a 'rural person' were consistently rejected; instead, it was important to recognise the primacy of *whānau*-based narratives. In talking about urbanisation, people I have interviewed have emphasised that although they have moved into the city, they are not a city people.

So, if the people referred to by historians as 'urban Māori' do not necessarily accept 'urban' as any kind of personal or group identifier, what then might be said about the limitations of 'urbanisation' as a subject of study for Māori? Well, there are very few general Māori histories of New Zealand, but Ranginui Walker's 2004 counter-narrative of the New Zealand past, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Mātou: Struggle without end*, provides an example of a Māori approach to discussing Māori urban identities. In *Ka Whawhai Tonu Mātou*, Walker used urban words that accommodated Māori perspectives. In particular, he used urban words that encompassed the wider contexts of urban living, rather than only an explanation of the location of residencies, thereby hinting at holistic Māori understandings of urbanisation as a concept with social and cultural applications. When writing about the concept of 'rural', he stated that the 1956 New Zealand census reported that '[t]he rural tribal hinterlands were being depopulated at the rate of 1 percent, or 1,600 people per annum' (Walker 2004:197). When discussing statistical evidence, a Māori view of history had him incorporate into a concept of 'rural' the *mātauranga* Māori (Māori worldview) concepts of *iwai* and *whenua* (land). In doing this, Walker wrote against the language that characterised urban-migration writing in the 1950s and 1960s and advocated for Māori views. This has been reflected by other Māori and non-Māori historians since, and many writers have shied away from giving too much weight to any urbanisation terminologies.⁹

Thus as a Māori historian researching urban migrations, I was also challenged to make decisions on how to approach such a significant event in personal stories from and about Māori in the twentieth century. I do find discomfort in the ambiguous wording of some texts and as a result have found that oral histories provide an important vehicle for prising open the social and cultural meanings of Māori experiences in urbanisation during the post-war era. Despite the significant and rapid changes in the widespread demographic transitions experienced by Māori during this time (and discussed by historians in New Zealand), Māori narratives and histories of the same period reveal varied constructions of the past that sideline urbanisation as a narrative feature. Ultimately, Māori understandings of the meanings of urbanisation suggest that to research Māori urban migrations, a holistic approach is necessary.

Evident in the early findings of my research, therefore, was that understandings and narratives of the past accessed through oral histories with Māori who moved into the urban areas of Wellington after the Second World War can contrast with what has been discussed in written histories. Instead of stories of change, Māori oral histories of urbanisation display clear and continued relationships with ancestral homes, despite

those people moving into the Wellington region and leading rich and full lives within the city. Although these lives in the city were structured physically, materially and economically by urban lifestyles, a Māori history of urbanisation that uses Māori oral histories must also accommodate the layers of meanings and identities that rest upon Māori values, including descent and *whakapapa*.¹⁰ As the *whakataukī* at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates, we must recognise that many Māori perspectives of urbanisation during the twentieth century do not just stem from independent, individual experiences. Instead, a person's strength, path and journey are not his or hers alone: they are the result of many.

In researching Māori experiences during the twentieth century, therefore, it is important for scholars to be mindful of their tools of research and their connections with the people most likely to be affected by those research practices.¹¹ By taking the concepts of urbanisation and urban migration back to the people who experienced those phenomena, I have begun an exploration of Māori urban migration in New Zealand history beyond its definition as a process of change. Using Māori oral histories to talk about urbanisation experiences allows us to recognise that despite the significant transitions experienced by Māori after the Second World War, it was through memories of *whakapapa* and descent that important Māori cultural concepts have been maintained. Despite the changes that have defined twentieth-century Māori histories, continuities have remained significant factors in enduring Māori identities in urban areas.

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Notes

1. This phenomenon was not exclusive to the time period cited here. For my thesis, to be submitted in 2013, I argue that Māori internal migration practices from the nineteenth century had effects upon Māori migrations of the twentieth century, including both pre- and post-war Māori urban migrations. For an example of early twentieth century migrations to the Wellington area see also *The Silent Migration*, which recounts the experiences of the founding members of one of the first urban Māori clubs, the Ngāti Pōneke Young Māori Club (Grace et al. 2001)
2. In 2006 the Māori urban population was 84.4 percent of the total Māori population in New Zealand. Nearly one-quarter (24.3 percent) of all Māori lived in the Auckland region (Statistics New Zealand 2010).
3. For example, the plenary discussion by Colleen Hayward, Rachel Perkins, Len Collard, Gillian Cowlshaw and Jason Glanville on 29 September 2009, which asked 'Who is urban?'
4. This version of the *whakataukī* was said to have been originally written by Āpirana Ngata in the *mita* (dialect) of Tūhoe.
5. There are many examples of the usages of urban terms in the first half of the twentieth century, but for a demonstration of usages alongside contemporary attitudes and discussions on Māori populations, see McQueen 1945, Hunn 1961 and Baird 1964.

6. Beyond the key resources, the scholarship on Māori urban migrations is multidisciplinary, covering a range of focuses and publishing periods.
7. Pool's most comprehensive and well-known work on Māori was published in 1991, a culmination of three decades of research (Pool 1991).
8. This 'revolution' included an increasing public consciousness and revitalisation of Māori social, cultural and political forms. Belich wrote that this revolution was an ongoing one, which the New Zealand population was still in the middle of (Belich 2001:467).
9. In 2009, for example, Nepia Mahuika argued that histories on Māori urbanisation were based in a historical tradition founded on nationhood as a defining feature for our past. Instead, he suggested a Māori understanding of New Zealand history could be structured around the notion of Te Ika A Māui (a historical Māori name for the North Island), connecting Māori experiences with longer narratives of descent (Mahuika 2009).
10. An important worldview perspective in historical discussions of Māori identity and continuities in urban migration is the ongoing relevance of *Te Tino Rangatiratanga* (self-determination) concepts operational among Māori communities (Hill 2009, 2012).
11. Some good sources exploring this foundation idea for Māori historical practice include Selby and Laurie 2005, *Tē Pouhere Kōrero (The Māori History Journal)* 1999–2010 and Royal 1992.

Chapter 11

Sixteen-pound hammers, fettlers, shanties and railway tents: Demographic movement of Aboriginal people from rural to urban areas of central eastern New South Wales in the assimilation era, 1940–69

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Abstract: *This chapter provides a brief history of Aboriginal urbanisation, with a particular focus on the trials and tribulations of Aboriginal people who relocated from the North Coast and New England districts of eastern New South Wales to Platt's Estate in Newcastle and Teralba at Lake Macquarie in the Hunter region. Drawn from colonial archival records, contemporary literature, film documentaries and Aboriginal oral tradition, this work specifically focuses on the lives of Aboriginal people against a backdrop of the assimilation policies of the paternalistic New South Wales Aboriginal Welfare Board from 1940 to 1969. How did these policies impact on Aboriginal people at Platt's Estate and Teralba? Finally and most importantly, this paper recognises an invaluable contribution to the Australian economy by Aboriginal people; the Aboriginal men who provided muscle and sweat as fettlers in the railways and as labourers in heavy secondary industries, and the Aboriginal women who cooked the meals and nurtured the children.*

A brief history of nineteenth-century Aboriginal urbanisation and the protection era, 1883–1969

Aboriginal populations, apart from large congregations at various ceremonial exchanges, lived in low-density demographic settlements prior to European colonisation. Since British colonisation in 1788 there has been a trend for Aboriginal

people to move to colonial urban centres. What motivated this trend? From archival and contemporary sources it is evident that employment and frontier conflict were significant factors in the nineteenth century. Australian historian Professor Henry Reynolds states that Aboriginal people were drawn to urban areas out of curiosity and a desire for European foods such as flour, sugar, meat and rice. Reynolds (1990:131) also states Aboriginal people moved to urban areas to escape colonial violence:

The attraction of the towns was real enough; but it was only half the story. Many family groups were driven in the countryside by the violence of the frontier, the difficulty of finding enough to eat in their own country, or because they were literally forced off their land by squatters and police.

Reynolds' claim is supported by missionary Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld, who observed the demographic migration of Aboriginal people away from Lake Macquarie in the first half of the nineteenth century. Here, according to Threlkeld, colonial frontier conflict erupted against Aboriginal people in the 1820s. He informed his superiors, the London Missionary Society, in a letter on 4 September 1826, 'Alas! The blood of the Blacks begins to flow. We are in a state of warfare up the country here' (in Gunson 1974:vol. 2, 213). A few years later Threlkeld lamented a failed mission at Lake Macquarie when he wrote to Colonial Secretary E Deas Thompson on 31 December 1840 (in Gunson 1974:vol. 1, 166):

The blacks have nearly forsaken this Lake, having found at Newcastle employment suitable to their habits; some being engaged in fishing, some as water carriers, messengers, servants, and some on board the numerous vessels, according as their services are required.

Although Threlkeld did not mention that urban migration to Newcastle was directly caused by violence, it was a most likely scenario. Colonial explorer Sir Thomas Mitchell (1965[1839]:9–10), who visited Lake Macquarie in the early 1830s, noted that a war had been waged by colonists against Aboriginal people in the district, resulting in forcible dispossession of land and resources:

Not a trace of man, or of his existence, was visible on any side, except a distant solitary column of smoke, that arose from a thicket between the hill on which I stood and the coast, and marked the asylum of a remnant of the aborigines. These unfortunate creatures could no longer enjoy their solitary freedom; for the dominion of the white man surrounded them. His sheep and cattle filled the green pastures where the kangaroo (the principal food of the natives) was accustomed to range, until the stranger came from distant lands and claimed the soil. Thus these

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first inhabitants, hemmed in by the power of the white population, and deprived of the liberty which they formerly enjoyed of wandering at will through their native wilds, were compelled to seek a precarious shelter.

Following a century of frontier conflict, colonial governance over the lives of Aboriginal people took a new direction in the latter part of the nineteenth century. On 2 June 1883 the Aborigines Protection Board was formed, comprising six members who were responsible to the Governor for Aboriginal welfare in New South Wales. The *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* (NSW) and subsequent amendments in 1915 gave government authorities legislative power to remove any children of Aboriginal descent from their parents (State Records n.d.). Dr F Gale (in Jupp 1988:242) writes, 'By and large, Aboriginal people in southern and eastern Australia during the nineteenth century were gathered onto confined missions surrounded by encroaching frontiers of settlement.' In total, the major impacts of this legislation were the confinement of thousands of Aboriginal people onto government reservations and the creation of a Stolen Generation. In the latter part of the 1930s, Commonwealth and New South Wales governments sought to dismantle segregation policies and decentralise missions by merging Aboriginal people into mainstream Australian society. This new direction saw the draconian Aborigines Protection Board replaced by the Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB). According to the New South Wales State Archives Office (State Records n.d.):

The Board was reconstituted again under the *Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act of 1940*, and its name changed to the Aborigines Welfare Board. The duties of the new Board were to: apportion, distribute and apply moneys for the relief or benefit of Aboriginal people; or to assist them in obtaining employment; maintain them whilst employed or otherwise to assist them to become assimilated into the general life of the community.

According to Gale (in Jupp 1988:240), the war years from 1939 to 1945 were 'the watershed between the total isolation of Aboriginal people on restricted, segregated missions and settlements, and their movement into towns and cities to join the growing multicultural Australian society'. Following the Second World War, full employment became a major policy goal of the Australian federal government, from Chifley's Labor Party to Menzies' coalition government. The AWB policy of encouraging Aboriginal people into full-time employment therefore conformed to a direction in federal government policy about employment in general (O'Keefe 1986:150–61). Gale (in Jupp 1988:240) proposes that positive and negative demographic forces influenced Aboriginal urbanisation following the cessation of the war:

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In this, as in almost all migrations, both push and pull forces were operating. Not only was life becoming increasingly restrictive and intolerable for many Aborigines on reserves, but also urban areas were opening up and opportunities became available in towns and cities on a scale never known on the reserves.

Australian historian Richard Broome (2002:178) noted that, following the war, 'many Aboriginal people moved to the capital cities. This move was stimulated by employment opportunities and greater freedoms that emerged after the war.' Broome's view is supported by social analyst Professor C Rowley (1973:363), who stated that Aboriginal people in general had been 'pushed from the country areas by economic factors, and by local discrimination'.

The merger of Aboriginal people into mainstream society was an uneasy process and the AWB recognised that racial discrimination was a major obstacle to achieving its goal of successful integration. The AWB believed that overcoming this barrier was the responsibility not only of the 'white' population, but also of Aboriginal people. In January 1952 the AWB highlighted racial divisions in its inaugural issue of a monthly magazine, *Dawn*¹:

Good progress has been made in overcoming the antipathy and colour prejudice which exists among a section of the white community in relation to the aboriginal people. It must be realised, however, that success in this direction, and the complete acceptance of the aborigine by the white people can only be achieved with the co-operation of the aborigine himself. He must prove his independence, and his willingness to work and live in clean hygienic conditions. (*Dawn*, January 1952:4, 5)

There was an expectation, if not onus, on Aboriginal people to 'prove' their worthiness to live among a larger post-colonial society. During this period many Aboriginal people in central-eastern New South Wales were living in relative poverty, either on missions or as fringe-dwellers on the outskirts of urban centres. The AWB was highly critical of Aboriginal housing standards. Photographs were placed in *Dawn* showing Aboriginal people living in shanties and makeshift lean-tos. In condescending terms the AWB made its ideals for Aboriginal people known (*Dawn*, January 1952:14):

The provision of so many clean, modern homes on Aboriginal Stations throughout the State, opens up a new world for the Aboriginal woman of to-day. She can now enjoy the same amenities, the same comforts, and the same pleasures as her white sister. From the dirt floor of a bark gunyah to the polished linoleum of a modern hygienic cottage, is a big step for many aboriginal women to take, a frightening step, perhaps, but, with the patient and ever ready help of Station Managers and Matrons, she will find it is not a difficult one after all. She will realise, that as

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the schools are educating her children to the cleaner and better ways of life, and teaching them various arts and crafts, she must play her part by providing that home environment that is so necessary to the welfare of those children.

Aboriginal women were expected to provide a 'clean, hygienic' home, cook meals for a husband in full employment and raise healthy children.

The post-war period provided job opportunities for Aboriginal people in a variety of positions, although unskilled, labour-intensive work appears to have been the main form of employment. The AWB reported in *Dawn* in June 1955 that the railways were a major employer of young Aboriginal men: 'The employment situation in Condobolin at present is very good. Many of the young men have taken permanent jobs with the railway and are making good money' (*Dawn*, June 1955:6). *Dawn* reported in 1957 that 'Employment is found with the Railways Department, Public Works, Saw Mills, Factories, as well as pastoral work and a few in the mechanical, teaching, nursing and secretarial professions; also several take up fishing and timber cutting on their own' (*Dawn*, January 1957:22). Aboriginal Welfare Officer A Norton, who monitored Aboriginal populations in the Bowraville district on the north coast of New South Wales, proudly boasted during an Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio announcement in January 1957:

The Commonwealth Employment Officers do a wonderful job in placing aborigines, and it is felt that with co-operation from both Government and non-official agencies, much will be done to place the Australian Aborigine in permanent employment which will, without a shadow of doubt, be a great step achieved towards our policy of Assimilation. (*Dawn*, January 1957:22)

The AWB saw permanent employment in the railways, public works, timber mills and factories as a preferable option to seasonal and casual work. The philosophy behind this policy is best explained by Norton: 'It is not easy to wean the Aborigines from casual work, catering as it does for the tendency in many to lead a nomadic life, and offering opportunity for high wages and free spending for all members of the family' (*Dawn*, January 1957:22). The following year, the AWB stated in *Dawn* (January 1958:4):

While increasing numbers of aborigines are finding more permanent types of employment, there are still many who follow seasonal occupations and lead a somewhat migratory existence. This is inimical to a stable economic position and has an adverse effect on the home life and education of the children. Officers of the Board make it their constant endeavour to settle workers in permanent occupations. Many have obtained positions with the Railway Department, Main Roads Board, Local Government bodies, and other work of a stable nature.

Government agencies worked collectively to absorb Aboriginal people into the workforce and to obtain full-time employment of a labour-intensive nature. In some ways the AWB held archaic views similar to Governor Lachlan Macquarie, who ruled the New South Wales colony from 1810 to 1821. Reynolds (1990:88) writes, ‘Macquarie expected the Aborigines to become “progressively Useful to the Country” when employed as “Labourers in Agricultural Employ or among the lower Class of Mechanics”’. Well over a century later, expectations did not seem to have greatly changed, with the AWB reinforcing the notion that Aboriginal people prefer the bottom end of a labour hierarchy. This is the sentiment expressed in *Dawn*, where it is stated, ‘Generally speaking they are not interested in academic pursuits, nor as yet have they expressed the desire to become highly skilled artisans’ (*Dawn*, January 1957:16).

Significant economic growth in the secondary industries in Newcastle stimulated during the Second World War saw a high demand for low-skilled labour. This high labour demand continued into the post-war period, with growth in the secondary industries and the government initiation of massive public works, including the Snowy Mountains Scheme. A labour shortage was compounded by more than 30 000 casualties as a legacy of war, which left New South Wales with a modest labour force. Men were also needed to renovate a rail system that had been badly neglected during the Great Depression and the Second World War and left in a state of disrepair (O’Keefe 1986:214). The following section shows that the lofty ideals of the AWB fell short in attaining equality, especially in housing, for Aboriginal people at Platt’s Estate in Newcastle and at Teralba in Lake Macquarie.

Platt’s Estate, Stolen Generation and tent children

Platt’s Estate was one of a number of shanty settlements seen in the Newcastle district during the Great Depression of the early 1930s (Figure 1). Late historian Shelia Gray (1989:21) stated that, following the Great Depression, ‘victims’ of unemployment left Platt’s Estate ‘when work became available’. She noted that ‘vacated humpies were taken over by other disadvantaged people; in Platt’s Estate for instance by fringe-dweller aboriginals’ (Gray 1989:21). The *Newcastle Morning Herald (NMH)* supports Gray’s claim, reporting on 6 September 1943 that six Aboriginal families were living at Platt’s Estate. According to the report, all the Aboriginal men were employed in secondary industries and the families had been issued permissive occupancies to reside at the estate (*NMH*, 6 September 1943:1).

In 1943 Platt’s Estate housed about 200 people in shacks and shanties, with between 20 to 40 Aboriginal people. Life in Platt’s Estate in the 1940s differed in a number of ways to mainstream society. The homes were low quality compared to mainstream housing, there was no electricity and the road into Platt’s Estate was composed of embedded rocks, which severely tested the soundest of carts (Turner and Blyton 1995:64). At Platt’s Estate Aboriginal families lived in humpies or shanties



Figure 1: A Platt's Estate residence, May 1960 (photograph courtesy of Ronald John Morisson)

constructed of bits and pieces of salvaged roofing iron and timber. Here they became the subject of dispute and racial vilification. For example, Mr R Evans of the Waratah Electoral Council of the Australian Labor Party stated on 4 October 1943 that the 'council simply did not want to encourage the settlement of blacks in the district' (*NMH*, 4 October 1943:1). Aboriginal residents protested against this discrimination. Vera Deacon (2000:4) wrote in May 2007:

On 22 September, *The Newcastle Herald* reports: 'Half caste aboriginal women left a prayer meeting at Platt's Estate City Mission to plead with the Health Committee not to send them away. The majority had lived there two to three years. The woman showed the alderman through their iron and bag shacks, crudely built, but spotlessly clean, each with a vegetable plot. One woman said: 'Why can't you leave us in peace? We should not be penalised because we are coloured.'

Alderman Higgins objected to the suggestion by Evans and the Chief Health Inspector (Mr Meddows) 'to have Aboriginal families on Platt's Estate removed' (*Newcastle Morning Herald*, 4 October 1943:1). He protested at a council meeting over the dispute 'that Aborigines should be treated as humans and not pariahs' (*Newcastle Morning Herald*, 4 October 1943:1). In contrast to the Aboriginal families, non-Aboriginal families also living at Platt's Estate were not subject to such arduous inquiry (*Newcastle Morning Herald*, 6 September 1943:1). Deacon (2000:4) writes:

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The walls of another shack were lined with newspapers, over which were printed Scriptural texts. An Aboriginal woman said: 'God sees no difference in us. Why should you?' A male Aboriginal interjected: 'It is a pity the bible is not read more in the world today'. Sister Durban, in charge of the City Mission described 'the behaviour as excellent'. One referred to the squalid condition of some white-occupied places. Another woman declared her intention to 'fight for my home. I'll never leave here.'

It is interesting that the AWB did not seem to have been involved in this dispute, which was eventually resolved and the Aboriginal families permitted to remain at the estate. The *Newcastle Morning Herald* (6 December 1943:1) reported in reference to these Aboriginal men at Platt's Estate:

The men, in most cases, are employed in essential industry. It is only natural that they should wish to reside in close proximity to their work. It would appear, furthermore, that Greater Newcastle Council had made an exhaustive investigation into the conditions on the estate, and the investigation disclosed that the men and their families were invariably of good character and that their homes were maintained well up to standard requirements.

Another Aboriginal family relocated from Purfleet Mission (near Taree) in the late 1940s, and the father gained employment in the secondary industries and the children attended the local school, Waratah West. An Aboriginal man who was a child at Platt's Estate recalled in 1994:

Dad worked at Stuart and Lloyds for years...it was the only place you could get work...In Newcastle there was no colour bar...the black man and the white man were equal...I went to school there and never found any trouble with the colour of my skin with my white mates...The only time I heard the word black was in jokes...My parents taught us to treat people as we found them and [that] we were as good as any Tom, Dick or Harry. I was lucky because I got an education and when I met people who had stayed at the mission years later they couldn't read or write. (Turner and Blyton 1995:60, 61)

Aboriginal people also abandoned Karuah Mission (60 kilometres north of Newcastle) to seek a better life and moved to Platt's Estate. One Aboriginal man left Karuah Mission in 1950 because he was tired of rations and the paternalism of mission life and found employment at Newcastle as a labourer at BHP. A former non-Aboriginal resident of Platt's Estate recalled in 1994:

He'd had enough of the mission and got tired of the handouts of brown sugar, flour and government suits. He decided to take a chance and come to Newcastle and it turned out a good move because he was able to gain employment in the heavy industries. (Turner and Blyton 1995:60, 61)

Both the Aboriginal men quoted above left missions because they wanted freedom of choice and equal rights rather than the strict regimes of mission life. However, there were some gains. The adult men gained employment in the secondary industries, such as Stewart and Lloyds, until the families were evicted and the land cleared for suburban development in the 1960s. Years later when this man visited Purfleet, he noticed Aboriginal people who had stayed at the mission were illiterate. So it can be seen that urbanisation may have led to some improvements for Aboriginal people in relation to education (Turner and Blyton 1995:60, 61).

Throughout the twentieth century many Aboriginal children were taken from their natural parents and either sent to institutions or adopted out to foster homes. As a result, many Aboriginal people lost contact with their kin and identity. Aboriginal urbanisation did not bring immunity from the threat of having children taken by the AWB officers. One former resident of Platt's Estate recalls being taken from his father by the AWB: 'The welfare caught up with us of course here...they were up on top of the hill with the spy glasses...as soon as Dad went they came straight down and grabbed me, Martin, Dessie and Laurie with the police.' These boys were sent to the notorious Kinchela Boys Home near Kempsey on the north coast of New South Wales. They never saw their father again (*Muloobinda Place of Sea Ferns* 2007). This was the policy line of the AWB, which stated in *Dawn* (February 1962:17):

It is recognised that the best substitute for a child's own home is a foster home with understanding and sympathetic foster parents. If accommodation of this type cannot be secured the only alternative is a Home under the control of the Board. Two such Homes operate, one at Cootamundra for girls, the other at Kinchela for boys.

A 1954 inspection of Platt's Estate by Newcastle City Council revealed there were 62 dwellings made of tents, bagging and iron, with a population of 125 adults and 109 children, including eight Aboriginal families (Turner and Blyton 1995:64). By the end of the decade the process of evictions reignited and both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people were relocated to Housing Commission homes. In 1960 the estate ceased to exist (*Platt's Estate Pambalong Country* 2008).

The history of Aboriginal people who worked on the railways differs to that of people at Platt's Estate who were sedentary and fixed in employment within the secondary industries. The nature of railway work required social mobility and Aboriginal families were frequently required to relocate. A natural catastrophe in

the Hunter Valley in 1955 was the catalyst of Aboriginal urbanisation at Teralba in Lake Macquarie when the banks of the Hunter River collapsed to floodwaters that caused extensive damage. Hundreds of kilometres of railway track were destroyed in the Hunter Valley, particularly in the Maitland and Singleton districts. This catastrophe created an urgent demand for labour and attracted many Aboriginal people from the New England region.

One Aboriginal man who was 17 years old put his age up to 18 to qualify for employment as a fettler. Word spread and he was soon joined by his older brothers as employees of the New South Wales railways. The Aboriginal men lived in tents leased from the Department of Railways about half a kilometre from Maitland Railway Station. In some places, their families joined them. According to this same man, the nature of the work was very hard, swinging 16-pound hammers, levelling ground with shovels, and lifting iron and steel rail girders to lay track. In his group there were five fettlers and a ganger (supervisor). The men normally worked an eight-hour day, but were often called on to do overtime and it was common to work ten to 12 consecutive days (Blyton et al. 2004:71, 73).

Another Aboriginal man who worked in the New England region as a seasonal pastoral worker moved to the Hunter Valley to gain employment in the railways. Although he experienced racism in being refused a lemon squash in an Armidale hotel and was made to sit in a roped section at the front of the picture theatre in Tamworth, the opportunity to obtain full employment was a primary motivation for relocating. To him, the railways presented an opportunity for both permanent employment and equal wages. He was employed as a fettler and worked with other Aboriginal men in gangs repairing railway track damaged by the flood. This was in stark contrast to employment in the pastoral industry, where work was seasonal and 'black rates' or lower wages were paid to Aboriginal men. He recalls:

We camped near Scone, I was 17 I suppose and Old Blue Stewart was the ganger. There was still a stigma about Aboriginal people and we were fighting for just basic individual rights. In the railways you were treated equal as long as you were prepared to sweat it out with the others. (Blyton et al. 2004:71, 72)

Although little research has been conducted in this area, it would seem Scone, Aberdeen and Muswellbrook in the upper Hunter Valley were once the locations of numerous Aboriginal tent communities sited along railway tracks.

It is interesting to note that the railways, albeit due to the influence of trade unions, recognised equal rights and wages for Aboriginal people many years before such rights were recognised in the 1967 referendum. While work on the railway may have been of a permanent nature, the residential addresses of fettlers frequently changed depending on where sections of track needed renovation. Aboriginal people

often found themselves packing up their tents, uprooting their families and relocating to new areas along the railway track. This happened to several Aboriginal families who eventually settled at a place known as Billy Goat Hill in Teralba near Lake Macquarie. During the 1950s and early 1960s at least five Aboriginal families lived on Billy Goat Hill alongside several migrant families who also worked as fettlers and lived in tents.

In William Street, Teralba, Aboriginal people lived in railway tents with their families. Here Aboriginal women raised their young children in the early 1960s. Some of the Aboriginal families eventually leased small blocks of land from the railways and were given permission to erect small two-bedroom weatherboard homes. A long-term resident of the Lake Macquarie area recalls a conversation with his grandfather regarding Aboriginal men working on the railways in Teralba:

I can remember my grandfather saying in the late 1950s, that Aboriginal people living along the railway line at Teralba were just people like us, under the thumb. They lived in tents because it was cheap...my grandfather used to stop by this particular family. The Aboriginal men worked as fettlers which was very arduous work on a difficult section of track between Teralba and Fassifern. Their accommodation consisted of Railway tents and in an area known locally as 'Billy Goat Hill'. (Turner and Blyton 1995:62)

The influx of Aboriginal people to urban areas in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie did not go unnoticed. Yet again Aboriginal people became a subject of controversy and debate among councillors and in October 1954 Alderman Jones of the Newcastle City Council was highly critical of the Railways Commissioner for allowing fettlers to continue living in what he described as 'squalid tent homes alongside railway track'. He was speaking during a debate on a reply to the representations the Health Committee had made to have the tent villages near Platt's Estate cleaned up (Turner and Blyton 1995:62).

Jones insisted that the railways were responsible for providing adequate housing for employees. His report does not specifically refer to Aboriginal people, but it is clear that a significant number of Aboriginal families were a part of these tent communities. Aboriginal people were among a number of disadvantaged minority groups who lived in tent communities. Aboriginal people found themselves working and living alongside migrant groups, including Greek, Italian and Polish people, along the railway tracks in tents or shanty communities (Turner and Blyton 1995:62).

An Aboriginal woman who resided at William Street, Teralba, raised her young daughter in a railway tent. The woman herself was raised in Kempsey on the north coast and had been removed from her parents by the AWB to serve as a domestic servant in Sydney when she was 12 years old. She recalls going to Green Hill Public School in Kempsey in the late 1940s and unsuccessful attempts by the AWB to

integrate the school by admitting Aboriginal children. When this happened all the 'white parents' removed their children from the school and sent them to West Kempsey primary school (Greenhill Public School Centenary 1990:26–32). She also remembers Kempsey as 'a terribly racist place', where if you 'tried on a dress you had to buy it'; while she encountered racism in Lake Macquarie, it was not as bad as Kempsey and Armidale (Turner and Blyton 1995:62–4).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate responses of urban 'white people' to the movement of Aboriginal people to towns and cities in the Hunter region. Preliminary findings indicate Aboriginal people experienced a variety of responses in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. Racist jokes were common, but colour bars seem less overt compared to some rural sectors. Unlike rural areas, there was no segregation in picture theatres or restrictions to municipal swimming pools. Unfortunately, this does not mean there was no racism or social discrimination. One Aboriginal woman has bitter memories of integrated school life in the Hunter Valley:

I couldn't wait to leave school, I hated it, I had to put up with racial abuse because I was Aboriginal. You'd be spat on, there was people known to have head lice, you'd see them crawling on the desk, they just stunk, and I'd always get the blame, never had a louse in my head. It was awful hard until I started fighting back. (Blyton et al. 2004:78)

In 1958 a large percentage of the Aboriginal population in New South Wales remained on missions under the auspices of the AWB, which identified that '4,758 reside on Stations and Reserves under the control of the Board. Of the remaining 8,840, some live in sub-standard conditions on the outskirts of country towns' (*Dawn*, January 1958:4).

Fear of racial conflict and discrimination shaped the decisions of some Aboriginal families in their choice of relocation. An Aboriginal woman recalls that her father had a choice to move to either Muswellbrook or Armidale for employment in 1949 and chose the former. She recalls her school days and how teachers had low expectations of Aboriginal students. She remembers walking to school along a creek and living in a tent leased from the railways department, where her father worked for 30 years:

Dad worked for the railways and had an offer for a job at Muswellbrook or Armidale but chose Muswellbrook because he thought us kids would have a better chance there because there was less racist problems. We were living in a tent. It's a caravan park now, but it was all Sydney Street once. It was an island then, Muscle Creek came round one way and the Hunter River the other way. We moved there in 1949 when I was one or two years old. There was no electricity even though across the other side of the road it was lit up. The railways used to give them a frame and

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the canvas went over the top and you had your sleepers as the floor. (Blyton et al. 2004:77)

It is acknowledged that the AWB had limited resources to assist Aboriginal people reach a state of social and economic equality in New South Wales. The Board admitted as much in a statement in March 1960:

The present board's policy aims at the economic assimilation of the aborigines into the general community, with emphasis on housing, health and education. Operating with limited funds, the board has made a great deal of progress in the implementation of its policy. (*Dawn*, March 1960:19)

The AWB promoted its success with little supporting evidence, while racial prejudice and inequality continued, particularly in rural communities. It is difficult to determine if Aboriginal people at Platt's Estate and Billy Goat Hill experienced less racism than their rural counterparts. Oral tradition from people who moved to these areas indicates it was better than rural districts. Aboriginal people were segregated in rural hospitals, with special wings serving as maternity wards for Aboriginal women. Aboriginal people were forced to wait until all the 'white people' had been attended to before being served in shops. A constant shadow of fear that their children could be taken by the AWB haunted many Aboriginal families during these times (*Muloobinda Place of Sea Ferns* 2007).

It was not until the 1960s, with the work of civil rights leaders such as Charlie Perkins, that continuing discrimination against Aboriginal people began to be highlighted. In February 1965 a group of Sydney University students went on a now-famous bus excursion (the Freedom Rides) throughout rural New South Wales, exposing social discrimination against Aboriginal people who were banned from swimming pools, segregated by rope at the front of picture theatres, and denied access to Returned Services League clubs and hotels (Read 1990:107,112).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief history of Aboriginal urbanisation and looked at the lives of Aboriginal families who migrated from rural sectors of New South Wales to Newcastle and Lake Macquarie in the Hunter region during the assimilation era (1940–69). It is estimated based on newspaper reports and oral tradition that about 20 Aboriginal families relocated from rural areas to Newcastle and Lake Macquarie seeking employment opportunities and escape from racial discrimination. There were positive and negative forces of demographic change. The 1965 Freedom Rides and oral testimony of Aboriginal people are evidence that racism remained active throughout the assimilation period in New South Wales.

Sadly, the AWB lacked the capacity to effectively combat racism or bridge housing inequity for Aboriginal people in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. The ideal of the AWB that Aboriginal women should live on floors of 'polished linoleum' did not materialise at Platt's Estate or Billy Goat Hill. Instead, Aboriginal women gallantly raised children in shanty settlements or railway tents, while Aboriginal men worked as labourers and fettlers in secondary industries and on the railways. There was significant racial conflict in many sectors of rural New South Wales and to escape this racism many Aboriginal families moved to Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. Despite such moves, Aboriginal families at Platt's Estate were under close scrutiny from authorities and the subject of debate concerning evictions. Aboriginal people were attracted to urban areas because they offered full-time employment and better opportunities for their children at school. Finally, it should be acknowledged that Aboriginal men provided valuable service to the economy by working in low-skilled, labour-intensive jobs in the railways and secondary industries. These were brave people in a social landscape where the rivers of racism ran deep in many sectors of New South Wales.

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Note

1. *Dawn* and *New Dawn: A Magazine for the Aboriginal People of NSW* were published from 1952 to 1975. The magazines are available on DVD via the 'Dawn and New Dawn magazines' page of the AIATSIS website (www.aiatsis.gov.au/fhu/dawn.html).

