AN INDIGENOUSX ANTHOLOGY

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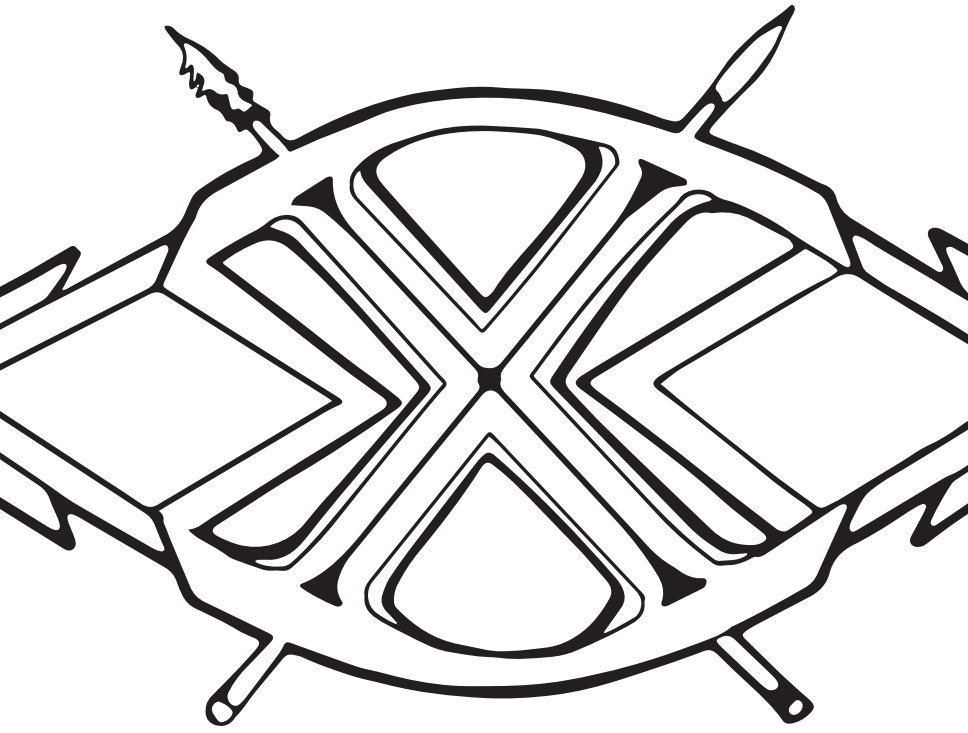

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We acknowledge that this book was largely produced on the traditional lands of the Boon wurrung and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations. We acknowledge that sovereignty was not ceded, and respectfully acknowledge their Ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging.

Published in 2021 by IndigenousX
www.indigenousx.com.au

Volume Editors: Nat Cromb and Luke Pearson
Production: Bowen Street Press, RMIT University
Bowen Street Press Editorial Team: Lilian Galea, Elizabeth Harrington, Tianna Morrison, Annaliese Schultz
Cover Design: Mandy Braddick
Text Design and Typesetting: Megan Ellis
Printed and bound in Australia by Griffin Press, part of Ovato

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

Australian Government | Australia Council for the Arts

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Foreword

LUKE PEARSON: CEO AND FOUNDER OF INDIGENOUSX

In 2015, IndigenousX was a mere three years old, but had already accomplished a lot in such a short time.

Tony Abbott was still Prime Minister so we had no shortage of inspiration for content, and thanks to our partnership with *Guardian Australia* and a new IndigenousX website, we had more ways than ever of sharing Indigenous stories.

It was in this climate that I applied to the Australia Council for the Arts for a grant to produce an IndigenousX anthology. I got 20 or so letters of support from former IndigenousX hosts, friends and allies, and thought, 'How hard could it be?'

Five years later we are ready to release the anthology, so it turns out the answer to that question is 'Clearly a lot harder than I anticipated!'

A small editorial team consisting of myself and Associate Professors Sandy O'Sullivan and Sandra Phillips worked for the first few years on bringing all the pieces of the puzzle together, and along the way I got married, had kids and launched IndigenousX as a consultancy and training company as well as a media organisation. Associate Professor Sandy O'Sullivan 'came in' as transgender, and moved from leading a national Indigenous research centre to beginning a multi-year research project focused

on mapping the influence of queer First Nations' artists. Associate Professor Sandra Phillips turned 50 and moved out of home and state as her youngest turned 18, then returned to Queensland for both work and love.

Despite all of the challenges and opportunities life threw at us, we eventually got to where we are, with no small amount of assistance from Tracy O'Shaughnessy, Cinzia Cavallaro, Lillian Galea, Elizabeth Harrington, Annaliese Schultz, Tianna Morrison and Mickayla Borthwick at RMIT, and IndigenousX Commissioning Editor, Natalie Cromb.

Even though many of the articles were finished at different times over the past five years, this just serves to reinforce the truth of the old adage, 'the more things change the more they stay the same'. This is especially true for the fight for Indigenous rights and recognition.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR SANDY O'SULLIVAN

The process of putting this anthology together began five years ago. At the time, IndigenousX was only a few years old and primarily focused on a rotating Twitter account that highlighted the voices of Indigenous people and their perspectives. Each week a new host would take over and tweet about their Community, their passions and their work, all wrapped up in what mattered (or didn't) to Mob. Each Indigenous person hosting the account had a complex set of stories that were reaching a wide audience, but it had one drawback: it relied on the audience engaging with Twitter.

So, an idea was struck to create a book that would reach a broader audience beyond social media. IndigenousX founder, Luke Pearson, sought funding from the Australia Council for the Arts to pay each contributor and to support the shaping of the book. A diverse range of past IndigenousX hosts were asked to provide a chapter that reflected their perspectives, resistance, advocacy, work and lives. At IndigenousX we formed an editorial team, led by Dr Sandra Phillips, and we worked with the contributors on different sections of the book to bring it together in the form you're now reading.

From commission to publication, the book took five years to produce, with the lives of the contributors, editors and the IndigenousX project itself changing substantially over that time. As a contributor, I rewrote the chapter I had originally submitted in order to reflect both a major personal change, and the ongoing

influence of IndigenousX on my life and work. Each author was given the opportunity to similarly update their stories and you will read this in the final work presented here.

In the years since the anthology was commissioned and production began, IndigenousX has become more prominent through the stories and labour of the many hundreds of hosts and contributors. And, while strengthening its presence in the Twittersphere, it has also moved into other areas. A website was developed to house the stories of hosts and to draw connections for readers. An ongoing relationship with *Guardian Australia* has also been reinforced to promote weekly stories beyond the site. Diversification into live events and across other platforms saw changes too, with IndigenousX—an independent organisation—seeking to continue providing strategies for organisations and the broader public to engage in complex understandings of who we are, as a people.

The chapters found in this book and the stories we have on the IndigenousX site aim to challenge the problematic space that historically had others telling our stories. When the IndigenousX project began, the most accessed site on the internet was a commercial website written and curated by a non-Indigenous person who had no connection to our Communities. While that site continues to cynically reproduce our work and thoughts, it is through the unique contributions of IndigenousX hosts—some of whom have chapters in this book—that we work towards a challenge to this.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR SANDRA PHILLIPS

Luke Pearson had a damned good idea to make the Australian media landscape better and smarter when it comes to Indigenous people. Since Luke founded IndigenousX in 2012, it has become synonymous with notions of Indigenous Excellence and is the place to head to for Indigenous knowledges, perspectives, opinions, and for its seriously hot 'hot takes'! Longtime followers would know the best place to find IndigenousX online is Twitter, where the rotational curation account holds court with an incredible diversity of Indigenous people, week after week after week. And from the time he started this anthology with the assistance of an Australia Council grant five years ago, Luke has grown IndigenousX into a media company that employs Indigenous people generating unique content and providing media and communications training and other services to a wide array of paying clients. I was glad to be a part of the original editorial team for this anthology alongside Luke and Associate Professor Sandy O'Sullivan, and I am now thrilled to know that others have lent their labour to ensure completion of this important project. To the anthology contributors: what a fine, clever, thoughtful, and patient Mob of Mob you are! This IndigenousX anthology is testimony to all the friendships and networks that IndigenousX keeps forging—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. I am proud to continue being part of its community, online and In Real Life.

Introduction

Reconcile This: An IndigenousX Anthology is the first anthology from IndigenousX, the organisation that changed the online media landscape for Indigenous voices. Since its inception, IndigenousX has developed a platform for Indigenous voices who come from many backgrounds and areas of expertise. *Reconcile This* brings some of these voices to print in fourteen illuminating and compelling pieces.

The anthology came about through a desire to create more concrete touchpoints than the tweets which are all too quickly lost to the never ending stream that is Twitter. The anthology reflects the strength of character, the diversity of opinion and the breadth of experiences that IndigenousX seeks to represent in all of the work we do.

IndigenousX curated this anthology over the last decade; a true labour of love. The pieces are scattered across that span of time, with some written as early as 2011 and some updated to reflect the unique landscape of 2020. *Reconcile This* reflects the shifts in Indigenous thought—and the way those thoughts were articulated—throughout this ten-year journey.

We're honoured to have a variety of voices and stories included in the anthology, spanning across both Australian and international First Nations communities. Each author explores a variety of topics and themes that seek to highlight and inform on Indigenous perspectives and experiences.

In ***The colour of my skin***, Aaron Nagas challenges the concept of 'colour-blindness'. He maintains that in being colour-blind, all the parts that make him proud to have the colour of his skin are ignored.

In ***Becoming visible***, Dameyon Bonson shines a light on the harsh statistics many Indigenous LGBTIQSB people face. He calls out the systemic homophobia that plagues our media, but also provides a message of change and hope for the young people of today.

Guess there's no parenting manual for that by Leesa Watego discusses the complexities of Indigenous motherhood in Australia and the lack of diverse and inclusive perspectives Indigenous Australian women have to navigate.

The excellence of our Indigenous voices celebrates the stories and voices from Lynore Geia's home community of Palm Island. She remembers the powerful effect of the historic 1992 Mabo Decision and reflects on the history of Palm Island and the impact of the *Strike 57* protest.

In ***Lessons in traditions***, Michael O'Loughlin discusses the life lessons passed down over countless generations through the art of engraving, songs, dances, stories and how these lessons are still prevalent today.

Garrwa/Yanyuwa discusses modern ways of transferring culture. Gadrian Hoosan contrasts the way he grew up, learning directly from the Elders, with the broader ways that Indigenous ways can be shared.

IndigenousX: Museums, diversity, gender, and meaningful connection through research takes a look at how the emergence of IndigenousX helped improve the results of Sandy O'Sullivan's museums project titled *Reversing the Gaze*.

In ***Indigenous potential in science, technology, engineering and maths***, Matthew Ngamurarri Heffernan examines how non-European cultures and knowledge systems have changed the way we view modern science, and how Australian Indigenous culture offers a different perspective to science and mathematics.

Digital empowerment—Diffusion our way traverses the Indigenous digital revolution in Peter Radoll's personal essay, stating that increasing Aboriginal use of technology drives ICT innovation.

Excellence by creative disruption is Anita Heiss' call to arms for the next generation of excellence. She asks for action and self-determination in order to grow excellence from Indigenous young people, drawing upon her wealth of experience.

Casting off the coloniser's gaze argues against reading journalism about Indigenous issues by non-Indigenous authors. Amy McQuire wants to stop Aboriginal voices from being silenced on the topics they are best suited to discuss.

In ***The time is now for First Nations Australian media***, Rhianna Patrick explores her journey towards becoming a journalist and the growth of First Nations Australian media.

In Terri Janke's ***Indigenous innovation: Creativity, protocols and Indigenous cultural and intellectual property*** she discusses the importance of a proper legal structure to protect Indigenous culture.

In ***I am still not a Canadian***, Chelsea Vowel discusses the fraught political stance Indigenous people in Canada are often forced to take, with reference to her own experiences in the 2015 Canadian election.

Finally, Amelia Telford's ***Our connection to country is key to First Nations leadership in addressing climate change*** addresses the climate crisis and the immediate action we need to take as a country.

With this wealth of powerful voices and stories, not only does *Reconcile This* showcase Indigenous excellence and empowerment, it proves that IndigenousX, as it approaches its 10th anniversary, is here to stay—online, and in print.

The colour of my skin

AARON NAGAS

'Why do you always have to make it about race?'

'I don't see skin colour!'

When you say that you don't 'see the colour of my skin', not only do I know you are lying, but it's disrespectful to those with the colour of my skin.

Firstly, let me clarify that when I say 'the colour of my skin' I don't just mean what you can physically see but also the culture that I know lives inside of me and each and every one of the people who have the colour of my skin. The words 'the colour of my skin' mean my Indigenous Australian culture.

I say that it's disrespectful because when you say that 'you don't see the colour of my skin' to me, that means you automatically assume that it must be a negative thing to see the colour of someone's skin and are therefore forgetting and disrespecting everything that is positive and amazing about that person's race and/or culture.

You are disrespecting the fact that someone with the colour of my skin is a part of *the* oldest living culture on earth.

You are disrespecting the years of struggle it took for someone with the colour of my skin to be accepted as a human being in their own country.

You are disrespecting the fight that someone with the colour of my skin fought just for me to be able to speak my mind without fear of persecution.

You are disrespecting the years that someone with the colour of my skin fought and died for this country knowing that when they got home, they would again be a second-class citizen.

You are disrespecting that someone with the colour of my skin is one of the greatest inventors this country has ever created, the Aboriginal Leonardo Da Vinci, David Unaipon who is now proudly on our $50 note.

You are disrespecting the fact that despite only being considered an equal in the eyes of the law in this country for fifty plus years, someone with the colour of my skin has overcome massive intergenerational social disadvantage and rose to the top of almost every profession this great nation has to offer.

You are disrespecting the fact that someone with the colour of my skin is one of our greatest ever Olympians.

You are disrespecting the fact that despite only being 2–3% of the population someone with the colour of my skin is currently playing in the NBA and NFL in the United States of America.

You are disrespecting the fact that despite only being 2–3% of the population someone with the colour of my skin represents 11% of the NRL, 9% of the AFL and is playing in all of our Australian representative teams for almost every sport.

Someone with the colour of my skin has many more achievements but when you don't see the colour of my skin, you are disrespecting the fact that someone saw the colour of their skin and this meant that those people had to fight even harder to achieve what they and many others did and continue to do every day in this country.

While race may be just a social construct, it's a social construct that has disadvantaged someone with the colour of my skin for over 200 years. When you say you don't see the colour

of my skin it sounds like you are trying to forget what someone with the colour of my skin has had to overcome to be more than just the negative stereotype:

Someone with the colour of my skin has a lower life expectancy than the average Australian.

Someone with the colour of my skin has a higher chance of imprisonment than the average Australian.

Someone with the colour of my skin is more likely to be homeless or live below the poverty line than the average Australian.

Someone with the colour of my skin is less likely to complete their education than the average Australian.

Someone with the colour of my skin is less likely to be employed than the average Australian.

While the list of social and health disadvantages is long, the majority of people with the colour of my skin have overcome all of those barriers and more. Someone with the colour of my skin is doing amazing things all throughout this country and all over this beautiful world.

That's why I don't want you to ignore the colour of my skin. I want you to be as proud of the colour of my skin as I am and I invite you to embrace the colour of my skin and learn as much about the colour of my skin as I have of others and be thankful that we can share and appreciate the oldest living culture in the world right here in Australia.

If we can encourage more people to embrace the colour of each other's skin, then together we will all love the skin that we

are in and be understanding enough to see that sometimes it's not what's on the outside but what's on the inside that counts. There's no reason for anyone to not be able to see the colour of someone's skin.

Becoming visible

DAMEYON BONSON

When I was first asked to write for this anthology, I wanted to write about how Black Rainbow is a self-determining effort in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Sistergirl and Brotherboy (LGBTIQSB) peoples.

I wanted to write that the term Black Rainbow came from a letter.

I wanted to write that I was one of the co-authors of that letter.

I wanted to write that this letter was penned to address homophobia in our communities.

I wanted to write that this letter was from a collective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB people who took a public stand against the overt homophobic outbursts of an Aboriginal Australian Boxer, Anthony Mundine.[1]

I wanted to write that there were some who, upon hearing the term Black Rainbow, envisioned a 'black arch', or that it reminded them of a death metal band. That somehow the word 'Black' negated any of the beauty a rainbow or life emits.

I wanted to write that for many, it did not.

I wanted to write that to effect a shift, we need to focus on big picture stuff.

I wanted to write that no matter how tough things get, you have to keep on going.

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1 Anthony Mundine has since apologised for his statements in June 2018. See Keira Jenkins, 'Anger over homophobia', *Koori Mail*, no. 670, February 21, 2018.

I wanted to write that perseverance pays off and that two years later, Black Rainbow is an established presence here in Australia.

I wanted to write that, ironically, two years after the homophobic outburst by Anthony Mundine I was a runner up at the 2015 Indigenous Human Rights Awards.

I wanted to write that it was ironic because it was the Anthony Mundine Indigenous Human Rights Courage Award that I was runner up to.

I wanted to write it was ironic because the nomination was for the recognition of my advocacy for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB peoples in our national suicide prevention discourse.[2]

I wanted to write it was ironic because homophobia kills by suicide. And it takes courage to fight homophobia. Courage was embodied in Mundine, who expressed homophobia.

I wanted to write that when we act out independent of white Australia, white comfort politics and white saviourism are part and parcel to the challenges we face as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I wanted to write how the founding of Black Rainbow has not been immune to that, but also that things have gotten better.

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2 In 2016 Bonson was awarded the Dr.Yunupingu Award at the Indigenous Human Rights Awards, but handed it back in 2018 due to 'the people that run the awards … pretty much standing by and not doing anything about [Mundine]'. See Matthew Wade, 'Indigenous advocate hands back human rights award after Mundine's homophobic rant', *Star Observer*, February 9, 2018, https://www.starobserver.com.au/news/national-news/indigenous-advocate-human-rights-award-mundine-comments/166121.

I wanted to write how in 2015, for the first time in the history of Australia, a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB people came together to discuss suicide as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB people.

I wanted to write of the struggle I had to come up with the right words to describe the self-determining arc that Black Rainbow has been on, but then I realised it is still being created.

So.

I want to write that this anthology provides opportunity for steps and stairs for the Black Rainbow story arc, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB people, suicide and prevention attempts.

I want to write that Black Rainbow is a self-determining effort in the prevention of suicide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB peoples.

I want to write that Black Rainbow is a non-profit movement dedicated to creating more than hope for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB people.

I want to write that May 2016 will mark three years since the release of the 'National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy': the result of sixteen community forums held across Australia by the Australian Government with input from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group and with dual health portfolio ministerial sign-off.

I want to write that, from the ABS, the strategy highlights that 'suicide rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

for the period 2001–2010 were twice that of non-Indigenous Australians'.[3]

I want to write that also in 2013, the Australian Bureau of Statistics ranked intentional self-harm the second leading cause of death for Indigenous males for 2011. For non-Indigenous males it is ranked fifteen.[4]

I want to write that despite ABS publications on suicide since 1994, the data has never been disaggregated to highlight sexuality diversity and gender variance; subsequently ruling out any possibility that homophobia or heterosexism could officially be deemed determinant in any of these deaths.

I want to write that nationwide, attempted suicide rates by non-heterosexual people are said to be between 3.5 and 14 times higher than those of heterosexual peers.[5]

I want to write that non-heterosexuals are more likely to have engaged in self-harm in their lifetime.[6]

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3 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide: origins, trends and incidence', National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention strategy, Australian Department of Health, last modified 2013, https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-natsisps-strat-toc~mental-natsisps-strat-1~mental-natsisps-strat-1-ab.

4 'Leading causes of death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people', Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed 2013, https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/3303.0~2018~Main%20Features~Leading%20causes%20of%20death%20in%20Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20people~2.

5 'New study sheds light on LGBT youth suicides', Australian Men's Health Forums, n.d., https://www.amhf.org.au/new_study_sheds_light_on_lgbt_youth_suicides.

6 'Snapshot of mental health and suicide prevention statistics for LGBTI people', National LGBTI Health Alliance, accessed 2020, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/lgbtihealth/pages/240/attachments/original/1595492235/2020-Snapshot_mental_health_%281%29.pdf?1595492235.

I want to write there is no data or research specifically about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB peoples and our relationship with suicide and self-harm.

I want to write that spirited discussion is yet to be had over whether or not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB peoples existed in pre-settler times.

I want to write that that's not going to happen here but what I will write is this:

I will write that I believe 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex' are counterfeit descriptors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in pre-settler times.

I will write that these classificatory descriptors contaminate the lens through which we view our histories and therefore our present and futures.

I am writing that the idea of discarding these classifications should be embraced due to their colonial nature, due to their origins in heteronormativity and thus being defined from what they are not by those who also are not.

I am writing that by doing so we can remove the false narrative that implies multiple sexualities and gender diversity did not exist.

I write that by removing the colonial lens and looking at relationships, family structures and behaviours subjectively, through the diversity and variances of sexuality and gender, not only will truer narratives appear but with those truer narratives, more affirmed ways of being will also emerge.

I write that up until recently, the public discourse on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sexual diversity and gender variance and our colonial LGBTIQSB identities has been in its infancy.

I will write however, that it does exist.

In 2005, the First Australians' float led the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade for the first time since Mardi Gras first stepped out in 1978.[7]

Published works of Maddee Clarke, Andrew Farrell, Steven Lindsay Ross, myself, David Hardy, Claire G. Coleman, Ellen Van Neervan, Uncle Jack Charles and others pepper our discursive landscape with narratives, testimony, stories, ideas and vision.

Indeed, the 2014 'Cultured Queer/Queering Culture: Indigenous Perspectives on Queerness' symposium featuring the local voices of Andrew Farrell, Sandy O'Sullivan, Maddee Clarke and others was seminal.

Performances such as that of Bogan Villea at Clancestry in Brisbane (2015) are breakthroughs in visibility.

However, those in remote settings are distanced from such exhibitions, and as such this tyranny creates a barrier between this public display of acceptance and co-existence.

Black Rainbow aims to obliterate that chasm.

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7 Michaela Morgan, 'The history of the First Nations float', *SBS*, March 3, 2017, https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/pride/mardigras/article/2016/05/26/history-first-nations-float.

This problem of accessibility is compounded by fact that in many of these remote settings, the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been profoundly influenced by missions, thus creating a watershed of heterosexism and homophobia.[8]

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB peoples, homophobia, transphobia, cisgenderism, biphobia, sexism and heterosexisms—perceived or real—are violent disrupters to our levels and security of psychological wellbeing and cultural safety.

I write that you and I know racism makes us sick.

Homophobia, transphobia, cisgenderism, biphobia, sexism and heterosexism also make us sick. These disorders of the human spirit can and do kill.

Homophobia, transphobia, cisgenderism, biphobia, sexism and heterosexist behaviours perpetuated on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB peoples centrally impact on our quality of living, our peaceful enjoyment of life.

I write that racism, social location, socioeconomic status, intergenerational trauma, you name it, have a devastating impact on our day to day.

I write that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB peoples, the psychological distress and anguish

8 Brian McCoy, *Holding men: Kanyirninpa and the health of Aboriginal men*, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2008), 4–10.

caused by these intersecting demographics, phenomena and determinants no doubt leads to complex mental health issues.

I write that mental health issues can manifest into drug and alcohol dependency issues as well as violent behaviours toward oneself or others, be these emotional or physical and domestic, family, lateral, or otherwise.

I write that that we need a universal strategy to promote comprehensive social and emotional wellbeing to counter these manifestations and their presenting mental health issues.

I write that studies have shown that the social disadvantage and health issues confronting Indigenous people internationally tend to be complex, historical, and include many interacting social determinants including exclusion, discrimination, and marginalisation.[9]

I write that in Australia it is no different.

I want you to know that Australia-wide, twice as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience serious psychological distress (32%) compared to non-Indigenous Australians (17%).[10]

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9 Michael Marmot, 'Social determinants of health inequalities', *Lancet* 365, (March 2005): 1099–104, https://www.who.int/social_determinants/strategy/Marmot-Social%20determinants%20of%20health%20inqualities.pdf.

10 'Whose health? How population groups vary', Australia's Health 2010, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, accessed 2013, https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/40bfe1f9-36d1-48bf-9fbe-ddf6482a8e45/11374-c05.pdf.aspx.

I want you to know that this statistic has direct relevance to the high rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide across the nation.

I want you to know that psychological distress has been shown to predict suicide ideation.

I want you to know that for the wider mainstream sexual and gender diverse community, evidence suggests this broad community is 3.5–14 times more likely to attempt suicide than the general community.

I want you to know while there are many suicide prevention programs and services that address risk factors such as substance abuse, suicide prevention, domestic and child violence, and other phenomena, there are *none* that specifically target sexual diversity and gender variance to facilitate suicide prevention activities within Aboriginal communities.

I want you to know that to address these issues, a campaign needs to be driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB peoples.

I want you to know that we need to uncover risk and protective factors of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB community; and who better than those who experience the risks and the protective factors.

I want you to know that without a doubt, the restoration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sexuality diverse and gender variant identities is a means to reduce suicide.

I want you to know that we are still at the very beginning of this conversation.

I want you to know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Transgender and Intersex peoples need to own and drive this conversation; self-determination is fundamental.

Guess there's no parenting manual for that

LEESA WATEGO

This is an edited speech originally presented at the Mothers at the Margins conference in April 2011. The author would like to acknowledge the traditional owners—the Turrbal and Yuggera peoples whose land it was presented on.

When I became pregnant, I read everything there was to read about being pregnant and giving birth. When I gave birth, I read everything there was to read about babies and toddlers. I still read about parenting, though most of my reading is now online and is about teens. However, unlike the plethora of information and manuals about trimesters, first foods, and toilet-training, there is little reading that helps Aboriginal mothers guide their children and young adults through the hazy maze of violence that exists within Australia.

In the last twelve months three incidents have occurred that have given me a sense of fear for my children's safety, not their physical safety, but safety in their understanding of who they are and where they fit in the world. Where's the parenting manual that helps mums teach their kids about racism? Where's the parenting manual that helps mums teach their kids that the world sees them as pathologised victims? I will explore the range of social media tools I have used that have helped me, first to cope and then to develop support strategies that have informed my role as a mother.

I am a mother, educator, business owner, partner, and community person. I am also an emerging blogger.

I would like to start with a quote by Vernon Ah Kee:

The Three Pigs

When approaching the legend of The Three Pigs there are some critical points to the story that should come to mind but usually never do. Probably because The Three Pigs is a folk tale and folk tales and nursery rhymes and such are generally taken with a grain of salt when looking for any kind of credence to the story or historical positioning. But points of contention should arise when approaching notions of truth and history in the reading. In war, most assuredly the spoils go to the victors. But certainly too goes the right to tell the tales of woe and heroics, establishing and engraining the tellings as truth in history.

It's worth noting that the Pigs do journey from their homeland to a far-off land where the Wolf already inhabits: the Wolf then has a prior claim to the land that the Pigs occupy; the Wolf did not approach the Pigs until they had begun constructing permanent dwellings. Whether the Wolf uttered the words 'little Pig, let me in ... huff and puff ... blow your house' and so on is questionable since it's unlikely the Pigs had any sense of the Wolf's language. In fact, the Wolf could have been trying to warn the Pigs of an on-coming storm that was threatening to 'blow your house in'. It is possible to suppose that the wolf gave his life in an effort to save Third Pig after failing to save First Pig and Second Pig; and that Third Pig, misconstruing the events, proceeded to celebrate his own survival of the storm by boiling and eating the Wolf.

In suggesting that what we know of the story is not entirely accurate and is presented out of context particularly in its representation of the Wolf, [we ask] several questions [that] seek the

> crux of the story. Does the story take place on Wolf land or an 'undiscovered' frontier region of Pig land? Are the three pigs pioneers or invaders? Could the Wolf be native to this land? Was the Wolf really black and the Pigs white?[1]

This quote provides the setting or at least the framework of mothering—Indigenous mothering—in Australia today. Present in this analogy are aspects of the historical (and contemporary) experience of Indigenous families in Brisbane, Queensland and throughout Australia. While not governing my everyday life today, the remnants of our colonised history including dispossession, misrepresentation, theft and violence sometimes feel less like remnants of a bygone era but living and breathing components of a contemporary Aboriginal family life. For me, this questioning of the natural state of being of the three pigs and their history, capture a number of key points that I would like to explore. Where the analogy explores an invasion of land and the telling of that story of the invasion, I would like to explore the way that Aboriginal parenting, mothering and family has been positioned, firstly, to tell not the story of the wolf, but of the three pigs; and secondly, to misrepresent Aboriginal identity and Aboriginal womanhood.

1 Vernon Ah Kee, 'The Three Pigs', in Michelle LaVallee, *Blow Your House In: Vernon Ah Kee* (Regina, Saskatchewan: Mackenzie Art Gallery, 2009).

Who tells the story of Aboriginal families?

To answer this question the answer is *not* Aboriginal people. The story being told the loudest with a significant impact is not Aboriginal people nor Aboriginal mothers. The story of Aboriginality is told to Australia by White people: White academics, White teachers, White critics, White curators. One simple exercise I often do with students is I ask them two questions. The first question is '*What do you know about Aboriginal land/identity/music/art/law etc?*' I ask them to think of the list that they would create just answering that question '*What do you know about ...?*' The second question I ask them, is '*What is the source of that knowledge?*' How do you know what you know about Aboriginal culture? For the most part, students will acknowledge that their knowledge comes from White people, other White people. Australia's knowledge about and of Aboriginal culture, comes from non-Aboriginal Australia.

The case study I would like to use to highlight this discussion is the 2011 case against News Ltd journalist Andrew Bolt. In *Pat Eatock & others v Andrew Bolt & the Herald & Weekly Times*, nine Aboriginal people—including Aunty Pat Eatcock, Larissa Berhendt, Anita Heiss, Geoff Clarke, Bindi Cole and Leeane Enoch—brought a racial discrimination suit against the Herald Sun/News Ltd journalist Andrew Bolt, over a series of articles he wrote about them being fair-skinned Aboriginal people accessing privileges that should be reserved for dark-skinned *real*

Aboriginal people. His arguments centred around the notion that if you have fair-skin you consciously *choose* to be Aboriginal for career gain. What Bolt and others of his intellectual trajectory—Miranda Devine, Pat Karvales, Keith Windshuttle and Gary Johns—demonstrate in their writing is a version of Aboriginality that is opportunistic, is clearly demarcated along skin colour and educational lines. That is, if you are educated and/or live in the city then you're not as Aboriginal as those who live in remote areas. To them modern Aboriginality is contaminated.

What is most interesting is my belief that this version of Aboriginality is perpetuated as a way to finally root it out and get rid of it. Their version of Aboriginality has to run out or to end one day—each generation gets fairer, each generation gets more educated. Eventually, there will be no Aboriginality at all. The past month of writing about Aboriginality in the mainstream press has illustrated the ability of White people to invade, hijack and recreate the story of Aboriginality, just the way the three pigs where able to invade and recreate the story of the wolf.

On a political level, what power does this school of thought have? I am in no position, as a resident of Brisbane to comment on the pros and cons of the Northern Territory Intervention, but I don't think it is a coincidence that Bolt et al. are firmly supportive of this Commonwealth government program that is seen by many as an abuse of human rights.

On a personal level, the power of their words to infect the psyche of ordinary people should not be underestimated. If you're

a reader as I am, these ideas stab at one's sense of self, and identity. By Bolt's logic, in my role as mother, raising four Aboriginal children in a city to be educated, I am denying them, their children and their grandchildren any future as Aboriginal people.

At this point, a quote from Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson:

> At the site of subjectivity, white people in the centre experience being white as a dominant status, but they do not usually perceive it as a consciously acknowledged status. Instead, they accept and experience it as taken for granted features in their social world that have surrounded them since birth. White cultural values, which transcend ethnicity and class, are applied to all areas of human experience, often unconsciously, but sometimes not. Images of white people are normalised through representations in magazines, books, billboards, newspapers, and television every day; to be normal is to be a white person. Media representations of Indigenous people position us as abnormal: we are deviant, inferior, exotic or primitive. These positionings are further complicated by feelings of desire, curiosity and repulsion by white people. In this sense, Indigenous people have become captives of certain kinds of racial difference.[2]

She further goes on to talk about how in making Whiteness visible, one is trespassing a forbidden zone. Are Larissa Berendt, Anita

2 Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'Unmasking Whiteness: A Goori Jondal's Look at Some Duggai Business', in *Unmasking Whiteness: Race Relations and Reconciliation*, ed. Belinda McKay (Brisbane: The Queensland Studies Centre, Griffith University, 1999), 29.

Heiss, Bindi Cole, Danie Mellor in being successful, professional, fair-skinned Aboriginal people perhaps trespassing a forbidden zone? In mainstream media Aboriginal women and mothers are not telling the story of Aboriginality. Well of course this is not the case. There are thousands of Aboriginal mothers, authors, scholars, musicians, artists and everyday people telling the story of Aboriginality, being and living the story of Aboriginality. The issues however, for Bolt and for the mainstream media, is that Aboriginal people's story of Aboriginality does not fit into the vision of what White people or White Australia says it should look like.

Similarly, the story of Motherhood, Mothering and Mothers is distorted, misrepresented and illusory. Despite the work of women over the past decades and centuries, our vision of motherhood is still sanitised, still soft-focus. Corporatisation has been dedicated in taking over as the new patriarchy. In today's world, corporatisation brings branding. Branding brings homogenisation.

Let's briefly explore the homepage of a popular Australian mothers' blog: Kleenex Mums.[3] Brought to you by Kleenex, a corporation, this online community consists of Mummy Bloggers from around the continent. It shares information, resources and opportunities to discuss issues relevant to Australian mothers. Now please *do not* think that I am in anyway attempting to disparage the work of women in bringing an online community to mothers

3 Kleenex Mums, www.kleenexmums.com.au (website is no longer available).

around Australia. But in a quick scan of the types of topics that you might find on the Kleenex Mums blog, I wonder where the diverse experiences of mothering are being captured.

Some of the topics include:

- Easter ideas for kids: ten tips for a fun and healthy Easter
- How to stop tantrums: tips from real mums
- What piece of advice would you give to an 18-year-old?
- Parenting techniques: what works for one child, might not work for the next
- Are mums guilty of over-organising their kids?
- Annoying questions that kids ask
- Parenting tips: raising an only child
- Preparing your toddler for a new baby
- The challenges of raising boys
- What is the ideal age gap between kids?
- How to celebrate Australia Day with the family
- Quick & easy Christmas recipes
- Meeting stepchildren for the first time
- Introducing your child to the family dog
- Your guide to Christmas giving
- Fantastic ideas for homemade Christmas cards
- How family Christmas experiences change as we grow older
- How to have a successful kids sleepover

It's probably at this point that the professional researcher/scholar would introduce a raft of evidence and findings of a survey that discuss the impact of the movement of Mummy Bloggers and a study of the types of topics that are featured, as well as perhaps the cultural background of bloggers across Australia. Well, I'll leave that research to the pros. My piece is basically about me and my experience as a mother.

My story is different?

Like many mothers on the margins I feel that on one level my story is very ordinary, mundane even. My concerns are similar to the Kleenex Mums. They are ordinary stuff. My ordinary day blog post titles might be:

- Five ways to get my kids to feed the chooks each day
- Will my kids ever learn to clean their rooms without having to be told? A mother tells.
- Kids & the three-minute showers: I reveal my secrets
- Ten great tips to get your kids to do their homework.

These are the kind of ordinary posts I could write about. But I think if I could write the kind of blog that I *really* want to, the kind of blog that truly captures the stuff that I deal with—confer with my sisters about—some of the posts might look more like this:

- Five great tips to help your kids fight classmate's assumptions about their skin colour

- Yes, Nan's a Whitefella: helping your kids work through the language of cultural difference
- I think my boyfriend's dad doesn't like Aboriginal People: how to give your daughter good advice
- Five tips to help your in-laws curb their racist language
- My best-friend called me an 'Abo' Mum: helping your child through their first year of school

I have a few others too, that I added last night after talking to a sista in Townsville:

- How to help her love her skin colour: it's not dirty, it's beautiful
- Why isn't my skin colour the same as everyone else's? One mum answers the tricky questions
- I want to have white hair like the beautiful kids: how to tell a toddler she'll never look like Princess Barbie
- 'I wish my skin wasn't the same colour as yours Mummy': What to do when your kids hurt your feelings
- Ten Positive bath games: How to stop your child from scrubbing their skin White.

These are just some of the topics that add to the story of mothering at the Margins of White Australian Motherhood.

I think, believe and hope, that there is real possibility as Mothers, Sisters, Aunties, Grandmothers and Great Grandmothers gradually take to the blogosphere over the next decades, that there is a

chance that Aboriginality—not the mainstream media's version of it, but living, breathing, human Aboriginality—will be expressed and captured for a future that is far beyond my life.

The excellence of our Indigenous voices

LYNORE GEIA

I remember the day, the 3rd of June 1992 when the news came; I remember my physical response, my mind screaming relief as my body trembled. I gripped the cold dark metal of the fence that protectively hedged my work place, forming a demarcation line between Aboriginal place in Mparntwe and the general public thoroughfare of the town. My heart wept silently. Tears blurred my vision as I began to comprehend the significance of that broadcast. The voice of the Australian High Court annulled the silent doctrine of oppression—*terra nullius* was no more. The myth that Australia was empty was debunked; no, we were not empty, in fact our 'Old People' Aboriginal people's ancient lores and laws passed down through the generations governed how the people lived. Births, marriages, deaths, justice, reparation, trade, war, and peace were physically and spiritually linked to our land (our countries) and their boundaries. The highest Western court in mainstream Australia had overturned *terra nullius*. Eddie Koiki Mabo, along with his fellow countrymen, had won their long hard social justice fight in our contemporary understanding; but for the Meriam people, the traditional owners of Mer (Murray Islands) in the Torres Strait, it was the proclamation of their sovereignty.

I was working in an Aboriginal community-controlled health organisation in Central Australia at the time. Here, struggles of all kinds were an everyday occurrence, from the Territory and Federal political arena through to the personal lived experience of the people who came to the health service. What amazed me at the time of the announcement was that this was the result of the

power of the voice of a community; the Meriam people's voices eventually echoed in the Australian High Court, leading to the abolition of the very premise that sanctioned colonial settlement and the subjugation of the Aboriginal nations to the colonisers. That edict of reproach defined our Aboriginal nations, and equally defined our lives. As First Nations peoples we became secondary and voiceless in Australia. Heiss and Minter[1] penned this so eloquently, 'just as the Crown's acquisition of 1770 had made sovereign Aboriginal land *terra nullius*, it also made Aboriginal people *vox nullius*'. As I reflect on the annulment of *terra nullius* I am struck by the power and excellence of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, just like our sovereignty our *voices* were never ceded.

So too in my home community of Palm Island, the month of June holds a date that resonates with the power of the voice, and an event that changed the lives of the Bwgcolman people. Palm Island is the home of the Bwgcolman and Manburra peoples, an island settlement gazetted by the Queensland government in 1914. Initially people were moved to the island in 1918 as victims of a severe cyclone that destroyed their home on the Hull River Mission in North Queensland. Soon after the government commenced forcefully transporting over 40 different Aboriginal tribes from around the state to what became known as

1 Anita Heiss and Peter Minter, *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Aboriginal Literature* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2008)

the place of punishment—Palm Island. Stories are told that the very mention of the name Palm Island was used as a measure of control by the white government officials, enough to deter in their eyes, the 'insubordinate behaviour' of Aboriginal people in other communities. No one wanted to be sent to Palm Island, but no one could stop the effect of the shameful *Queensland Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* (Queensland Government, 1897), notoriously known and despised by Queensland Aboriginal people as 'the Act'.

Amongst the people removed to Palm Island were my great grandparents, they and their peers were people of vision, and people of endurance. To survive the onslaught of government actions against them, and to live in unity together as a community on this isolated island, they had to unite as one people. They became the Bwgcolman people, meaning many tribes, one people. They talked together to keep themselves and each other strong, they wept together and laughed together, using humour to cope with the hardships they were experiencing; in effect stripping the problem of its power over their lives.

June 10th 1957 on Palm Island, my uncle, Albie Geia, raised his voice of protest against the state, one man's voice catalysed a protest against tyranny. Joined by six other men, he and they spearheaded what was to be a major strike by Aboriginals on an Aboriginal reserve against the Queensland Government's punishing regime. These men never graced the walls of our nation's universities, indeed nearly all of them attained less than grade five

level of education. Their scholarship within social justice did not win academic accolades, nevertheless, their intellectual prowess was played out in the field and the dust of our communities, where they left their imprint for us to read and tell our children. Honorate, Bill Congoo, Albie Geia, Eric Lymburner, Sonny Sibley Gordon Tapu, Willie Thaiday, and George Watson. Just writing these names fills my soul with pride in what we have achieved and what we are capable of achieving through speaking out. Saying no to injustice and drawing a line in the sand, thus far and no more.

Like many others who dared to speak out against oppression in our history, raising their voices came at a cost. The seven men and their families paid dearly for their actions. In the early hours of the morning they were removed at gunpoint by the state's police force and further exiled to other Queensland Aboriginal reserves. Although they paid a hard price, their action of speaking out, the power of their voice gave them all a sense of freedom, which was also shared by those who were left behind on the island. As the boat pulled out on that cold June morning, the men, shackled by irons, and their families under police gunpoint looked back at their home and a song came forth. Willie Thaiday sung out powerful, poignant, resilient and full of love for his home and his people; in his own words decades later, Thaiday wrote:[2]

2 Willie Thaiday, *Under the Act* (Townsville: N.Q. Black Publishing Co. Ltd, 1981)

> Soon as we pull out a bit I strike out a big song—island song about our home. The captain fellow called Mr Whiting hear us and say: 'Who them boys? They can't be going to prison in handcuffs. They seem so happy.'
>
> We sing like anything in the military patrol boat. It belong to the air force in Townsville. The policemen are on top and machine gun is pointed down to us but while we are in front of machine gun we sing like anything. When we get on the boat it is nearly daylight. The walkie-talkie is going all the time, talking to people on the shore, talking to people in Townsville. They ask him 'How them boys? They say: 'Nothing wrong. They singing like hell here.' Mr Whiting can't get over it. They wait to arrest us. They think we all wild fellows on boat but we all happy fellows.

I love reading those lines, over and over again. They resonate through my being every time and fill me with the conviction to keep going now over sixty years after this event. My uncle Bill Congoo described how he felt at the time of this event in an interview with Joanne Watson, he said: 'I felt great, at least someone was taking notice, no fear'.[3] Those families did not return to Palm Island until the exile was lifted decades later. Now, just as Mabo Day is an annual celebration and commemoration day, so too does the anniversary of *Strike 57* hold the same power and meaning for the community of Palm Island, especially for those of us who are descendants of the *Strike 57* warriors.

3 Joanne Watson, *Palm Island: Through a long lens* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2010)

One of the wonderful treasures that I found in reading Watson's earlier 1993 thesis[4] was the documentation of my own father's excellent voice in fighting for the cause. During the year of the Strike, my father penned a letter to the government requesting that Director O'Leary (whose position would now probably be referred to as departmental Director General/DG) travel to Palm Island and hear the grievances of the community. Of course, O'Leary did not honour Dad's request to visit, which comes as no surprise. Watson also documented that my father spoke at a conference on racism and education at the University of Queensland in 1972, the year he died. Once again the voice of my father still echoes into my life, immortalised in the pages of Watson's PhD thesis. It gives me great pleasure to see the evidence of my father's works and his words. When I think about what Watson related, I can see in my mind's eye my father Tom sitting and speaking out the words, head down, and pen positioned distinctly in his left hand; writing his letters and his notes in preparation for his conference presentation.

I wasn't born when the Strike happened, my birth took place on Bwgcolman land in 1959, I grew up listening and watching. Bwgcolman stories were told around the table to teach us to stand up and be counted, to challenge injustice when we are able to, and to use our voice. Now in my early sixties as I walk the land, the voices of my elders past become louder—my 'inner ear' listens

4 Joanne Watson, 'Becoming a Bwgcolman: exile and survival on Palm Island reserve 1918 to the present', Doctoral dissertation (University of Queensland, 1993)

to their voices and to the increasing awareness of age within the natural; my awareness sharpens to that place of becoming 'ol girl' now ever before me and the responsibility it carries.

The voice does not dwindle; on the contrary it begins to beat on my inner drum, 'get up my girl, get up and speak'. I heard the 'Old People' say:

> 'Our words echoed over time, our breath still part of this existence, listen girl, listen, we stood where you stand, we walked where you walk, we looked to the horizon where you look … we looked to the mountains where you now look, we spoke the words that you now speak. Our voice is not dead, even though our bodies have gone to the dust of the earth, our voice lingers in the air, … come freedom … once more as I chased the goanna, as I swam naked—no shame, as I walked with my mother at one with the bush … listening and speaking softly as she teaches me to respect the seen and the unseen … as we sat on the bow of our boat like kings sailing the azure sea, as I thread my words through the hearts of the children … as I sing my songs of freedom like the wind and the birds in my rainforest home … As I cry for the ache in my heart cannot be comforted, the voice of chains shackled me … the seen and the unseen … the wails that came forth from deep within as we are ripped from kin and country. The voice choked by the salt wind as we turn our face to destiny'.[5]

5 Lynore Geia, 'First steps, making footprints: intergenerational Palm Island families. Indigenous stories (narratives) of childrearing practices strengths', Doctoral dissertation (James Cook University, 2012)

I love the taste of salt on the wind, when I visit my country I always go to a special part of the beach. I stand there on the same place where history meets the present, the very beach that received all the footprints, soaked up all the voices like a big sea sponge soaks in the oceans since 1918. The wind brings their voices back, it touches my face, it swirls around my body, and it revives me again to keep walking forward.

I carry this now into my professional space; as an academic and researcher, I am conscious that I build my work on the existing works of others. As an Indigenous researcher, I am building on the foundations of the spoken and written words laid down by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island luminaries that have spanned centuries in this country. Writers and scholars, to name a few, from the first letters of Bennelong in 1796 to his Governor describing his plight and requesting assistance[6,7]; the distinguished scholar and inventor of the early 1900s, David Unaipon whose image graces our Australian fifty dollar bank note; the poet and activist Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker); freedom fighter Charles Perkins whose voices in the freedom rides of 1965 created a political furore; and social justice activist William Cooper who not only protested about the treatment of Aboriginals but, in 1938, extended his sense of social justice by leading a unique protest to the German Embassy about the treatment of the Jewish people at Kristallnacht.

6 Anita Heiss, *Dhuuluu-Yala: to talk straight-publishing Indigenous literature* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2003)

7 Anita Heiss and Peter Minter, Macquarie *PEN Anthology of Aboriginal Literature* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2008)

Many critical Indigenous scholars of excellence have paved the way for us, their names would fill pages; we have been following their footprints to find ourselves in the present day. Now our voices intersect the World Wide Web, Indigenous voices have emerged and are growing in the social media sphere. The excellence of our voices now permeates the corridors of parliament, the courtrooms, law firms, school rooms, hospitals and universities—making space and demanding a seat at the policy table. Indigenous people are now becoming the teachers, and western academics and researchers are becoming the learners, thereby balancing the scales with our new-found tensions and transformations. I believe this is a healthy seed bed where our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island voices are making ourselves known in the western sphere, where exchanges of ontological and epistemological discourses make a creative space for something new.

We need to keep going, using our voice to build, to bring understanding, to confront, to open the doors of our self-determination, to stand together and not malign each other, to bring hope to the young people who are watching and listening, as I did decades ago.

When I am an old woman, I want to hear the excellence of the Indigenous voices of the generations who are now in primary and high school and indeed in the womb … I want to and I hope to experience that same physical response of my body, my mind screaming relief as my body trembles. I hope to grip the arch of my walking stick and have my heart weep with joy, and for my

tears to blur my vision as I comprehend the significance of the excellence of their voices as they say to Australia and beyond, 'we are here and have walked into your space, make way and don't hinder, because we have something to say'. As I end here, I share a conversation with my cousin Delphine tonight, the daughter of Uncle Albie Geia, and she recounts the events of the mid-1980s in Townsville when Eddie Koiki Mabo would visit my uncle who was his mentor and brother in arms … their voices not dead, but alive and vibrant today.

Lessons in traditions

MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN

I start by paying my respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia and the Torres Strait. I would also like to pay my respects to the Elders past, present and to the Elders that are yet to come. Finally, I would like to pay my respects to my family.

Conservative estimates are that Aboriginal society has been ongoing for at least 60,000 years. For a society to survive and function for such significant millennia it needs coherent rules and guidelines—codified as law—for everyday life. These laws and guidelines have been passed down and fine-tuned through countless generations in the form of life lessons. These life lessons were passed through the art of engravings, songs, dances and stories. In this article I will look at some examples of these life lessons and how they are expressed in the above mediums. I will also be looking at how these life lessons are relevant in today's modern society. The examples I will be looking at are: Protector/Guardian figures and their representations in art sites, the Map Site located within Yengo National Park, Bandaarr Bumali and Thulli Wagun, both Gamilaraay songs and dances, and the Thorny Devil and Galah traditional story. Each of these media examples have life lessons in them which I believe are just as relevant today, if not more so, than they were in traditional times. In many traditional art sites, there are guardian figures. While they may not be easily identifiable, they are usually located off to the side of the main site or at the entry to a site. These figures can take many forms—spirit figures, figures of men or women carrying weapons,

or a lone hand stencil off the side of the cave, sometimes depicted with a weapon and sometimes without. What all these figures have in common is that they represent the spirit who is there to look after and protect the site.

An example of this is the protector figure at the Map Site located within the Wollombi National Park in the Hunter region of New South Wales on the lands of the Wonnaruh. If you enter this site from the traditional entry way the first figure you see is a male figure approximately six feet in length carrying a large boomerang or bundhi (a club) above his head. This figure represents the spirit Protector of this site.

The lesson that is taught through these figures, and the stories that go with them, is the need to look after places of importance. For me personally I take this lesson to reflect the importance of looking after my family and my home. In traditional times, or in times before colonisation, these figures would have been readily understood by visitors as a warning sign that they were now entering other people's country and that they would have to be respectful or suffer some consequence. There are numerous stories told by the Elders who know the site well, of people who have gone to the site and have vandalised the site by engraving their number plates or tried to remove engravings from the site that have come across misfortune either immediately or soon afterwards.

I need to point out that I do not condone wishing misfortune or ill will on people but I do believe in looking after my own. I also believe these stories and these lessons generate knowledge and

awareness of the ways we should interact with others, particularly when going into other people's country and into their personal spaces such as their homes. The key learning from these figures for me is to always show respect to both people and their property.

The next lesson that I am considering is fairness and respect. To look at this concept I am going to look at a song and dance that I remembered while I was riding a bus to university, 'Bundaarr Bumali' or 'Kangaroo Fighting'. This song tells the story of how in traditional society if you had a disagreement with someone and it got heated—resulting in a physical confrontation—you were told by the Elders within the group to go to a clearing and to settle it out. However, these physical confrontations were bound by a number of rules designed to make the fight fair and to ensure that there were no repercussions as a result of the fight.

Some of the rules included: no striking of a downed opponent, if one person couldn't continue or there was blood shed the fight was to stop, and whether you won or lost the matter was considered over. The final—and the most important—rule was that win or lose you could not bring the fight up again and could not boast or complain about the fight. I believe these rules were constructed to ensure that when the inevitable conflicts occurred there was a mechanism that ensured harmony and cohesion returned to the group.

Some people have called this method of dispute resolution 'customary law' or 'medicine square', and I believe such laws and methods are something modern society could reflect on further.

All too often we are confronted by stories of fights where one person has died as a result of being hit from behind or by being attacked while unable to protect themselves on the ground. How often do we hear someone threatening revenge after losing a fight? I believe that if we, in our twenty-first century society, reflected on the lessons of respect from traditional society more there would be an increase of community harmony and functionality.

Returning to the Map Site within Wollombi National Park the next lesson I would like to explore is the concept of people from different backgrounds being able to come together and being able to work together and get along. The site that teaches this lesson for me is the Three Birds at the Map Site. This site consists of three birds: a scrub turkey, an emu, and a water fowl; each of these birds represent a different group of people. These people would all come to the Wollombi Valley at certain times of the year to participate in ceremony. Each group from different geographical areas would have their own community structures. In some cases, they would have an ongoing conflict with other groups who would be in the valley at the same time. However, everyone knew that while they were in the valley for ceremonial purposes, they would need to put their differences aside.

The lesson that I take away from this site is that although we may all come from different backgrounds and cultures, if we all choose to put aside our differences, we will all be able to conduct business and move forward together.

The next lesson is one that occurs frequently in traditional Aboriginal stories. In many stories there is an underlying message of persistence and keeping your eye on the prize. To explore this, I will look at a song that I remembered while I was driving back home to Moree. The song is called 'Thulli, Wagun' or 'Goanna and Scrub Turkey'. The song and dance describe a goanna trying to get some eggs from the scrub turkey's nest. Each time he gets close to the nest the turkey chases him away. Eventually, the goanna is able to get an egg.

I believe that to achieve anything we need to display persistence. In today's society we are always looking for the instant answer, the quick-fix and the immediate reward. We often forget that the best rewards are those that are earned. I believe that if we went back to this type of thinking there would be a greater appreciation of what we have and not a culture built on trying to outdo our neighbour or a culture of entitlement.

As previously mentioned, many traditional Aboriginal stories have many life lessons embedded into them. An example of this is the story of the 'Thorny Devil and the Galah'. One of the lessons in this story is the way we react to situations has the ability to either make the situation better or worse. In the story the thorny devil is throwing a boomerang and bragging to the galah about how good he is. The galah continually berates the thorny devil and challenges him to throw the boomerang harder and further. Each time the thorny devil throws it he successfully catches the boomerang and each time he boasts about how good

he is to the galah. This continues until the thorny devil finally throws the boomerang too hard and far and is unable to catch it and the boomerang hits the galah in the head which results in the two getting in a fight and ends with the thorny devil being thrown into a thorn bush.

For me, this lesson could be heeded in many aspects of modern society including the media and social media. The way we react to situations whether we realise it or not can have a large impact on those around us or on those whose situation we choose to comment on or react to. We only have to look to our recent history to see the effects that internet trolls can have on people. While some may say that they did not cause the final outcome or that they were only joking we need to remember that every action has a consequence. While it's easy to only see the negative outcomes there are many examples where negative comments have galvanised a community and had positive outcomes. An example of this is the video of Sean O'Brien , the 'Dancing Man', that went viral after some negative comments were made in an attempt to shame him at a concert.

While I have looked at several different stories there is one basic lesson that runs through all the examples that I have provided and is present in many more. This is the most important lesson that, as a society, we seem to have lost. This lesson is respect. In my day-to-day work I hear people say all the time that young people don't have respect anymore. While in some cases that may be true, I believe that respect is a two-way street and that it must

be earned. I believe that, as a society, if we all learn to show more respect to one another a lot of the issues that we face would be lessened. For me, respect is the guiding principle I live my life by. I said at the start that Aboriginal society has been estimated at 60,000 years old and I believe that if there was not the respect that is taught in all aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture, we as a people would not have survived.

Garrwa/Yanyuwa

GADRIAN HOOSAN

I was born and grew up at Wandangula and Sandridge, which is in the Gulf Country of the Northern Territory. We grew up a lot in the bush, and I was lucky to spend time with Elders learning our cultural ways: stories and how to look after the land. Back then we didn't have mobile phones and laptops and we learned mainly from listening and watching Elders on country. It is in this way that people in the community get selected for learning things, to take over—you know what I mean. I was one of those young fellas selected and I am real proud of that responsibility. We still take these matters seriously. For now, we are passing this learning on for the new younger generation. And we are proud of them taking on that responsibility in a new modern world of technology.

Nowadays we are sharing the public stuff a lot through computers, video and modern music. That is why we started the Sandridge Band really. Music is the best thing to spread a message out to the world for all people to listen too. The first song we played in the Sandridge Band was 'Mimi Country'. That song is really special because we made the documentary about how our Elders used to walk over different country back in the day. It was called 'the Journey East' and I was in that documentary. But I was little kid then. That documentary was important because the Elders wanted to show how they travelled with young initiated men, young 'daru'. We travelled from Malarndarri Springs to Manangoora Station—it was pastoral lease property. That country is all very important because it has a lot of dreamtime

stories in the land and the documentary was a way to share that story. 'Mimi Country' follows the documentary, my old people, my Mimi (Mothers Father/Grandfathers).

We sing that song to honour our Elders and our country and as a way to protect it. Everyone in the community likes that song and when we play it they get up and dance. We are proud of that song. Recently we were very worried about our lands—which are on pastoral leases—being sold because Wollogorang and Wentworth Stations were recently sold without any traditional owners knowing. That was around 80,000 hectares of beautiful country for the Wurdaliya clan. This is part of the reason why we sing and dance our country still—to show our connection and to protect the land.

I felt really good when our stories were shared through IndigenousX. During the week I was hosting, we had a big protest about protecting the land from destruction from mining and fracking. Getting the community together and united for the protest was hard work but on the days of the protest we marched and blocked the roads and bridge across the McArthur River. There were four clans coming together, most were in agreeance but some were opposed to our protests. We all stood strong and our Elders led the march and the young people danced that Ngabaya to show strength and unity. It was a proud moment for us all and it showed how strong our culture is and how it is worth fighting for. We are really concerned about the poisoning of the McArthur River from the mine. Our people still eat from the

river and rely on fishing and hunting the area. It is our livelihood and we want future generations to be able to live off the land too.

We worked with some strong allies: Lauren from Environment Centre NT, David from Environmental Defenders NT, Lock the Gate and Jason (our brother) from Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning UTS. I guess also we were working with the IndigenousX community through Luke and it meant so much to see the support in sharing our story. Today we are still working on it with all of these allies and friends. The FrackFreeAlliance is growing in NT and we will keep guarding the country.

We have a lot of good white brothers and sisters working alongside us, ones that we respect; ones that respect our culture, and support our struggle to stay on the land, on our own terms. We have been here since the beginning, for thousands of years and our laws and ways sustained us and gave us autonomy on our own land. Back in the days we were self-autonomous, we were free. The Elders are still carrying on and that is what they wanted. It is still going and that is what we want. We are carrying on what the Elders and the old people wanted. This also means that we are working with people to identify all of our cultural material—and set down new protocols that are determined by the right ceremonial custodians. For us young fellas the Elders are leading the way and will be there for us when we go to Canberra and hopefully around the world. If people need us to go, we will go and when it comes to our sacred material we must look after it and make sure it is shared in the right way. That is why we work

with different people we trust from lawyers, to environmentalists, activists and different community mobs and our overseas brothers and sisters.

We even have started to visit *Aotearoa*/New Zealand to make our relationship stronger with our Maori brothers and sisters. We were warmly welcomed there. I remember going through customs and the Maori customs officer was so warm and welcoming to us it made us feel strong and good. Although it was so cold in the snow that I had to put a blanket around my head and put fire in my brother Teanau Tuiono's house. When we were in *Aotearoa* (Bruce King, Jason De Santolo and me) we shared the story of what we were struggling against and the story of the Ngabaya. We got up there and showed respect for their mana over the land and we took part in a *Matariki* ceremony. We were very honoured. Since we were welcome in *Aotearoa* when we came back we felt like we were not free in our country. The NT Intervention still exists, our lands are threatened and our culture is not taught in schools still. I guess that is why we teach it out bush at our outstations and on country—that is really where it belongs.

We have had problems with media and schools. To me, they are trying to shut down culture in the Aboriginal community. There is no reason to do that, it is what unites us and brings order to our world. Because you know why—because our country is true, it comes from the land. Real power comes from the truth. So that's what we are fighting for—our peoples truth which is celebrated in our ceremonies and cultural ways. We cannot hide

behind a false truth—we must all begin to understand that our ancient ways must be respected. In a good way, you know. And in another good way, the whole four clan groups listen to Elders, not a small group of forty people making decisions to us in Canberra. No one don't listen to anyone but their own leaders. That is why we are unsure about recognition. We don't need to be recognised in our own country.

We know this will take us a long time, many generations. We are looking for it to begin with a fifty-year plan and move towards strong clans, healthy country and powerful culture. The Sandridge Band and Elders have worked on our Ngabaya project with Jason over the past few years. We had a great time visiting with Astro and Uncle Willie Brim and Zennith in Cairns and Patrick Mau (Maupower) where the recording of the song was done with our Elders at Pegasus studio. It was exciting to see the story come up on NITV and in 2017 we shot the material for the music video. It was the right time. We would like to thank Elder Gladys George for supporting us—that Ngabaya story came from her country, our great grandmother. For now, we are looking forward to launching this Ngabaya music video in in the community at the DanceSite festival, hopefully with support of Lia and Vanessa from ArtBack and MusicNT. We are thankful for all the creative supporters working with us. An exciting part of our strategy, and as part of that story to protect the land and keep culture strong, we will be dancing and singing. And I guess that is what makes this real deadly, that our young people are

dancing and singing still. Our ancient song traditions prove our connection to the land. We are all working together as one and are thankful for all the support we get. Let me finish with a quote from my mother and Elder Nancy McDinny: Jungku Ngambala Ngarrur Ngarrumba Yarkijina Yurrngumba.

'We all sit peacefully in our lands forever.'

IndigenousX: Museums, diversity, gender, and meaningful connection through research

SANDY O'SULLIVAN

Museums, diversity, and IndigenousX

I'm a Wiradjuri transgender/non-binary person, and an Associate Professor in Creative Industries at the University of the Sunshine Coast. The work I do is informed by First Nations'[1] perspectives, and spans creative practice, gender studies, performance, and museum studies, all through the lens of representations of identity and often Indigeneity. I am also compelled by the ways in which our complex diversities are understood across these and intersecting areas, and by how we—as Indigenous peoples—choose to tell our own stories.

Over the last decade, I have worked on a project that explored the engagement and representation of First Nations' Communities and Peoples across major museum spaces in several countries. The museums project—focused on the stories we tell, and the stories told about us—paralleled the emergence of IndigenousX. Over the next few pages, I will detail some of the ways in which the existence and persistence of IndigenousX has improved the outcomes of the museums project, and then how it also assisted in a life-altering personal transformation with a gender reveal. No pressure, IndigenousX!

1 The term includes the First Nations possessive to incite a connectedness of the world that follows it (Peoples Communities), and a clear marker of belonging to those First Nations.

Museums: terrible, terrific, terrifying.

The museums project I have been working on since 2010, entitled *Reversing the Gaze*, was funded by the Australian Research Council. The idea was to undertake a review of 470 museums to determine their capacity to meet our needs as First Nations' Peoples and to find out what works in this representation.[2] Museums are dangerous, tricky places for Indigenous people, and have historically reflected poor or mismanaged representation. Many First Nations' readers will be familiar with the horror of discovering that museums regularly not only collected the remains of our ancestors, but also displayed their bodies as curiosities.[3] After years of work engaged in requesting museums return these ancestral remains, the *Reversing the Gaze* project formed a different approach to extend the conversation and ponder if we needed museums at all. I wanted to find out how, after all of the pain they had caused, museums could adequately engage and represent the diversity of our Peoples and Communities. To do this, I talked to people who worked in museums and how

2 Sandy O'Sullivan, 'Reversing the Gaze: An Indigenous Perspective on Museums, Cultural Representation and the Equivocal Digital Remnant', in *Information Technology and Indigenous Communities* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2013).

3 Both Lonetree and Sleeper-Smith are used extensively throughout Reversing the Gaze, as First Nations' authors challenging representations across the national museum space.
Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Caroline Press, 2012).
Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 2009).

they engaged First Nations' Peoples in participating in being represented and in sharing their stories. The idea was to find out what works *for* our Communities, rather than against them.

The flyer for the project, presented to museums, asked the central question of 'what works'.[4] It also explained why the project approached museum staff for these answers, rather than the Communities that they were engaging and representing. As an Elder in one of the focus group meetings stated, 'we know what *we're* doing right, not so sure about the museums'.[5] From these discussions with museum staff, the project gathered exemplars from across their sector that showed the amount—or limits—of diversity of First Nations' Peoples reflected in these spaces.

When you ask people what works, they'll often tell you what doesn't. Shining a spotlight on spaces that aim to represent us often reveals the motivations of the individuals who tell our stories within these public institutions. The question of 'what works' in the representation of First Nations' Peoples in museums often depends on their level of cultural responsiveness. It quickly became clear that I was getting very different answers from First Nations' staff than from their non-Indigenous colleagues. Back in 2014, the study felt complete in relation to its brief, but these differences in the answers made it clear that the far smaller percentage of

4 Sandy O'Sullivan, 'Reversing the Gaze: An Indigenous Perspective on Museums, Cultural Representation and the Equivocal Digital Remnant', in *Information Technology and Indigenous Communities* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2013).

5 Reversing the Gaze Focus Group 1, (Brisbane: November 12, 2009).

First Nations curator's voices in the project was producing 'noise' from the non-Indigenous cohort that was drowning out some important messages. So I contacted the museums that had already participated, but I also needed a recalibration of how I was approaching them. IndigenousX had approached me at this time to host the rotating Twitter account for the first time. I talked to IndigenousX founder, Luke Pearson, about the issues I was having, and it was decided the week would be devoted to exploring museums, through which I would be able to ask broad questions about the museums project. I also opted to talk about education since I was then working at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, and I was concerned that the museums area would be too contentious without an alternative buffer. What happened next changed the course of the project.

I started out the IndigenousX week by talking about the museums project. I explained some of the obstacles and some of the findings. There was a lot of interest, not just from Australian-based Indigenous curators, but from other Indigenous curators around the world, since IndigenousX was rapidly increasing its international following. The work I'd done in the project over four years of contacting people via email, then waiting for a reply, organising meetings and visiting them on a schedule, was completely turned on its head. Suddenly I was able to interact with many of the curators I had missed out on meeting throughout the project, including at museums where they had nominated their non-Indigenous and often more senior staff, to be interviewed.

For someone who had been looking at museums for a long time, I got what we like to call an edumacation.[6] I heard what wasn't being represented, some of the resistances, and also privileged information that they couldn't tell me as representatives of their institutions. I also heard from people who were no longer working in museums and I heard why. I also experienced some difficult to hear, real-time accountability for not checking in with some of them. I heard a lot of specifics: traditional clothing being referred to as 'costumes' by their non-Indigenous colleagues; representations that were pan-Indigenising that erased the specificity of Communities; and I heard in great detail about interpretation for visitors that was racist or uninformed. Finally, I heard frustration that they felt that Communities were not being adequately represented and had no role in shaping exhibitions, and that some were embarrassed that they had to go back to a Community and let them know, and that their role wouldn't allow them the flexibility to change it.

I heard a lot of the negatives that I wasn't asking for with the question of 'what works', but in doing so, I was also hearing exactly what works in this representation: honesty, listening to Communities, and understanding their truths, fears and frustrations. It also contributed evidence to the case that First Nations' curators are essential to creating culturally responsive

6 Sandy O'Sullivan, 'Practice Futures for Indigenous Agency: Our Gaps, Our Leaps', in *Challenging Future Practice Possibilities*, eds. Joy Higgs, Steven Cork and Debbie Horsfall (Rotterdam: Brill-Sense Publishers, 2019).

museums, and it also highlighted how culturally risky these positions were, with many feeling that their own cultural position was compromised from their engagement.

Publications matter for research and I have a book coming out in 2021 on the project, but the most significant outcome was the real-time Twitter exchange and the hard conversations it forced. Beyond it improving my research, the sharing of stories over that week from one museum curator to another, allowed geographically distanced—and sometimes isolated—Indigenous curators to hear that the struggles they faced were shared. While this wasn't planned as a strategy at the outset, this kind of engagement is necessary for accountability, reach and as a measure of ensuring that people outside of small focus groups, the funding agency, the museum and the university at which I work, has eyes on the project, forming a scrutiny that all research should welcome. Without IndigenousX I know the research project would have floundered, or worse still it could have reinforced some of the status quo.

In 2017 I was invited to keynote at a *Museum Queeries* Indigenous-focused symposium in Winnipeg, Canada. The organisers had asked me to talk about the work I'd done in museums, and in particular any exhibitions or focus on diverse genders and sexualities of First Nations' Peoples. Over the life of the project, I had seen some exhibitions with queer representations, but they were minimal. I started to wonder if I hadn't looked hard enough. I went back through the 200,000 reference photos from the project, and over my notes. I had already noted that most

of the diversity of First Nations' Peoples, including in relation to our sexualities and genders, was downplayed. And while I knew the lack of diverse representation was a finding of the research, I didn't want to go to this symposium without some concrete proof that the representation was at least occurring somewhere. In the representation of First Nations' Peoples in mainstream museums, there is often a historicisation of cultures and peoples, that tends to align with the colonial interests. Churches and missionaries—historically—erased the complexities of gender and sexuality from First Nations' Communities.[7] This focus is often greater in social history museums, but there is an abundance of representation in museums and exhibition spaces that show contemporary representation, and that in particular have showings of contemporary First Nations' artists and makers. In the end, this provided a lens on how greater agency and representation could be made. The symposium that followed the keynote was vibrant and engaged, with First Nations' artists from across Turtle Island coming together to talk about their work and their ideas on how spaces could be transformed, the barriers to this transformation and the beginning of strategies. Set as a roundtable, each day began with people giving their personal pronouns. I was aware of why this mattered and what it meant to say She/Her/Hers or They/Them/Theirs, but it was rarely explored in Australia in my circles. What I hadn't realised was what the impact of going

7 Qwo-Li Driskill, 'Stolen from Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic', *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Volume 16, Issue 2: 50–64.

around the room and hearing each person say it, would have on me. At the time I was fifty-one, and it would be another two years before I came out as transgender/non-binary, but it was from the symposium and across the trip that I began my journey towards understanding that I was assigned the wrong gender at birth.

After I left the symposium in Winnipeg, I drove for 2000 miles across the US eventually heading back up to Toronto, and a further 1500 miles back to Winnipeg. I had a lot of time to think. I was working on a freelance project that required a fairly simple review of museums and Keeping Places. I had just left my previous job and was waiting to begin my current one. Driving alone, I felt disconnected from family, friends and community, as well as work. And I was thinking a lot about my gender. It was at this stage that I turned to Twitter. No, not Twitter, but IndigenousX. Facebook had always held more of a responsibility, it was where I put my photos, but it was also where my family was. And I wasn't ready to let them know … even I didn't know. Luke let me tweet a bit from the road, and I engaged in social media and in the community of IX, when I saw a bear IX was tagged in the video. When I talked about the symposium, I got a lot of interest in the issue of pronouns, and I discovered that there were a number of other Aboriginal people who used they/them/their pronouns.

When I came out as trans in 2019, I asked Luke if I could talk about it on the IndigenousX website. So, on the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia, IX published an article that talked about the

colonial incursions that led to the erasure of the complexities of Indigenous gender identities.[8] Over the last couple of years, I've been working on a project called *Challenging Symbolic Annihilation*. The project thinks through ways that we challenge the erasure of our complexities as people in representations in not just museums, but books, art, on the screen, and across media. It asks how we exist and thrive in a world where you never see anyone like us. It asks some complex questions around visibility, that without IndigenousX, and in particular Luke Pearson's support and encouragement, I wouldn't have formed. I owe a debt to IndigenousX for keeping my research 'real', but also for supporting my individual journey. Over the years, this has been a part of the profile of IndigenousX as it has allowed interrogations of all the ways in which we can be Indigenous people.

In 2020, I was successful in gaining a four-year, million-dollar Australian Research Council grant (with a further $700,000 provided by University of the Sunshine Coast) to undertake work that had its beginnings in discussions with IndigenousX on the importance of queer representation across our Communities. The project will extend the Challenging Symbolic Annihilation work with a renewed focus. 'Saving Lives: Mapping the influence of Indigenous LGBTIQ+ creative artists' will explore the real impact of First Nations' Peoples in supporting diversity across our Communities, and IndigenousX will be a partner in this work through curating creative material and public-thinking about the topic. Because of course they will.

8 Sandy O'Sullivan, 'As Queer Indigenous People We Know a Thing or Two about Days of Action – IDAHOBIT', *IndigenousX*, May 17, 2019, https://indigenousx.com.au/as-queer-indigenous-people-we-know-a-thing-or-two-about-days-of-action-idahobit/.

Indigenous potential in science, technology, engineering and maths

How various cultures have contributed to current understandings of the sciences, mathematics and the nature of reality, and how Australian Indigenous culture can offer unique perspectives

MATTHEW NGAMURARRI HEFFERNAN

Author Note

It's important to stress that although there are many similarities across Indigenous language and tribal groups there is no monolithic system of beliefs, cultures or traditions. The specific knowledges expressed are from the author's own particular language and tribal group: I am Luritja and adhere to and respect my people's culture, cultural protocols, and tradition. Such adherence to protocols of being and knowing means that I intentionally omit a large proportion of this knowledge. Noting too that only a privileged few are holders of this and even more knowledge, and I'm certainly not one of them, and I myself am only just scratching the surface in this essay.

When we discuss the history of philosophy, mathematics, sciences and humanities around the world, the influence of European and European Enlightenment thinkers (seventeenth and eighteenth century) dominates epistemologies in classrooms and academies. However, when we scratch the surface of this hegemonic knowledge system we see that there has been significant input of non-European cultures and knowledge systems. These inputs have dramatically changed the ways in which modern science, mathematics and philosophy—particularly existentialism—are being understood. However, in these disciplines, the Australian education system remains reluctant to explore the rich diversity of Indigenous systems of knowledge and perceptions of the world around us. Although this isn't an academic piece in the strictest

sense of the term, this essay contributes to the important discussions happening on the fringes of our contemporary education systems and makes them accessible to the layperson.

The essay will begin with a brief overview of the development and influences of Western European and Australian education systems, and how non-European cultures have altered the very nature of the way in which we understand and describe the cosmos, while providing brief critique of the richness of ideas lost from those source cultures. The essay continues with an examination and comparison of Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts in which scientific and mathematical discoveries have been made, and how different ontological premises can have the potential to contribute radical new ways of approaching the ensuing conundrums at the cutting edge of research, theory, and knowledge production. Finally, this essay goes through the variety of ways in which the adoption of Indigenous science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) knowledges could improve our economy, deepen our scientific understandings and foster an Australian culture conducive to reconciliation.

History of Western and Australian education systems

The history of modern Western education can be traced back to the influences of ancient Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq and Iran) through to Egypt, India, Greece and, of course, Rome.

Philosophy—from the Greek 'love of knowledge'—was a system clouded in esoteric mysticism and an amalgamation of various disciplines—geometry, astronomy, music, language, etc. Although there isn't any exact point in history where this structure ended and modern systems were introduced, we can credit the transition of European society from feudalism to capitalism as one of the catalysts that made education an important function of society. Key drivers in this transition include the commodification of labour, as well as the increased distribution of labour and therefore the increased need for labour specialisation. It was because of the radical changes in society with democracy and technology that meant people needed to have more specialised educations to participate economically in a modernising society.

Australian pedagogies reflect their British and colonial origins with acute similarities to a gamut of assumptions and paradigms. Over the period of two centuries, curriculums have slowly adapted to localised contexts. For example, in the Northern Territory—with a large Indigenous population per capita—and in remote Indigenous communities, the decision was made in 1973 to teach in the first language of Indigenous students. To call that progress would be far too generous. Without being too critical too early, this example is one of many that, with only superficial observation, indicates a fundamental brokenness in the Australian education system. These systems continue to influence the pseudo-European identity of Australia, even as pluralism, Asian geo-political regional influences, and globalisation are making mono-national identity history.

Additionally, the reductive promotion of education systems as capitalist factories for the output of specialised labour, with mottos and programs such as 'Earn or Learn' and 'Job-ready Graduates', takes away from the profound existential nature of the sciences, mathematics and philosophy as methods by which we understand our universe and ourselves. Education in and of itself is more than just jobs and income, education has an inherent value that it contributes to both the individual in pursuit of it, but also to society more broadly.

Some unfortunate consequences of this 'applied' or utilitarian nature of Western education and capitalism has been the compartmentalisation of our lives, society and education disciplines whilst the connective tissues of holistic systems, the esoteric and the mysterious are discarded. There has been so much emphasis placed on education as a means toward capitalist output, that self-development, social and environmental wellbeing have been relegated to simple mechanisms of capitalism themselves, rather than essential aspects of our very existence.

Western science and Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies

Perhaps the most significant missed opportunity in Australia's modern identity is its failure to adopt knowledge systems of Indigenous cultures outside of a historical and arts context.

The Aboriginal individuality and ontology—the way we perceive and practise the nature of our existence—would be an

asset to the now seemingly metaphysical nature of cosmology and arguably also to the computer sciences and physics. For example, in the Pintupi, Luritja and some other kinship systems, Indigenous people have been using a type of data structure known as a 'binary tree' to efficiently look up an individual's relationship to another, and then based upon this information, how they should interact with that individual. This mental search and sort process has been used for thousands of years. Data structures are a way in which to store and manage sets of data for efficient retrieval and manipulation. A binary tree consists of a 'root' node at the top—there is only one root per tree—and in a western desert kinship system the root node represents you as the individual as you proceed to establish your relationship with others. As the name suggests, each node can have at most two descending nodes. In this example, whether the person you're interacting with is a man or woman will determine whether you will proceed to the left child (child node not biological child just yet) or the right child. Stored within each node in our example is data about who your parent nodes are. This also determines whether new nodes (actual children) will be created, or whether there is some other type of relationship you have with that individual. Each node conceptually represents another root node in their own respective binary tree. In total, there are eight different skin name data types (for male and female), with rules around what specific skin name types can marry and certain community responsibilities associated with each. This is a process that has been ongoing for thousands of

years and has helped ensure the survival of Indigenous people in central Australia. As a computer science and mathematics concept that is inherent in the central Australian Indigenous cultures, why has this never been considered as a method to understand data structures and algorithms in the classroom?

Further, there are many examples and anecdotes of famous discoveries made by thinking about and discussing conundrums and approaching them from abstract perspectives. One such thinker—perhaps the most famous of the last century—was Albert Einstein.

Einstein developed a conundrum that would conceptualise the theory of special relativity and eventually lead to the now famous equation $E = mc^2$ from a dream that he was said to have had. In this dream he imagined what it would be like to travel at the speed of light. What would happen to what he was looking at in front of him, what would he experience and what would an outside observer see?

These were profoundly significant questions with answers that even in our common everyday experience were then and are now still hard to intuitively understand. As you may have already guessed, this now poetic story of an important discovery has many similarities with many Indigenous cultural epistemologies; namely, what is commonly in mainstream Australian parlance referred to as 'the dreamtime' but what we the first people from Central Australia call 'Tjukurrpa'. Similar to Einstein's dream, Tjukurrpa's complex system of belief was separated from the

intuitive waking world, where a dreamlike reality existed before what we see around us today, and where creator beings either interacted with other beings or humanity to teach important moral and/or survival lessons. More importantly, within this 'ether', all forms of scenarios, however implausible to everyday human experience, could be created and examined for its application to repeat observation and testing in everyday life.

The imparting of wisdom through this tradition is still hardly understood, but its practicality serves great purpose in an environment as harsh as central Australia.

The Einstein example, and that of most modern scientists, reflects the influence of globalised cultures, social construct axioms and the religious influences that have contributed to scientific and mathematical understandings of the cosmos. Because of the sometimes geographically isolated circumstance of some Indigenous people—at least on the Australian continent—there is still a rich differentiation on existential paradigms between Indigenous cultures and that of 'other' cultures and cultural amalgamations. For example, through the religious and cultural Christian and Pagan influences on Western European 'ontology' and 'epistemology' we can look at the story of religious spiritualist Johannes Kepler. Facing antagonism from the church, he still used the fundamental understanding of the cosmos from Christianity, Greek philosophers, and Judaism to further his—and our—understanding of astronomy, mathematics and various other fields.

It was during Kepler's research into the nature of planetary motion that he clashed with the 'status quo' thinkers who thought that the orbit of planets must be circular—as the circle is a perfect form and the 'heavens are perfect'. Although elliptical and very close to circular, the data from careful observation of the known planets didn't match the quasi-religious doctrine and status quo of the day, and therefore had to adapt to match observation and mathematical data.

It was the rigidity of the late middle ages' geography, culture, and epistemology—particularly the idea that a deity and its creation would have an intrinsic natural order, symmetry and mathematical elegance—that prevented an accurate understanding of the working of the world. However, Indigenous Australian culture with its epistemological social context that—as famous physicist Niels Bohr once quipped at Einstein— 'doesn't tell God what to do' has conceptualised some of the basic premises for understanding the motion of planets and stars. Although not as compartmentalised as the 'efficient' and practical modern Australian capitalist system, Indigenous pedagogies and epistemology are rooted in practicalities for societal survival within a demanding environment. The 'mythological' and supernatural were not strict narratives with literal historicity but for the most part were in fact methods of information retention, application, and distribution.

So what's the point?

There are some key questions that have not been asked and/or answered sufficiently when trying to examine the lack of Indigenous knowledges in Australian curriculums. There are a variety of arguments that could be made for why filling this vacuum of knowledge would have beneficial consequences across social, economic, and scientific fields in Australia and indeed across the world. Some of these are briefly highlighted below:

Social

The most visible of issues affecting Indigenous Australians arguably belong in this category, and although there is no single cause or single issue, there are common recurring themes across tribal groups and across different socio-economic geographies. Unfortunately, the policy responses have been to either look at the direct, visible causal factors or just crass intellectual laziness and scapegoating. The electoral cycles and shallowness of policy discussion means there is little attention to formulating strategic, long-term, and considered responses for the less visible drivers of social chaos. A nation-state and a world that intrinsically values the intellectual contribution Indigenous cultures provide would contribute to the process in reducing the marginalisation of the cultures who are *holders* of the oral traditions which contain the knowledge. Additionally, valuing different ontologies/ways of thinking about the world would have far-reaching positive consequences for how young Indigenous people—and perhaps

young people from all other cultures—engage in the Australian pseudo-European education system.

Economic

We are already witnessing the slow adoption of Indigenous knowledges as a means by which to grow or protect economies; for example, the endorsement of Indigenous fire-stick farming methods has had an impact on reducing the potential economic damage caused by large bush fires. In parts of the Northern Territory, Indigenous people have been able to leverage their knowledge of country for arts businesses and boutique bushfood products. Although economics as a discipline covers quite a broad range of areas, one such example of the application of Indigenous knowledge in economics is in the amalgamation of ecological preservation with tourism across Australia. Large national parks like Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta in the Northern Territory are examples of relying on ancient and contemporary Indigenous knowledges to protect the environment of these sacred countries while also allowing tourism and business to thrive. The possibilities for application are broad, such as global integration of traditional Indigenous food sources and agri-business development for global export of traditional foods and medicines. Integration of Indigenous knowledges with computer-science curriculum to encourage Indigenous participation in driving innovation in tech across remote Australia. Some of these possibilities are already in the process of becoming realities.

Scientific

The potential for scientific (across all the sciences) and research outcomes is what motivates this essay. Indigenous Australia, as one of the oldest living cultures alive, still has much to contribute. The aforementioned ideas around computer sciences and economic contributions are some examples, however, overall it will be through active Indigenous-led and codesigned localised curriculums that we will see the full fruition of what Indigenous contributions could generate for the country and future generations.

This essay has sought to give a broad overview about how and where Indigenous STEM knowledges could be beneficial in Australian education. It started by discussing the development and influences of European and Australian education systems, followed by a synopsis of non-European cultural influences on the way in which we understand and describe the cosmos. The essay proceeded with an exploration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts in which scientific and mathematical discoveries have been made, followed by how Indigenous knowledges and ontological premises could possibly contribute to new ways of approaching the challenges in both STEM education and society more broadly. To close the arguments, the essay then went through the possible ways in which Indigenous STEM knowledges could improve the Australian economy, deepen the country's scientific understandings and foster an Australian culture ready to improve its relationship with the first nations people.

Digital empowerment—
Diffusion our way

PETER RADOLL

From the early days of 14.4 kilobit internet connection to the dominance of social media today, change in digital technologies has increasingly enabled Indigenous people to develop digital empowerment. We *can* control how and why technologies work for us. We *can* decide what we do or do not want to digitise. We *can* innovate and lead the world in digital technologies. This essay describes some of the technological changes over the time that I have been involved in the Indigenous digital revolution.

I have more than a fleeting interest in digital technologies. Having completed two degrees in Information Technology and a PhD in Information Systems, technology is a lifelong passion that started for me around the age of fourteen when my father purchased one of the early programmable computers. Therefore, our family could be considered as early adopters of Information Technology.

This pattern continued into my adult life. I clearly remember the days when I first had a 14.4 kilobits per second internet connection and how exciting it was to be connected to the internet. This was a time well before Google and a time before web browsers. It was a time when the internet was predominantly listservs and forums and when an image would load slowly one line at a time over a minute or more. It sounds painful compared to today's standards, but it was quite exciting at the time! I remember dreaming of a time when the internet would be super-fast. All I wanted was to see what computers and the internet could do, and what it could offer me; but I could never have imagined that it would take us to where we are now.

Throughout my early years at university, both as a student and a junior academic, I was often left feeling perplexed by what I saw as a general lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Knowing how important these skills were for my own studies, I wondered what I could do to assist my fellow students. So, as a first-year student I started to run digital literacy classes for students. I didn't know it at the time but what I was looking at was the digital divide and I was running a program to address it; I was empowering my fellow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Since then I have witnessed some of the most incredible ICT innovations in the Indigenous space and a move from Indigenous ICT-based programs being non-Indigenous led to more of the programs being Indigenous designed and led. This is important in the adoption of digital technologies for Indigenous people because the digital content and design has to be meaningful to us and we have to have a level of control over the access to technology. This is to preserve and control Indigenous knowledge systems and allow us to develop digital empowerment over our own culture.

While working as an Information Technology Systems Administrator at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in the 1990s I saw the first Ara Irititja database when it was in its embryonic phase. It was ground-breaking in what it was trying to do. At that time there was no such thing as a data archive or image storage database. As I remember it, the idea

of the image and cultural database came from non-Indigenous researchers in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in Central Australia. However, the database did have Aboriginal champions who worked closely with the non-Indigenous researchers to develop a culturally appropriate design. For the more technically minded the Ara Irititja database was a flat, non-relational filemaker pro database that could only run on Macintosh computers. The idea was to create a series of these databases and distribute them to various communities. I managed to see one in action in 2005 at Mutitjulu and later found a version running on a computer at the Koori Heritage Trust in Melbourne, so I guess it delivered on what it was set up to do. While the interface design and the content were great, having a flat, non-relational database meant that it held lots of redundant data. Nevertheless, community members got to access old archive images and were able to write their own story associated with the images. An added benefit was that while interacting with the database communities were building valuable ICT skills.

In the early 2000s I made a few trips to Yuendumu in the Northern Territory to research the adoption of ICTs. I had become aware of and was intrigued by the work that Eric Michaels had done around television and culture in the early 1980s. His work suggested there was a high level of technology uptake in Yuendumu particularly around television recording and broadcasting technologies. From what I read it seemed that while the

community embraced the technology the adoption was primarily driven by non-Indigenous academics. Around the same time, I also read the work of Everett Rogers who come up with the concept of a Diffusion of Innovations model in the early 1960s. Rogers argues that once a community adopts technology early—as Eric Michaels said Yuendumu had done—they stay ahead of other communities. Yet I did not observe strong evidence of Yuendumu's ICT adoption staying ahead of other communities. In fact on my first visit I noticed very few homes had the internet connected. This did not make sense with respect to Roger's model of diffusion and it indicated to me that Aboriginal diffusion of ICTs was somehow different.

While in Central Australia I was informed that there were three public access internet-connected computers located in a media hub building. The only trouble was that to get to them you had to wait for the non-Indigenous manager of the broadcast centre to give you access to the building. Someone was normally around in the middle of the day, but the centre opened late in the morning and closed early in the afternoon and if the manager had to leave during the day the centre would have to be locked up. I was only there for a couple of weeks so I cannot say that this was the usual, but I did not see a great deal of the Aboriginal community using the Internet facilities. I did, however, wonder if what I was seeing was actual public access or whether it was controlled access to the ICTs.

The idea of what public access might look like in the Aboriginal community came up again in the mid-2000s when I travelled to north western NSW to review a government-funded Indigenous public internet access program. I had the opportunity to look at what could happen if you gave an Aboriginal community control over access to computers and the internet in remote parts of NSW. I was struck by the difference between how public access in the Aboriginal community was controlled as compared to public access in the non-Indigenous community. In my report I wrote that Aboriginal community public access needs to be determined by each community. This was the first time that I applied self-determination or Indigenous empowerment principles to Aboriginal community access to ICTs and the internet. Ensuring Aboriginal communities had control over the technology was my main concern.

Another amazing innovation that I was fortunate enough to witness was the development of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Cultural Mapping System. While staying at Mutitjulu in 2004 I saw the first iteration of the system. Two Aboriginal Rangers drove the project and a non-Indigenous programmer provided the technical expertise. Initially the system was a standalone, web-based system and has since become a cloud-based system. However, it is the way it came into existence is what I like so much about it. The three people—Mick Starky, Troy Mallie and Glenn McLaren—tell a story of where the three of them stood on the red dirt of Central Australia, not far

from Uluru, and sketched out the system design in the dirt. They wanted to ensure that the system was designed in a culturally appropriate way. The system holds both Aboriginal knowledge associated with the various significant sites within Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and cultural heritage information that National Park Rangers use to manage the sites. The system is a real hybrid which has Aboriginal knowledge at its core. Interestingly, it has now been deployed in numerous other contexts including the Department of Defence for the monitoring of heritage sites and in Vanuatu for a cultural site management system. This is a great example of where Indigenous knowledges have contributed to an Indigenous ICT-based social enterprise that became a commercial enterprise.

It is evident that increasing Aboriginal use of technology is driving ICT innovation. Moreover, Indigenous knowledges are driving ICT innovation in ways that we could not have imagined all those years ago. We need to recognise that things have changed and that we need to be able to make use of new technologies. We need to grab hold of new technologies and use them for our purposes, to use them to empower our communities both socially and economically.

One of the driving forces of technology adoption by Indigenous communities in Australia is the desire to keep culture strong. This is done in many ways. It is collecting, storing and distributing stories; it is collecting old photos about family and where they are from; it is accessing national or international

archives and collections for family histories, culture and language. Aboriginal language apps are popping up regularly these days to reconnect displaced or lost languages with Indigenous communities. Even though many of the archives and language apps are primarily English-based they still provide a strong connection to culture.

If we look at more recent digital technologies, we see an increase in Indigenous digital innovation. Social media is having a huge impact on the Indigenous community and, subsequently, the broader Australian community. We are able to share in our struggles and our successes. This is can be clearly seen through social media accounts such as @IndigenousX who highlight and promote Indigenous voices and perspectives.

Social media has enabled Indigenous peoples to participate in a forum where previously they have been silenced. The number of Indigenous people who participate in social media simply astounds me. Whether they are young or old, in a remote community or urban community, whether they are a community member or leader: they all have a voice. And they all have an opinion that can be heard! Social media has connected us together in a way that is not only culturally appropriate, but has also given us opportunities that we would never have dreamt of. Social media is the new frontier of digital technologies and it is my guess that it will drive new ways of digital empowerment.

Through my journeys over time and place I have witnessed many great innovations that we, as Indigenous people, do with

and by using digital technologies. I have come to know that our digital innovation is world class and that through Indigenous ICT innovators there are many more innovations on the horizon. Digital empowerment is ours for the taking!

Excellence by creative disruption

ANITA HEISS

I was raised in a house where both my parents were workaholics and excellent in their own fields. My father was a cabinet-maker all his life, and my mum worked in Aboriginal health, the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, and as a homemaker. Through them I saw that hard work, and doing what you were passionate about, bought rewards beyond financial gain. In relation to my father, there was no doubt that turning someone else's trash into his own furniture treasure was a passion he enjoyed.

While I was studying at university, my father said to me, 'Anita if you want to sweep the streets and that's what makes you happy, then that's what you do'. Of course, when I completed my PhD in Communication and Media he expected me to do more than sweep the streets, not only because I'd spent so many years studying, thanks to parental sacrifices, but also because he and Mum believed I had the capacity to do great things.

I've lived by my father's motto for at least two decades, having found a way to make what I love doing—writing—the way to make my living. I share my father's words with the thousands of school students I've spoken to—suggesting they find a way to make a career out of what they love doing most. Surprisingly, only a few have their sights set on playing football or other sports as their sole career ambition. For the most part, the young Koori people I work with have goals and dreams that were not even on my radar when I was their age. Students today talk about success and achievement. They want to excel at school and many want to go to university. They tell me about careers I never considered in

my youth. They want to be engineers and astronauts. They want to get trades and run their own businesses. They want to be role models for the kids that follow them. This is a brand of excellence I see in our young people today, and a maturity that I didn't see when I was young. Perhaps it's the generations of role modelling and excellence that's been handed down and that has evolved over time (without recognition) that I am witnessing the fruits of in these young people's aspirations.

I write this piece aware of who I am, and of the position of privilege I have because I was raised in a city with resources, and in a home where my parents made our education their top priority. It is because of that sense of privilege, in an Indigenous context, that I make a conscious choice to often showcase excellence rather than the disadvantage that riddles a large part of Indigenous Australia. Excellence you see is *not* what is expected of Indigenous Australians, and I hazard to say, Indigenous people internationally.

'Be the change you wish to see' is a quote often attributed to Gandhi, though contested.[1] Either way, it is a motto I try to live by; being the excellence I want to see. I acknowledge that I am competitive at almost every level, except cooking, but COVID-19 provided an opportunity to improve those skills also. I can accept and embrace what I am not good at. But I strive to be the best

1 Garson O'Toole, 'Be the Change You Wish To See in the World', Quote Investigator, published October 23, 2017, https://quoteinvestigator.com/2017/10/23/be-change/.

at what I do; I want to make the bestseller list; I want to beat my own personal best in every half-marathon; I aim to break new ground with my written work and effect change through my public speaking.

I am also compelled to aim for excellence because I am surrounded in my personal and professional life with ground-breaking people; women who are at the peak of their chosen careers. Some of my closest tiddas include Terri Janke (Wuthathi and Meriam), who was the first Indigenous woman in Australia to set up a private law firm. Terri specialises in Indigenous Intellectual Property and Trademarks. Robynne Quiggin (Wiradjuri) is also a lawyer and Associate Dean (Indigenous Leadership and Engagement, UTS) and Sonja Stewart (Yuin) is the CEO of the Law Society of NSW. Through these women I witness not only excellence, but also passion for their work, and passion for always creating challenges for personal and professional growth. Sometimes it's easy to feel inadequate around those who seem to thrive in some of the toughest situations. But it is also an inspiring and motivational space to be in. And a reminder of the responsibility of my generation to make the most of the opportunities that my old people not only fought for, but for the most part, were without.

Success = excellence

Defining excellence is like defining success. In business terms, success may be framed in terms of profit, growth of customer/client

base, employee satisfaction and so on. I am a business of one, so I have sole responsibility for my client growth and satisfaction and for my business' success. While I do need to earn a certain amount of money each year, to plan for the future, cover everyday expenses and to spend on the business so it is able to perform, I am not motivated by income. Making social change through my writing and my public speaking is what motivates me.

As a writer, I measure excellence a certain way. I realised this back in 2005 when I was at University of East Anglia for the 'New Worlds: Reflected Writing Symposium'. I was one of 40 writers invited to sit at a round table from across the world. I struggled with my role there the whole week. On the final day I listened to writer after writer talk about how they measured success: being on the *New York Times* Best Seller list; being reviewed in the *New Yorker*; being translated into x number of foreign languages, and so on.

And then it hit me.

I had never measured my own success, or excellence—had never been at that level in those ways. I realised why I was struggling at that global roundtable: while I'd love to be reviewed in the *New Yorker* etc., I have always measured my success by the impact I have on my readers. Success for me is receiving feedback from a 70-year-old Anglo-Australian who'd read my novel for kids based on the story of a young girl whose life was turned upside down by the Stolen Generations. The conversation was fleeting as I exited the stage following a festival panel, but the moment has

always stayed with me because I wrote *Who Am I? The Diary of Mary Talence, Sydney 1938* with a young adult audience in mind. Success for me is walking into a community organisation and having Aboriginal people tell me they've identified so much with my writing, saying that I've written their story. Having Aboriginal women who have never read a book cover to cover, email me to say they have read one or more of my chick lit novels in its entirety because they can see themselves on the page; that is success to me.

Why excellence matters

To me, excellence brings self-determination. Excellence brings respect, recognition, and opportunities to participate in places and ways I wouldn't have if I hadn't pushed myself to achieve my university degrees or to achieve my published books. Being one of the best in my field is what excellence means to me. And I see this kind of excellence in my writing community, I saw it through my years working on the BlackWords research community, which has over 7000 writers and storytellers indexed across genres, nations and language groups. Now, I see it every day.

Indigenous authors are kicking goals across the literary landscape, spreading Indigenous excellence in storytelling into the mainstream and internationally. These authors include Melissa Lucashenko who's most recent novel *Too Much Lip* (UQP, 2019) took out Australia's most coveted literary award the Miles Franklin. She also won the Queensland Literary

Awards—Queensland Premier's Award for a Work of State Significance and was shortlisted for a swag of others.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research community known as BlackWords has documented the success across genres and includes international translations. The late Doris Pilkington's *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* (UQP, 1996) is possibly one of our greatest examples of publishing success. It was not only adapted for film and screened internationally, it has also been translated into Chinese, Turkish, German, Dutch, French, Japanese, Italian, Swedish, Slovenian and Sinhalese.

What will help excellence grow

- I believe that by demonstrating excellence, individuals will help it grow. Encouraging excellence by demonstrating it proves what's possible. Creating opportunities for others to shine will help excellence grow. 'You can't be what you can't see.'
- I believe that organisations that can provide educational and employment opportunities to Indigenous people can also assist in helping excellence grow.
- Indigenous excellence is scalable. It should be our goal to grow the Indigenous excellence community.

What hinders excellence?

I remember being on the playground at five years of age, and counting to 100 and someone saying, 'Wow, you're a good counter for an Abo'. There was an almost-universal belief that we could not be smart, be gifted academically, or be on par with, let alone better than, non-Indigenous people. Likewise, when I first went to university at UNSW and majored in history and political science, there was often a sense of surprise when I told locals at the bar where I worked that I went to uni. Not many of the local Blackfellas did back then. And while we now have thousands of Indigenous students currently studying and graduating across all of Australia's universities today, I think there is still a feeling that we aren't meant to achieve, that just getting by, or even falling under, is not only acceptable but also expected.

And in recent years there has been increased commentary by Indigenous academics including Dr Lawrence Bamblett (ANU) and Dr Marnee Shay (UQ) around the need to speak of Indigenous Australia from positions of excellence, rather than from positions of deficit.

Excellence in creative disruption

I am called many things, most of them affirming, some of them downright offensive. On the main, I avoid labelling myself—it's other people who give me labels. I don't wake up and say I'm

a leader or a role model. One term I do enjoy using is that of 'creative disruptor'. I learned it form the Women in Focus (WIF) network I am part of through the Commonwealth Bank. WIF is a network of female entrepreneurs who are highly proficient in their fields e.g. medicine, marketing, health, homewares, fashion and food and so forth. They are excellent businesswomen. And I have learned much about my own capacity to grow and give from watching these extraordinary women and how they connect and support each other.

One questioned posed at the WIF conference I attended in 2013 was: 'If you are not disrupting anything through your work, then what are you doing?' And it made me think about what I do, and how I do it. I believe I disrupt the status quo through my creative writing and the unique way I present. Both in writing and speaking, I create opportunities to consider serious issues while entertaining and engaging. I seek to create communities of interests and people who are bonded by common purpose and mutual energy. In that way I am happy to call myself a 'creative disruptor'. My current goal is to see my days out feeling content with my contribution to community, to my current main employer, the University of QLD, and to continue to write and publish stories I believe to be important to society over all.

This short piece was first drafted in 2015. The edit and this closing paragraph is being written in the first stages of COVID-19 here in Australia. My notions of excellence and expectations of self, have been challenged over the last few weeks, and accordingly

that have been adapted. It took me ten days in self-isolation and social-distancing to recognise and accept that it is impossible to produce, create and deliver to the same 'normal' standard or excellence I may have done previously, when we are living in abnormal, extraordinary times. It was that realisation and relief of pressure on myself, while allowing myself some time to reflect on the changes happening across the globe, that allowed me to think differently about how to approach the future with the same level of passion and commitment, delivered in different ways. To ensure Indigenous excellence into the future, time to recalibrate, to reframe and to rethink outcomes is essential.

Casting off the coloniser's gaze

AMY MCQUIRE

There are certain times of the year where I flat out refuse to read articles about Aboriginal affairs written by white people. It begins unintentionally. My eyes begin glazing over reams of texts and empty statistics. Words once alive with meaning become hollow, as if their centres have been drilled out and replaced with the aspirations of outsiders.

I screen bylines and biographies, skipping over writers I admire, feeling fatigued by their work even if it is of its usual high standard. I actively choose to engage only with black writing because reading black is in itself an act of resistance. There is a continuing debate in media about who has the right to tell Aboriginal stories. Are white people allowed to dip in and if so, how far are they permitted to go? What is their role and what are their responsibilities?

The question though is deceptive, because it is automatically geared towards white people: it is solely centred on their right to tell our stories. It is designed to placate white media and the non-Indigenous journalists who win Walkley's about black suffering, often constructing their stories on the foundation of black writers who have usually written about the issue for years and years only to have their voices ignored.

We are now in a situation where—although we have a burgeoning black workforce both in Aboriginal media and mainstream media—we are still working to and under the 'coloniser's gaze'.

We often find ourselves compromising, working within the confines of the system to appeal to mainstream Australia in the

hope it will affect change, rather than challenging and smashing the system altogether.

We are in a cycle of response and the onus falls on us to do one of two things. Either we correct the inaccurate reporting of mainstream media for fear of the consequences or celebrate the non-Indigenous writers who seek to give a 'voice to the voiceless' by—ironically—prioritising their own.

Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison once famously said that she wrote the stories she wanted to read, and she never felt the need to write for the 'white gaze'. Morrison has always centred black characters in her novels and is unapologetic about her refusal to privilege white readers in her work. The result is her canon refusing to remain in the shadows of the often-blinding white gaze which has given her the freedom to plant her stories and watch them grow.

Rather than writing to the perceptions of white readers, she completely throws that off and re-centres blackness. 'What happens to the writerly imagination of a black author who is at some level always conscious of representing one's race to—or in spite of—a race of readers that understands itself to be "universal" or race-free?' she asks.[1]

In a brilliant article for Meanjin, Aboriginal author Alexis Wright has posed important questions about the way we frame

1 Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992).

our own stories. In the piece she poses similar questions: 'I wanted to explore what happened in our imagination and in our creative efforts when we write under the cloud of those who fear us, and who instil their fear in us. Why do I write at all? And why do I write what I write? These are questions I wanted to explore while trying to create stories more authentically; and on the other hand, I wondered, am I just telling stories I have been conditioned to tell by the stories other people tell about us? How could I free my mind to write differently?'[2]

Wright uses the most egregious example of media-driven Indigenous policy in recent history—the NT intervention—to talk about how our stories have been taken from us, to horrific consequences. She says she came to understand after the intervention 'that the Australian media was the storytelling bard of Aboriginal stories for the nation' and we are forced to find other ways to tell our alternative stories.[3]

The intervention, Wright says, had a real impact on the way the Aboriginal story was told: '… What would go up in a ton of smoke was any expectation that we should have our own stories in the political mainstream, even if the word "expectation" had never featured in Aboriginal terms with Australia. Many years of hard work by Aboriginal people on cultivating highly credible

2 Alexis Wright, 'What Happens When You Tell Somebody Else's Story?', *Meanjin*, Summer 2016, https://meanjin.com.au/essays/what-happens-when-you-tell-somebody-elses-story/.

3 Wright, 'What Happens'.

leaders who were presenting our story in a movement that had already changed much of its direction and focus from a national pan-Aboriginal movement to its traditional grassroots regional homelands amounted to nought.'[4]

We are still facing the hangover of the intervention, an abusive policy that continues in new forms in the Territory and across the country. In the beginning, the right of consultation and consent was completely stripped away through the branding of Aboriginal men as child sexual abusers and NT communities as hubs of depravity. The story was taken out of our hands and distorted to within an inch of its life. We are still suffering the consequences, not just from the theft of land, the income management system, the porn and grog bans and the seizure of Aboriginal assets but also because it has forced us into uncomfortable silences we are now being punished for yet again.

The fear of the 'coloniser's gaze', which is so powerful it can lead to a military intervention and a 400% jump in suicide and self-harm rates, now means we fear discussing the important issues in our communities like escalating levels of family violence. While the rest of the country has a national conversation about domestic violence, Aboriginal women remain confined to a foot note, a 'jaw-dropping fact' copy and pasted into text to tick the boxes. The need to talk about the complexities of Aboriginal family violence—its causes and symptoms—in order

4 Wright, 'What Happens'.

to propose solutions, is getting lost in the wider mainstream story, particularly in 'liberal feminism' which strives for faux intersectionality credentials.

It is well known that many Aboriginal women don't report violence within their communities for fear of the authorities—whether it be the police, the justice system where black men and women are killed in cells, or the child protection system—where Aboriginal children are being taken away at higher and higher rates. In Aboriginal media, we are also often fearful of how our stories will be misused yet again, how violence perpetrated against women and children could lead to policy responses which end up hurting us all collectively. Sometimes that means the fear of the 'coloniser's gaze' stops us from covering the story at all. But then, if we do that, can we really say we are doing our job?

Another example of writing to the 'coloniser's gaze' was the tragic case of Ms Maher, an Aboriginal woman who died in a police cell after being picked up one night in Cessnock. Ms Maher had not been charged. She was picked up for public intoxication.

That should have immediately caused outrage. A quarter of a century after the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Death in Custody recommended against the criminalisation of public drunkenness an Aboriginal woman loses her life on the floor of a police cell.

But the outrage was confined solely to matters of 'police procedure'—both mainstream media and Indigenous media

followed the line from the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT that this was a failure of protocol because the police had not rung the endangered Custody Notification Service.

There was nothing on the fact Ms Maher should never have been locked up in the first place and the CNS—a funding issue for the under-resourced ALS NSW/ACT—was used as window dressing, a quick fix to stop the brutalisation of Aboriginal people in custody. *The Project*'s Waleed Aly went viral with a monologue on Ms Maher's death in custody, but he was quick to preface it by immediately clearing the police of any brutalisation and claimed that Aboriginal deaths in custody were not caused by 'deliberate, unlawful killings by police'.[5]

Any Aboriginal person who has felt the brutalisation of the police service, who has been slapped a few times with the telephone book or slammed roughly into the side of a police car, would be astounded at that. It's yet another example of how the story is taken away from First Nations peoples, how our stories are filtered to appease non-Indigenous viewers, while watering down the truth about state-sanctioned violence in this country.

Another example is the 'Recognise' debate. For about five years, you couldn't find a dissenting story about constitutional reform unless it was from a right-winged shock jock. The campaign—well-oiled by government funds—was effective in

5 Waleed Aly, 'Aboriginal Deaths in Custody', Facebook video, 7:04, posted by 'The Project', 19 August, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/TheProjectTV/videos/10153836198908441/.

silencing Aboriginal voices, while mainstream media treated the sizable Aboriginal cynicism as a fringe issue. Even now, the constitutional reform debate is completely lead by white people, packaged to white people, and swallowed by white people—to the detriment of our own voice. While talk of Treaty is gaining prominence across the country, one wonders if it will be true nation-to-nation negotiations and not heavily weighted in favour of government at the expense of Aboriginal people. It is undeniable that the media exerts a huge amount of power over Aboriginal people. Indigenous affairs are one of the most media-driven areas of policy in this country and politicians often are given free rein to ride roughshod over Aboriginal rights. We do feel a certain sense of responsibility to ensure our words—the stories we tell—are not misused. This is an unfair burden, but it is one we often feel shackled to. The problem is that writing within the 'coloniser's gaze' can often result in silences and—in some cases—distortions, as we seek to placate white audiences.

It is hard when our Aboriginal media space is sadly tied to government funds because unfortunately that has been the reality. Indigenous community radio stations are hubs and information centres but are severely underfunded. Our national Indigenous broadcaster was forced to amalgamate with SBS which is often Sydney-centric.

That is why there is so much strength in social media as a tool to break down the 'coloniser's gaze'. Although it can sometimes feel as if we are stuck in a hall of mirrors, going around and around

and seeing no exit, we can still manipulate the platform to write our own stories again.

It is why IndigenousX is so important—as well as other Aboriginal bloggers—who build their platform to circumvent the mainstream media. But we all still fall into the trap occasionally of writing for the 'coloniser's gaze', of writing to the whims of white readers. We unconsciously validate non-Indigenous writers over our own and spend a great deal of energy educating white writers because if they write an inaccuracy there could be real consequences. We often feel an accountability to the white writer and reader because of the potential impact on our own people but at what point should we throw that off, as our own story becomes even more fragmented and assimilated?

That's why I prefer to read black journalists and writers because even the non-Indigenous writers I trust are still controlling a story that is not theirs. Even with their credentials they write their own unconscious biases into copy; they rearrange voices they deem most important and cater to their own audience—which is most often not black. Although I admire many non-Indigenous journalists, I want to read the stories of my own people because a voice, like language, loses something in the translation.

As our story has been restricted and fragmented, assimilated and stolen over the course of 200 years can we afford to keep losing it, to keep giving it away?

The time is now for First Nations Australian media

RHIANNA PATRICK

For as long as I can remember, I've always wanted to be a journalist.

I can't pinpoint the exact moment it happened, but for those who've heard my story before, my career of choice was very much inspired by the longest running sci-fi television series: *Doctor Who*.

As a young Torres Strait Islander growing up in a small mining town on Cape York, working for the ABC as a journalist was the bigger part of that dream.

At no point did it seem like an impossible goal to achieve despite growing up in a remote and at the time, isolated area. The thought had never crossed my young mind, which is of course the beauty of being young and having a dream.

When I reached high school, that dream solidified.

I knew I wanted to give First Nations Australians a voice, report issues from our perspective, and combat what seemed like a constant stream of negative stories about our communities.

During my high school years, ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) was formed, the final report from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was released and the UN General Assembly proclaimed the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples and later, the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

It was a time of immense change and one that definitely influenced me personally and professionally.

By the end of that decade, I'd started my first newsroom job at an Aboriginal radio station and graduated from university.

I couldn't have imagined then how much the world would change, technologically, and how much that change would affect the way that I worked or the way that news was disseminated.

Fast forward to 2020 and I've been living out the career I'd grown up dreaming of with the ABC for almost two decades.

In that time, I've seen the establishment of NITV, an increase in Indigenous drama, comedy and children's television programming and the rise of digital spaces like IndigenousX.

Technological advances and the development of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram along with online publications like *The Guardian* and *The Conversation*, have opened up new ways for First Nations Australians to publish, comment and analyse Indigenous affairs.

It's also given us a publishing space on our own terms where we can discuss issues from our own perspectives without waiting to see if it's included in the mainstream news cycle.

Add to that the plethora of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander podcasts being produced and presented by First Nations Australians, and it's clear that anyone looking for an Indigenous Australian voice can now find one.

That's not to say that there hasn't been one before; I acknowledge the extensive network of Indigenous radio stations across this country and traditional print publications like the *Koori Mail*, but as the new decade dawns, mainstream audiences seem to be searching out our voices and content in digital spaces in greater numbers than ever before.

It's because of this 'shift' that the time is now for First Nations Australian media.

IndigenousX has shown, and to quote the film *Field of Dreams*, that 'if you build it, they will come'.

The momentum of what started out primarily as a Twitter movement has quickly grown into a broader platform which not only allows a Twitter audience to see and interact with the diverse voices of First Nations Australians but it's also allowed those voices to be heard in the mainstream through its partnership with *The Guardian*.

I've watched closely in how this new platform has approached changing the narrative for Indigenous Australians and how it's influenced other guest curated accounts which popped up on Twitter after IndigenousX showed how an account like that could work successfully.

For me, IndigenousX introduced me to new and sometimes unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices. People who are doing what they do, in whatever part of the country they live and do their work on.

Whether it's the guest host that week educating the wider Twittersphere on a particular topic, raising money for Indigenous-led projects or online advocacy, its followers are passionate about the alternative that IndigenousX offers to the mainstream media cycle.

Although there's been an increase in the reportage of Indigenous news stories over the last two decades, it would seem

that hearing or reading our perspectives in those alternative media spaces is what is driving mainstream audiences to find sources that not only cover the latest news items, but also show the positive stories happening within our communities.

But while new(ish) platforms like IndigenousX exist, it should also be a reminder that supporting our existing Indigenous media outlets like Indigenous radio stations, radio programming (both community and mainstream delivered) like *Speaking Out* and *Awaye!* on ABC Radio, *NITV/SBS Radio*, printed publications, online only publications, podcasts and Indigenous television programming (both community made and mainstream delivered), are important outlets for our community regardless of what they might consume from the national media landscape.

However, there are still many challenges when it comes to the 'Indigenising' of the Australian media landscape. Although the number of Indigenous journalists has increased and the number of Indigenous broadcasters continues to grow, those with investigative journalism skills or with the opportunity to acquire them, are still few and far in between and it should be an area of focus in this new decade for those working in Indigenous media.

While the Indigenous media sector has found empowerment through radio, TV and print, it's predominantly still the mainstream media which produces those investigative pieces which have led to Royal Commissions and advocated on our behalf.

What would it look like if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander journalists had the capacity to be able to do this for ourselves?

Imagine what that could look like on a platform like IndigenousX and what effect that might have on the wider media landscape in terms of controlling and owning our own narrative?

It's an exciting world to be in as the juncture between traditional media forms meets the new age of citizen journalism and user-generated content. Where anyone with a platform and a smartphone can be a player in this burgeoning media landscape in Australia.

A place where new voices can be elevated and where the media consumer has more choices than ever on what they choose to click on.

So how we, as First Nations people, decide to proceed is ultimately up to us.

No longer do we have to sit by and wait for our stories to be given space in a mainstream news bulletin or newspaper.

No longer do we have to wait for our comments to be included or our phones to ring when you want to hear our side of the story.

You can find us now in your newsrooms, on your screens, on your radio and in your print media along with those working behind the scenes to make our content matter.

So what do I hope to see in the next decade? Beyond 2020? That a platform like IndigenousX is only the beginning.

That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders continue being the drivers of their own narrative and that the wider community continues to seek out our voices and perspectives as the starting point of their daily media consumption.

While making change in the mainstream media sector is important, so is harnessing our own power and taking control via the new options now available to us.

Those that came before us built the means by which we can now do this, all we need to do is step into our future.

Indigenous innovation: Creativity, protocols and Indigenous cultural and intellectual property

TERRI JANKE

IndigenousX's underpinning philosophies include Indigenous excellence, self-determination, autonomy and solidarity. Innovation is a key way that we Indigenous people can achieve this. Indigenous innovation is the nurturing and developing of Indigenous knowledge systems and applying it to contemporary situations. Traditional knowledge, for example, can be applied today to create new medicines or foods. Traditional fire management and cultural burning can provide solutions for land management. Collaborations in the arts, science and technology industries can enable Indigenous people to achieve economic prosperity. However, it is paramount that we are in control of our own cultural dynamic.

As an Indigenous lawyer, I work with creators and entrepreneurs who seek to use their cultural assets but are mindful of the lack of legal protection for Indigenous people to protect and control their Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP). The precedent for Indigenous contribution to the world of innovation has already been set, but the future collaboration opportunities are yet to be determined. Indigenous knowledge and cultural expression can be a significant contribution to all industries.

In 1999 *Our Culture: Our Future: A Report on Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property* was released. It looked at the rights Indigenous people wanted to protect their cultural heritage. Where knowledge and ideas, culture and expression had been ripped off and appropriated for the benefit of the other, Indigenous people were not recognised as the owners of culture.

There has been a long history of innovation in Indigenous communities. Boomerangs were a technological advancement in aerodynamics. Fish traps, craft and weaving were advancements in traditional tools. Australian Indigenous artists are leaders in international art and design.

Every time I look at David Unaipon on the Australian $50 note, I am reminded that there is so much wealth of Indigenous knowledge. An acclaimed inventor, Unaipon registered a patent for his straight-line motion shearing machine in 1909. Unaipon was also the first published Indigenous author but was sadly the victim of literary theft. Born in 1872 and died in 1967, the Ngarrindjeri author's writings focus on creation stories, highlighting the similarities between Aboriginal and European spirituality. Melissa Jackson, Sydney-raised Bundjalung woman and librarian, states that: 'Over time, he submitted this material section by section to Sydney publishers Angus and Robertson, who paid him a sum of £150. The sections were then edited and joined into a book. A typescript copy was made, and Unaipon even submitted a photograph for the frontispiece and wrote a foreword, but the book was not published in his name at that time'.[1] Angus and Robertson did not publish the book with Unaipon as author but instead sold the copyright to William Ramsay Smith, anthropologist and South Australian Chief Medical

1 Melissa Jackson, The Heritage Collection 2004 (Sydney: Nelson Meers Foundation, State Library of New South Wales, 2004).

Officer. The book was published in 1930 as *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals*, after minimal change. Of course, Smith claimed himself to be the author and Unaipon's work was not acknowledged on the manuscript.[2] In 2001, many years after Unaipon's death, the original manuscript was published with the cooperation of his descendants under Unaipon's name and his original title, *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines*.[3]

Innovation stems from many different areas of Indigenous culture. The specific piece of Indigenous cultural innovation that I will discuss in this essay is art. Art comes from place and defines the life of the people. The artist's practice links with land, belonging and identity. The lines and dots may seem like pretty patterns that look good on walls, carpets and clothing, but they represent insignia, claims to country, rank and responsibility for Indigenous artists. Whilst the Carpets case, *Milpurrurru & Others v Indofurn Pty Ltd & Others*, gave Indigenous artists the pathway of copyright to protect their cultural and economic interests, other behaviour has increased such as international copyright infringements and the poaching of works by deceased Indigenous artists or artists who aren't represented by an Aboriginal arts centre. The use of stylised versions of 'Aboriginal art', instances

2 Matthew Rimmer, 'Albert Namatjira: Copyright Estates and Traditional Knowledge', *Incite*, no. 24, 6 (2003).

3 David Unaipon, Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines, ed. Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001).

where no exact work has been copied but the styles and themes of Indigenous art are taken, is also concerning.

In 2012, Bibi Barba, a Berri Gubbi and Yuin woman, found out that her works, *Desert Flowers* and *Flowers of the Desert*, had been copied into the fabric of the Hotel Eclipse in Domaslaw, Poland.[4] Her artworks were used as the basis of the entire interior fit-out of the hotel—reproduced on carpets, wood panelling, glass dividers, tabletops and art panels in the foyer. Bibi was devastated to see her works stolen and used in this way. In her words, the artwork was a connection to spirituality and country that should not be corrupted. The icons used in the work reflect cultural connections and stories she has inherited from her grandmother. They are her passion and livelihood. The artworks were more than likely copied from the website of the gallery in Sydney that represented Bibi and sold her works. Across the world, the works were now being used by the Polish designer Ewa Smuga who was commissioned by the Hotel Eclipse.

The designer alleges that this is not a copyright infringement but that she merely drew inspiration from Bibi's works. The designer says she 're-designed' the artwork and was inspired by the geometric patterns which she alleges are in the public domain. There are some aspects of Polish copyright law that are different from Australian copyright law. In Australia, the deciding

4 Andrew Taylor, 'Polish Hotel Tramples Aboriginal Artist's Work', *The Age*, February 17, 2013, https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/polish-hotel-tramples-aboriginal-artists-work-20130216-2ek3r.html.

factor between copying and inspiration is in how substantial the reproduction is. The artist is pursuing her case against the hotel and the designer.

This type of plagiarism—where Indigenous art, styles and themes are used as 'inspiration' without a legitimate connection to the artist and the country—does not meet cultural protocols. To curb this type of behaviour, the Australia Council for the Arts (the national peak body for arts) and my legal firm developed a set of cultural protocols which advocate for the ethical approach: not copying styles but commissioning an Indigenous artist and getting permission from the community to use their designs and stories. These protocols have set standards and are also made legally binding, at least to those who receive grant funding from the Australia Council.

A different story concerns the Musée du quai Branly, a museum in Paris that was the vision of the then French President Jacques Chirac. The French architect Jean Nouvel commissioned eight Indigenous Australian artists to produce works that were incorporated into the architectural skin of the administration building. Their approach was entirely different with the Musée entering a special partnership with the Australia Council for the Arts.

The works of eight Indigenous artists are featured on the façade, the ceilings and the rooftop. Two experienced Australian Indigenous curators were chosen to select and work with the artists—Brenda Croft and Hetti Perkins. They worked with

Australian Architect firm Cracknell and Lonergan to develop the works. The contracts were in French and English, clearly covering the rights for the non-commercial uses that the Musée would need. The range of commercial uses that could be made of the work were agreed to and included in the appendix of the contract. The fact that it was part of the building needed consideration for the Musée's needs. The artists were paid and attended the launch. Recognition and value of their contribution was included as attribution clauses and community recognition clauses. The Australia Council visual arts protocols were translated into French and attached to the contract. Another curatorial guide was created so that the care of the works could be properly managed.

The lessons from the Musée du quai Branly story are threefold. Firstly, it shows that copyright can be useful if a substantial part is copied. Inspiration and the protection of styles can fall through the cracks. Secondly, it illustrates that the role of the individual artists is empowered by copyright and the link to the community via cultural protocols is important. The case *Bulun Bulun v R & T Textiles* recognised that the artist has a fiduciary duty to the community to deal with his or her copyright consistently with their cultural obligations. Whether this relationship is one that the law should deal with is another point to consider.

Thirdly, for those wanting to make use of Indigenous or Traditional Cultural Expression (TCE) styles, it is best to commission the work of a TCE artist rather than use TCE as 'inspiration'. The willingness of the Musée du quai Branly to

engage with Indigenous artists and their communities to build genuine and long-term relationships has set a strong benchmark for future collaborations.

Making use of existing laws such as copyright and trademarks, and developing protocols and using contracts, are ways to protect Traditional Cultural Expression. However, there are gaps which will require legislation. Indigenous Australians call for laws that recognise their rights to cultural knowledge and expression. However, representing only 2% of the population, there is no political force behind changes to law.

We need to act now to fix this problem by bringing in structures and processes that assist in the management of these rights. The solution should include customary laws and processes which identify the relevant Indigenous custodians and recognise their authority to 'maintain, control and protect' their cultural expressions.[5]

I have written about a proposal for a consistent national framework, the National Indigenous Cultural Authority (NICA), in my paper *Beyond Guarding Ground*.[6] The NICA model proposes the creation of an independent organisation that can support the facilitation of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual

5 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations General Assembly, 13 September, 2007), Article 31, https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples-1.

6 Terri Janke, *Beyond Guarding Ground* (Sydney: Terri Janke and Company Pty Ltd, 2009), 19, https://4b0a135d-0afc-4211-ad92-391c5def66bb.filesusr.com/ugd/7bf9b4_3346f929752c4f1da9766fb3da148c4c.pdf.

Property (ICIP) rights by providing tools, contracts, monitoring and protocols, as well as implementation of a certification process using a registered trademark, to allow consumer identification of NICA endorsed cultural products and services.

The model for NICA recognises the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to manage their ICIP through free, prior and informed consent on mutually agreed terms, consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

This is a possible solution that all countries should consider. I believe that a National Indigenous Cultural Authority can achieve a balance between protecting TCE rights and allow sharing on agreed terms. Furthermore, it is a framework that can empower Indigenous people to thrive both culturally and economically. In this way, Indigenous people can benefit from systems of IP protection which incentivise and reward their sharing, continual innovation and practice of their cultures.

Empowering Indigenous innovation requires an integrated model of intellectual property rights, protocols, and managing relationships. This model could increase Indigenous innovation and support self-determination. Encouraging Indigenous peoples to share their culture will only happen if Indigenous people feel that it is safe to do so. For this reason, there is a need for appropriate legal frameworks that allow for the sharing of cultural expression and knowledge, whilst at the same time, ensuring respect and recognition of culture.

To end, Indigenous innovation goes hand in hand with IndigenousX. In harnessing the rise and popularity of new technology and social media, IndigenousX encourages Indigenous people from diverse backgrounds and professions to share their stories and perspectives. In the 21st century, more and more people are looking to Indigenous knowledge and culture for solutions, whether it's in art and design, medicine and health, academia and ecological conservation. Let's keep encouraging Indigenous excellence, self-determination, autonomy and solidarity so Indigenous people feel secure to share their innovations with the world.

I am still not a Canadian

CHELSEA VOWEL

On October 20 of 2015, I was feverishly watching a live feed of the federal election results, and refreshing a webpage that showed the polling results as they came in. Despite having sworn that I would not participate in this election, fear had gotten to me. A little ashamed, I cast a ballot after all.

For almost ten years the longest running conservative federal government since 1959 had been systematically attacking Indigenous rights in this country and I was absolutely terrified they were going to be given another mandate. I voted for the New Democrat Party (NDP), fairly certain that the NDP incumbent Member of Parliament in our riding was headed for an easy win anyway. Instead, I watched along with the rest of the country as Liberal red spread across the Atlantic provinces and headed west, wiping out NDP orange until finally smashing up against a solid block of Conservative blue on the prairies, and being forced around that impenetrable wall to finish taking the West Coast. For 148 years, Canada has only ever had two parties controlling federal politics and despite hopes to the contrary, absolutely nothing changed this election. Conservatives and Liberals merely take turns administering colonialism, and other parties seem to exist only to get people's hopes up.

The story I want to tell you, however, is not about the ridiculous farce of Canadian politics. Rather, it is about why voting is such a contentious issue among Indigenous peoples here.

To tell you this story from my perspective, I need to tell you where I am from. I am Métis from the community of

manitow-sâkahikan, which is known in English as Lac Ste. Anne, in the province of Alberta. Despite the fact that the term 'Métis' simply means 'mixed' in French, we are an Aboriginal people, recognized under Section Thirty-Five of the Canadian Constitution along with Indians (First Nations) and Inuit.

We are a post-Contact people, just as the Lumbee, Oji-Cree, Comanche and Seminole are. Our ethnogenesis involved intermarriage between Europeans and various First Nations, but crystallized in a unique history and culture rooted in the plains. To a certain extent, almost all Indigenous peoples are mixed in some way with people of other cultures, either with other Indigenous peoples, or with non-Indigenous folks. Yet in the Canadian consciousness, only Métis are 'mixed', 'half-breeds', part Indian and part not. This is a misconception sometimes shared by other Indigenous peoples too, and it can lead to some misunderstandings about our Indigeneity. Colonial logics impact us all, and we sometimes have to remind people that we are a People, not just parts of people.

Métis began establishing a formal socio-political order in the Red River Valley at the beginning of the nineteenth century. From 1816 on, we engaged in a number of military conflicts with colonial agents as well as weathering economic and military persecution. Our socio-political order included alliances with other Indigenous nations such as the nêhiyaw-pwât, or Iron Alliance, which included the Métis, nêhiyawak (Cree), Nakoda, Anishinaabe and some Mohawk. Our clashes with colonial expansion culminated

in the Battle of Batoche in 1885 where Métis met defeat against General Middleton and one of our leaders, Louis Riel, was executed by the Canadian government. This period was known among Métis and our allies as kâ-mâyahkamikahk, or 'when bad things happened'. Once the Métis and our government were scattered, punishment for participating in the Northwest Rebellion was severe. Rations were withheld from Métis and our allies and a pass system was instituted which completely restricted movement of Indigenous peoples on the plains for some time. A series of *Indian Act* amendments were also passed in 1885 which outlawed sacred ceremonies and dress, curtailing the spiritual and political lives of those confined to reserves and disrupting the ability of all Indigenous peoples on the plains to organize against Canada effectively. By then, the buffalo had been decimated and our economies laid entirely to waste.

Despite this violence and repression, at no point did the Métis accept Canadian sovereignty. We believe this to be true despite the fact that some of us, along with other plains nations, are treaty signatories.

The 'numbered treaties' are a series of treaties signed between Indigenous nations and the reigning monarch of Canada between 1871–1921. They do not cover all of Canada, and in fact hundreds of thousands of hectares of land are covered by no treaty at all, foiling any attempt by Canada to legally claim sovereignty on those lands. The numbered treaties have been interpreted by Canada as being land surrender treaties. Among

signatory nations however, it is clear that these treaties, though coerced as they were and backed up by starvation policies and outright aggression, were about sharing the land 'to the depth of a plough', not merely handing them over wholesale. After all, who would hand over their kinship responsibilities like that?

I come from Treaty Six territory. Some of my ancestors took treaty, and others took something called scrip. This was basically a land grant by Canada, meant to extinguish any responsibility towards Métis. Scrip was offered in the form of a document which could be exchanged for a parcel of fee simple land, or a sum of money. Ignoring the ridiculous nature of offering people land that was already ours, scrip was either never issued, or snapped up by unscrupulous settler speculators to the point where Métis were left with essentially no land base at all.

In the face of all of this, Indigenous peoples all across Canada, all of whom have their own stories of conflict and resilience to tell, continued to organize. I do not know of a single Indigenous nation that accepts Canadian sovereignty. It is for this reason that many Indigenous people in Canada do not identify as Canadian. Most Indigenous nations articulate their relationship with the Crown as one of equals, not ruled to ruler. Despite the enormous, and deleterious impact of Canadian laws and policies towards Indigenous peoples and the very real impacts those laws and policies have, they are not valid. We are not Canadian subjects.

Now, I do not think our position in Canada is different to those of Indigenous peoples in other places. Just as I have never

heard an Indigenous nation in Canada declare they have accepted Canadian sovereignty; I have never heard an Indigenous nation outside of Canada accept colonial sovereignty either. However, the way this position informs a debate on voting among Indigenous peoples in Canada seems somewhat unique.

Essentially the issue boils down to this: if we are not Canadians, we should not be participating in Canadian political processes.

At the risk of offending my former hosts, the Haudenosaunee, one of the best ways to explain this to people is to use the example of their Two Row Wampum. I have no intention of trying to explain this to you fully, as it is not my place, and I simply do not have the appropriate level of understanding to even attempt such a task. So please understand that what I say here is only the barest outline of what this actually represents.

The Two Row Wampum was a treaty made in 1613 between Dutch traders and the Haudenosaunee. That treaty is represented by a wampum belt, which depicts two purple rows on a background of white. The purple rows represent two vessels travelling on the same river, each vessel with its own people, laws and customs. They do not interfere with one another, and they do not overlap. Colloquially, many Indigenous people in Canada have taken to using the phrase 'you stay in your canoe, I stay in mine' as a way of describing this desired relationship of peaceful co-existence, mutual respect and non-interference.

Voting in settler elections is considered by many Indigenous people as 'stepping into the wrong canoe.' On one end of a

spectrum of opinions on this topic some believe that voting in Canadian elections is an acceptance of Canadian sovereignty and a surrender of Indigenous sovereignty. While very few Indigenous people consider this to be something that happens the second you enter a polling station, it is seen as a very slippery slope. If we want Canada to stay in their canoe, we can't be crossing over into theirs ourselves.

On the other end of the spectrum are those who point to the fact that Inuit only got the federal vote in 1950 (although they rarely had any way to exercise the franchise as ballot boxes were not placed in most communities until 1962) and Status Indians had to wait until 1960 to be allowed to participate in elections. Before this, Status Indians had to 'give up Status' (i.e. stop being legally Indian) in order to vote. *Indian Act* regulations had so severely restricted political organizing for over half a century, that not utilizing the right to vote is seen by some as wasteful at best, and at worst, disrespectful of our ancestors' struggles.

The Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) tend to, as a nation, take the strongest stance against voting, and participating at all in settler elections. I have seen some people in Pacific Northwest nations also take this position as well. Among the Treaty nations (those of us from numbered treaty territories), there seems to be less difficulty with the idea of voting—though voter apathy is as high as it is anywhere else. So there is great diversity across nations on this issue, but every single time an election rolls around, the debate begins anew. It can get pretty vicious too.

The 2015 election felt different. The regular debates over voting were voiced, as expected, but there was a huge push by Indigenous people in their communities to 'get the First Nations vote out'. This mirrored a higher turnout among Canadians in general, the highest voter turnout since 1993, but few Canadians understand just how historic the Indigenous turnout was. In Manitoba, it was estimated that 11,000 new Indigenous voters went to the polls alone. The increase was so unexpected, six First Nations polling stations ran out of ballots! Ten Indigenous Ministers of Parliament were elected, the highest number ever, and a Kwakwaka'wakw woman became the Minister of Justice.

Even many Indigenous people who are ideologically opposed to voting (as I am) chose to vote that year, simply because the conservative government has been so harmful over the previous decade that it seemed dangerous not to vote. There was also the feeling that for the first time in Canadian history, a third party might have a real shot at forming the next government.

I do have to wonder about that fear-mongering and false hope. My vote did not seem to matter after all; my riding ended up going to the Liberals, at the expense of the New Democrats. In fact, the New Democrats suffered most of the losses to the benefit of the Liberals, while Stephen Harper's odious Conservatives managed to hold onto ninety-nine seats, the same number of seats they had when they formed their first minority government in 2006. It is difficult to say what impact the Indigenous vote

actually had and some see this as a slow fall into playing Canada's game according to Canada's rules.

I also cannot forget that it was the Liberals who passed the Indian Act in 1867. I cannot forget that the father of Canada's new Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau (also a Liberal), attempted to ram through the White Paper in 1969, which would have seen the unilateral dissolution of any relationship with Indigenous peoples in Canada, completing the assimilation program. I cannot forget that the Minister of Indian Affairs at that time was Jean Chretién, who later became a Liberal Prime Minister. I cannot forget that Paul Martin, who succeeded Jean Chretién as Prime Minister, had been the one to impose the still-existing 2% funding cap on First Nations education when he was Minister of Finance. I cannot ignore that Justin Trudeau's Liberals have been in power since 2015 and despite all the rhetoric surrounding 'reconciliation', little has improved for Indigenous peoples in this country. For these reasons, replacing the Conservatives yet again with a Liberal government, rings especially hollow.

No Canadian political party has ever run on a platform that includes repudiating Canada's claims to sovereignty, and frankly, that is what it would take for any of these parties to truly work in the interests of Indigenous people. While I applaud the energy that community organizers brought to voter registration, to educating people on political platforms, and on successfully mobilizing so many voters, I personally feel the 2015 election was

a stark reminder of how little the Canadian political process can do for Indigenous peoples.

The 2015 election was the last time I voted in a Canadian federal election. I believe my time is better spent focusing on supporting the process of renewing existing inter-Indigenous treaty relationships in our territories, expanding them to include Black and people of colour, as well as the process of seeking new treaty relationships with Indigenous peoples outside of Canada. It makes much more sense to me that we turn to one another for meaningful and reciprocal relationships, than it does to continue to present ourselves as supplicants in colonial systems that see us as obstacles to be removed. êkosi.

Chelsea Vowel is an author from Canada and Canadian spellings have been retained throughout.

Our connection to country is key to First Nations leadership in addressing climate change

AMELIA TELFORD

I have vivid memories of riding along the beach in the back of Uncle Fatty's truck as a child, looking for the little lumps of pippies in the sand. We'd be out there digging for hours. Sometimes the waves would be too rough for us kids to swim, so on the way home we'd stop off at the Kingscliff creek at our family spot where you could see Wollumbin from the water. For as long as I can remember my family have spent Christmas Day down on the creek. Sometimes one of the uncles would even sleep in his car on Christmas Eve just to save the same spot under the shade of a massive native fig tree. We would spend hours in the salty water, bathing in the sun and embracing our roots and the place we call home.

My family have always had a strong connection to the land. From a young age, my brothers and I grew up very aware of the world around us. When I was nine months old, we moved further down the coast south of Kingscliff but frequently went back and forth visiting family. At the start of each trip one of us would always say 'I wonder what's going to be different this time.' My brothers and I were always so excited to look out the car window and see what had changed since our last trip—like new residential developments and sights that as a kid seemed so harmless.

Nowadays, I'm not so excited to see the changes. I'm not excited to see the severe coastal erosion that our home is suffering from. The beach that the Kingscliff creek flows into has almost disappeared. The caravan park has lost half of its sites and the surf club is waiting to fall into the water. I remember getting out of the car one day and just standing in silence, not even recognising the

place where we had grown up. Our country is literally crumbling before our eyes.

I started to realise the scale of this issue when I connected the dots between climate change and the impacts it was having on my home and on Aboriginal communities across the country. Not only has the beach suffered severe erosion but the house that my family lived in has now been demolished along with the coastal shrubbery that surrounded it. This stretch of coastline is now home to Casuarina and Salt; coastal cities blooming with beach houses, hotels and holiday parks.

We are facing the impacts of the climate crisis right now, today. It affects everybody but the impacts are not evenly distributed. Too often it's the people who have caused the least damage, and have benefited the least, who face the most severe consequences. It's low-income people, communities of colour and in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia who are on the frontlines of this crisis. It's our communities that are hit first and worst, not only by the impacts of climate change but by the impacts of extractive, polluting and dangerous industries that are devastating our country and fuelling the greed, wealth and root causes of this crisis.

Right now, the land that we survive on is being dug up, grinded down, tossed around and burnt, and with it goes our culture, our families, our communities and our future.

Without a doubt climate change is the greatest threat to Indigenous people and our culture. As the world continues

to dig up, export and burn fossil fuels we're locking ourselves in for further climate chaos. The science is clear and our stories are inarguable. With roaring bushfires encroaching earlier, fuelled by drought and lack of Indigenous land management, as well as rising sea levels lapping at the doorsteps of the Torres Strait Islands and communities lacking resources to deal with extreme heat waves, it's clear that we are facing the consequences while the fossil fuel industry continues to profit from it.

So far the global response to climate change shows us once again that the lives of black and brown people are valued less than others, that women are valued less than men which is reflected in the way we are treating our mother earth, and that we can continue to take and take without giving back.

What needs to be acknowledged more is that the same systemic injustices that have caused the issue in the first place are being perpetuated—capitalism, colonialism, white supremacy and the patriarchy—and unless our pathways to building solutions include dismantling these systems, then we're going to end up in this mess all over again.

Over and over we hear from governments and mining companies that our land is theirs to take and that our lives and culture are dispensable. At a time when our communities are already facing breaches to basic human rights, racism and the ongoing impacts of colonisation, we need to be able to connect the dots between what we're fighting for and the root causes of the injustices we face. Once we do this we can organise ourselves

and our shared responses to the issues and build a world that we can actually live in, not just survive in.

Across the globe people are coming together. Climate change is no longer an issue of environmental justice; it's an issue of social justice. It's about people, it's about communities, and it's about justice. As communities on the frontline of the crisis, we need to be at the forefront of change.

Just last week I was at a rally where I caught eyes with a young girl. She would have only been about five years old. She was standing between her family of strong, black warriors. For a moment all I could think about was how, like many of us, this young girl has been born into a fight that she didn't start. A fight in which she already was a victim. A fight that, just like her mother—who's hand she was holding—she would probably end up leading one day.

But in that moment, I stopped myself from thinking in that way. Because I'm sick of being told that we're victims. I'm sick of being told that we're powerless.

We are not powerless, we are powerful.

We are survivors. We are warriors. We are fighters.

Despite attempts to eradicate our people, to force us off our land and tell us who we are and how we should act, we're still here and we're still fighting.

Right now, there is a growing movement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people standing up for our rights to say no to extractive industries digging up our country

and destroying our culture. We are inspired and guided by the movements and warriors who have gone before us, here in this country and across the world.

In particular, one warrior woman who has deeply inspired me is the late Koreti Mavaega Tiumalu from the Pacific Climate Warriors. As a mother, mentor, colleague and a friend, there are so many reasons to look up to Koreti, but it was something she said in a speech at Power Shift 2013 in Melbourne that has stuck with me ever since. She said: 'I'm here today to represent, the small voice of the Pacific Islands. The fossil fuel industry and the Pacific Islands, their futures cannot coexist, and it is the fossil fuel industry that needs to back down.'

It's this fierce yet loving, determined and unapologetic approach that we need to take knowing that like the Pacific Islands, our culture, our communities and our futures cannot coexist with the fossil fuel industry either.

But I have so much hope because every day I get to work with young people who stand strong for country and are a part of the oldest continuing culture in the world. The Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network is a shining example of a grassroots movement of people willing to do whatever it takes and show the government what true leadership on climate change looks like.

We are a growing network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who have a vision of strong, sustainable and resilient communities powered by the people, the sun and the wind.

Even with everything at stake there's a huge opportunity for our people to lead the way in solving climate change. Australia is one of the sunniest and windiest countries in the world and we have the capacity to play a huge role in leading the transition to safe, clean, renewable energy.

Our Indigenous brothers, sisters and families across the globe are already leading the way. This is our opportunity to do the same and leave our government with no choice but to follow. Unless we take swift, ambitious steps to reduce our emissions, keep new coal in the ground and transition to renewable energy, we will continue to see the destruction of country and catastrophic consequences from climate change.

There's nothing more powerful than a movement, led by Indigenous people, with a shared vision worth fighting for. We can't afford for climate change to be an issue that divides us—we need to stand up and make sure that climate change is the issue that unites us.

No matter where I am in the world, I'm always guided by my ancestors and country is always calling. Like the roots of the native fig tree by the Kingscliff creek, it takes roots to weather a storm, and when a huge storm is upon us, we no doubt need these roots.

Contributors

Dameyon Bonson is a Gay, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, of the Mangyari (NT) and Maubiag (TSI) peoples. He is a Suicide Preventionist (Private Practice) and a Post Graduate student in the Master of Suicidology. Dameyon is also the Founder of Black Rainbow. He lives in his hometown of Darwin, in the Northern Territory.

Lynore Geia is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman from Palm Island, North Queensland, home to the Bwgcolman people. She has over three decades of experience as a health professional with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and is a strong advocate for Aboriginal community-controlled health. She is a leading voice in State, Territory and Federal forums, and her extensive practice focuses on youth and family health in rural and remote areas.

Matthew Ngamurarri Heffernan is a Pintupi-Luritja man from Alice Springs but is now living in Darwin. He works in Indigenous Business Development with the NT government. He is a poet who was introduced to the art through song writing and hip-hop. Matthew has also performed as a rapper across the Northern Territory and Australia.

Professor Anita Heiss is an author, poet, cultural activist and social commentator. She is a proud member of the Wiradjuri

nation of central New South Wales. Anita was a finalist in the 2012 Human Rights Awards and the 2013 Australian of the Year Awards. She is also a Lifetime Ambassador for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation and advocates for First Nations authors and writing through lectures, media and industry organisations.

Gadrian Hoosan is a Garrwa/Yaayuwa man and community leader from Borroloola, in the remote Gulf of Carpentaria, Northern Territory. As a leader and musician, Gadrian works to protect and strengthen homelands, language and culture for generations to come. In 2020, he ran a campaign as an independent candidate in the Territory election, which was cut short by COVID-19 restrictions.

Terri Janke is a Wuthathi/Meriam lawyer. She is the solicitor director of Terri Janke and Company, an entirely Indigenous law firm she founded in 2000. She is respected as one of Australia's most influential lawyers, campaigning for Indigenous intellectual and cultural rights. In 2011 Janke was named the NAIDOC Indigenous Person of the Year.

Amy McQuire is a Darumbal and South Sea Islander journalist and former NITV National News political correspondent. She has worked with a number of media organisations in Australia, most recently with Buzzfeed Australia, and her writing has focused on inequality within the Australian justice system. She currently hosts *Curtain the Podcast* with Martin Hodgson.

Aaron Nagas is a Bailai and South Sea Island man. He was born and raised in the Gladstone area in Central Queensland, where the Bailai people are the Traditional Custodians. Nagas now lives on the Sunshine Coast and helps young people—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—who are involved with the youth justice system. He is also passionate about his involvement with Indigenous youth programs like Oxfam's ChangeCourse program and the Queensland Indigenous Youth Leadership Program.

Michael O'Loughlin is a Gamilaraay man from Moree in northern NSW. He has cultural connections to Ngiyampaa and Worimi countries. Michael is the education officer for IndigenousX, having previously worked in the government sector and the private sector in various mentoring roles, including juvenile justice and high schools.

Sandy O'Sullivan is a transgender, Wiradjuri person. A researcher and Associate Professor at the University of the Sunshine Coast, their research includes queer and gender studies, museums, performance, and cultural representation, with a particular focus on First Nations' agency. From 2020–2024, they will lead a large research project focused on promoting the contributions of First Nations' queer creative practitioners.

Rhianna Patrick is a Torres Strait Islander broadcaster and media professional with more than 20 years experience. She has

worked across news and current affairs, television documentaries and radio. In 2020, she was QUT's inaugural Indigenous Journalist in Residence.

Peter Radoll is an Anaiwan man of Northern NSW and is Professor of Information Technology and Pro Vice Chancellor, Indigenous at the University of Canberra and Director of the Ngunnawal Centre. He has over fifteen years of experience in the higher education sector and nine years in Indigenous higher education, and has conducted research on a range of matters of importance to the Indigenous community.

Amelia Telford is a Bundjalung and South Sea Islander woman and the National Director of the Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network. In this work, Amelia supports a national network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people building a movement to protect country, culture and communities from the causes and impacts of climate change. Amelia was awarded National NAIDOC Youth of Year in 2014, Bob Brown's Young Environmentalist for the Year 2015 and Australian Geographic Young Conservationist of the Year 2015 for her commitment to building a more just and sustainable future for all young people.

Chelsea Vowel is a Métis writer, educator and public intellectual from manitow-sâkahikan (Lac Ste. Anne in Alberta, Canada). She currently teaches Cree language at the University of Alberta. She runs the IndigenousXca Twitter account, which is

IndigenousX's Canadian counterpart. Vowel's work can also be found at her blog, apihtawikosisan.com, and publications like the *Huffington Post*, *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail*.

Leesa Watego was born and raised in Brisbane. Her family is Aboriginal (northern New South Wales) and South Sea Islander. Her contribution to *Reconcile This* is a piece originally written in 2010. At the time of writing, she was the sole carer for her four school-aged children. She was also building a fledgling education and creative agency and was an early adopter in the emerging world of social media and blogging. Today Leesa is the Managing Director of Iscariot Media. She founded the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander blogging community Deadly Bloggers in 2010. She blogs infrequently at www.notquitecooked.com.

RECONCILE THIS: AN INDIGENOUSX ANTHOLOGY is a collection of thought-provoking and powerful First Nations' voices.

When IndigenousX was founded in 2012, they had an important goal: to share the knowledges, work and experiences of Indigenous people. Since then, they've developed an online platform that has changed the media landscape across Australia and the world.

The authors in this anthology tackle a wealth of different issues—sexuality, culture, tradition, motherhood, science, colonialism, climate change, politics, and media representation—and the way these issues intersect with their Indigenous identity.

With new voices as well as established authors like Anita Heiss, Terri Janke, Amy McQuire and Dameyon Bonson, these essays both showcase and celebrate Indigenous diversity and excellence.